

## Demographic Study of European Football (2009-2017)

Drs Raffaele Poli, Loïc Ravenel and Roger Besson

### 1. Introduction

This Monthly Report analyses the evolution of the demographics of the European football players' labour market. The study covers the thematics of training (club-trained players), internationalisation (expatriate footballers) and stability (players recruited during the year). The CIES Football Observatory is currently the only organisation in a position to provide such an analysis.

The statistical indicators that have been reviewed allow us to compare policies pursued by clubs in composing their squads on both a temporal and spatial level. The sample is made up of 466 teams participating in 31 top division leagues of UEFA member associations. The study covers a period of nine years between 2009 and 2017<sup>1</sup>.

In order to be taken into account, a footballer had to be present on the 1st October in the first team squad of the clubs analysed. Moreover, he should have already played in domestic league games during the current season, or, if this was not the case, to have taken part in adult championship matches during each of the two previous seasons. The second and third goalkeepers were included in all cases.

Figure 1: sample of the study (01/10/2017)

		Players	Clubs	Players per club
AUT	Bundesliga	250	10	25.0
BEL	First Division A	406	16	25.4
BLR	Premier League	406	16	25.4
BUL	First League	339	14	24.2
CRO	1. HNL	275	10	27.5
CYP	1. Division	354	14	25.3
CZE	Czech Liga	387	16	24.2
DEN	Superliga	340	14	24.3
ENG	Premier League	522	20	26.1
ESP	Liga	505	20	25.3
FIN	Veikkausliiga	289	12	24.1
FRA	Ligue 1	507	20	25.4
GER	Bundesliga	475	18	26.4
GRE	Super League	402	16	25.1
HUN	NB I	307	12	25.6
ISR	Ligat ha'Al	329	14	23.5
ITA	Serie A	530	20	26.5
NED	Eredivisie	411	18	22.8
NOR	Eliteserien	407	16	25.4
POL	Ekstraklasa	409	16	25.6
POR	Primeira Liga	491	18	27.3
ROM	Liga I	370	14	26.4
RUS	Premier League	417	16	26.1
SCO	Premiership	292	12	24.3
SRB	Super Liga	427	16	26.7
SUI	Super League	248	10	24.8
SVK	Super Liga	296	12	24.7
SVN	1. SNL	254	10	25.4
SWE	Allsvenskan	392	16	24.5
TUR	Süper Lig	471	18	26.2
UKR	Premier League	304	12	25.3
<b>Total</b>		<b>11812</b>	<b>466</b>	<b>25.3</b>

<sup>1</sup> See also [Monthly Report 19](#) (2016).

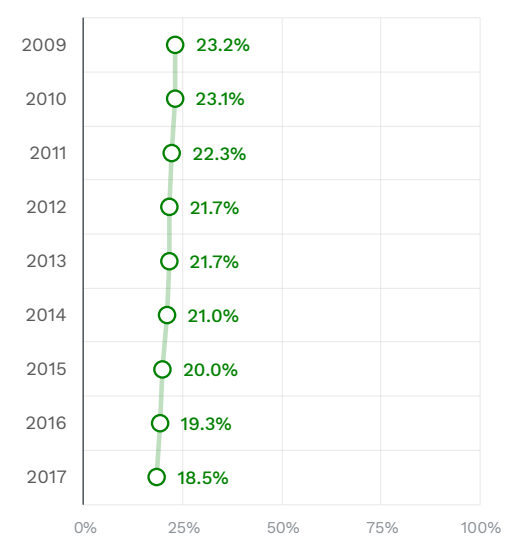
## 2. Training

The analysis of the thematic of training is based on the definition of a club-trained player as conceived by UEFA and used by numerous national leagues so as to encourage the employment of local footballers. Club-trained players are those having spent at least three years between the ages of 15 and 21 in their employer team.

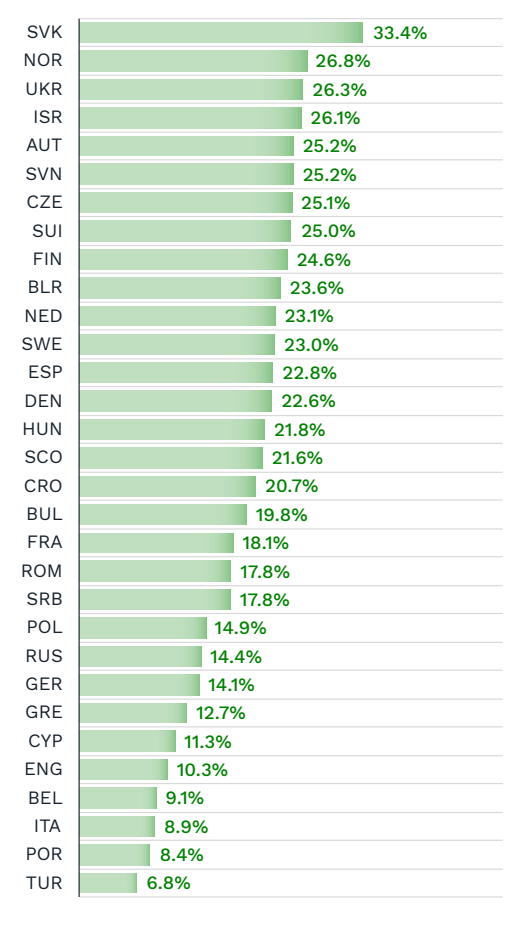
Between 2009 and 2017, the proportion of club-trained players in the squads of teams analysed went down from 23.2% to a new negative record level of 18.5%. This is the eighth year of consecutive decrease. This finding highlights the intensification of the mobility of footballers, as well as the ineffectiveness of measures put into place to encourage the employment of home-grown players.

In one league only, the Slovakian top division, club-trained players still account for over one-third of squad members. In 2017, record lows were registered in nine championships, including the Turkish Süper Lig. At the other end of the scale, no record high was observed. The proportion of club-trained players is less than a tenth in four countries: Turkey, Portugal, Italy and Belgium.

**Figure 2: evolution in the percentage of club-trained players in squads (2009-2017)**



**Figure 3: % of club-trained players, by league (1st October 2017)**



### 3. Expatriates

The notion of expatriate defines players having grown up outside of the national association of their employer club and having moved abroad for football-related reasons. This definition allows us to isolate migrations directly linked to the practice of football. Indeed, players of foreign origin having grown up in the association of their employer team are not considered as expatriates.

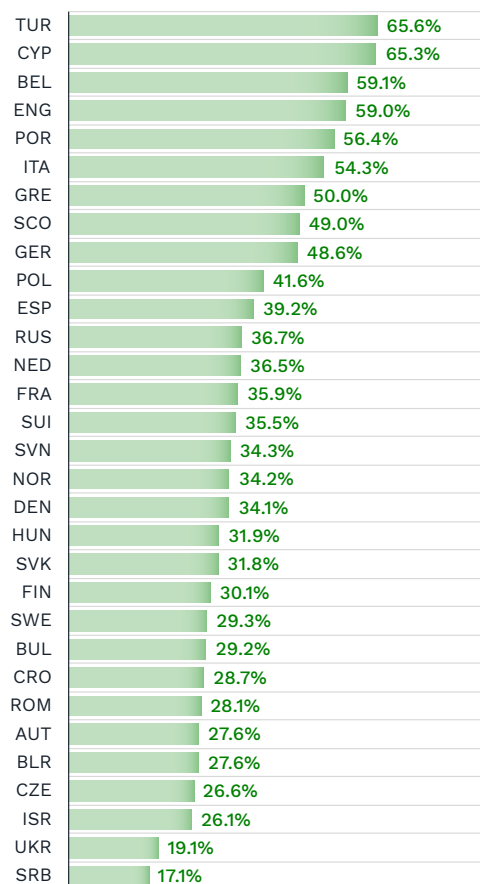
During the period taken into account, the proportion of expatriates in squads has increased steadily: from 34.7% in 2009 to a new record high of 39.7% in 2017. The increase has actually accelerated over the past two years: +1.1% per year since 2015 as opposed to about 0.5% per year for the six previous years.

In 2017, Turkey overtook Cyprus as the country with the championship made up of the highest percentage of expatriate players: 65.5%. This proportion is at least 50% in seven leagues, including the English Premier League and the Italian Serie A. Expatriates represent less than one-quarter of squads in only two countries: Serbia and Ukraine.

**Figure 4: evolution in the percentage of expatriate players in squads (2009-2017)**



**Figure 5: % of expatriate players, by league (1st October 2017)**



### 4. Stability

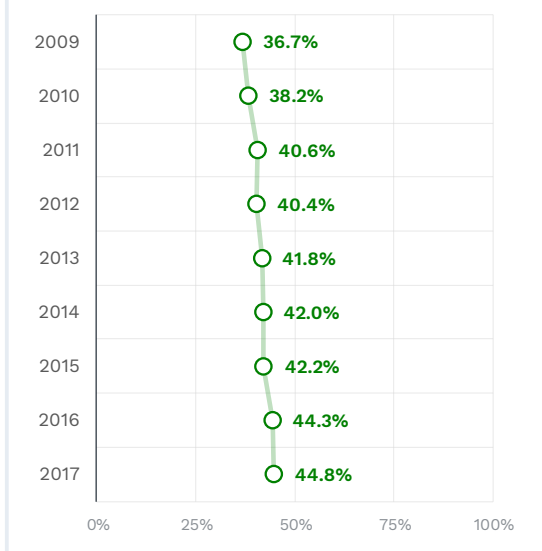
In order to measure the stability of teams, we have calculated the percentage of players recruited by their employer club during the year of reference. Footballers having joined the first team squad directly from the youth academy were not considered as new signings.

Between 2009 and 2017, the percentage of new signings in the squads of clubs analysed has increased sharply from 36.7% to 44.8%. In 2017, a new record was recorded in 11 of the 35 competitions studied: Belgium, France, Hungary, Israel, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Russia, Sweden and Ukraine. This result also reflects the acceleration of mobility in the footballers' labour market.

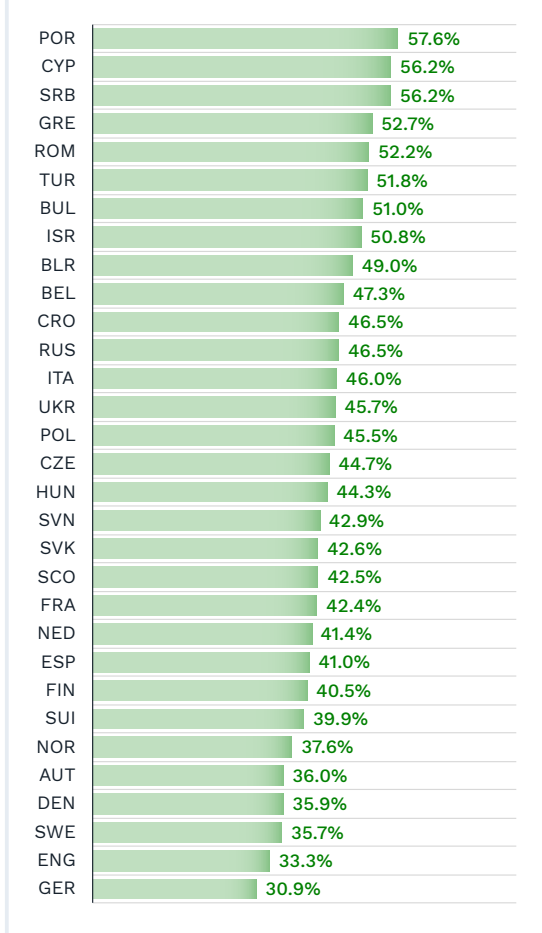
On the 1st October 2017, players signed over the course of the year represented more than half of squads in eight championships, including the Portuguese Primeira Liga (57.6%). At the other end of the scale, the clubs with the most stable squads were to be found in the German Bundesliga (30.9%) and the English Premier League (33.3%).

As time passes, stability has become a luxury that few leagues and clubs can afford. The gaps between championships are also explained by the different approaches in the manner of conceiving football as a business. However, despite regional differences, our analysis shows that speculation on the transfer of players is an increasingly common activity for more clubs and leagues across Europe.

**Figure 6: evolution in the percentage of new signings in squads (2009-2017)**



**Figure 7: % of new signings, by league (1st October 2017)**



## 5. Conclusion

Our study confirms the increase in the mobility of players in the footballers' labour market. The teams' squads are more and more unstable. Moreover, mobility occurs ever earlier during the players' career. The constant and considerable drop in the number of club-trained players within squads is a visible instance of this process.

Player mobility pays scant regard to national borders. The continuous increase in the percentage of expatriates reflects the growing internationalisation of the European footballers' labour market. This state of affairs is primarily to the advantage of the wealthiest clubs and leagues that are able to regroup the best players independently of their origin.

The regularity of the trends observed enables us to confirm that a real change is taking place in top-level European football. The central question is to know just how far this process can go without jeopardising the interest of competitions, the credibility of professional football and its sustainable development in the majority of countries.