

Belgian Amateur Football Project


FINAL REPORT PRESENTATION



MARCH 9th, 2021

Presented by **Emilien PAULIS**

PRESENTATION PLAN

Goals of the meeting 

CONTRIBUTORS

ULB & VUB



REPORT PART 1

SUMMARY OF THE MAIN FINDINGS



CONCLUSION

PROSPECTS & Q/A



AIM OF THE PROJECT

QUESTIONS & METHOD




REPORT PART 2

SUMMARY OF THE MAIN FINDINGS



PROJECT CONTRIBUTORS

Presentation of the team 



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We thank all the non academic partners involved in this research



ROYAL BELGIAN
FOOTBALL
ASSOCIATION



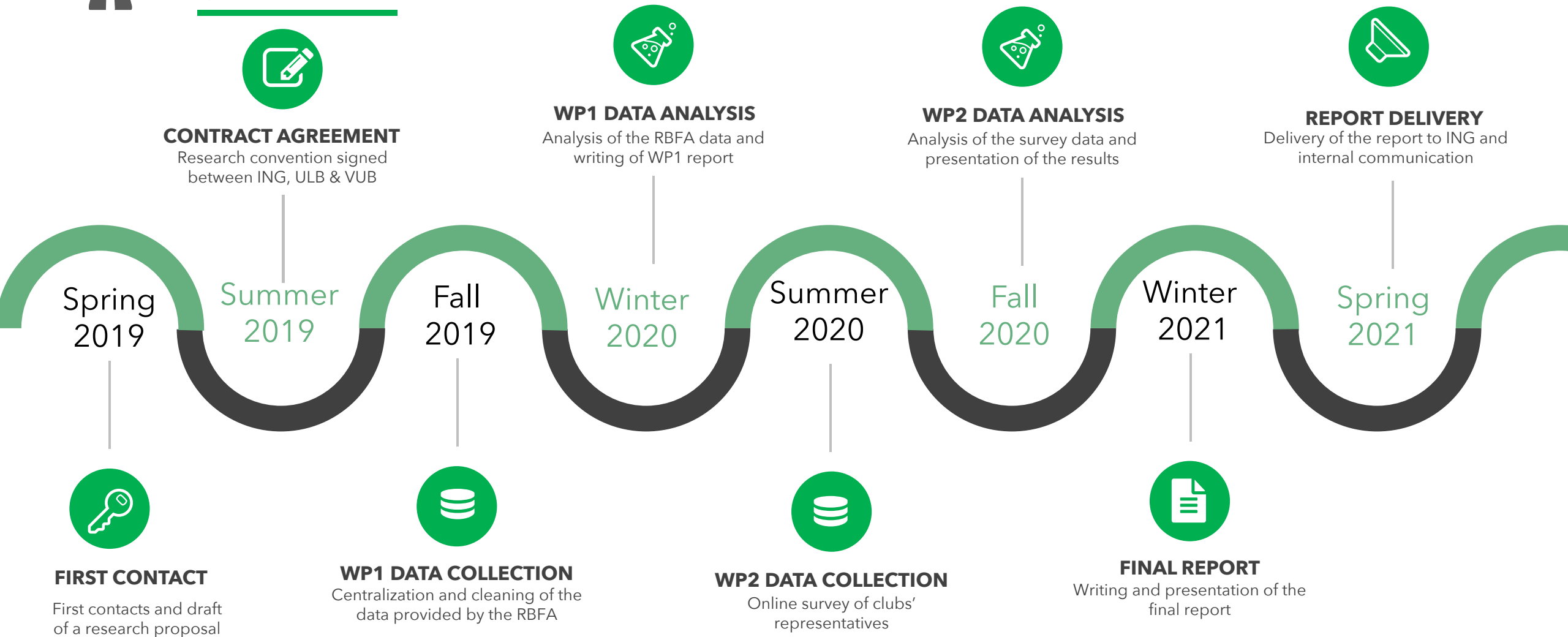
ING




VOETBAL
VLAANDEREN



A PROJECT TIMELINE



RESEARCH GOALS

Presentation of the main objectives 



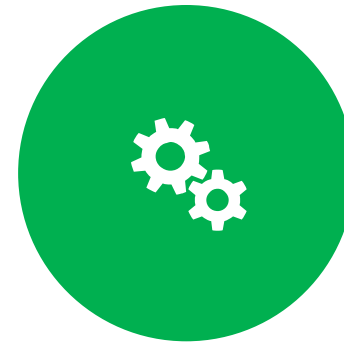
Definition

Define what Belgian amateur football is



Location

Dig into the geographical spread of amateur football over the Belgian territory (WP1)



Functioning

Explore the way amateur football clubs organize, function and are challenged (WP2)



Knowledge

Build an empirical expertise on Belgian amateur football

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

WP

1

How many amateur football clubs and affiliates exist in Belgium? How are they **spread** over the Belgian territory? How is the 'number one' sport anchored at the **local level**? What can account for **variations** across the country?

How do Belgian amateur football clubs **function** and **sustain**? How are they structured and balanced in terms of resources? What are the general **issues** faced by Belgian amateur clubs?



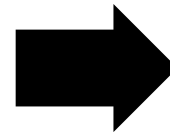
How has the **COVID crisis** been harmful to their activities?

2

WP

DATA & METHODS

Data collection



Data analysis

Data source

- WP1: RBFA dataset
- WP2: online survey

Methods

- Descriptive statistics
- Visual mapping (WP1)
- Regression models


DEFINITION

Amateur football as defined by the RBFA: non professional football

1 

PROFESSIONAL LEAGUES

2 divisions: D1A (18 clubs) & D1B (8 clubs)

2 


NATIONAL AMATEUR LEAGUES

1 division: National 1

3 

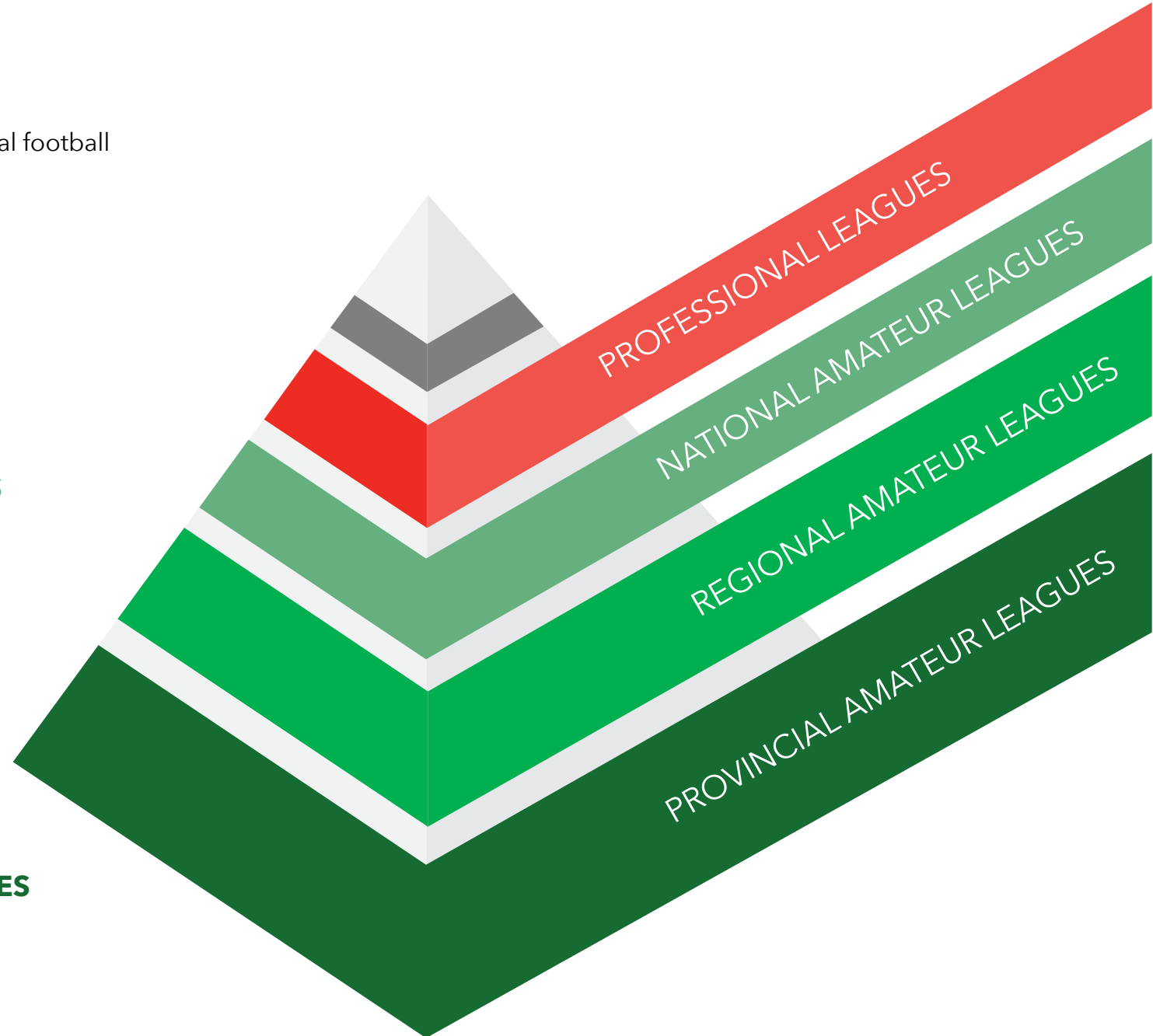
REGIONAL AMATEUR LEAGUE

2 divisions: National 2 A/B/C & National 3 A/B/C/D

4 

PROVINCIAL AMATEUR LEAGUES

4 divisions: P1 (9 provinces), P2 (9 provinces), P3 (9 provinces), P4 (8 provinces)



DEFINITION

Amateur football as defined by the RBFA: non professional football

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PROFESSIONAL LEAGUES

2 divisions: D1A (18 clubs) & D1B (8 clubs)

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NATIONAL AMATEUR LEAGUES

1 division: National 1

3



REGIONAL AMATEUR LEAGUE

2 divisions: National 2 A/B/C & National 3 A/B/C/D

4



PROVINCIAL AMATEUR LEAGUES

4 divisions: P1 (9 provinces), P2 (9 provinces), P3 (9 provinces), P4 (8 provinces)

- Amateur does not mean that there is no money in the game
- Futsal is not included
- Other amateur leagues non-dependent on the RBFA are not included

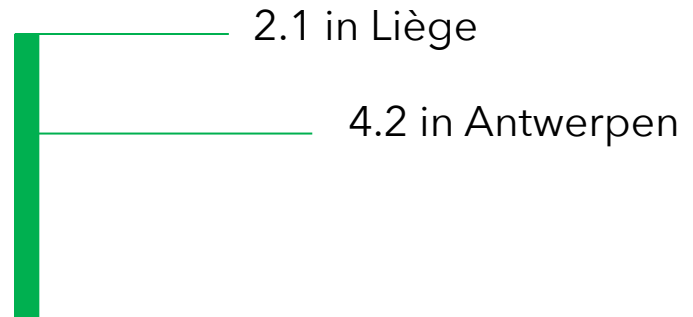
- ❖ The overtime evolution of the structure of football in Belgium reflects the regionalization of sport policies
- ❖ The last reform endorsed by the RBFA in 2020-21 has removed the term 'amateur' from the label

WP1

GENERAL OVERVIEW OF BELGIAN AMATEUR FOOTBALL

WP1 FINDINGS

How many clubs and affiliates in Belgium ?



1744

clubs

3

clubs per one Belgian municipality (average)

494 510

affiliates

4,3

% of the Belgian population



14 men out of 200



1 women out of 200

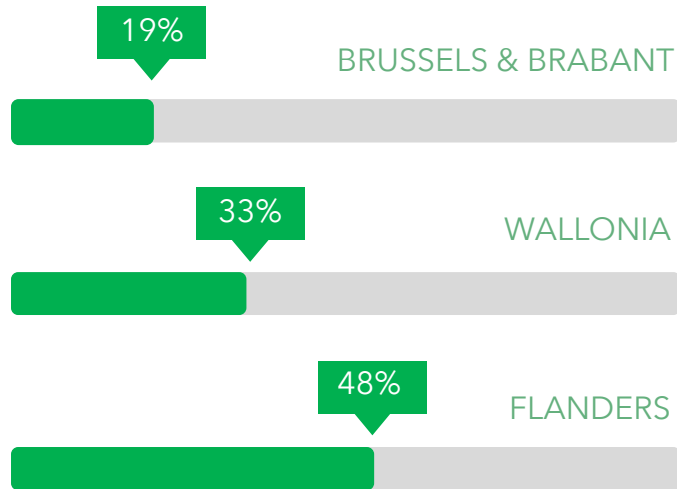
WP1 FINDINGS

How are they spread across the country ?

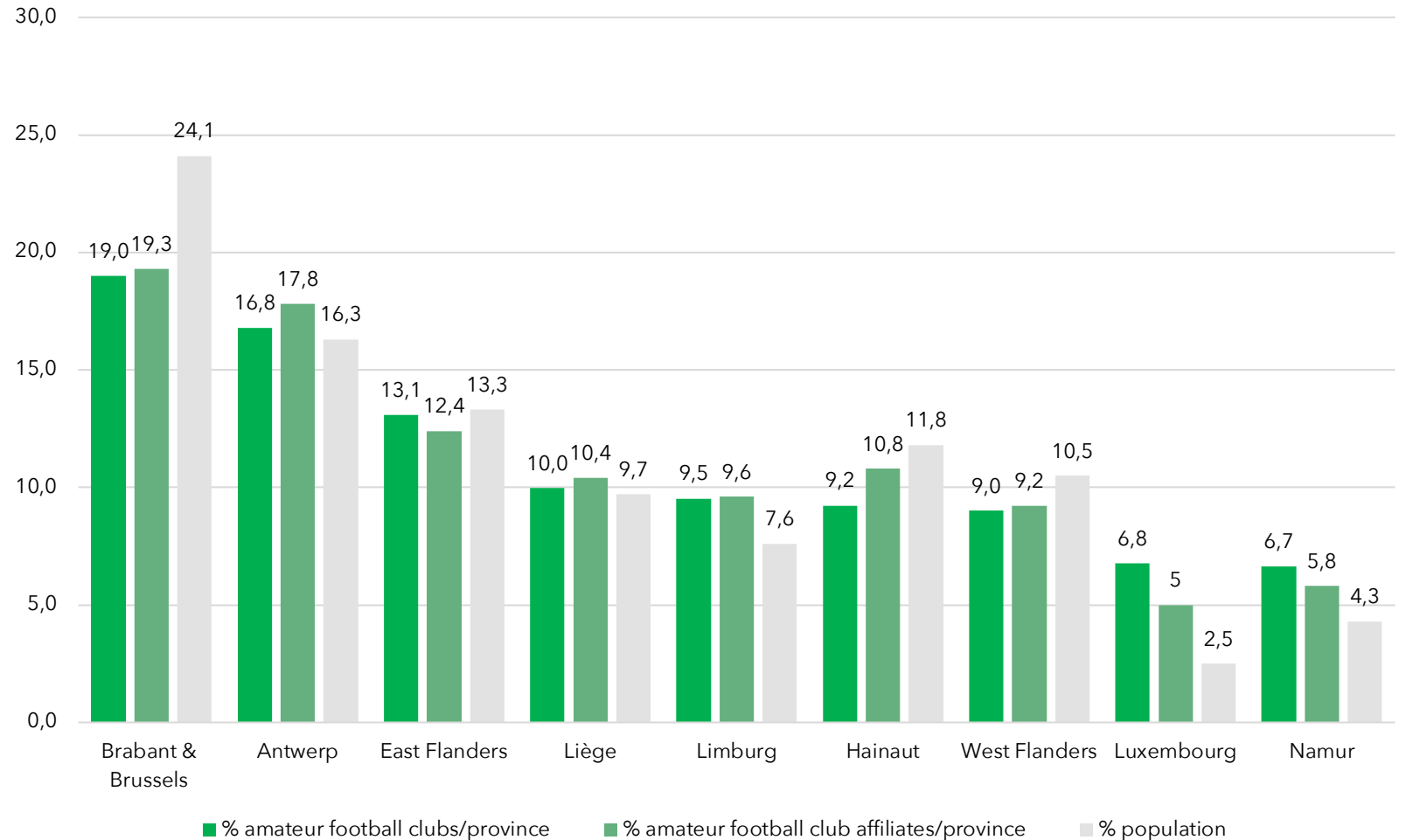


Distribution of clubs and affiliates by provincial districts

Affiliates' distribution by region



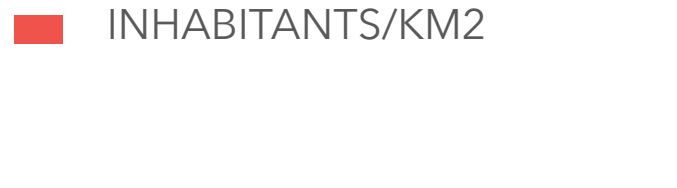
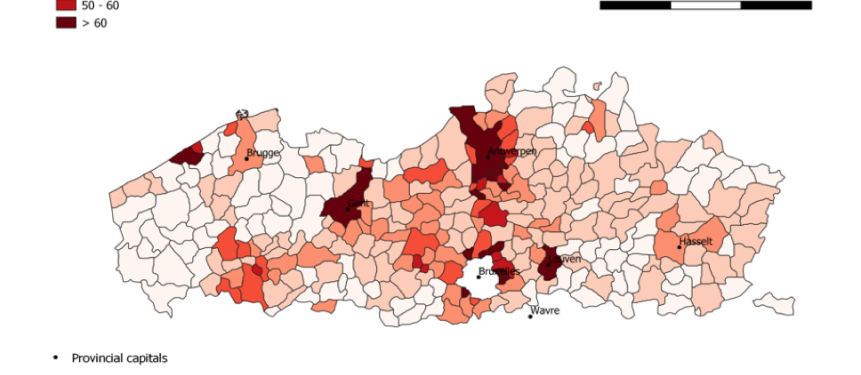
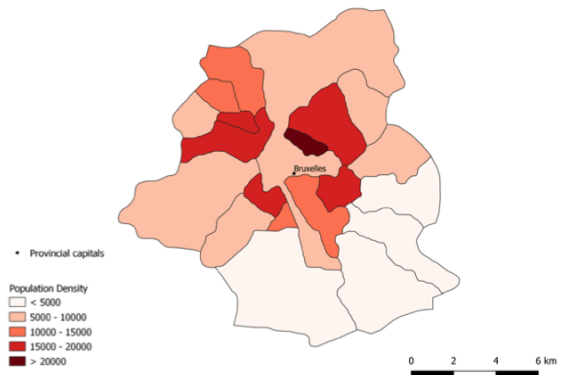
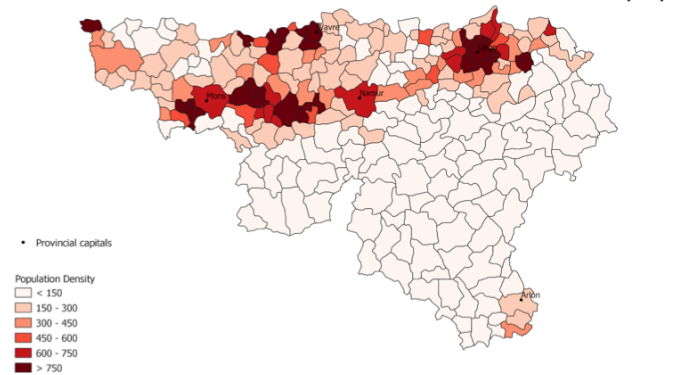
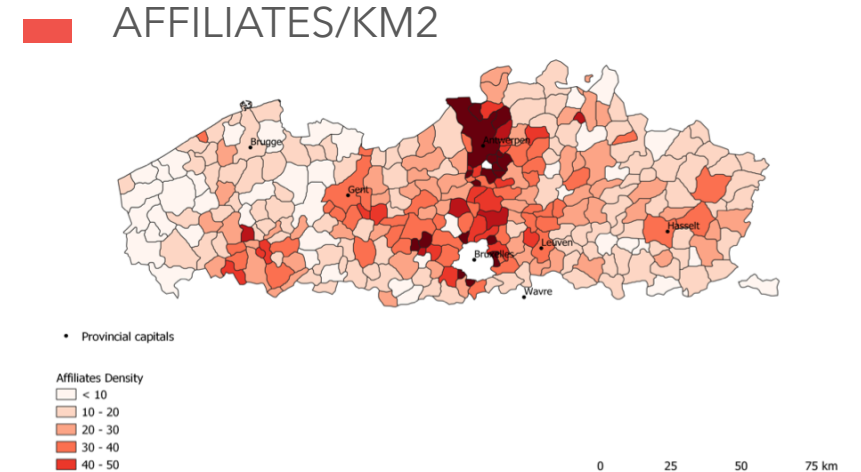
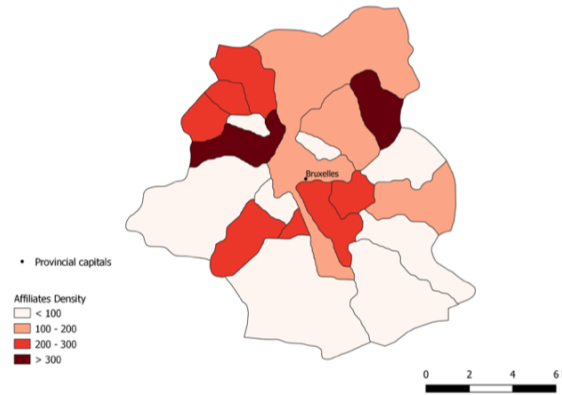
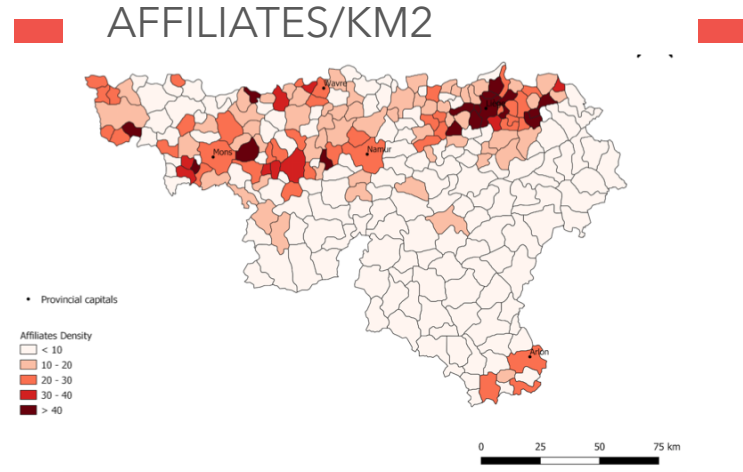
- Top cities in terms of affiliates: Antwerpen, Gent, Liège, Namur
- Top cities in terms of clubs: Antwerpen, Mechelen, Genk, Gent



WP1 FINDINGS

How dense are the affiliates at the level of the municipalities?

Industrial pools
→ origins of the sport



WP1 FINDINGS

youth

A substantial role of amateur football is to provide structures for the development of the youth (U6-21)

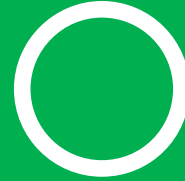
77%

of all the teams identified in the RBFA dataset match with a youth team ranging from U6 to U21.



FLOP

This figure raises to more than 40% for the municipalities located in the provinces of Namur or Limburg



TOP

Antwerpen, Gent, Charleroi and Liège are the 4 top Belgian cities in terms of raw N of youth teams



VARIATIONS

The clubs situated in Wallonia have on average less youth teams than in Flanders or in Brussels

25%
OF MUNICIPALITIES

have no team structure available for the youth among the clubs located on their territory

WP1 FINDINGS

women

A focus has been given throughout the project on women football

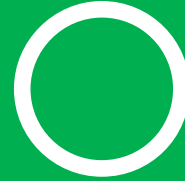
78%

of the clubs have no team available for women



FLOP

This figure raises to 70% in the provinces of Luxembourg or Liège



TOP

Kappellen, Deurne, Merksem, Kontich and Leuven are the 5 top Belgian cities in terms of raw N of female teams



VARIATIONS

The clubs situated in Wallonia have on average less women teams than in Flanders or in Brussels

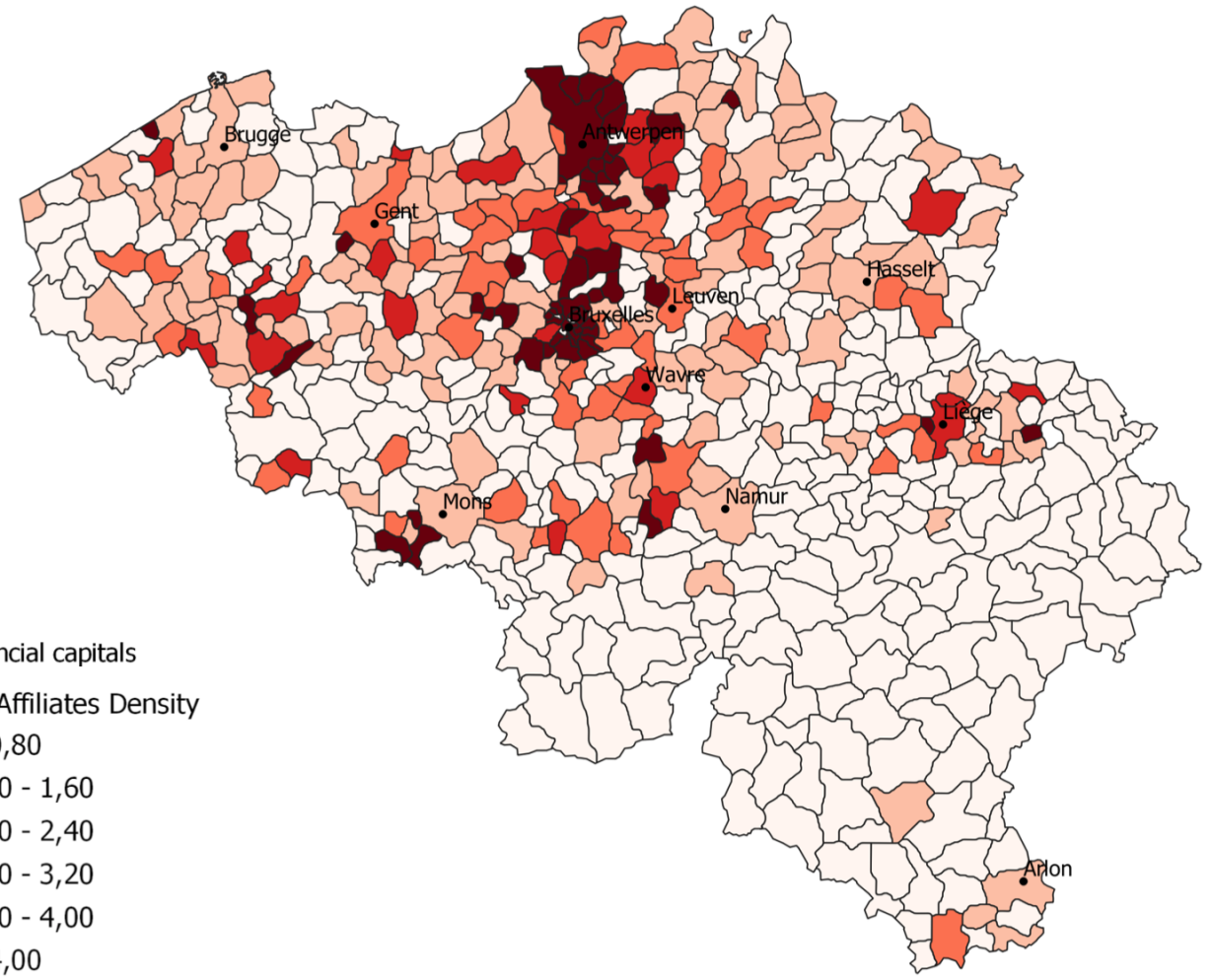
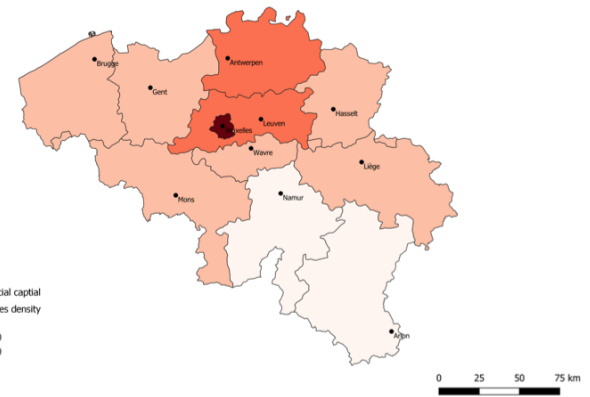
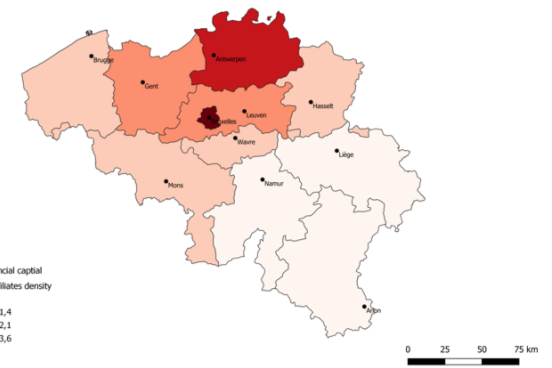
50%
OF MUNICIPALITIES

have no teams available for women among the clubs situated on their territory

WP1 FINDINGS

How densely are located the female affiliates within the country?

 Density of female affiliates in Belgium



WP1 FINDINGS

1 Besides these descriptive and factual accounts, what can explain the variations across the municipalities?

Local population density

- ✓ Densely populated municipalities stand out by having more clubs and more affiliates on average.
- Yet, higher penetration rates among the general population are found in rural areas

Local population diversity: women & youth

- ✓ The larger the population size of female or young citizens (U18), the higher the number of women or youth teams among the club(s) of a municipality

4 **Local population diversity: foreign population**

- ✓ The higher the proportion of non national citizens, the more foreign players integrated among the club(s) of a municipality

Average income

- ✓ The higher the level of income, the lower the number of youth or women teams among the clubs of a municipality
- ✓ The higher the level of income, the lower the number of affiliates in a municipality

6 **Socio-demographic and economic structures**
(seem to) **matter**

Yet, it would deserve more robust analyses

WP2

BELGIAN AMATEUR FOOTBALL SEEN FROM THE BOTTOM

WP2 FINDINGS

Presentation of the survey findings



SAMPLING INFORMATION

- 243 club representatives → 14% of participation rate
- 63% of Dutch respondents
- 92.5% of male respondents
- 37% graduated high school or university
- A third of retired people
- Long attachment to their club (24 years on average)

PROCESS

- Collected online during August 2020
- Two rounds of emails sent by VV & ACFF
- Response incentives: match tickets

WP2 FINDINGS



PHILOSOPHY

MAIN OBJECTIVES
OF THE CLUB

3 MOST CITED ITEMS

SOCIAL TIES

61.5%



YOUTH

56.6%



INFRASTRUCTURES

33.6%



Significant variations

- ✓ Flemish respondents focus less on the social and education aspects, more on sport and economic performances
- ✓ Referring to social ties decreases the importance given to the COVID crisis

Clubs first and foremost as social agencies

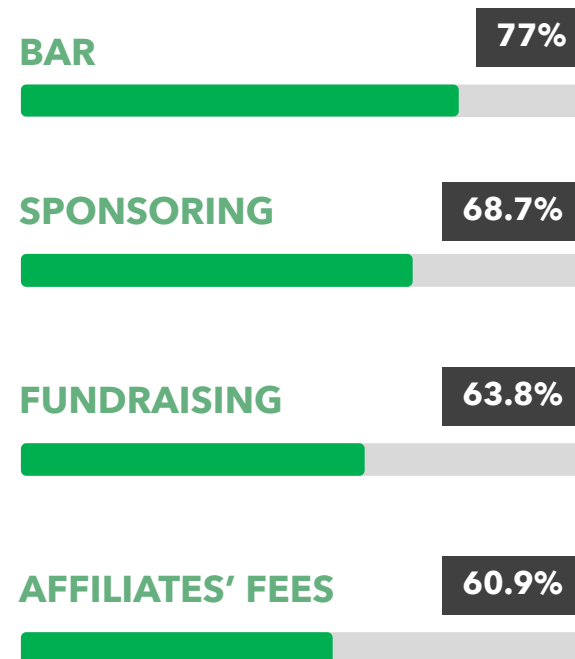
WP2 FINDINGS



FINANCIAL RESOURCES

MAIN INCOMES

4 MOST CITED INCOME SOURCES



Significant variations

- ✓ Flemish clubs more dependent on sponsoring, Walloon and Brussels on affiliates' fees
- ✓ Brussels' clubs stand out with higher chances to report public subventions
- ✓ Walloon respondents have the highest probability to refer to the bar
- ✓ Women focus more on public and federation subsidies

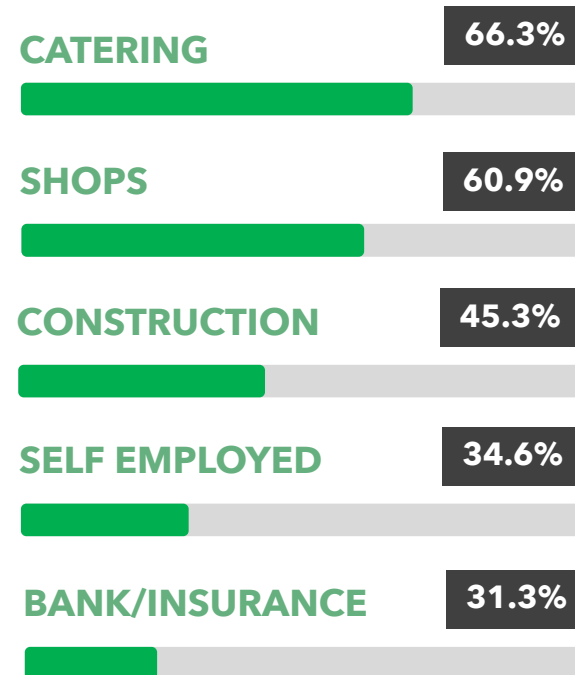
WP2 FINDINGS

A deeper look into sponsoring

59%

Of clubs have more than 10 sponsors

5 MOST CITED SPONSORING SECTOR



Significant variations

- ✓ Flemish clubs have more sponsors on average
- ✓ Clubs with positive financial balance have higher probability to have several sponsors
- ✓ Catering and shops prevail mostly in Wallonia and Brussels
- ✓ Brussels' clubs have the highest chances to refer to bank/insurance

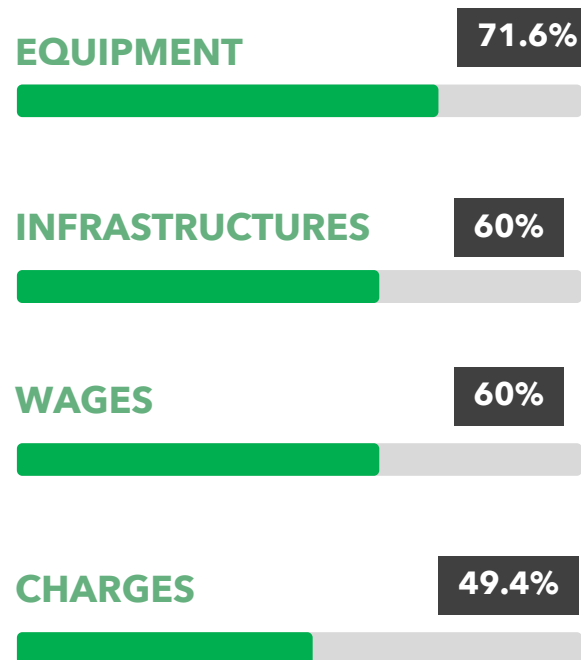
WP2 FINDINGS



FINANCIAL RESOURCES

MAIN EXPENSES

4 MOST CITED EXPENSES



Significant variations

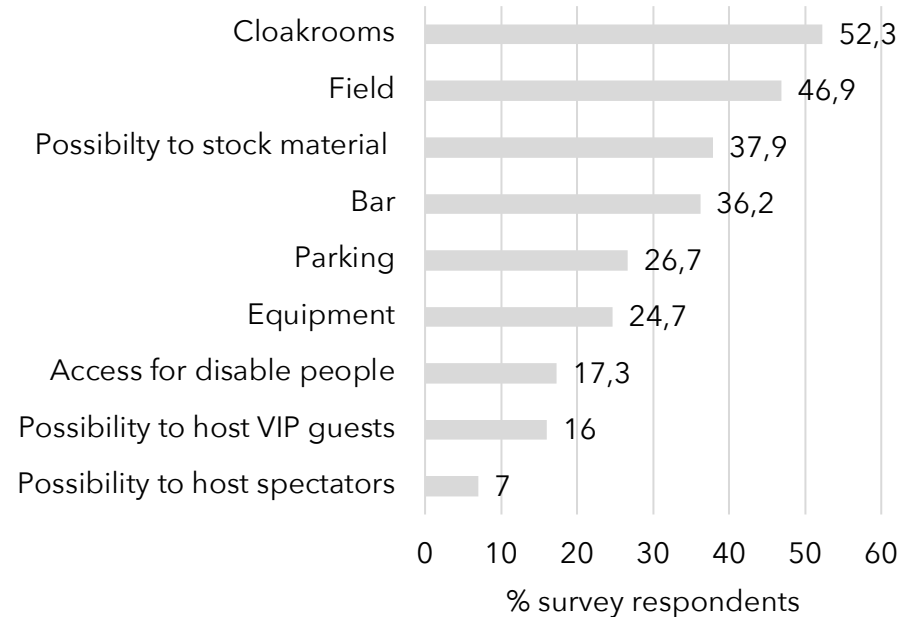
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WP2 FINDINGS

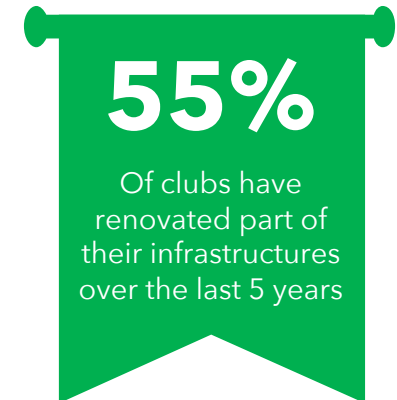
A deeper look into infrastructures



INFRASTRUCTURES' IMPROVEMENT



RENOVATION



Public subsidies were reported central to fund the renovation

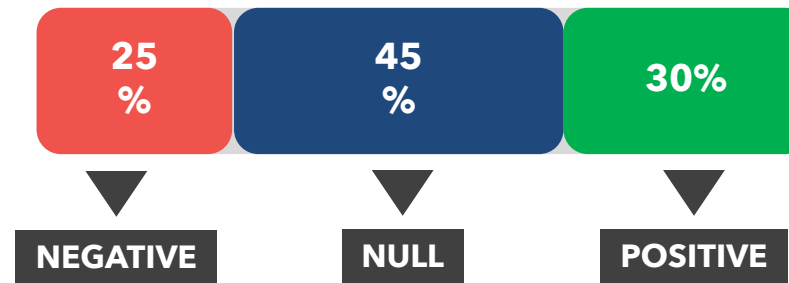
WP2 FINDINGS



FINANCIAL RESOURCES

BALANCE

CLUBS' FINANCIAL BALANCE (2018-19)



Significant variation

- ✓ Walloon respondents have higher probability to point a negative balance

More than the club's sport performances or its social life, the financial management is the most reported source of dissatisfaction among the respondents

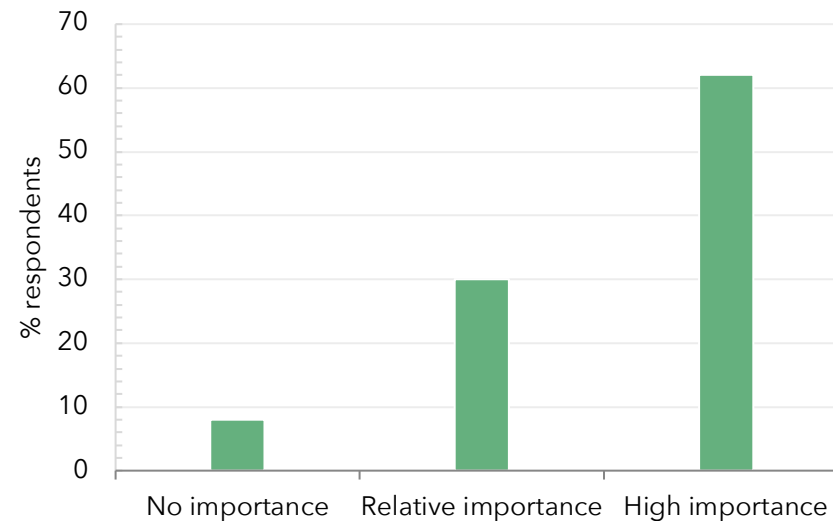
WP2 FINDINGS



FINANCIAL RESOURCES

BALANCE

COVID IMPACT



62%

Of respondents claimed that the COVID crisis has had, at the time of the survey, a very important impact on the club's treasury

Significant variations

- ✓ Walloon respondents have higher odds to mention high importance
- ✓ Clubs dependent on public subsidies have lower probability to report being impacted by the COVID
- ✓ Clubs with unfrequent, specific expenses (transport, online communication) have more chances to have given importance to the COVID

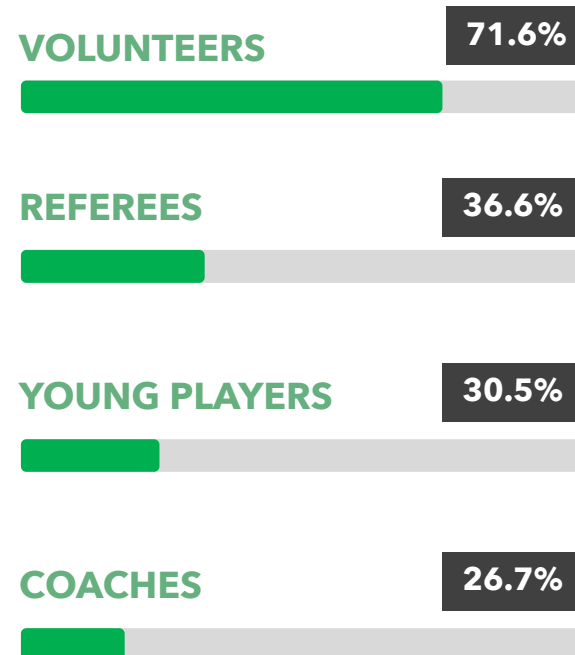
WP2 FINDINGS



HUMAN RESOURCES

CHALLENGES

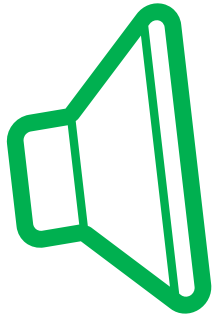
4 MOST CITED RECRUITMENT/RETENTION ISSUES



Significant variations

- ✓ Young players' recruitment and retention is less relevant in Brussels
- ✓ Volunteers' crisis salient especially among clubs with negative sport and/or economic performances
- ✓ Relationships to sponsors and public authorities, plus coaches' recruitment/retention, as main challenges in Flanders

WP2 FINDINGS



ONLINE COMMUNICATION

CHANNELS

3 MOST CITED ITEMS

FACEBOOK

90.5%



WEBSITE

77%



INSTAGRAM

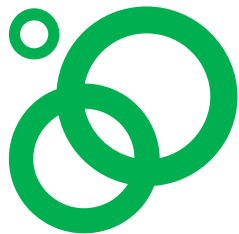
21.3%



Significant variations

- ✓ Brussels' clubs are more likely to combine the different channels
- ✓ The clubs with positive sport performances stand out with a higher likelihood to combine the different channels

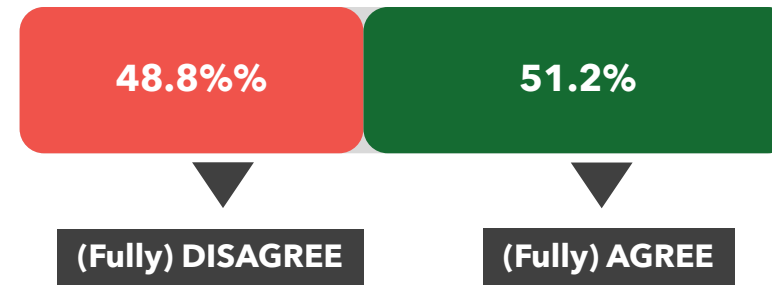
WP2 FINDINGS



MERGING

OPENNESS

OPENNESS TOWARD THE GENERAL IDEA



25% of respondents declared that the COVID crisis could make them consider positively the scenario of merging

However, this has much to do with people who were already opened to the idea. Those against tend to stay opposed despite the COVID.

Significant variations

- ✓ Walloon respondents are more likely to be opposed to merging
- ✓ Older respondents too
- Brussels and Walloon respondents have higher probability to have become more in favor of a merging because of the crisis (Flemish were already quite opened, hence little effect of the covid)
- Responding for a club which financial balance is importantly affected by the COVID increases the chances to have become more opened toward merging because of the crisis

WP2 FINDINGS



PROSPECTIVE HELP

MAIN DEMANDS

3 MOST CITED ITEMS

REACH NEW PUBLIC SUBVENTIONS



REACH NEW SPONSORS



STAFF TRAINING



Significant variations

- ✓ Walloon respondents ask more public subventions
- ✓ Brussels and Walloon respondents claim more say in regional sport policy building
- ✓ Brussels' respondents have higher probability to want help for administrative and legal issues
- ✓ Being located in Flanders increases the chances to report building new partnerships with professional clubs or to develop online communication

WP2 FINDINGS



PROSPECTIVE HELP

MAIN DEMANDS

3 MOST CITED ITEMS

REACH NEW PUBLIC SUBVENTIONS



REACH NEW SPONSORS



STAFF TRAINING



Significant variations

- ✓ Responding for a club with a negative financial balance increases the probability to focus on the need of new sponsors
- ✓ Being in a club impacted by the COVID in terms of treasury boosts the probability to ask for public subventions

CONCLUSION

AMATEUR FOOTBALL IS ABOVE ALL **SOCIAL**

○ **The grassroots of Belgian football**

- Substantial anchorage among the municipalities and the population
- Underdevelopment of women offer, especially in Wallonia

○ **Location and spread**

- Proliferates even more where the population tend to be densely concentrated, but also poorer in terms of level of incomes
- Historical stigma: industrial pools and professional clubs

○ **The future of Belgian football**

- Youth football represents a large part of amateur football
- Yet, it may be an issue to recruit young players for some clubs

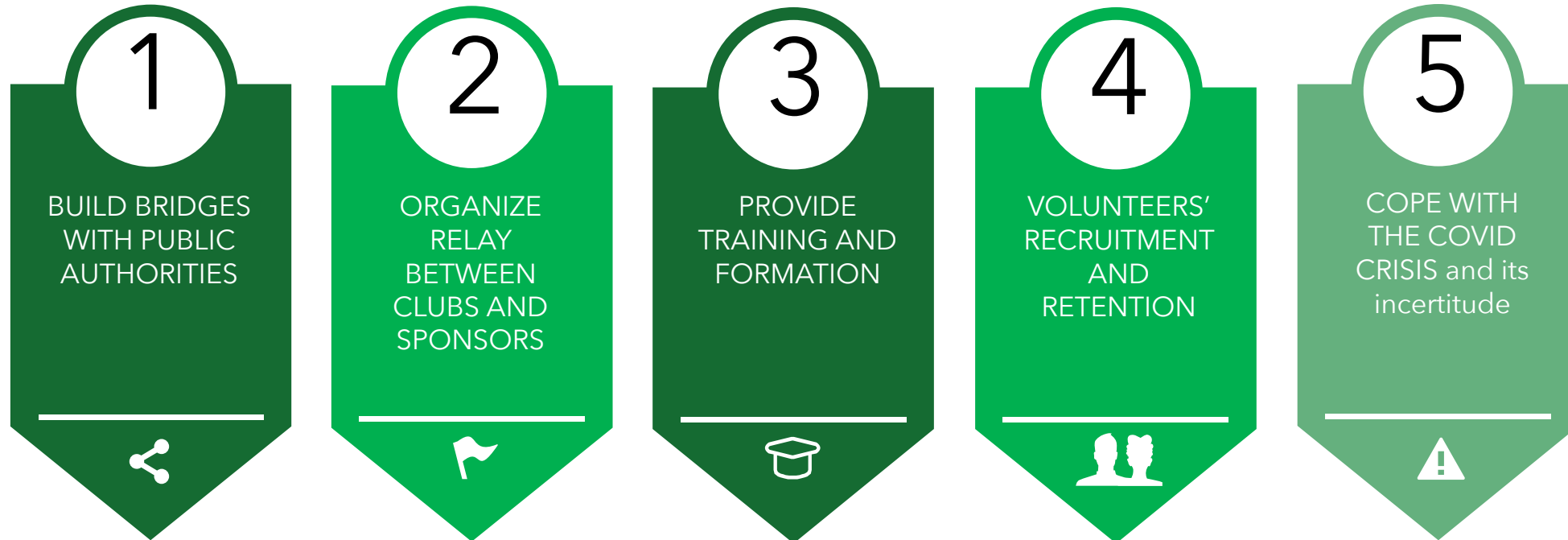
○ **Mission**

- Building ties among individuals is the first mission reported by the clubs
- They are important social agencies which generate social capital in our society
- Mostly self dependent in terms of resources
- Regional discrepancies

PROJECT CONCLUSION

MAIN PROSPECTS

5 big axes of reflections pop up from the project



THANK YOU



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