This article analyses the trends in sport employment over the last few years, looks into its contribution to total employment, and also presents some characteristics of persons in sport jobs both at European Union (EU) and at country level.

In recent years, sport has acquired a significant profile in a number of European strategies and programmes. Sound, comparable statistics on the economic and social significance of sport in the EU are therefore needed to provide the foundation for evidence-based policies in the field.

To achieve this objective, Eurostat, together with the Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture of the European Commission, has launched a plan for the regular collection and dissemination of statistics on sport. Eurostat’s sport statistics reflect the multidisciplinary nature of sport and aim to take into account its importance in various fields: employment, trade, social cohesion and personal well-being.

Sport employment in the EU is slightly rising

In 2017, 1.7 million people worked in the field of sport in the EU-28, with the largest contributions from the United Kingdom (435 thousand) and Germany (253 thousand).

Between 2012 and 2017, employment in sport rose in nearly all EU Member States. The highest increases in terms of annual average growth rate (AAGR) were observed in Greece (+19 %), Portugal (+13 %) and Malta (+12 %) (see Table 1). It should be noted that in the EU as a whole and in nearly all countries, employment in sport increased at a higher pace than total employment.
The decrease of sport employment in France between 2012 and 2017 (influencing also the EU figures) is mainly due to break in series in 2013, caused by modifications in the correspondence between the national classification of occupations and the International standard classification of occupations (ISCO-08).

In 2017, employment in sport accounted for 0.8 % of total EU employment, ranging from 0.2 % in Romania to 1.6 % in Sweden (see Figure 1). In the majority of EU Member States, it levelled at 1 % at maximum. In addition to Sweden, only four other EU Member States exceeded the 1 % rate: the United Kingdom, Finland, Ireland and Spain.
Compared to total employment, jobs in sport still accounted for relatively small shares but the contribution of sport was slowly but steadily growing. For instance, between 2012 and 2017, sport contribution to total employment increased slightly in nearly all Member States and, at EU level, it passed from 0.7 % to 0.8 %.

**Men outnumber women in sport employment**

In 2017, women accounted for 45 % of employment in sport in the EU (see Figure 2). This reflects the structure of the total employed population (46 % female). More men than women worked in sport in all EU Member States, except in Germany (53 % for women), Czechia (52 %), Finland and Sweden (both 51 %).
At the other end of the range, in Slovenia, sport employment comprised only one third of women.

Among non-EU Member States, only Switzerland counted more women than men employed in sport (54%).

Nearly 4 in 10 workers in sport employment are aged 15–29

Compared with the age structure of the total employed population (see Figure 3), it is noticeable that young people account for a relatively significant share in sport employment: in 2017, nearly four in ten workers in sport employment in the EU (37 %) were aged 15–29, almost twice the figure for the total employed population (19 %). In all countries for which data are available, the proportion of young people in sport employment outnumbered that in total employment. The difference was particularly high in Spain, where the percentage of young people employed in sport was 2.7 times higher than the share of young people in total employment as well as in Greece and Italy (2.6 times higher).

At Member State level, particularly high shares of young people employed in sport were observed in Denmark (57 %), Sweden, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom (44 % each) and Finland (43%).
Over one third of people employed in sport completed tertiary education

Considering the educational background of persons employed in sport in the EU in 2017, 37 % had completed tertiary education (see Figure 4). This figure was slightly higher than the share of tertiary graduates in total employment (34 %).

Figure 4: Share of people with tertiary education, in sport employment and in total employment, 2017 (%) Source: Eurostat (sprt_emp_edu) and (cult_emp_artpc)

In five EU Member States, half or more of those working in sport were tertiary graduates: Lithuania (66 %), Greece (58 %), Spain (53 %), Bulgaria and Latvia (50 %). In comparison with total employment, the proportion of tertiary education graduates was nearly double in Greece, Bulgaria, Croatia and Portugal.

On the other hand, Denmark and Sweden reported a share of tertiary graduates employed in sport at the low levels of 21 % and 24 % respectively. In eight Member States, the share of tertiary graduates in sport employment was lower than that in total employment.

Between 2012 and 2017 (see Figure 5), the percentage of tertiary education graduates employed in sport rose in the EU as a whole, as well as in all Member States except Greece, Ireland, Hungary and Germany (for which data are sufficiently reliable).

Figure 5: Share of people with tertiary education, in sport employment, 2012 and 2017 (%) Source: Eurostat (sprt_emp_edu)
Source data for tables and graphs

- Employment in sport Excel file

Data sources

As no Eurostat data collection is devoted specifically to sport, sport statistics are derived from already existing EU surveys. Sport employment statistics are derived from the results of the European Labour Force Survey (EU-LFS) — the main source of information on the situation of the EU labour market and employment trends.

The purpose of these statistics is to throw light on the contribution sport makes to overall employment and on the main characteristics of sport employment (using variables such as age, sex or educational attainment).

Methodology/Metadata

Employment in sport is measured using the central statistical definition from the ‘Vilnius definition’ of sport, covering the core sporting activities coded under NACE Rev.2 class 93.1 — Sports activities.

The dimension of occupation has also been introduced within the scope of sport employment. The methodology used is very similar to that used to estimate employment in the culture sector; all jobs in a NACE economic sector and jobs in a sport occupation (ISCO, ‘International Standard Classification of Occupations’) outside the NACE sport sector are considered simultaneously.

Concretely, all workers recorded in NACE rev.2 code 93.1 (Sports activities) and/or ISCO-08 code 342 (Sports and fitness workers) fall within the scope of this definition of sport. In other words, employment in sport includes the working population employed:

- in a sport-related occupation in the sports sector (ISCO 342*NACE 93.1), e.g. professional athletes, professional coaches in fitness centres, etc.;
- in a non-sport occupation in the sports sector (NACE 93.1), e.g. receptionists in fitness centres;
- in a sport-related job (ISCO 342) outside the sports sector, e.g. school sport instructors.

NACE Rev.2 code 93.1 includes:

- the activities of sports teams or clubs whose primary activity is participating in live sports events before a paying audience;
- independent athletes who take part in live sporting or racing events before a paying audience;
- owners of vehicles or animals that take part in races (such as cars, dogs or horses) who are primarily engaged in entering them in racing or other spectator sports events;
- sports trainers providing specialised services to support participants in sporting events or competitions;
- operators of arenas and stadiums;
- other activities of organising, promoting or managing sports events, n.e.c.

ISCO-08 code 342 includes sports and fitness workers (athletes, players, coaches, instructors and officials, fitness and recreation instructors and programme leaders).

It is important to bear in mind that the employment figures presented here are person counts, not full-time equivalents. In other words, they include all paid workers in sport-related jobs, regardless of their work pattern (full-time or part-time).

Context

Sport is part of the wider EU policy agenda, which includes achieving the EU’s social and economic goals. Since 2011, the Commission and EU countries have worked together on the basis of multiannual work programmes agreed by the Council (EU Work Plan for Sport 2011–2014; EU Work Plan for Sport for 2014–2017; EU Work Plan for Sport for 2017–2020) which set priorities and define the principles underpinning cooperation.
A number of expert groups have been set up to achieve concrete results. Among them, the Expert Group 'Sport and economics' (XG ECO) and the Expert Group on Health-Enhancing Physical Activity (XG HEPA) play a key role in implementing evidence-based policies in the sports sector. XG ECO, for example, has produced the economic definition of sport ('Vilnius definition'), and made progress towards developing Sport Satellite Accounts in some EU countries. XG HEPA concentrates on implementing the Council recommendations on Physical activity adopted in 2013. These include a monitoring framework with indicators both on the level of physical activity and on policies to promote physical activity in the EU Member States.

Comparable data on sport employment, trade, participation in sporting activities etc. is an important tool to contribute to the monitoring and development of the EU’s sport policies.

Other articles

- International trade in sporting goods

Database

- Employment in sport (sprt_emp), see:

  Employment in sport by sex (sprt_emp_sex)
  Employment in sport by age (sprt_emp_age)
  Employment in sport by educational attainment level (sprt_emp_edu)

Dedicated section

- Sport

Methodology

- Employment in sport (sprt_emp) (ESMS metadata file — sprt_emp_esms)

Legislation

- Sport and physical activity (Eurobarometer 412)
- EU Work plan for Sport for 2017–2020

Visualisations

- Sport - statistics illustrated

= External links

- DG Education and Culture — Sport policy and programmes
- Erasmus+ Sport
- Special Eurobarometer — Sport and physical activity