

PFPO 2011 GLOBAL PLAYER MIGRATION REPORT

The *Global Player Migration Report* analyses the international transfers that occurred in 2010 to 104 leagues belonging to 69 national associations from around the world. The first chapter analyses player importation, the second studies their export, and the third deals with the question of networks linking the departure and arrival countries. Throughout the report, data on international flows are interpreted taking into account the criteria of age, position and origin of players involved.

Imports

Cyprus is the most active national association for the import of players, both in absolute and relative terms. In 2010, clubs of the Mediterranean island have recruited 219 foreign players from abroad. This figure represents an average of 7.8 per team. The first non-European association in this ranking is the **United States of America**. This reflects the increasing appeal of the *Major League Soccer* (MLS) and its greater inclusion in the global transfer market for footballers.

When it comes to re-imports, **Brazil** is at the top of the table. On the whole, 135 players from this country came back home to play for first or second division clubs, of whom 10 just for *Flamengo*. The return migration of Brazilian and more generally South American footballers is a key feature of the contemporary global player circulation system.

Clubs of the top division Brazilian league have imported the oldest foreign players (on average 29 years of age), while teams of the **Italian** second division championship have recruited the youngest ones (22.8).

Exports

The three national associations having exported the most local players are Brazil (280), **Argentina** (215) and **Serbia** (150). While 103 associations have exported at least one national player to the leagues surveyed, 27% of these flows originate from one of these three countries. This figure is 50% if we take into account the 10 associations exporting the most local footballers.

Almost 80% of **Ghanaians** who migrated in 2010 are midfielders or forwards. Generally speaking, a greater part of international flows concern players in these positions (63.5%). This figure is higher for Africans (81%) and South Americans (69.2%), than for Central or North Americans (63.2%), Asians or Oceanians (58.7%), and Europeans (59.3%). When it comes to recruiting African or South American footballers, importing clubs seldom seek defensive ones.

England is by far the most re-exporting national association. In 2010, 241 foreign footballers moved away from this country to clubs in the other championships analysed, of which 111 from the *Premier League* (5.5 per club on average). This shows the challenge that many players face to settle down at the heart of the world football economy.

Networks

The most used pathways for international migration are those having led players from Brazil to **Portugal** (95, and 21 the other way around), from England to **Scotland** (67, and 24) and from Argentina to **Chile** (56, and 29). The latter country plays a stepping stone role for Argentinean players who then move up to **Mexico**.

Brazilians can be considered as the authentic global football workforce. In 2010, they have moved across borders to clubs located in 58 distinct national associations out of 69. This figure is much higher than for any other player origin: Argentina (44), Serbia (40), **Croatia** (36) and **Nigeria** (35).

After Portuguese clubs, those having imported the most footballers from Brazil are in Asia: **Korea** (15), **Japan** (14) and **Iran** (12). While South-North networks are historically well established, South-South ones are rapidly developing. From this perspective, South America can be considered as the real hub of the globalisation of the player transfer market.