

# Sport Management in Football and Sustainable Development

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## Abstract

*Sustainable development represents one of the important concepts that have emerged relatively recently and since its beginning it started to exert a prominent influence over the ways of thinking, but also actions of researchers, professors and students, managers and entrepreneurs, specialists from various organizations, from all areas of the world. Football is strongly connected to sustainable development as it provides a wide range of benefits for the economy and society, and it is a very dynamic field that is in permanent search for innovation, quality, and better performances. Sport in general, and football in particular contribute to the health of population, to creating structures for socialization, but also create a better economic and social environment, that is strongly connected to what we call sustainable development.*

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## 1. Introduction

Sustainable development proves to be an important paradigm that determinates the decision-makers at public and private entities to analyze better the present and past, but with a strong view of the future.

In this global picture an important sector can draw attention having in mind its visibility and impact: the sport industry. We can see that more and more the sport is not seen only as a mean of entertainment, but as a strong industry that can generate important revenues, create new jobs and promote countries, regions or cities.

Between sport and sustainable development there are strong links, each of them supporting the other one. That is why the decision-makers from public authorities or private entities should look together at the opportunities offered by the environment. All the politicians state that they focus on improving the quality of life for the population, on offering better jobs, better opportunities for development in a more globalized world.

Sport is also connected to one of the latest trends (Baroncelli, Lago, 2006) in modern management organizations: talent management! For decades, the sport

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clubs were the promoters of this important managerial approach, understanding the importance of recruiting, selecting and training people with high potential.

It is the moment when we can look more attentively to what sports could offer to the society and economy and to design special strategies that allow to value the know-how and the resources that are embedded in sport industries.

Sustainable development means a long-term vision and the same is happening in sport. Is not only about the immediate results, it is about training, teamwork, coaching, leadership and so on and so forth. All of these are elements that not only do a person to be a performer, but perhaps more important they contribute to the professional and personnel development, supporting the development of a better citizen.

The sport and football field demonstrated their resilience during the COVID-19 pandemic, but also in the post-pandemic period, representing a support of normality for many people (Bond, et al. 2022).

The development of society is possible only if we have good organizations and good citizens. It is the role of politicians to understand the connection among different sectors of economy and society and to create the best framework for them to act. It means that we must have national strategies, public policies that will offer the possibilities both for public institutions and private organizations to be able to elaborate and pursue their own strategies in a predictable environment. We should not separate the sport industry by economy or society, but we have to take them in their complex interdependencies.

## **2. Sport management**

Understanding the wide possibilities offered by sport, the states - through specific governmental organizations - give this phenomenon an important role, within their own promoted strategies, proposing the objectives of the sports movement in accordance with the major directions of the development of society. Starting from this point of major importance, the way of organizing the sports movement in different countries, including Romania, continues to represent a primary concern.

Sports policies, nurturing and promoting sports talent constitute a long-term investment for the benefit of a nation. Sport and politics are not and cannot be considered as separate realities, and the meeting between the two phenomena is not accidental. Sport has become a field often exploited politically, due to its universal character. There is a widespread view that sports institutions have had to politicize certain decisions both to pursue their interests and survive, and to create a favorable image.

It should be noted that the challenges of postmodern society have led to conceptual changes in terms of new organizational models and their management, which provide viable solutions to the need for adaptation and survival of



organizations from all areas of society and from a multitude of environments, from the business environment to the sports environment.

The scientific management of sports activity requires people who possess solid specialist and management knowledge, and who have delegated competences. It is true not only for adult players clubs, but also for young players clubs (Cojocaru, et al., 2015). Fulfilling this requirement forces sports organizations to professionalize management and promote knowledge-based management, because it is known that the field of sport, by its very essence, is a performative one. It is important to note that highlighting the intrinsic qualities of the product of sports activities involves performance, evaluated in direct competitions.

Therefore, the achievement of sports performance includes at the same time both activities in the sphere of sports and in that of the management specific to sports organizations. Thus, the two categories of activities indicated above, specialized and managerial, are complementary, management having the role of creating the indispensable framework for the basic activities of the organization and supporting their achievement at the expected performance level. The practical action of sports managerial leadership presupposes the existence of people who carry out activities specific to the sports management process in an organized manner.

According to some specialists in the field, management is a field of research with an interdisciplinary, borderline character. In essence, it is the science and art of leading efficiently, of optimizing the utilization of all resources in order to achieve success (Nicolescu, Verboncu, 1999).

In the field of sports, sports management is considered a science because it has a reference field, has its own principles and operates with specific methods and techniques to achieve the objectives of sports organizations; it is also art because it highlights the most important resource, man, who is the only creative resource and shows that the application of all concepts and tools depends on the personality of the managers or entrepreneurs in the field.

At the same time, it is necessary for sports management to cultivate the acceptance of economic (Nastase, 2009), social and moral responsibilities in those who apply it, responsibilities that train: the selection of values generates the competence that maintains competitions on all levels and the achievement of success.

Therefore, it is necessary that the method of administration, management and performance of sports organizations be applied in our country, that is, the management of sports organizations.

Sports management, as a branch of management, was born with the establishment of the first professional sports organization. Due to the emergence of a scientific system, the knowledge of sports management, intertwined with the development of the professionalization of sports and the acceptance of the laws of the market economy led to the emergence of sports management sciences, first in the private sector and then in the public sector.



### 3. Human resources management in football

One of the important challenges faced by the top managers of sport clubs is the limited understanding by the staff of the context in which the organization is evolving and that of the strategy that should be developed and implemented within it.

That's why it is very important to be able to build up a good management team, with good communication skills and that is eager to share a common vision related to the future

At the same time, some clubs could face great inertia and many of the employees do not perceive the possibilities of innovation and particular ways of actions that could make them competitive. We have to consider that even small changes can prove significant in terms of impact in the organization's activities in medium and long term, based on a strong culture and identity (Edgar, Edgar, 2021). Is a fact that the existing clubs' strategies and structures should be functional and accepted by most employees.

A major issue in sports club management is represented by human resources management and an example for such challenge is represented by the foreign players that activate in Romanian clubs in SUPERLIGA.

We take into consideration the nationality of foreign players in order to show the global character of the football and the challenges associated with selection and integration of players coming from different countries, with different cultures.

We present below an analysis regarding the nationality of the 180 foreign players who started the 2023-2024 season.

In the stages of this season, 180 foreign football players (which represents 35.5% of the total number of players) from 57 countries have played in Romania. Data available at (<https://www.transfermarkt.com/liga-1/startseite/wettbewerb/RO1>)

In the table 1 we present the distribution on countries of the players and the percentage in total foreign players.

SEASON 2023-24 "SUPERLIGA" ROMANIA

Table 1

Number of Players and Percentage	Country
16 players (8.9%)	CROAȚIA
14 players (7.8%)	BRAZIL
10 players (5.6%)	FRANCE; PORTUGAL
9 players (5%)	ARGENTINA
7 players (3.9%)	MOLDOVA; NIGERIA
6 players (3.3%).	BOSNIA-HERȚEGOVINA; CÔTE D'IVOIRE
5 players (2.8%).	SPAIN; BULGARIA; SLOVAKIA; BELGIUM
4 players (2.2%)	ALBANIA; ITALIA



Number of Players and Percentage	Country
3 players (1.7%)	CAMEROON; NORTH MACEDONIA; GHANA; GREECE; SLOVENIA; MONTENEGRO; NETHERLANDS
2 players (1.1%).	CZECH REPUBLIC; HUNGARY; UKRAINE; GUINEEA; MARTINIQUE; KOSOVO; GUINEEA-BISSAU; JAPAN; TOGO; GERMANY; SWITZERLAND
1 player (0.6%)	ENGLAND; ARUBA; CONGO; BURKINA-FASO; VENEZUELA; MADAGASCAR; ARMENIA; ICELAND; ISRAEL; URUGUAY; LIBERIA; CAPE VERDE; DENMARK; MALAWI; EQUATORIAL GUINEA; AUSTRIA; MEXICO; SENEGAL; GEORGIA; BENIN; MAURITANIA; SOUTH-AFRICA; GUATEMALA; ESTONIA.

The football clubs that used the most players in Romanian SUPERLIGA are CFR Cluj, Oțelul and CS BOTOȘANI (16) and the fewest: Univ. Cluj (4), FCSB and Hermannstadt with 5 players each of them.

Looking at the list of foreign players in League 1 in the 2023-2024 season (the list is constantly updated as the free players can be registered throughout the season), it reveals that the most numerous are the Croats.

It is also interesting to see that there are players that come and play here, but also who leave our championship. A special case is that of the foreign players who left our league and then returned, considering that Romania offers them the best opportunities for their professional development.

This season, 13 foreign players returned to SUPERLIGA after playing abroad: William Amorim, Carp, Dangubić, de Nooijer, Gustavo, Hourii, Pl. Iliev, Ivanovski, Júnior Maranhão, Luckassen, Omoh, Sanoh and Smola.

One important issue to be noticed when we analyze the attractiveness of our sport competition, in our case football, is to look at the clubs that succeed in attracting foreign players. In our football championship all 16 teams have foreign players, demonstrating that Romania has still a good image in the football market and the players consider that they come at good clubs where they can launch or re-launch their professional careers.

The globalization process is very visible in football and Romania doesn't make exceptions. For instance, we have footballers, for the first time, from Aruba, Benin and Malawi, Togo, or Equatorial Guinea.

In terms of value, the market is fluctuating a lot. At the moment we can notice (see Table 2) that only 5 of them have a market share exceeding 1 million euros. It means that our sport market is attractive, but we could consider it still an emerging market, that has more potential to grow and to be able to bring more valuable players.



## Value of foreign players

Table 2

Name	Club	Country	Position	Age	Market value
Andrea COMPAGNO	FCSB	Italia	striker	27	2.5 mil. €
Gabriel DEBELJUH	HERMANNSTADT	Croatia	striker	27	1.4 mil. €
Ermal KRASNIQI	CFR CLUJ	Kosovo	winger	25	1.4 mil. €
Risto RADUNOVIC	FCSB	Montenegro	left-back	31	1.3 mil. €
David KIKI	FARUL	Benin	left-back	29	1.2 mil. €

Sursa: <https://www.transfermarkt.com/liga-1/gastarbeiter/wettbewerb/RO1>

An important indicator of the Romanian football championship is represented by the players quota (Quansah, et al. 2022), this being a good signal about the value of our competition, but also how attractive we are for the foreign players, as well as for foreign clubs.

We can notice from the Table 3 that only few players (5) have a significant market value, over 2-million-euro, amount that could represent a good base for negotiations, if the clubs want to sell players and to make a capital infusion for developing its operations.

However, we consider that there are more players of high value to be seen and the qualification of the national football team to the European Championship is going to substantially increase the quotas for some Romanian players.

## Top 5 player quota ranking from Romanian Superliga

Table 3

Player	Position	Country	Club	Market value	Age
Darius OLARU	midfield	România	FCSB	5.3	25
Octavian POPESCU	midfield	România	CFR	3.8	20
Florinel COMAN	winger	România	FCSB	3.5	25
Cristi MANEA	right back	România	CFR	3.5	26
Tudor BĂLUȚĂ	defensive midfield	România	FARUL	2.8	24

Sursa: <https://www.transfermarkt.com/liga-1/gastarbeiter/wettbewerb/RO1>



#### 4. Conclusions

We consider that the fast social and economic developments determine the needs for adaptation of sports management both from strategies used, from organizational structures and from managerial perspectives.

The sport, generally, but the football in particular contributes to the health of population, to creating structures for socialization, but also create a better economic and social environment, that is strong connected to what we call sustainable development.

Globalization, the free movement of human resources and other types of resources, provide more opportunities for clubs to bring players, sponsors, public and to be important actors for increasing the quality of life.

Consequently, we don't talk anymore only about competition, but about cooperation, integration and creating healthy sport ecosystems that will last and develop, creating high value for the whole society.

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