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Chapter 10

Sport Clubs in France

Sabine Chavinier-Réla, Emmanuel Bayle, and Eric Barget

10.1 Introduction

France is a unitary constitutional republic which has a parliamentary system with a semi-presidential tendency. Historically, the country has defended democratic, non-religious and republican values. Its motto *Liberté, égalité, fraternité* means *Liberty, equality* and *fraternity*. The capital of France is Paris, French being the official language with the euro as its currency.

The major part of the French territory and population is located in Western Europe. However, owing to its colonial heritage, France also comprises several overseas regions and territories worldwide. With a population approaching 67 million people, it is the largest country in the European Union (EU) and the third in Europe.

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10.2 History and Context

10.2.1 Origin of Sport Clubs

At their early stages, the French sport clubs got directly inspired from a strong Anglo-Saxon influence. They were initially established in Paris and in the major cities of the country. Their members were exclusively well-bred students. Then, during the last third of the nineteenth century, physical and sporting activities started to set up massively in France. This is how a physical culture was born first. Originally, such a physical culture did not have unity. We could identify a value system and/or a set of objectives for each social group (Arnaud and Camy 1986). There were different types of practices: playful, sporting, gymnastic, competitive, athletic, etc., depending on the groups that could be localised and identified. Sociability with peers was a core issue but each set of sport clubs was pursuing its own goals. For instance, Catholic sport was considered as a means to master modernity and it met a need to compensate for the Church which was affected by the social and political changes (Lagrée 1986).

The beginning of the twentieth century was marked by the advent of a fundamental law for sport clubs. On 1st July 1901, Pierre Waldeck-Rousseau passed the law *related to the contract of association*. Its scope is significant as it guarantees one of the greatest republican freedoms. Every citizen has the right to freedom of association without prior authorisation. The following decree, on 16th August 1901, represents the basis of the functioning of French associations. For the sport association movement, the effects of those laws were observed as of from 1910 (Garrigou 1986).

The sport clubs were gradually established in rural areas in the course of a diffusion phenomenon including the republic, the school, the labour unions and the agricultural cooperatives (Garrier 1986). The sport associations were considered as institutional intermediaries for education with a specific role in the “republicanisation process” in France (Arnaud and Camy 1986, p. 408). The competition between young Catholic, Protestant and lay youth groups favoured the spreading of sport associations, as shown by Jean-Pierre Augustin (Augustin 1992) with the example of basketball in the Chalosse region (south-west of France). Thereafter, the First World War played a significant role in increasing the number of sport clubs, as shown by Pierre Lanfranchi in the case of football in the Languedoc region (Lanfranchi 1986) or by Sabine Chavinier-Réla with the example of basketball around the American bases.

During the twentieth century, a period of internationalism contributed to the modernisation of the sport association movement (Arnaud and Camy 1986). With the first international matches and the creation of French federations for each sport, France moved from an activist approach falling within the scope of popular education or close to industrial paternalism to a competitive approach, focused on sport as such. During the interwar period, Délétang described sport as a steamroller unifying

all the sporting practices, whether they have the same affinities¹ or not (Délétang 1986). Then, during the Second World War, the Vichy government helped to increase the number of sport associations (Garrigou 1986).

During the second part of the twentieth century, an evolution of social demand quickened. Throughout the advent of the *leisure civilisation* (Dumazedier 1962), the expectations of the French population towards sport competition turned into new aspirations related to sensations (Loret 1995) but also to health concerns. The Eurobarometer 412 (2014) has thus highlighted that the motivations of the French to practise a physical or sporting activity are mainly related to their will of improving their shape, relaxing or being with friends.

A quick analysis would lead us to think that *history seems to be repeating itself*. The origin of the sport association movement has merged with the history of associations. In the nineteenth century, the associations were multifunctional, and then they became monofunctional during the twentieth century (Agulhon 1978). But, during the twenty-first century, expectations towards associations have been multifunctional again, the only difference being that a strong demand for synergies and partnerships has been observed. While the expansion of sport associations is one of the effects of the predominance of sporting ends and sport competition, their future seems now to be depending on their ability to fulfil social functions (integration, education, inclusion, cohesion), health functions (against obesity, epidemics, fighting chronic diseases) and economical functions (professionalisation, financial impacts of events, lever of territorial development). From the bourgeois, male student of the Parisian universities to the millions of sport club members and people practising a sporting activity, the evolution is significant. However, the transition to sport for all is still unachieved. Given the societal challenges, the French public authorities have been encouraging sport associations to welcome new members and adapt their offers to people still remote from sport. Different priority target groups have thus been identified and public funding is oriented towards specific actions that the sport clubs can implement for them.

10.2.2 A Brief Overview of Position of Sport Clubs Within the National Sport Structure

The position of the French sport clubs is part of a vertical organisation, which is a reflection of a highly structured sport association movement. A network of 164,137 sport clubs thus forms the base of a pyramid on top of which are the national sports federations and the French National Olympic Committee (CNOSF).

¹ The French Ministry of Sports and Youth provides the following definition for the sports federations considered as *affinitaires* (French Ministry of Sports): they aim in priority at a multipurpose sporting practice, with several activities, based on different affinities focused on the human being as a whole (e.g.: the French federation “UFOLEP” has a double objective: to be a multisport federation and to promote the movement of ideas in today’s society and in the future).

Table 10.1 Number of clubs depending on the type of federations (French Ministry of Sports 2012)

	Single-sport federations	Multisport federations
Olympic federations	67,927	X
Non-Olympic federations	42,187	54,031

In France, the ministry responsible for sports² classifies sports federations in two categories: multisport or single sport. Besides, among the single-sport federations, a distinction is made for the Olympic federations. The Olympic single-sport federations gather almost 68,000 clubs in France, which represents around 41 % of the overall. The clubs affiliated to the multisport federations come after with 54,000 clubs (i.e. one-third) (Table 10.1).

The French Sports Code provides a definition for the sports federations considered as *délégués*: in each sport discipline, and for a defined period of time, only one authorised federation receives the delegation of authority from the ministry responsible for sports. The *delegate* federations organise sports competitions at the outcome of which are awarded the international, national and regional titles. They conduct then the corresponding selections, and make suggestions for the registration of elite athletes, coaches, referees and senior judges on the elite lists, but also on the list of athletes under 22 years old (called *Espoirs*, which means prospects) and on the list of training partners. These federations enact the technical rules that are specific to their sport discipline as well as the regulations related to the organisation of any event open to their members (French Sports Code, articles L131-14 to 16).

Based on the model of the French public administrations, the sport association movement exists on the regional and the local level (department level specific to France). These bodies are both ascending/descending communications relays and points of contact for the local authorities corresponding to the administrative level. In broad outline, each of the 115 national sports federations has 22 regional leagues in mainland France (including Corsica, but excluding the French Overseas departments (Guadeloupe, Martinique, French Guiana, Reunion Island, Mayotte) and territories (French Polynesia, Saint-Pierre and Miquelon, Wallis and Futuna, Saint-Martin, Saint-Barthelemy) as well as New Caledonia and the French Southern and Antarctic Lands). They take care of the organisation of interdepartmental championships; provide federal training for sport coaches, referees and managers; collect public funding from the Regional Council (*Conseil régional*); manage the high-level training centres and much more. We currently observe at the regional level a trend to mutualise human resources for administrative and financial positions as well as development jobs at the service of the clubs. At a lower level, each national sports federation governs a hundred of departmental committees. They are mainly in charge of organising local championships; they can provide services to mutualise

human resources or payroll outsourcing services; they collect the public funding from the General Council (*Conseil Général*), manage the sport classes (special section at school with a specific timetable for sporting activities) and much more. Nowadays, some of these departmental committees get involved in the development of a complementary offer to sport clubs, more focused on institutions (leisure centres, prisons, retirement homes, medico-educational institutes (IMEs) and so on).

Sport clubs themselves rank fourth at the national level (behind the federations, regions and departments). Their members are generally both subscribing members of the club (subscription fee) and members of a sports federation (sport licence). The clubs can be affiliated to one or several federations. Their role is to organise a sporting practice on a daily basis (trainings) and the club participation in sports competitions (championships, trials, tournaments). At this position, sport clubs are at a crossing point between two principles: a vertical approach (as part of the federal sport movement, but also with a link with the state and its decentralised bodies) and a horizontal approach (being established in a territory with local authorities (town, department, region) and audiences with specific expectations and demographic, economic and social characteristics).

The pyramid which traditionally represents the French association movement is nowadays weakened. On the one hand, a part of the sports elite is trying to distance itself from the new trend which consists in teaming up individual sports athletes or organising professional clubs shaped like sports companies with a mere statutory link with the support association which organises a mass practice. On the other hand, national sports federations have the possibility since 2007 to authorise professional sports institutions as part of their affiliated members, in addition to the traditional sport clubs. Within 5 years, the number of these institutions has increased from 5,000 to 7,000. Moreover, 80,000 non-affiliated associations can be counted outside the federations' scope, which represents almost one-third of the overall sports offer provided by associations (CNAR-Sport March 2009). Besides, even the athletes start to practise a sporting activity outside the sport movement: there is now a sports supply provided by municipalities at competitive prices, but also an increase in the private, for-profit offer as well as the development of self-organised sporting practices. In 2013, 43 % of the French population declared that they practise a physical activity on a more or less regular basis, whereas only 16 % claimed that they were practising sport in a club (Eurobarometer March 2014).

10.3 Role of Sport Clubs in Policy and Society

10.3.1 National Data on Sport Club Participation (by Age Group, Sex, Etc.)

According to a survey on the sports practices conducted in 2010 (Ministère des sports 2011), 65 % of the population aged 15 and over living in France stated that during the past 12 months they had been practising one or several physical activities

²In France, the designation of the ministry in charge of sports has changed many times since its creation: sometimes associated to other fields such as youth, health, associative life and gender equality.

at least once a week. If we count all the people practising sport, including the ones who do it on an occasional basis and those who only practise a physical activity during the holidays, 89 % of the French population are concerned by the practice of a physical or sporting activity. In 10 years, the practice of a physical or sporting activity has slightly increased. Taking into account the same coverage (population aged from 15 to 75) having the same socio-economic structure status and being asked similar questions, the practice rate has grown by 5 points, increasing from 83 % in 2000 to 88 % in 2010. Over a decade, the women's sporting practice in particular has expanded as well by 6 points. The affiliation to an organisation (whether it is an association or a private, for-profit club) has slightly increased, but the practice of a physical and sporting activity generally takes place outside any kind of sports organisation, and resorting to a coaching structure still represents a minority of cases. The most spectacular growth in terms of practice has been reached in the activities of nature sport. If we take all the practice modes into account, whether they are institutional or not, almost 25 million people declared practicing an activity similar to nature sports (hiking and cycling being the ones stated most often). The development of nature sports events witnesses the public's enthusiasm for these kinds of sporting practice.

We should undoubtedly also mention the number of people who practice a physical or sporting activity more than three times a week, among the few activities that are representative of the new forms of commitment to sports: indeed, there are about 600,000 joggers and 500,000 weightlifters. Besides, France is not unified in sport, as illustrated by the predominance of rugby union in the south-west, or *pétanque* (bowls) in the south-east, or traditional practices related to specific territories like *Basque pelota* in the Basque Country, but also *courses camarguaises* (bloodless bullfighting) in the Camargue region as well as the so-called *joutes languedociennes* (water contests on boats in the Languedoc region).

Concerning the sporting practice in club specifically, a study conducted by the French Ministry of Sports (Cléron 2013) in 2013 shows that the number of sporting licences issued by the official sports federations—authorised by the French ministry responsible for sports—increased by 11 % between 2001 and 2011, up to 15,659,500 licences. The number of other sporting participation certificates (for example temporary sport licences or *discovery passes*) multiplied by 2.5, reaching 1,842,000 units. If we make a comparison on the same period of time, the growth of the French population was considerably lower (+7 %). The growth of the number of licences issued was higher for the single-sport federations than for the multisport ones: 12 % compared with 9 %. Over a period of 10 years, some federations like the French federations of hockey and weightlifting have more than doubled their number of licences. However, in terms of impact on the total number of delivered licences, the highest increases have been observed in Olympic federations like the French horse riding federation (+273,285 licences), the French handball federation (+140,812 licences) and the French golf federation (+116,438 licences). In the same period of time, the French federation of football, which is the biggest in France, has lost more than 150,000 members, dropping below two million members; this seems to be

mainly due to the negative image of football given by the French national team in 2010. In 10 years, the women's licences have significantly increased (+3 points) reaching about 37 % of total licences in 2011. The competitors are estimated to be about nine million and the top of the pyramid is represented by 10,000–12,000 professional and top-level athletes who dedicate most of their time to sport.

On one hand, when one takes all the federations into account³ (Ministère des sports 2013), the number of male members goes over 63 % whereas, in the French population, women are more numerous (52 %). On the other hand, we estimate that in 2011 more than half of the memberships have been given to people 20 years old or younger. In comparison, they represent only 25 % of the French population. Furthermore, 4.4 million people live in low-income urban zones (sensitive urban zones: around 7 % of the French population), and they represent only 4 % of the sport members. The level of education (diplomas) as well as income level have an effect on the practice level. Concerning this aspect, statistics are available for players only even if they do not belong to a sport club (Muller 2005) and not for the members.

Even if people aged 15–24 years are the most athletic ones, being graduated, studying or working and having a high level of living make it easier for people to practise sports. The difference in the practising rate between men and women is less important for people with privileged backgrounds. Furthermore, the number of sports increases along with the level of life, so does being a member of a club or taking part into sport competition. As far as the other variables are concerned, one must know that in France: *It is forbidden to collect or process personal data which precise, directly or indirectly, the ethnic origins, the political, philosophical or religious opinion or the trade union membership of people, or which refers to their health or sexual life.*

Societal, political embedding (why do sport clubs exist, importance of sport clubs for society, contribution to the local municipality—incl. national special programs, special interests).

The massification of the sports phenomenon explains the major societal role played by sport and clubs, especially in local social life.

The affiliation of a sport club to a national sports federation allows it to be eligible for the federal activities and to receive public funding. Some sports federations—but very few clubs—are considered as public-interest organisations and such recognition allows them to receive donations and legacies.

The significance of public funding, whether it is direct or indirect (free-of-charge sports facilities), and of volunteering allows clubs to offer services that are much cheaper than the market price (see Sect. 4.6 afterwards). As a consequence, their offers are accessible to people with very limited creditworthiness and even to people who are excluded or away from the sporting practices. In addition, some specific public helps like the sports voucher (worth €10) supplement the access to the sporting practice in a club. Some regions like Poitou-Charentes have made the accessibility

³Atlas national des fédérations sportives, 2012 (Atlas of the national sport federations).

of youth to sport a priority.⁴ Other public helps like the ones from the family allowances fund (*Caisse d'Allocations Familiales*) are intended for teenagers whose parents have low incomes. More generally, the state and the public actors consider sport as an essential tool for social cohesion and encourage policies with priorities for the people kept away from the sporting practice (like women, sensitive urban and periurban neighbourhoods, rural areas and disabled people) or policies fighting violence and uncivil behaviours. The agency for education through sport (APELS) is a national association in France that was created to enhance and recognise the utility of sport as a tool for education and integration. To this end, this association conducts many calls for projects, brings technical resources through publications and organises meetings and discussions as well as enhancing events. Thanks to the programme *Fais-nous rêver-Fondation GDF Suez* (Make us dream-GDF SUEZ foundation), the APELS organisation has been detecting, enhancing and helping initiatives of education through sport for 17 years.

Furthermore, the clubs can host school groups and this process could increase significantly with the reform plan of the school pace (allowing more time for cultural and sporting activities). More generally, clubs can work as service providers for the municipalities, as part of projects for hosting sporting and leisure activities for the youth. The public funding for sport tends to target more the dimension of social cohesion/inclusion/education through sport and less the help to the general functioning of clubs. These public funds thus try to give more value to the social and educational role of sport clubs. The French National Olympic Committee (CNOSF) supports this phenomenon and struggles against the expansion of the auto-organised sports practices through its campaign called *Le sport, c'est mieux dans un club* (It is better to practice sport in a club). It is associated since 2009 with another public campaign called *Sentez-vous sport* (Feel sport (Comité National Olympique et Sportif Français)). Its goal is to encourage the French population to practise a physical activity on a regular basis while being supervised by a sport coach. This event offering thousands of activities during 1 week aspires to be a sustainable meeting, a great sports party symbolising the annual period of restart for sports in France. The importance of using sporting and physical activities in the health programmes has raised national awareness in France which has been translated at the national level by sport, health and well-being. This plan was launched in 2012 and consists in promoting and developing the practice of physical and sporting activities as a public health factor. It lies on 15 principles forming a range of 47 actions organised towards two different typologies of people (general public/public with specific needs). The expansion of the physical and sporting activities for health opens new possibilities for the sport movement, as showed by the implementation since the end of the 2000 of new positions as sports and health coaches in the French Athletics Federation, as well as quite similar initiatives within the French Federation for Physical Education and Voluntary Gymnastics (FFEPGV) (*Fédération d'Education Physique et de Gymnastique Volontaire*).

⁴For example, with the *sports voucher*, a teenager aged between 15 and 18 can have a €25 discount on the membership fee in the club of his or her choice.

10.4 Characteristics of Sport Clubs

10.4.1 Characteristics of Sport Clubs: Size, the Way They Are Organised, Roots (Independent, Religion, Company, Single- or Multiple-Sport Club)

The decrease in the number of clubs together with the increase of the number of licences resulted in a growth in the average size of clubs, from 84 licences in 2001 to 96 in 2012. This number reveals a 20 % increase in comparison to 2000 (French Ministry of Sports and Youth 2012) but we can note some territorial variations. The biggest clubs (about 123 licences each) are established in the Ile-de-France region (whose biggest town is Paris). The smallest clubs (about 65 licences per club) are established in a rural region: Limousin (whose capital is Limoges). Four regions can be highlighted thanks to a size ranking for clubs which do not respect the ranking according to the number of inhabitants. They are territories where the associative movement is particularly active around towns like Lille, Nantes, Rennes and Strasbourg (Table 10.2).

Variations between sport disciplines—The clubs affiliated to the French Federation of *Giravation* (rotor crafting) have the highest number of members with 1,305 licences, whereas the smallest clubs are affiliated to the French federation of sand yachting with 6 licences on average. The French sailing federation ranks 5th (taking into consideration all types of federations all together) with an average of 284 licences per club. The French football federation which has the highest number of clubs (15,696) has reached an average of 126 licences per club (French Ministry of Sports and Youth 2012).

Variations depending on the level of competition—The clubs competing at the highest level are fewer (6 %) but their average number of members (257 licences) is significantly higher than the other clubs. They can be easily distinguished from the clubs that participate in national, regional and local (departmental) competitions. The clubs that do not attend competitions are the most numerous (31 %) and generally have an average of 94 members (Table 10.3).

Table 10.2 Overview of the size of sport clubs and the size of regions in France (The French Ministry of Sports 2012)

Region	Number of licences per club	Rank	Population	Rank
France	96		64,933,400	
Alsace/Strasbourg	100	4	1,852,325	14
Rhône-Alpes/Lyon	100	4	6,283,541	2
Bretagne/Rennes	100	4	3,217,767	7
Pays de la Loire/Nantes	103	3	3,601,113	5
Nord-Pas de Calais/Lille	108	2	4,042,015	4
Ile-de-France/Paris	123	1	11,852,851	1

Table 10.3 Number of members according to the clubs' level of practice (Beretti E, Calatayud P 2006, p. 5)

Highest level of practice	Average number of members	Percentage of associations
Leisure/no competition	94	31 %
Departmental competition	103	18 %
Regional competition	151	22 %
National competition	180	23 %
International competition	257	6 %

Table 10.4 Estimation of volunteering in sport associations (Ministère des sports 2006, p. 4)

Roles of the volunteers	Average number per club	Estimation of the annual number of hours per volunteer	Estimation of the total number of volunteering hours per year
President	1.1	254	279
Treasurer	1.1	156	203
General Secretary	1.3	167	217
Coach	5.9	379	2,236
Other	3.9	219	854
Total	13.5	224	3,789

Variations between single-sport clubs and multisport clubs—The clubs affiliated to Olympic single-sport federations are the biggest with 124 licences each. The multisport federations have clubs with an average of 94 licences. Finally, the non-Olympic single-sport federations barely exceed 52 licences per club (French Ministry of Sports and Youth 2012).

In accordance with the French law on the freedom of association of 1901, sport clubs are run in a democratic way. They are traditionally managed by a board composed of volunteers. The president, treasurer and general secretary share the main functions. Other volunteers get involved in the field as coaches or playing supporting roles (refer to Table 10.4). Some clubs pay the sport coaches. The best structured clubs have also employees for administrative, management or development missions.

10.4.2 Experienced Bottlenecks and Challenges by Sport Clubs

The sporting practice organised within associations and the *smooth* running of clubs depend a lot on public funding whether it is direct or indirect (provision of sport facilities belonging to the municipality, often free of charge) and on volunteering. These items are often not enough clarified in the clubs' budgets (refer to Sect. 4.6 related to finance) and yet, they represent the pillars of the organisational model of finance for French associative clubs. This dependence leads to greater risks in the context of the growing economic and social crisis since 2008.

On the one hand, the increasing public debt for municipalities and public actors indeed raises queries on the ability of towns to continue to bear the free provision of sport facilities despite the growing interest in local sport as a social cohesion factor. Indeed, the French Ministry of Sports has identified more than 260,000 sport facilities and most of them (80 %) belong to the municipalities and 70 % of their management is performed directly by the municipality, whereas 15 % are granted to associations. On the other hand, the decrease of commitment for long-term volunteering (Schlesinger et al. 2013) seems to be an issue which, more globally, echoes individualism and the growing hopping of social behaviours observed in the developed countries. The potential costs related to these two elements can weigh on the clubs' finances as well as on their identity, encouraging them to act more as service providers (Chantelat et al. 2001).

Another recurring threat for the sport association movement is the difficulty to adapt to the development of demand, especially the high increase of *sports for health* and the practices of nature sports. The sport clubs often face both direct and indirect multifaceted competition: public and private for-profit offers, as well as prevalent self-organised practices in most of sports. Educational and marketing innovations are required to emerge from the traditional competitive offers for adults and children, and thus, to better meet the various expectations of the different market segments (from the very young children to the oldest people). While some federations start to diversify their sporting practice offers, the ability of the federal network and clubs to implement these offers is often partial and fragile because of the lack of professionalisation.

Professionalisation is a very sensitive matter in the sport associations. It could be defined as directing project management aiming at increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of an organisation without necessarily resulting in hiring employees (Chantelat 2001). In fact, it is more about rationalising the functioning: using tools, management and human resources practices in order to develop a real ability to provide services. It often implies the challenge of managing volunteers and employees whose expectations and forms of commitment are very different, which could create potential risks of conflicts (Amis et al. 1995; Cuskelly et al. 1999).

The challenges to respond to the identified threats are often taken on but not always fully exploited by many sport clubs and/or disciplines:

Pooling of means (human resources, material, projects, etc.) which sometimes results in clubs' gatherings and even club mergers in order to achieve a minimum critical size: The national sports federations as well as local public actors are generally the driving forces to encourage this pooling of means.

Quality approach through an increased professionalisation and sometimes through the labellisation of associative clubs (generally attributed according to the specifications) that are proposed by some federations, based on a method of self-assessment (Pigeassou 1997).

Enhancement of the positive externalities of the associative sport clubs activities: It is a major challenge, especially to legitimise public funding. This requires developing tools in order to understand the social, economic and environmental impact of clubs.

10.4.3 Recreational Sport and Professional Sport in Sport Clubs

Recreational sport concerns more individual sports, whereas the evolution of competitive sport towards professional sport rather concerns team sports. This distinction is of course too brief, insofar as the dimension of recreational sport (health, well-being ...) is a strong tendency of the evolution of sporting practices which should be assimilated by all the federations and their clubs because this practice is largely dominant (walking, swimming, cycling) and a 76 % increase in the number of subscriptions to the federations of nature sports for nautical activities between 2000 and 2011: according to the French Ministry of Sports and Youth (Cléron 2013). The survey on the sporting practices of the French in 2000 suggests two poles of sporting worlds: one marked by the diligence, or even a strong commitment in terms of participation in competitions, of membership to a club, or in terms of frequency of practice (rugby, martial arts, handball), and the other being more related to leisure activities and relaxation (skiing, sailing, table tennis). For a number of recreational and/or touristic sports, some federations have decided to accept commercial structures that offer sporting practices as part of federations like canoe-kayak, horse riding and sailing, for example. In some sports like golf, tennis or judo among others, it is more likely to find clubs acting as service providers that are very close to the model of service companies described by Chantelat et al. (2001). The growth of recreational sports partly explains the strong employment growth during the last 20 years and more recently the number of employees in clubs has increased from 74,000 to 81,000 between 2005 and 2010, according to the data collected by the French Ministry of Sports and Youth (Cléron 2013).

All the professional clubs emanate from the historical associative clubs. At the club level, the professional club is integrated into the supporting association, most often in the form of public limited company (except for volleyball where the associative status remains very dominant). We can count around 200 professional clubs, essentially in six team sports organising a professional championship in France (ranked by order of economic importance: football, rugby, basketball, handball, ice hockey and volleyball). Unlike in football, most professional clubs are small- or medium-sized companies valued at less than ten million euros, of which most contracts concern sport professionalisation (players and technical staff). As for the marketing and administrative positions, they are sometimes fulfilled by volunteers in the least wealthy clubs (Table 10.5).

In these professional sports, a league under the administrative supervision of a federation organises the competitions on both economical and sport sides (Bayle 2000). The originality of the French organisation model is the financial and direct relationship between professional sport and amateur sport. This financial link is reflected by the existence of a mandatory convention between the supporting association and the professional club, in the same way as between the federation and the professional league. Moreover, the legislation imposes financial retrocessions that come from television rights (from entertainment sports) to amateur sport (see Sect. 4.6

Table 10.5 Average budget of the professional team sport clubs for men playing in the first division in France (CDES)

	Football	Rugby	Basketball	Handball	Ice hockey	Volleyball
Number of clubs	20	14	16	14	14	13
Average budget	€64,866,000**	€18,325,000*	€4,301,000*	€3,349,000**	€1,368,000**	€1,414,000*

Report from management control authorities, sport seasons 2011–2012* and 2012–2013**—data processing by CDES

above) regarding the National Sport Development Centre (CNDS). It is important to note interesting evolutions for the women's elite football in France, since the French football federation now obliges professional clubs to have a women's section, thus developing the original concept of *mixed club* which is not very present in the other women's elite clubs in basketball, handball or volleyball (Bayle et al. 2013).

10.4.4 *Activities for Sport Club Members: Training, Competition, Other Sport Activities, Non-sport Activities*

Naturally, French sport clubs offer sport activities to their members. Traditionally, the offer of sport clubs is mainly composed of training sessions and competition. For the first one, depending on the sport disciplines, the French clubs offer collective practices with a coach during determined time slots, individual lessons or courses (or for limited-sized groups) on demand or the bare rental of sport facilities. For the second one, as part of their performance goals, the French clubs make sure that the teams and individual athletes are registered to the competitions, and they can even organise the trip, supervision and coaching during the events. Many of them schedule tournaments and internal training courses.

In addition, French sport clubs are less or more active beyond sport. Most of them try *to be a living place again*. In a society that is increasingly individualistic, several sport clubs are willing to offer other services to their members (joint purchasing, repairs, rental, sale of equipment), as well as other more friendly sporting activities (petanque tournament (bowls), road racing, hiking, rally) or non-sporting activities (sale of second-hand equipment, club house, organisation of friendly evenings, trips to attend sports events and so on). Intergenerational offers are emerging to allow families to practise a sporting activity all together, or grandparents to devote themselves to an activity while waiting for the children they look after doing their own activity.

Furthermore, clubs assert themselves as a vector of education and citizenship. Through a sporting activity, the clubs can also achieve other goals related to people's self-fulfilment or civic commitment. Some clubs also offer awareness campaigns about health food or the risks of all addictions, but also first-aid classes, as well as classes about the various volunteer functions related to sport coaching, refereeing and administration management. Some of them organise after-school tutoring or networking services: car sharing, babysitting, exchange of expertise, etc.

Finally, sport clubs get requests from the public authorities. The reform of the school pace encourages the municipalities to request sport clubs to supervise extra-curricular workshops during the lunch break or after school. More broadly, sport clubs are increasingly offering their services to the surrounding establishments: retirement homes, leisure centres, medico-educational institutes and prisons. The challenge is mainly to secure permanent jobs by optimising the working hours of the employed sport coaches in addition to Wednesdays and evenings. At the state level, the demand consists in reaching the people who are remote from sport. The

sport clubs are thus encouraged to increase the range of age groups they welcome. The offers are targeted to increasingly young children (under 3 years old) and increasingly old people (aged more than 50, more than 65 and so on). Specific efforts towards women are also required through various feminisation plans elaborated by the federations, at the request of the French ministry responsible for sports.

According to the figures of the last Eurobarometer dealing with physical and sporting activities, the answers of the French may seem paradoxical:

- 43 % of the French population indicated that they practise a sporting activity or do physical exercise on a regular or occasional basis.
- 16 % are members of a sport club; 4 % of them are members of another type of club, 4 % are members of a fitness centre, whereas 74 % are not members of any type of clubs.
- Yet, 88 % declared that they agree with the statement: Local sport clubs and other local providers offer many opportunities to be physically active.

10.4.5 *Professionalisation (Paid Employees and Volunteers, Training)*

The professionalisation of sport clubs has been a strong tendency during the last 20 years. It is reflected by the arrival of a higher number of employees as well as by a consideration given to training, but more largely, by the support provided to volunteer managers who hire employees.

This employment growth can be explained by the fact that the associative sport sector has been perceived by the political authorities, especially since the 1990s, as a recruiting ground with potential job opportunities to contribute, at its scale, to reduce unemployment. A lot of employment aid measures offered to the youth,⁵ the associative sector⁶ and the associative sport⁷ have thus been mobilised to drastically decrease the employment costs.

The employment in the associative sport sector and clubs is characterised by the huge predominance of jobs for sport coaches (nine jobs out of ten in clubs; Camy, 2004) in comparison to administrative and managerial jobs. This predominance can be explained by the obligation, specifically in France within the European sporting landscape, to have diplomas which are recognised by the state whose training

⁵Contract of apprenticeship and professionalisation.

⁶“Contrat emploi-jeunes” (Youth employment contract), “contrat unique d’insertion” (single contract of occupation integration), then the so-called Contrat d’avenir (Contract for the future of people with minimum social benefits).

⁷The decision dated 27/07/1994 allowing tax exemptions of social security contributions or social security contributions on very limited flat-rate bases; the sport-employment programme (created in 1997) offers a government aid, sometimes completed by decreasing the regions, and regressive during 4 years, bearing the expenses in some cases for 80 % of the payroll during the first year and a maximum of 40 % during the last year.

courses have mainly benefited to the French Ministry of Sports.⁸ Between 1995 and 2005, around 100,000 sport diplomas of this type were delivered. Between 65 and 70 % of the graduated as sport coaches from the French Ministry of Youth and Sports are probably full-time employees (Beaufils 2013), according to a survey about the occupational insertion of 2007 graduates. It seems that the contracts subsidised by the government are not dominant; nevertheless the median earning is very low (around €1,110/month) and the career development possibilities are generally poor. However, since 2006, the existence of a collective agreement about sport has allowed to provide a regulation framework to social dialogue and to start working on the management of human resources,⁹ often a taboo subject in the associative sport clubs.

It must be said that the volunteer managers are generally not well prepared to fulfil their employer function. That is why, since a decade, some information and training policies, as well as supporting measures, have been implemented. The programme *Profession sport loisirs* (Recreational sport profession) (Fédération Nationale Profession Sport and Loisir), created in 1989, works almost like a temporary work agency in all the French departments. It allows the clubs to be freed from their social and administrative obligations regarding the staff management. It also avoids that employed sport coaches have recourse too often to short-term contracts, since they are usually recruited on a full-time basis directly by profession sport. At the same time as this initiative which is very close to the French Government and the Ministry of Sports, the federations have little by little supported more timidly the managers who hire employees, providing them with trainings (some federations created a training centre) and measures dedicated especially to them (as in the case of the French table tennis federation), as well as the creation—still timid—of employers' groups for each sport on determined territories (for instance, the French judo federation).

All the stakeholders that are present around the clubs, the federations, the Ministry of Sports and the regions in charge of the employment/training have therefore strongly urged to support the professionalisation movement of the associative sport. Their efforts were not sufficient to find sustainable and structuring solutions neither for the crumbling and weakness of the employment in the associative sport sector, nor for the issue related to its management in organisations having a lot of volunteers.

10.4.6 Finance (Revenues, Expenses, Balance)

A study conducted at the European level (European Commission 2011b) related to sport clubs of six disciplines (football, tennis, basketball, gymnastics, swimming, athletics) in eight countries (Germany, Denmark, Spain, France, the Netherlands,

⁸The French State certificate for Sport Coaches was replaced in 2011 by the professional certificate and advanced diplomas, respectively, for the levels 4 and 3 in the European classification.

⁹8 pay grids, identification of the function for employees working as executives, easier access to professional training.

Compared structure of revenues in the French / European sport clubs

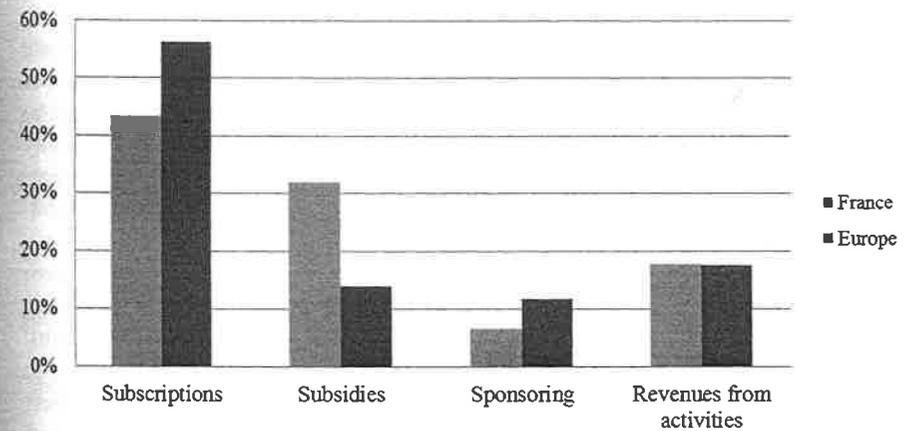


Fig. 10.1 Compared structure of funding in the French/European sport clubs (European Commission 2011b)

Lithuania, the Czech Republic, the United Kingdom) allows to draw up the financing structure of these clubs as well as their expenses. The French sport clubs (there are more than 200,000) can be positioned in comparison to the other European Union's countries from the figures gathered during the reporting year (2009).

10.4.6.1 Main Revenue Items

The average amount of funding for a club is about €64,871 in France, which has to be put into perspective because of a risk of potential bias in favour of the big clubs in the survey.¹⁰ Besides, there are great disparities: since the median is very different from the average, it is established only at €35,098. The budgets of the richest clubs push the average up. The sport association that has the highest resources gathers €894,000 in terms of revenues. The distribution of the budget between the major revenue items shows some features specific to France (Fig. 10.1).

The breakdown of these revenues from activities divided into subcategories also shows the closeness between France and the European Union from this point of view. Yet, we can note that the subscriptions and sponsoring represent a relatively smaller part in France than in Europe, in spite of the advantageous provisions related to donations and patronage that confer entitlement to a tax reduction for 60 % of the donation. On the contrary, the subsidies have a significant relative higher weight in

¹⁰A study conducted by the French Ministry of Sports, Youth and Associative Life estimated in 2005 (Stat Info 2005) the average budget of the French sport associations to be around €31,000 (reference year: 2003). This confirms that we can possibly fear a bias in favour of the biggest clubs in the European study published in 2011.

France, given that the financial aid from the territorial authorities (local and regional), in particular from the municipalities, is high and widespread. This relates to the findings of the study on sport funding in general (Andreff et al. 2009). France ranks first in Europe in terms of support from the local authorities, with €163 per inhabitant. The scale of the action taken by the territorial authorities can thus be interpreted as aiming at seeking greater equity. This public contribution partially replaces private expenditure and explains that the French citizens are less consenting to pay than in other countries that have quite a similar level of GDP per inhabitant. As a result, the subscription fee is moderate, especially in comparison to Spain where subscriptions are very expensive. The revenues from activities—which show the clubs' dynamism and their ability to generate their own revenues by selling products or services—are at the same level in the French clubs as in European clubs.

The contribution from local authorities is all the more noteworthy because in addition to these financial contributions (direct) there is also an indirect support through the provision of sports facilities belonging almost entirely to the local authorities, as well as through the provision of staff, especially for maintenance tasks (Bourg and Nys 2012). The associative sector also benefits from an advantageous taxation regime in terms of VAT, and often gets an exemption for the entertainment tax (tax that applies to the sports events and which usually goes to the municipality). Employment aid programmes are also highly developed, with a gradually decreasing contribution from the public authorities over the years. There is a real challenge for the clubs: to secure the employment sustainability by developing their own resources (this challenge is often not achieved).

Volunteering is also a resource to finance sport clubs. With an average of 0.64 volunteer for 100 inhabitants France ranks second in Europe behind the Netherlands (European Commission 2011b). One may wonder about enhancing the value of volunteering, which means to think about the efficiency of voluntary work, compared to paid jobs. Andreff (2009) suggests an interval of values by enhancing the value of the volunteers' working hours according to the national average income (high assumption), on the basis of half of this salary only (low assumption). With 271,000 full-time equivalent hours, it is estimated that the French volunteers represented between 2.544 and 5.089 billion euros in 2005. France ranks first in Europe, followed by Germany (3,965 billion euros), and the Netherlands (2,327 billion euros).

10.4.6.2 Main Expenditure Items

The clubs' expenditure pattern shows again some specificities of French clubs, compared to the other European clubs (Fig. 10.2). Thus, salaries have a relatively lower impact, which might show some delay in terms of professionalisation, despite the development of sport management courses in sports universities. The rental costs of sport facilities are also proportionally less significant, which can be explained by the widespread provision of sports equipment by the municipalities, unlike in other European countries where private facilities are used. On the contrary, we can observe an over-representation of the travel expenses, which deserves to be

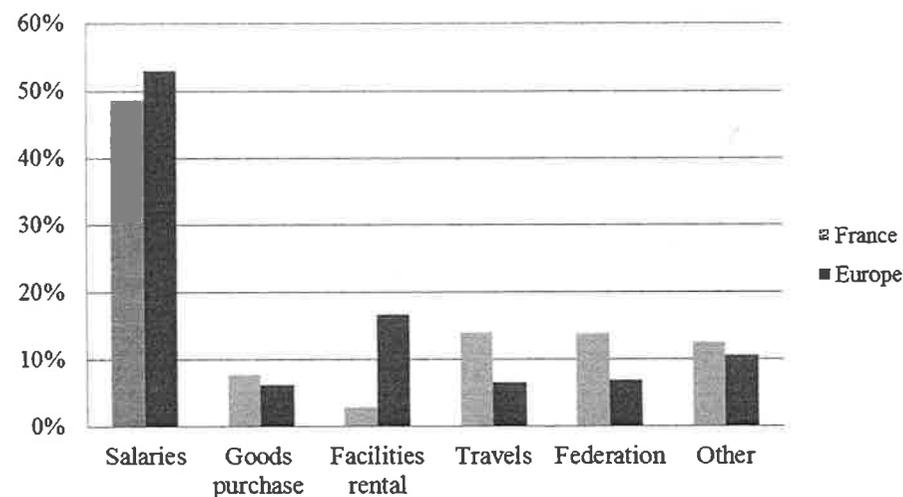


Fig. 10.2 Compared expenditure structure of the French/European sport clubs (European Commission 2011b)

considered in a complementary study in order to identify potential undisclosed compensations paid to the managerial staff. The amounts retransferred to the French federation are also more important than in Europe, because the clubs' contribution to the French federal functioning system seems to be more substantial.

This average structure of the budget conceals something: behind it there is actually a huge heterogeneity. Both funding and expenditure of sport associations vary depending on the size of the organisation, the sport discipline, the level of competition and the presence (or not) of employees in the organisation (Barget and Chaviner-Réla 2011). Furthermore, some authors (Chantelat et al. 2001) have shown that socio-economic logics were decisive. They suggest a typology of clubs with six categories (each one referring to a socio-economic logic related to their functioning):

- The sociable club: The expenditure is planned to create social relationships.
- The traditional club: The expenditure is balanced between sociability and sporting practice.
- The club focused on sport: The main part of expenditure is for the sporting practice.
- The professionalised club: The expenditure is targeted to the delivery of sporting results.
- The community, professional club: The expenditure is balanced between sporting practice, quest for performance and sociability.
- The service-provider club: It is very close to the model of a service-provider company.
- Are French club sports funding different of French associations funding?

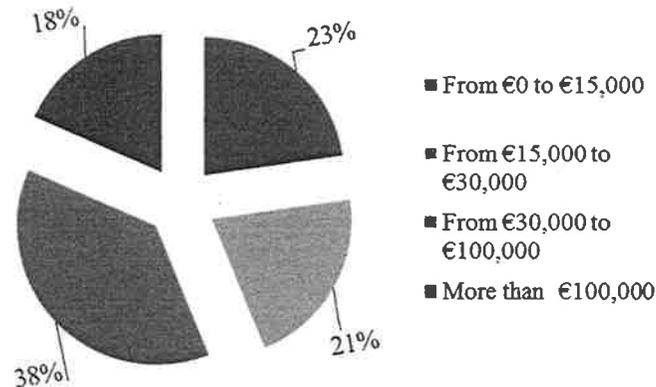


Fig. 10.3 Distribution of French clubs according to their budget bracket (European Commission 2011b)

In the last part, we propose to focus on the French specificities vis-à-vis the sport clubs in Europe from what we learnt from the European study on the funding of grass-roots sport. Our question is as follows: Are French clubs representative of third-sector* institutions? Of course, sport clubs belong to the non-profit private sector including non-profit associations but which comparisons can we draw between the financing of associations and the financing of sport clubs? We will try to answer this question by explaining the sources of diversification of revenues and studying the sustainability of solidarity mechanisms.

The size of the budget is extremely variable, as shown in Fig. 10.3. Whereas a significant proportion of clubs (22.7 %) have a budget lower than €15,000, others (18.4 % of the sport associations) have financial resources above €100,000. The minimum amount which was announced in terms of revenues was €100 and the maximum value €894,456. The median shows that half of the clubs have a budget below €35,098.

Such disparities can be explained by many factors (Muller 2005) in the associative sector in general (Tchernonog 2007a, b) and especially in the sporting sector. According to this last publication, the fact to employ people (status of *hiring associations*), the level of practice (from leisure level to international level) and the type of sport discipline taught in the association are decisive.

First of all, the club's level of structuration and professionalisation seems to be crucial regarding its ability to develop its own resources, and especially revenues from activities. From this point of view, sporting institutions have gone through profound changes for about 30 years, and there are more than 350,000 jobs (in the sporting sector, not related to clubs) focused mainly on sport management (Leroux and Dalla-Praia 2012). The recruiting process of employees is largely conducted in sport science universities, since the number of students in sport management courses has experienced a noteworthy growth in spite of the growing competition with business schools. While 31 % of the French sport clubs have at least one employee (some-

times with a government-subsidised contract), 69 % of clubs are run only by volunteers. The fact of having employees influences the club's budget: the associations that hire employees have an average budget of €64,833, whereas the associations with no employees have an average budget of €13,255 (French Ministry of Sports 2006). The associations with employees have a budget that is four to five times higher than the others.¹¹ The expenditure structure is also affected because the *hiring clubs* dedicate 43 % of their financial resources to the payroll, whereas the expenditure related to the activities is preponderant in the clubs with no employee (74 % of their total expenditure). These employment aid measures exist, with a system of depression for the contributions from local authorities over several years (3–5 in general), but they raise the question of preserving these jobs when the subsidy ends.

The level of sporting practice has also a strong influence on the size of the budget, since the correlation between these two variables is positive: the higher the level achieved by the top team in collective sport or the best athletes in individual sports, the more the budget increases. The statistics from the French Ministry of Sports (2006) show that the associations whose purpose only concerns recreational sports have resources around €13,000, whereas the clubs with some athletes participating to international competitions have resources around €58,000. Again, it is difficult to establish the causal link: clubs need to have sufficient means at the beginning to compete in a high-level championship, and such participation paves the way for extra revenues, especially in terms of ticketing, sponsoring and subsidies.

In financial terms, the sports discipline is also a crucial differentiating factor (see Table 10.6). The data provided by the Statistics Unit (Beretti and Calatayud 2006) show that 30,000 of sport associations that are not affiliated to an authorised sports federation (15 % of all the French clubs) have budgets which are less than half than those of the affiliated associations. The highest budgets per members are those of team sport clubs: rugby, football, basketball and volleyball. Volleyball ranks only 13th in terms of clubs' average budget, due to the rather limited number of members per club (52). The sport associations which have the highest budget are rugby clubs (€96,550): their average budget is three times higher than the average value calculated for all the disciplines. We can observe that the financing of some individual sports is well ranked, considering the estimated budgets; it is the case for swimming and tennis. Other disciplines are emerging in terms of budget per member, especially table tennis and athletics.

These inequalities persist despite the fact that diverse mechanisms have been mobilised in order to ensure some fairness between clubs practising different disciplines with various different levels of practice. These sport policies show France's attachment to the European model of sport funding. They aim at preserving the sport pyramid starting from grass-roots sport (clubs) to high-level sport (entertainment).

¹¹ Based on the information available so far, it is difficult to know if the importance of the budget is a consequence of the recruitment of employees who are able to request more means to club's stakeholders or, if on the contrary, it is the triggering factor of the recruiting process. Unless it is both: when a certain resource threshold is reached, the club can recruit people, and the recruitment is a valuable asset to develop further the activities and the corresponding financial incomes.

Table 10.6 Average budget of associations per sport discipline (Beretti and Calatayud 2006, p. 4)

Disciplines	Average budget	Average number of members	Budget per member	Subscription per member
Rugby	96,500	206	468	69
Swimming	69,906	341	205	96
Football	45,156	179	252	48
Basketball	36,892	143	258	49
Tennis	33,678	174	194	66
Judo	25,899	145	179	95
Dance	21,639	128	169	91
Athletics	19,341	88	220	38
Hiking	18,689	144	130	16
Table tennis	18,304	59	310	48
Gymnastics	16,948	143	118	63
Karate	16,808	81	207	112
Volleyball	14,917	52	286	37
Bowl sports (bocce)	12,819	78	164	17
Bicycle touring	6,915	52	133	14
Multisport	65,521	466	141	40

Such policies with a vocation for redistribution are sometimes implemented by the sporting institutions themselves, as illustrated by the aid fund for amateur football. Based on a protocol (contractual agreement) between the French football federation and the French professional football league, the latter pays each year a contribution to the aid fund for amateur football. The French tennis federation retransfers the profits from the Roland Garros tournament to the decentralised bodies and clubs in order to implement tennis development programmes for different target audiences (seniors, women, beginners, mini-tennis). Such retransfers are another example of the solidarity existing within the federal sport system. From a net profit of about 70 million euros (based on a budget of 160 million in 2012), 27 million euros have helped to develop grass-roots tennis. This is a unique example of this magnitude, due to the success of the tournament and to the federation's decision made during the era of Philippe Chatrier to manage the tournament itself in order to keep the profits (Bayle 2014).

Such solidarity is spread by the state's action (who redirects part of the money coming from sports betting towards grass-roots sports). If the French State ranks 6th for the amount allocated to sport by the government (€51.4 per inhabitant according to the European Commission 2011a), it is mainly due to the National Sport Development Centre (CNDS). The CNDS, which was created in 2006 (but succeeding to the FNDS which was functioning with the same funding), is a public organisation handling administrative matters that benefits from revenues assigned by the Finance Law. The revenues come from a part of tax withholding performed on the amounts at stake both for the games managed by *La Française des jeux*¹² (1.8 %)

¹²72 % of this company is owned by the French State.

and for sport betting run by all the authorised operators (1.5 %). What is probably even more surprising is that another taxation (5 %) is applied on the transfer of broadcasting rights for sport events. This shows a certain originality, since there is both a vertical solidarity (between professional and grass-roots sport) and a horizontal solidarity (between broadcast sports, especially football, and the other sports that are not—or poorly—broadcast). These revenues are indeed broadly distributed between sport associations and decentralised federal organisations (local (i.e. departmental) and regional committees of the different sports).

As a conclusion, it should be noted that the policies aiming at reducing the funding gaps between sport clubs do not seem to be strong enough to regulate successfully the system which remains very unequal. In this context, it can be useful to bear in mind the challenges to be taken on by the French sport clubs, as they were identified in the European Commission report of 2011:

- Raise individuals' willingness to pay.
- Balance the various funding sources to have less dependence on one stream of funding, adapt the offer to the needs of households to increase membership and participation rates and increase funding from other (private) stakeholders.
- Secure the revenue from lotteries, betting and gambling and reinforce solidarity mechanisms with channel revenue from the high level to the grass-roots level: including through solidarity within the sport movement: although there are regulated mechanisms channelling the revenue from lotteries, betting and gambling and media rights to sport, these revenues represent less than 1 % of the total budget of the sport system.

10.5 Conclusion

Historically, the sport sector in France is characterised by a public, interventionist model in which sport clubs are the cornerstones of a truly consolidated sport movement.

Since the 1970s: an increasing number of private clubs have been opened; the individual sport practice (without supervision) has faded and the state has developed its own sport offer. Moreover, the whole organisation has become more and more professional, the regulations have been strengthened, the relationship with the local authorities has become more efficient, etc.

Today, the French sport clubs have to face several challenges. The main one is the need to adapt to the evolution of social demand both in granting a special attention to people who are not interested in sports and in adapting themselves to the increasing demands of new consumers/members.

In this context of competitiveness, making sport associations sustainable has become the main issue to come. The knowledge of the social functions fulfilled by the associative sport sector is the actual challenge.

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