Cite: Taks, M., & Schubert, M. (2016). **The Sports labour market: An empirical comparison between Flanders (Belgium) and Germany**. In J. Zhang & B. Pitts (Eds.), Global sport management: Contemporary issues and inquiries (pp. 270-282). Routledge.

Chapter 16

The sports labor market: An empirical comparison between Belgium and Germany

Abstract

The state structures of Germany and Belgium have undergone opposite evolutions in the past few decades. Over this period, Belgium has increased its federalized state structure, while Germany has closed the East-West separation. With 85 million residents, Germany is about eight times larger than Belgium. However, regardless of this difference, the development of the sport sector and, consequently, the labor market and employment in sport are similar between the two countries. This chapter will first provide some facts and figures about the size and trends of the sport labor markets in both countries. For Belgium, particular emphasis will be placed on Flanders, the northern, Flemish-speaking part of the country. In light of the cultural autonomy of each Belgian region, sport is mostly dealt with on a regional level, and seldom at a national level (Taks et al., 1999). While for Germany, the emphasis will be on the country, as a whole. Second, this paper examines the demand and supply of sport goods and services to provide an overview of the sport labor market. The demand side of the sport market directly influences the supply of sport labor, while the supply side of the sports market affects the demand for sport labor (i.e., the derived demand, e.g., Gratton and Taylor, 2000; Taks and Misener, 2015). The comparative approach of this analysis faces the problem of the usage of different methodologies and different types of data sets. These differences need to be carefully taken into consideration when comparing data of both countries.

INTRODUCTION

The state structures of Germany and Belgium have undergone opposite evolutions in the past few decades. Over this period, Belgium has increased its federalized state structure, while Germany has closed the East–West separation. With 85 million residents, Germany is about eight times larger than Belgium. However, regardless of this difference, the development of the sport sector and, consequently, the labor market and employment in sport are similar between the two countries. This chapter will first provide some facts and figures about the size and trends of the sport labor markets in both countries. For Belgium, particular emphasis will be placed on Flanders, the northern, Flemish-speaking part of the country. In light of the cultural autonomy of each Belgian region, sport is mostly dealt with on a regional level, and seldom at a national level (Taks et al., 1999). While for Germany, the emphasis will be on the country, as a whole. Second, this paper examines the demand and supply of sport goods and services to provide an overview of the sport labor market. The demand side of the sport market directly influences the supply of sport labor, while the supply side of the sports market affects the demand for sport labor (i.e., the derived demand, e.g., Gratton and Taylor, 2000; Taks and Misener, 2015). The comparative approach of this analysis faces the problem of the usage of different methodologies and different types of data sets. These differences need to be carefully taken into consideration when comparing data of both countries.

FACTS AND FIGURES OF THE SPORTS LABOR MARKET

Different approaches can be used when analyzing the sport labor market (Taks, 2000). First, one can analyze national data and trends by examining labor force surveys and/or sport organizations. Second, one can look at the effect of the economic activity in sport on total employment by means of input–output analyses. Third, the demand for sport labor can be analyzed

from the perspective of sports suppliers. Finally, the professional careers of graduates from physical education (PE), sport, and recreation programs provide information about the supply of sport labor.

Empirical statements about facts and figures of the sports labor market are rather difficult to find. There are limited data from sport economists. Moreover, the sport sector is seldom isolated in national statistics. Nevertheless, a recent survey about sport and employment in Europe provides some facts and figures, including data for Belgium and Germany (European Network of Sport Science in Higher Education [ENSSHE], 1999). Economic impact surveys also provide data and information about sport labor market trends (e.g., Meyer and Ahlert, 2000; Taks and Késenne, 2000).

The sports sector in national statistics

Static Picture. Both countries showed a similar share of employment in the sports sector (0.27%) as a percentage of total employment (code 92.6 in the National Statistics). This is low compared with other European countries (ENSSHE, 1999; Figure 1). The share of the sports sector as a percentage of the total population showed a slight difference: 0.11 % for Germany compared with 0.14% for Belgium (EHSSHE 1999; Figure 2). This difference can be explained by the fact that the share of total employment within the total population is lower in Germany compared with Belgium.

Trends. Although the data sources from both countries are not exactly comparable, the tendencies clearly indicate an increased employment rate in the sport sector in Germany and Belgium between 1993 and 1998, and 1985 and 1998, respectively (Table 1); reflecting a growing sport industry in both countries.

Effect of sport on employment

The increased economic activity in sport creates considerable employment in other sectors of the economy. For instance, in 1996, the Flanders' sport sector stimulated 70,697 full-time equivalents (FTEs) of employment in Belgium (Taks, 2000), while in Germany 253,250 people were employed in other sectors of economy in 1993 (Mayer and Ahlert, 2000; Table 2). The wholesale and retail sectors in Germany, and the service sector in Belgium (28% increase between 1983 and 1996) profited the most (Mayer and Ahlert, 2000; Késenne et al., 1998).

Demand of sports labor. The demand for employees comes from different sport supplying organizations. These include public sector, private non-profit (voluntary), and private for-profit sector (commercial) organizations. In Germany, the government (public sector) makes a limited contribution to the sport labor market, and most staff who works in sport clubs and federations are volunteers (only 14% of clubs employ a minimum of one full-time employee; Mayer and Ahlert, 2000). This suggests that the commercial sport sector is the main reason for the growth and difference of employment opportunities, especially in high performance sport, and fitness and health clubs. In Flanders, almost one quarter of employment in the sport sector is provided by the public sport sector (excluding the education sector), particularly in local sport authorities (Table 3). Flemish sport clubs and federations use primarily volunteers (90% of human resources needs). It is estimated that there are three times more employees in the commercial sector in Flanders compared with the public sector. A noteworthy category in the commercial sector are self-employed Sport and Physical Activity (SPA) professionals; these are professionals with a post secondary degree in sport and/or physical activity, and are often trained to become PE teachers, but because of a lack of opportunities in the educational sector, they find and create other types of employment in the commercial sector (see also Campos-Izquierdo, González-Rivera, & Taks, 2016).

Supply of sport labor. In this section, the labor supply in both countries is compared through the analysis of tracking of graduates in PE programs (Taks et al., 2000; Taks et al., 2003). Both countries have different types of training programs, which can lead to a profession in the sport sector (Table 4).

From an analysis of the employment situation of graduates in sport, PE and recreation, it appears that university PE graduates in Flanders find jobs in the school system, or in the medical and paramedical sector (Taks et al., 2000). The German university graduates are primarily employed in the health system, media, and commercial sport suppliers sectors.

In short, trends in the sport labor market show increased employment in the sport sector, as well as increased employment in other sectors of the economy due to the spin-off effects of sport's economic activity. The share of the current employment in the sport sector as a percentage of total employment or total population is almost equivalent for both countries. However, it is relatively low in both, Germany and Belgium, compared with other European countries. The commercial sports sector starts playing a more important role in the sports labor market.

Discussion

Trends in the demand and supply of sporting goods and services illustrate the development of the labor market in the sport industry. In what follows, we specifically focus on shifts and current trends in the size and structure of the demand and supply for sport.

The demand for sport

Final expenditures on sport. One way to look at the demand for sport is by analyzing consumers' expenditures on sport products and services. For both countries, final expenditures in sport were analyzed through economic impact surveys. In Flanders, two economic impact surveys have been carried out; one in 1982 (Couder and Késenne, 1990) and one in 1996 (Taks and

Késenne, 2000). In both studies, primary data were collected. Representative samples of Flemish families were interviewed about their sport expenses through a standardized questionnaire. For Germany, Meyer and Alhert (2000) published 'Die okonomischen Persektiven des Sport: Eine empirische Analye fur die Budesrepublik Deutschland' (The economic perspectives of sport: An empirical analysis for Germany). This publication concentrated on the economic significance of sport in Germany in 1998, but it also refers to similar data from 1993. The data are mainly secondary and collected from national statistics.

In 1993, the total final expenditures for sport in Germany were estimated at 22,672 million EUR. In 1998, this increased to 27,098 million EUR. In both years, the sport industry made up 1.4% of the country's gross domestic product (Mayer and Ahlert, 2000). In Flanders, the spending increased from 771 million EUR in 1982 to 4,239 EUR in 1996. The gross regional sports product (GRSP) increased from 1.35% in 1983 to over 3% in 1996 (Taks and Késenne, 2000). These figures are comparable to other Western European countries. For example, Andreff et al., (1995) found, in their investigation of 12 European countries, percentages of the gross domestic sport product (GDSP) ranged from 0.56% (for Denmark) up to 3.37% (for Switzerland). Table 5 summarizes the GDSP for Germany in 1998 and the GRSP for Flanders in 1996.

In both countries, private household consumption accounts for the largest share of spending in the sport marketplace. These findings are similar with other macroeconomic impact studies (e.g. Jones, 1989; Andreff et al., 1995; Andreff, 1997). Table 6 illustrates the distribution of the sport-related demand in Flanders and Germany. A distinction is made between direct sport consumption, including sport services (e.g., membership and entrance fees) and sport goods (e.g., equipment, apparel, shoes), and indirect sport consumption (e.g., travel, food, drink, lodging, newspapers, books). Indirect expenses make up almost half of the total expenditures. While the direct related

expenditures are almost equally divided over sporting goods and services in Flanders, Germans spend a larger share on sport services.

There is a clear tendency that final expenditures on sport increased over the periods studied. This is, of course, more apparent for Flanders because of the longer time period studied. Processes such as the increased level of sport participation (i.e., an increased demand for sport), the increased sport supply, commercialization, mechanization, and technology are responsible for this (Slack, 2004). Furthermore, the patterns in final expenditure are very similar in Germany and Flanders. As indicated earlier, these final expenditures for sport are an indicator of the demand for sport. The next section will look into some determinants of the demand for sport, and analyze them for both Germany and Flanders.

Determinants of the demand for sport. Different factors influence the demand for sport (Schubert, 2000). First, there are *population trends and structure*. In both countries, there has been a shift in the age structure with the number of older adults increasing. This might have a negative effect on the demand for sport and recreation in the future. However, sport suppliers may adapt their products and services to meet the changing demand.

A second factor is *the participation in sport, as an active participant or as a spectator.* Sport participation data are difficult to compare because the different research teams used different definitions. In both countries there is a trend of increased active sport participation. In Flanders, for instance, there is an increase from 52.8% in 1982 to 64.2% in 1997 (participating in sport at least once a year, including walking and biking). In 1997, 47.1% of the Flemish population participated in sport once a week (Bollaert et al., 2000). Depending on how sport participation is defined, 40 to 70% of Germans participate in sport; 25% participate at least once a week (Schubert, 2000). In both countries there is a tendency of increased irregular and/or informal sport

participation through activities such as skiing, cycling, and walking, trend that is further confirmed for Europe as whole by Downward and colleagues (2009).

There is a growing interest for spectator sport through television. In 1994 about 45% of the German population was interested in sport program on television; in 1999 this increased to 62%. In 1996, 61.2% of Flemish families watched sport on television daily/often (Verbiest, 2000). Moreover, in both countries, private television entered the marketplace in the late 1980's, for which sporting events played a crucial role when competing for viewers. Clearly, all these data point toward an increased demand for sport and recreation.

Third, *the level of well-being, income trends and household expense structures* may influence the demand for sport. Private households in Germany spend an average of 1.8% of their budget for sport purposes (Schubert, 2000). In Flanders, this amounts to 6.8% (Taks and Késenne, 2000). This large difference might be due to different methodologies for calculating sport expenses (e.g., primary data in Flanders versus secondary sources in Germany). Moreover, the share of households' consumption related to sport, leisure time activities, and travel seem to have increased over the years in both countries. Figure 3 shows the relationship between income- and sport-specific expenses in Flanders and Germany, from which a positive correlation can be detected: the higher the income level, the higher the sport expenses. This holds true for Germany and Flanders.

Fourth, there is the issue of *leisure time trends.* Sport participation does not only require money but also time (Taks et al., 1994). In both countries, the supply of leisure time activities has grown faster than the time consumers have available to participate in the activities. Data from Eurostat indicate that the average hours spent working in Germany was 40 hours/week and 39 hours/week in Belgium in 1995. The percentage of employees working over 48 hours per week

was 4.5% in Germany, compared with 2.1% in Belgium (Gratton and Taylor, 2000). Apparently, Belgians have a little more spare time than Germans.

Fifth, certain *phenomena of individualization* have an effect on the demand for sport, such as an increasing erosion of family traditions and household structures, an increasing number of single households, single parents, and childless couples. There is also a rising demand on the space and occupational flexibility of people. Traditional social classes and milieu are dissolving (Burch and Matthews, 1987). These trends are clearly apparent in both countries.

Supply of sport goods and services

In both countries, the public, voluntary, and commercial sectors offer sport services. Sport clubs and federations (non-profit organizations) are dominant in the delivery of organized sport in both Germany (Heinemann and Schubert, 1999; Figure 4) and Flanders (Taks et al., 1999; Table 7). There is a tendency that commercial sport suppliers are growing in importance in both countries. This finding supports recent claims that commercial sport organizations are increasing their share in the sport labor market.

Other determinants of the supply in sport are the structure and development of technologies in sport (Desbordes, 2001). New technologies create new markets. Without being able to provide concrete evidence for both countries, technological innovations have been readily apparent in both countries, as is the case in most European countries.

Finally, the existence of substitutes (i.e., other type of leisure suppliers) may affect the type and amount of sport supply; thus, competition from these other leisure pursuits need to be take into consideration in both countries. Another danger of substitution of sport results from the change and the shifting of motives for practicing sport. Motives like fitness and health become more

important, which affects the sport supply. Therefore, shifts in the sport supply may be expected, following the changing demand of sport consumers.

CONCLUSION

Both Germany and Flanders show similar patterns in the evolution of the sport industry, which explains the similar patterns appearing in the sport labor market. The difference in the GDSP between Germany (1.4%) and Flanders (3%) may be due to different data collection strategies (secondary versus primary data respectively). The GDSP shows how important sport has become in the overall economy, thereby stimulating jobs creation, affecting the general labor market and the sport labor market in particular. Overall, sport is having an increasingly larger economic significance (Taks and Késenne, 2000). The determinants of the demand for sport, namely: population trends, trends in sport participation, the level of well-being, leisure time trends, and the trend of individualization, show striking similarities in Germany and Flanders. Consequently, the demand pattern for sport is very similar, and so will be the expected shifts in the demand. This might lead, in turn, towards similar shifts in the sport labor market in the future. Although the voluntary sport sector is still dominant in supplying sport, it does not strongly contribute to (increased) employment in the sport labor market. This is, of course due to the 'voluntary' nature of this sector. On the other hand, the growing importance of the commercial sector with relation to the sport labor market is becoming increasingly more significant. More research is needed with relation to other aspects of the supply side and their effect on the sport labor market, such as: the impact of increased technology and the competition with other substitute suppliers. A lack of empirical evidence keeps us from making general conclusions in these areas. In addition to the three supply sectors (i.e, government, voluntary and commercial sectors), hybrid forms of sport

suppliers are becoming apparent, such as public private partnership, or quasi public or quasi private organizations (Taks & Misener, 2015).

Beside many of the similarities, one important difference between Germany and Flanders is the degree of legislation. Flemish legislation stimulates sport employment in the public and the voluntary sectors, increasing the degree of professionalization. In both countries, the absence of legislation for the commercial sport sector might, among other things, be responsible for increasing (uncontrolled or unlegislated) employment levels in the sector.

References

Andreff, W., Bourg, J. F., Halba, B., & Nys, J. F. (1995). *Les eneux economiques du sport en Europe: Financement et impact economique [Economic factors of sport in Europe: Financing and economic impact].* Paris: Dalloz.

Andreff, W. (1997, June). *Sport financing in Europe: Towards a transformation in the twenty-first century?* Paper presented at the International Press Seminar on Economics, Politics and Culture of Sports: Sport Media and Civil Society. Vingsted, Denmark: Vingsted Sports Centre.

Burch, T. K., & Matthews, B. J. (1987). Household formation in developed societies. *Population and Development Review*, *13*, 495–511.

Campos-Izquierdo, A., González-Rivera, M.D., & Taks, M. (2016). Multi-functionality and occupations of sport and physical activity professionals in Spain. *European Sport Management Quarterly*, *16*(1), 106-126.

Couder, J., & Késenne, S. (1990). The economic impact of sports in Flanders. *Sport Science Review*, *13*, 60–63.

Desbordes, M. (2001). Innovation management in the sports industry: Lessons from the Salomon case. *Europe Sport Management Quarterly, 1,* 124–149.

Downward, P., Dawson, A., & Dejonghe, T. (2009). Chapter 5: The supply of participant sport: The Public and Private Sector. In *Sports economics: Theory, evidence and policy* (pp.117–146). London (UK): BH Elsevier.

European Network of Sport Science in Higher Education [ENSSH] (1999). *Sport and employment in Europe: Final report.* Luxembourg: European Network of Sports Sciences in Higher Education and European Observatory of Employment in Sport.

Gratton, C., & Taylor, P. (2000). *Economics of sport and recreation.* London: Spon.

Heinemann, K., & Schubert, M. (1999). Sports clubs in Germany. In: K. Heinemann (Ed.), *Sport clubs in various European Countries* (pp. 143–167). Stuttgart, Germany: Hofmann Verlag.

Jones, H. G. (1989). *The economic impact and importance of sport: An European study.* Strasbourg, France: Council of Europe.

Késenne, S., Taks, M., Laporte, W., De Knop, P., Dejaegher, E., & Audenaert, E. (1998). *De economische betekenis van de sport in Vlaanderen [The economic importance of sport in Flandres]*. Brussels, Belgium: Sport Vlaanderen.

Meyer, B., & Ahlert, G. (2000). *Die okonomischen Persektiven des Sport: Eine empirische Analyse fur die Budesrepublik Deutschland [The economic perspectives of sport: An empirical analysis for Germany]*. Köln, Germany: Verlag Karl Hofinann.

Schubert, M. (2000, July). *Labour market and employment in sport in Germany – facts and figures, problems and perspectives.* Paper presented at the Employment and Job Creation in Sport Seminar, Novgorod, Russia.

Slack, T. (2004). *The commercialisation of sport*. New York: Routledge

Taks, M. (2000, July). Sport and employment. In: J. Avela, P. V. Komi, and J. Komulainen (Eds.), *Proceedings of the Fifth Annual Congress of the European College of Sport Science* (pp. 729). Jyvaskyla, Finland: University of Jyvaskyla.

Taks, M., & Késenne, S. (2000). The economic significance of sport in Flanders. *Journal of Sport Management*, *14*(4), 342–365.

Taks. M., & Misener, L. (2015). Sport's role in economic development (Chapter 5). In. M. T. Bowers & M. Dixon (eds.), S*port management: An exploration of the field and its values* (pp. 95-122). Urbana (Ill.): Sagamore Publishing.

Taks, M., Delheye, P., & Demuynck, N. (2000). *Careers of graduates in sport and sport related programmes (including physical education): Final report* (TNProject D25709-CP-1-99-1-ES-ERASMUS-ETN). Barcelona, Spain: European Network of Sport Science in Higher Education.

Taks, M., Renson, R., & Vanreusel, B. (1994). Of sport, time and money, *International Review of Sociology of Sport*, *4*, 381–397.

Taks, M., Renson, R., & Vanreusel, B. (1999). Organized sport in transition: development, structure and trends of sports clubs in Belgium. In: K. Heinemann (Ed.), *Sport clubs in various European countries* (pp. 183–223). Stuttgart, Germany: Hofinann Verlag.

Verbiest, S. (2000). *Consumptie-uitgaven van Vlaamse gezinnen aan passieve sportbeoefening: dee/project 'de economische betekenis van sport in Vlaanderen'* [Expenses of Flemish families for spectator sport: Part of the project 'Economic importance of sport in Flanders']. Leuven, Belgium: University of Leuven.

Table 1. Number of persons employed in the sport sector

Germany (Mayer and Ahlert, 2000)[1]	**Belgium** (Taks, 2000)[2]
1993: 519,100	1985: 6,736
1998: 540,600	1991: 9,210
	1998: 14,524

Notes. [1] Sport sector was broadly defined to include part-time, second jobs, the public sector, and PE teachers.

[2] The sport sector was more narrowly defined to only include main jobs, and excluding second jobs, the public sector, and PE teachers.

Table 2. Share of employment in other sectors of economy inducted by Germany in 1993 and in Flanders in 1996 (Mayer and Ahlert, 2000; Késenne et al., 1998)

	Germany 1993			Flanders 1996		
Industry	Employed persons	Full-time equivalents	%	Employed persons	Full-time equivalents	%
Construction		28,600	11.29		2,139	3.03
Trade						
Wholesale	*36,840*					
Retail	*56,050*	92,890	36.68		8,993	12.72
Transport		14,920	5.89		8,934	12.64
Catering		24,690	9.75		9,937	14.06
Other services						
Services				*22,286*		
		40,850	16.13		24,222	34.26
Bank and insurance				*1,936*		
Other sectors						
Agriculture, forestry, fishing				*413*		
Energy and water supply				*483*		
Manufacturing				*3, 277*		
Clothes, shoes		51,300	20.26	*687*	16,472	23.30
State				*7,663*		
Education				*3,949*		
Totals		253,250	100.00		70,697	100.00

Table 3. Estimation of the number of employees in the sports sector in Flanders (Taks, 2000)

Sector	**Public**	**Private**	
	Government[1; 6] (non-profit)	Voluntary[6] (non-profit)	Commercial (for-profit)
	BLOSO[2] (N≈750) VTS[3] (N>100) Provincial sport authorities (N≈151) Local sport authorities (N≈3,000)	Sport federations and clubs VLABUS[4] (N≈700)	*With sports facilities:* ▪ Sports centers ▪ Fitness centers ▪ Sports shops ▪ Recreational parks *Without sports facilities:* ▪ Sport events organizers ▪ Outdoor sports organizers ▪ Sport tourism organizers ▪ Self-employed SPA professionals[7]
Total	4,000 (23.5%)	1,000 (5.8%)	12,000 (70.6%)[5]

Notes. [1] Excludes education (e.g., PE teachers); [2] BLOSO=Flemish Sports Administration; [3] VTS=Flemish Training School (offering training programs in specific sports); [4] VLABUS=Flemish Office for Sports Guidance (non-commercial temporary work office placing qualified PE teachers in voluntary sport; (organizations); [5] Estimation based on National Statistics (1997): 12,902. [6] Share of paid employees/volunteers in the public/govt. sector = 90/10 and in the non-profit sector: 10/90; (7) SPA=Sport and Physical Activity Professionals (see also Campos-Izquierdo et al., 2016)

Table 4. Training and educational programs in Germany and Belgium that might lead to employment in the sport sector

Germany	Flanders
Sport federations' educational programs	Flemish Training School (programs in specific sports)
Qualified training programs in specific sports	Three-year non-university higher education programmes in physical education and sports
University programs in sports sciences	Four-year university programs in sports sciences

Table 5. Gross domestic sports product for Germany in 1998 (Mayer and Ahlert, 2000), and gross regional sports product for Flanders in 1996 (Taks and Késenne, 2000)

	Germany: 1998		**Flanders: 1996**	
	EUR	%	EUR	%
Private household consumption	20,758.50	76.60	4,147.26	97.84
Government consumption	5,164.05	19.06	307.39	7.25
Investments	3,272.27	12.08	104.11	2.46
Import	-3,016.62	-11.13	-535.45	-12.63
Export	920.33	3.40	215.67	5.09
Total	27,098.53	100.00	4,238.98	100.00
% of GDP	1.40%		>3%	

Note: EUR is in millions

Table 6. Sport-related consumer demand of private households in Germany in 1998 (Mayer and Ahlert, 2000) and in Flanders in 1996 (Taks and Késenne, 2000; % of total sport related financial consumption of households)

		Germany	**Flanders**
Directly related to the sport industry	DIRECT-sport service	38.1	25.5
	DIRECT-sport goods	14.7	21.9
Outside the sport industry	INDIRECT	47.2	52.6
Total		100	100

Table 7. Evolution of sport federations, sport clubs and members from 1974 to 1999 in Flanders (Taks et al., 1999)

Evolution of sport federations, sport club, and members	1974	1990
Number of sport federations	81	80
Number of sport clubs	7,027	14,002[(1)]
Number of members	436,822	932,898

Note. [(1)] Does not include clubs from the Belgian Soccer League and the Belgian Cycling League (estimated at 19,000).

Figure 1. The share of employment in the sports sector as a percentage of total employment (source: ENNSH, 1999, p. 94)

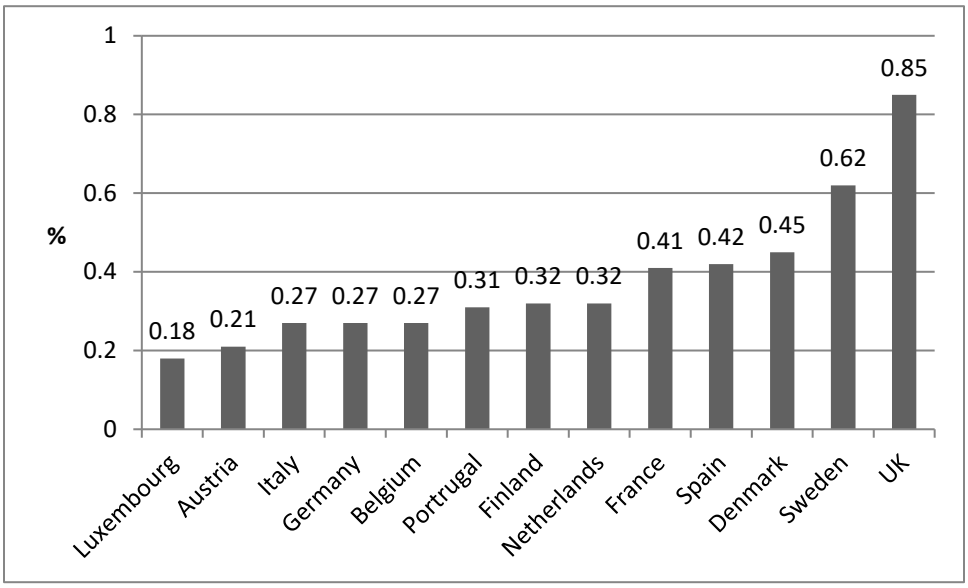

Figure 2. The share of employment in the sports sector as % of total population (source: ENNSH, 1999, p. 22)

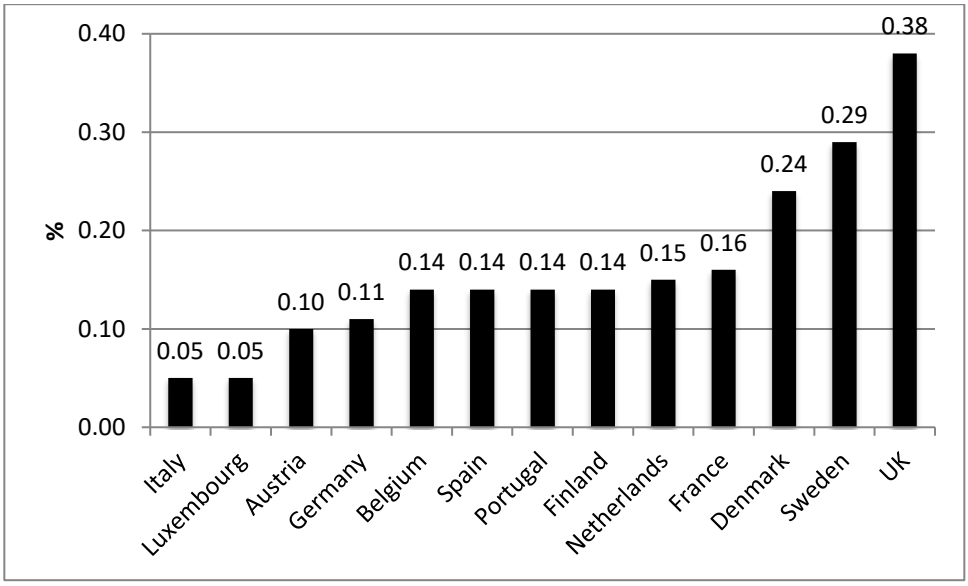

Figure 3. The relationship between sport specific expenses and income in Germany and Flanders (in EUR/month)

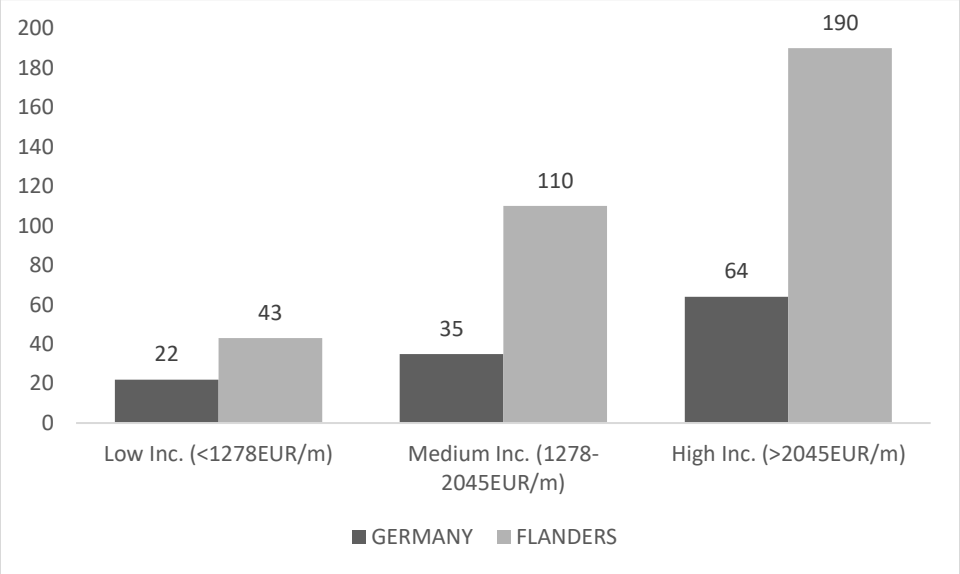

Figure 4. The organizational contextfor sport participation (in percent) (Weber as cited in Heinemann and Schubert, 1999)