

Chapter 22

Sport Clubs in Switzerland

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22.1 Introduction

This chapter examines the development and characteristics of sport clubs in Switzerland. Starting from a historical overview and some remarks on sport clubs' relevance for Swiss sport and society (Sect. 22.2), we look at some general features of the club system (Sect. 22.3) as well as a number of specific characteristics of the clubs such as their size, finances and the importance of voluntary and paid work (Sect. 22.4). Section 22.5 then examines differences in the structure of sport clubs between the three major Swiss language regions.

There are several data sources on sport clubs in Switzerland on which the chapter has drawn. A number of reviews and studies on (sport) clubs as well as data from the following recent surveys have been used:

- (a) In the framework of the *Sport Switzerland 2014* survey, a representative sample of the Swiss population aged between 15 and 74 ($n=10,652$) was interviewed regarding their sport participation and sport club membership in mid-2013 (Lamprecht et al. 2014).¹ In some instances, results from the two preceding Sport Switzerland studies of 1999 (Lamprecht and Stamm 2000) and 2007 (Lamprecht et al. 2008) were used to analyse changes over time.

¹The survey was carried out by the Swiss Observatory for Sport and Physical Activity in close co-operation with the following partners: Swiss Federal Office for Sport (BASPO), Swiss Federal Statistical Office (BFS), Swiss Olympic, Swiss Accident Insurance Fund, Swiss Council for Accident Prevention (bfu) as well as several cantons and towns.

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- (b) More detailed information on the structure and problems of sport clubs comes from two surveys carried out in 1996 (Stamm and Lamprecht 1998) and 2010 (Lamprecht et al. 2011, 2012) with representatives of sport clubs. The more recent study was undertaken in close co-operation with Swiss Olympic (SO), the umbrella organisation of Swiss sport associations and clubs, the Federal Office for Sport and a German project on sport clubs (Breuer 2011). The survey included questions on membership structure, organisational features, offers, goals and finances as well as an assessment of various problems that the clubs face. The most recent study covered about a third of all Swiss sport clubs ($n=6,221$) and is highly representative. In addition, this study also included interviews with representatives from all associations affiliated with SO.
- (c) Finally, some results from a recent survey on voluntary work in sport clubs (Schlesinger et al. 2014) were used. The survey was based on case studies of 63 sport clubs and interviews of 1,717 members on their volunteering, motivation, expectations and other factors influencing one's participation and engagement in clubs.

Unless otherwise stated, the results in the following sections are from these three sources.

22.2 Historical Background and Context

Sport clubs have been an important feature of Swiss sport for quite a long time. In fact, taking a broad perspective, one could even claim that the establishment of sport clubs preceded the introduction of modern sport in Switzerland. The earliest cross-bow and shooting associations were founded as early as the late medieval times (e.g. in the mid-fourteenth century in the town of Lucerne). However, military defence rather than sport was the primary objective of these early shooting clubs that did not see themselves as sports clubs until well into the twentieth century.

Somewhat the same applies to a second type of early sport clubs. German gymnastics (*Turnen*) were introduced into Switzerland in the early eighteenth century, and from 1819 onwards the first gymnastic clubs started to emerge. Rather than offering competitive sport activities, gymnastic clubs had primarily social and political goals and saw themselves as a setting to build and improve members' bodies, health and characters. Consequently, and similar to shooting, throughout the nineteenth century there was a strong linkage of gymnastics with military defence considerations. Some more decades had to pass before modern sports in the true sense made their way into Switzerland in the wake of industrialists and students who had gotten to know sports in England. The first cycling club was established in Geneva in 1860, followed by the Swiss Alpine Club (1863), St. Gall football club (1879) and the rowing (1886) and tennis associations (1896) to name but a few important dates.

At the beginning of the twentieth century Switzerland thus had three distinctive traditions of sport clubs. Whereas shooting and gymnastics were predominant with a total number of about 1,500 clubs, modern sports clubs were still quite marginal and only started to take off seriously in the twentieth century. However, all three types of clubs had at least two common features that still exist: First, clubs are voluntary organisations with democratic structures that exist because members share a common goal, namely, practising sport (e.g. Nagel 2008). Second, and to the extent that the number of clubs was growing, coordinating mechanisms integrating clubs of the same sport, so-called sport associations, were established.

As the number of clubs and associations increased during the first decades of the twentieth century, a further need for coordination beyond single sports was felt, and in 1922 the first umbrella organisation of Swiss sport associations was founded by nine associations including gymnastics but not shooting.² The remainder of the twentieth century saw a more or less steady rise in the number of sport clubs and an increasing differentiation into different sports. Currently, SO has 84 member associations representing roughly 20,000 clubs which means that there are more than 2.5 clubs per 1,000 inhabitants. All important Olympic sports federations are members of SO. The only sport of some importance in Switzerland currently not being a member of SO is *Schwingen*, a traditional form of wrestling. At the same time, however, SO also integrates a number of associations and clubs only loosely associated with sport in the strict sense as, for example, (boy) scouts or an association aimed at improving school sports. Apart from the scout movement (602 clubs in 2009), these associations do not play a major role in SO and in the system of sport clubs, however.

As can be seen from Table 22.1, in 2009, shooting and gymnastics were still the most important club sports in terms of the number of clubs. Yet, other sports such as football, tennis, skiing, volleyball, cycling, athletics, riding and floorball have gained ground over the past 100 years. In terms of active members, gymnastics, football, *academic sports*, tennis, shooting and the Swiss Alpine Club are most important with over 100,000 members each. In total, there are currently about 2.7 million persons in Switzerland belonging to one or more sport clubs, 2.2 million of which are classified as *active members*. Correcting for persons that are members in more than one club, the total number of club members is estimated at 1.6 million or about 20 % of the Swiss population (see also Fig. 22.1).

Despite these impressive numbers, sport clubs are currently not the only and not even the most important setting for practising sport in Switzerland. There are no figures regarding general sports participation during the nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth century but it is safe to say that until the 1960s, most sports took place in the framework of clubs. Since then, the sport system has expanded and integrated ever more persons in an increasing number of sports and settings (Lamprecht and Stamm 2002).

²Shooting joined the sports movement only in 1941. It is also important to note that the Swiss Olympic Committee had already been founded in 1912 but only joined forces with the general umbrella organisation of Swiss sport clubs and associations in 1987.

Table 22.1 Most important club sports and their associations in Switzerland (2009)^a

Sport	Number of active members	Number of clubs
Gymnastics	297,000	3,288
Football	272,000	1,450
Tennis	189,000	839
Academic Sports Association ^b	133,000	16
Shooting	131,000	3,125
Swiss Alpine Club	125,000	122
Skiing	91,000	810
Golf	69,000	94
Riding	62,000	475
Judo and Ju-Jitsu	49,000	303
Swimming	47,000	200
Athletics	45,000	479
Swissfit ^c	42,000	488
Company Sports Association ^d	36,000	421
Volleyball	34,000	611
Floorball	29,000	446
Cycling	16,000	517
Basketball	15,000	205

^aAssociations with more than 15,000 members; excluding non-sports organisations

^bThe Academic Sports Association integrates universities' sport clubs (one per university)

^cAssociation made up of the former *Workers' Sport Association* and the *Catholic Women's Gymnastic Association*

^dSport clubs existing in the framework of enterprises

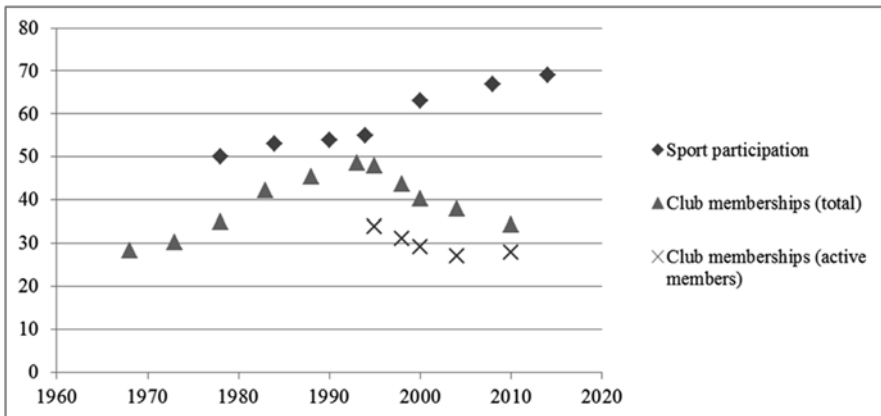


Fig. 22.1 Sport participation and sport club memberships (per cent of the population), late 1960s to early 2010s (Lamprecht et al. 2012, 2014). Note: Sport participation: percentage of persons claiming to participate at least once per week in sport; Club memberships: total club memberships (including passive members and double counts) and active members (including double counts) as a percentage of total population

The data in Fig. 22.1 suggest, that club sports have initially profited from this development but that sport outside of clubs has grown even more strongly over the past few decades. The decline of total sport club memberships in Fig. 22.1 is somewhat misleading, however, for two reasons: On the one hand, membership rosters have been improved since the 1990s leading to a decrease in double counts and nominal member figures. On the other hand, compulsory membership of conscripts in shooting clubs was abandoned in 1997 leading to a sharp drop in membership figures of about 350,000 members in the following years. In addition, the number of active club members appears to have increased slightly over the past few years. In fact, if we exclude shooting clubs from the calculation, we find a net gain in active memberships of 10 % for the period of 1995–2009.

Still, the total number of clubs has dropped from an all-time high of 27,090 in 1995 to 20,728 in 2010 (see also Sect. 22.3) due to a number of factors: mergers of (small) clubs, the disappearance of small clubs (shooting clubs in particular) and improved accounting procedures in the sense that up to the 1990s clubs were often counted more than once when they were members of more than one association (e.g. gymnastic clubs that also have volleyball and handball teams, see also Sect. 22.3).

22.3 Role of Sport Clubs in Policy and Society

Even though sport clubs no longer appear to be the dominant framework for practising sport they still hold an important position in the Swiss sport system: According to the recent *Sport Switzerland 2014* survey, about three quarters of the Swiss population aged between 15 and 74 years (74 %) participate in sports, and about a third of these persons (25 %) also hold a club membership (see Fig. 22.1 and Table 22.2 below). Sport clubs are particularly important when it comes to regular and competitive activities: 84 % of all club members and 76 % of all *independent* sport participants claim to be active for at least 2 h per week, and 50 % of all club members but only 10 % of the other respondents are involved in competitions that are usually organised and coordinated by sport associations. In this connection, it also needs to be mentioned that team sports are hardly ever played outside of clubs.

The Sport Switzerland survey also contains data on the general relevance and structure of club sports in Switzerland. Whereas Fig. 22.1 above shows the overall participation in sport and sport clubs, selected characteristics of sport club members and other sport participants are being compared in Table 22.2. As can be seen from the table, men are predominant in sport clubs—in fact, only 42 % of all club members are women—whereas general sport participation does not vary greatly between men and women. In addition, there are also differences with respect to citizenship in the sense that migrants are underrepresented in Swiss sport clubs.

There is also a distinctive age structure in the sense that sport clubs have a considerably higher share of young athletes than the general population. A further analysis on the basis of the 2010 sport clubs survey shows this in more detail

Table 22.2 Characteristics of active sport club members and other sport participants, 2013 (per cent of total population aged 15–74 years) (Federal Statistical Office for Population Data 2014, Sport Switzerland 2014 for sport and club participants)

		Total population (distribution %)	All sport participants ^a (% of total population)	Active sport club members (% of total population)
Overall			73.7	25.2
Gender	Female	50.7	74.1	19.9
	Male	49.3	73.3	31.0
Age	15–29 Years	24.1	79.8	34.7
	30–44 Years	28.6	75.4	24.6
	45–59 Years	28.1	72.4	22.0
	60–74 Years	19.2	68.2	21.3
Citizenship	Swiss	77.6	76.0	27.2
	Foreign	22.4	61.1	13.7

^aAll persons claiming to participate in sport at least occasionally

Table 22.3 Age and gender of active club members, 2010 (Lamprecht et al. 2012)

	Population share ^a	Share of all active members	Share of women in age group
10 Years and less	11	9	49
11–20 Years	11	26	37
21–40 Years	27	34	35
41–60 Years	29	23	36
Over 60 years	22	9	31

^aShare of age group in the total Swiss population of 2010

(see Table 22.3): The share of persons 20 years old or younger in all sport clubs amounts to 35 %, even though the share of this group in the population is only 22 %. On the other hand, elderly persons are underrepresented in sport clubs: only 9 % of all club members are older than 60 years, even though this group also accounts for 22 % of the total population. As is shown by Table 22.3, there is also a relationship between age and gender in the sense that in the youngest group there are about equal shares of boys and girls. During adolescence, the number of women drops sharply, however.

Of course, the social composition of a club depends to a large extent on the sport(s) it offers. The club survey of 2010 suggests, for example, that volleyball, ice skating and gymnastics have elevated shares of women whereas there are, not surprisingly, hardly any women in ice hockey, wrestling and weight lifting. Children and adolescents are particularly often found in ice skating, swimming, taekwondo and karate, and almost absent in bowling, boules or pétanque clubs. Finally, the share of foreign nationals is above average in football, basketball and karate. Conversely, winter sports such as skiing and curling as well as crossbow and rifle shooting have a low proportion of migrants thus reflecting differing cultural preferences for selected sports in the Swiss and migrant population.

Before analysing the structure of sport clubs in somewhat more detail, a few further remarks on the significance of sport clubs in the Swiss sport system are suitable. There are two important reasons why sport clubs have played a decisive role in the development of sport in Switzerland and keep on being a major force in Swiss sport.

1. *Club friendly environment*: The establishment and operation of clubs has always been simple in Switzerland and was seldom opposed by the authorities as was, for example, the case in Germany, where gymnastics were banned on political grounds from 1820 to 1842. Currently, Swiss law only has two prerequisites for establishing a club: First, clubs are voluntary organisations of members sharing a common goal and must not be oriented towards making an economic profit, and, second, they need to have written statutes stating their aims and organisational characteristics.

In this connection it should be noted, that most sport clubs have a secular background. Even though there was a number of explicitly catholic clubs during the twentieth century they have all but vanished. In a similar fashion, *class-based* sport clubs are no longer of major importance. Interestingly, the *Swiss Association of female Catholic gymnasts* has merged with the *Swiss Workers' Gymnastic Union* to form a new organisation called *swissfit* in 2003 (see also Table 22.1). To be sure, there are still social differences between clubs, but these usually do no longer proceed along conventional social class or occupational lines (academic clubs, -workers' clubs etc.) but rather correspond to economic wealth (via membership fees), one's citizenship (clubs of migrants, e.g. *FC Portugal*, *Stella Italia*) and differing preferences for certain sports in different milieus.

2. *Clubs as a partial substitute for public initiatives*: When sport and the first sport clubs emerged, there was not yet a central government that could play a role in shaping sports. In fact, in the absence of strong public authorities, early clubs—not only in sports but also in areas such as science, education and politics—have often assumed official functions. Even after the foundation of the Swiss Confederation in 1848 the central government remained weak, and somewhat the same applies to regional and municipal authorities that keep on relying to a considerable extent on contributions by clubs and other non-state actors. Thus, sport and other clubs are to some extent a private and officially encouraged alternative to public interventions and have become an important feature of Swiss civil society.³ Sports clubs and associations are the main promoters of leisure sport and top level sports in Switzerland whereas public authorities are responsible for sport and physical activities at school.

However, it would be wrong to assume that there is no political support for sport in Switzerland. The key word in this connection is *subsidiarity*, i.e. a system in which the initiative is left to individuals and private organisations such as sport

³For 2007, Helmig, Gmür, Bärlocher & Bächtold (2010) have estimated the total number of clubs in Switzerland to be about 76,500. This translates into about ten clubs per 1,000 inhabitants. More than a quarter of all clubs in Switzerland are sport clubs.

clubs whose activities are supported by the authorities if they are perceived as contributing to the common good (for details concerning Switzerland's public sport policy see Chappelet 2010). An important kind of support already mentioned above entails providing a favourable legal framework that facilitates the establishment and operation of sport clubs. In addition, sport clubs are supported either indirectly or directly by public authorities on the national, regional or municipal level. An example of direct support is the national *Youth and Sport* programme in whose framework over 50 million Swiss Francs per year are distributed by the Federal Office of Sport to clubs and schools engaged in the promotion of youth sports. In addition, about ten million francs of public funds per year are channelled into organised sport via SO. Sport facilities are an important type of indirect support as they are usually built, maintained and operated by local authorities but made available to sport clubs and individuals at concessional rates (Balthasar et al. 2013). According to the sport club survey of 2010, about three quarters of all sport clubs (73 %) rely exclusively or partially on public sport facilities.⁴

Thus, despite a lack of far-reaching direct interventions, sport clubs are effectively being supported by public authorities and are acknowledged as an important pillar of the Swiss sport system. In general, they are supposed to fulfil several welfare functions in the context of health promotion, the socialisation of children and adolescents and the social integration. Sport clubs, in turn, are aware of the role they play in sport and society. In the 2010 survey, large proportions of all interviewed officials claimed that their clubs *offer cheap sport opportunities* (83 %), *are interested in leisure and popular sport* (80 %), *integrate young* (68 %) *as well as elderly people* (68 %), *low income groups* (66 %) *and migrants* (66 %) *and play an important role in community life* (53 %) *as well as in health sports* (43 %) to name but a few of the positive functions that clubs associate with their activities.

22.4 Characteristics of Sport Clubs

As stated above, there are over 20,000 sport clubs in Switzerland. As Table 22.4 illustrates, these clubs are on average rather small: Somewhat less than two thirds of all clubs have 100 or less active members. Large clubs with more than 500 active members are quite rare (2.7 %).

Since the late 1990s, these figures have not changed fundamentally, but there is a slight trend towards bigger clubs: The share of large clubs with more than 500 members has doubled, the share of mid-sized clubs has also increased, and average membership figures per club have increased by 19 %. At the same time, and as noted in Sect. 22.2, the overall number of clubs has dropped by 23 %, but the number of active members increased by 10 % if one does not take into account the

⁴Thirty-two percent of all clubs also use facilities belonging to the club and 19 % use privately owned facilities. The sum of these numbers is more than 100 % because some clubs use different types of facilities.

Table 22.4 Size of sport clubs, 1996 and 2010 (percentage of clubs in different size categories)

	1996	2010
1–50 Active members	40.7	40.9
51–100 Active members	26.4	23.5
101–200 Active members	21.1	19.5
201–500 Active members	10.7	13.4
More than 500 active members	1.3	2.7
Average number of active members per club ^a	89	106

^aFigures calculated from overall membership and club figures for 1995 (2.4 million active members in 27,090 clubs) and 2007 (2.2 million active members in 20,728 clubs)

shrinking rifle clubs. These conflicting figures suggest that many clubs have vanished or merged into bigger units while other clubs appear to have thrived.⁵

More than two thirds of all sport clubs restrict their activities to one sport (68 %), with the remainder having a more varied offer. For example, many gymnastic clubs also have team sports and special fitness trainings in their programme. Taking these multiple offers into account, we find that traditional gymnastics (*Turnen*) are most widespread in the Swiss club system with 16 % of all clubs offering this sport. Further important sports are shooting (13 % of all clubs), football (13 %), fitness training (12 %), general gymnastics (11 %), athletics (10 %), volleyball (10 %), floorball (9 %), aerobics training (8 %), tennis (7 %) and skiing (5 %). Overall, the clubs in the 2010 survey offer 150 different sports, many of which (as for example synchronised swimming, modern pentathlon or American football) are only practised in a handful of clubs.

An important feature of Swiss sport clubs is their interest in competitive sports: 85.5 % of all clubs participate in competitions at the regional (33 %), national (34 %) or even international level (19 %), and 61 % claim to be proud of their success in competitive sport. However, participation in competitions is not a prerequisite for membership in most clubs. In fact, the 2010 survey shows, that less than half of all active members (42 %) engage in competitive sports. As a consequence, most clubs (80 %) subscribe to the view that they are primarily aimed at leisure and popular sports (which may or may not be competitive). In addition, clubs often have different departments for recreational and competitive sports. A further differentiation is usually found with respect to the age of participants: Depending on the size of the club and the sport being played, one may find one or more branches for kids and adolescents as well as different recreational and competitive teams for adults. In addition, most clubs are not only interested in sport but organise further activities such as parties (88 % of all clubs) and claim to be engaged in the prevention of tobacco, alcohol and drug abuse (69 %).

⁵Of the 84 member associations of SO, 44 have increased their membership figures between 1995 and 2009, and 30 have lost members during the same period. There are no data for the remaining 8 associations. The biggest winners for this period were football, golf and riding, the biggest losers were shooting, company sports and tennis.

Table 22.5 Earnings and expenses of sport clubs by size, 2010 (rounded median mean values in €)

	Earnings (€)		Expenses (€)	
	Total	Per active member	Total	Per active member
Small clubs (up to 100 members)	6,400	166	6,000	160
Mid-sized clubs (101–300 members)	33,800	203	31,100	191
Large clubs (more than 300 members)	94,700	204	94,700	208
Average (median)	10,800	177	10,200	169

Note: The use of median average values may explain the surprising finding that earnings and expenses appear to be balanced in large clubs

Club size appears to play an important role with respect to a number of further features of the clubs. Table 22.5 shows a summary of earnings and expenses of clubs according to their size. Not surprisingly, small clubs have considerably lower total earnings and expenses than bigger clubs. In addition, they also appear to generate and spend less money per member. Overall, the finances of clubs appear to be in order as earnings usually exceed expenses slightly. In fact, only 28 % of all clubs in the 2010 survey report a financial deficit which is rather small in most cases: In only a fifth (22 %) of these clubs the deficit amounts to more than 100 Swiss Francs (about €68) per active member. At the same time, over half of all clubs (54 %) report a profit. Again, only one fifth of these clubs have a substantial gain of more than 100 Swiss Francs per active member.

Figure 22.2 shows, that membership fees and public grants account for about half of a club's budget. Advertising and sponsoring also plays a role, and a further important source of income are events organised by the clubs. If we have stated earlier that most clubs organise events and competitions we now find that these activities have often an important economic rationale. In addition, the importance of different income sources varies according to club size: Large clubs rely more heavily on membership fees (51 % of all earnings) than small clubs (31 %) which, in turn, generate a larger proportion of earnings with advertising and sponsoring (18 % vs. 12 %) and events (16 % vs. 8 %). In addition, the share of different income sources varies according to the sport that is practised in a club: Golf (71 %) and tennis clubs (64 %) are much more dependent upon membership fees than handball (19 %), rifle shooting (18 %) and cycling clubs (13 %). Golf and tennis clubs also have comparatively high membership fees (golf: median value of CHF 2000, tennis: CHF 400). Average values for all clubs are considerably lower ranging from CHF 50 per year for kids to about CHF 150 per year for licensed athletes. Conversely, advertising and sponsoring appear to play a comparatively large role in team sports such as handball (52 %), football (32 %) and ice hockey (29 %) as well as in cycling (32 %).

With respect to expenses, staff and operative costs are most important (see Fig. 22.2), but, once again, there are substantial variations with respect to club size and sport. Small clubs have a lower share of staff costs (21 %) than big clubs (42 %), whose operation costs are comparatively lower (36 % vs. 52 %). The share of staff

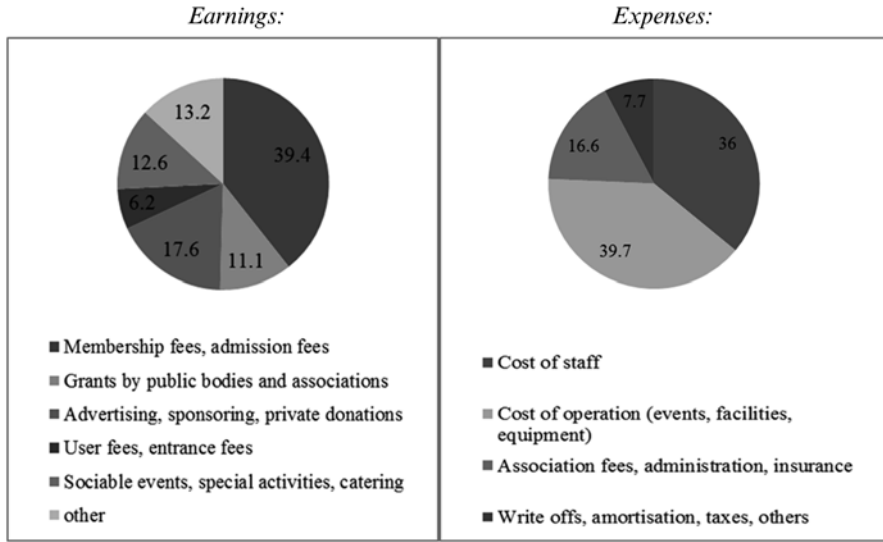


Fig. 22.2 Share of different categories of earnings and expenses in an average sports club, 2010 (percentages) (Lamprecht et al. 2012)

costs is highest in swimming (55 %), football (54 %) and handball (51 %) and lowest in shooting (8 %), yachting (10 %) and cycling (12 %). In cycling clubs, operation costs (67 %) are much higher than in the above mentioned team sports (about 30 %).

The high share of staff costs in an average club would at first glance suggest that Swiss sport clubs are highly professionalised. This is not the case, however, as is shown in Table 22.6: Keeping in mind that most clubs only have small earnings and expenses, staff cost usually refers to comparatively small compensations and allowances for travel cost, equipment etc. In fact, most work in clubs is done by volunteers that earn less than CHF 2000 per year (about €1,350). An average club has 14 volunteers⁶ but less than one person earning more than CHF 2000 per year. In sum, Swiss sport clubs rely on about 285,000 volunteers and 17,500 paid persons, only 3,500 of which have a paid workload of 50 % or more. In other words, paid work is still comparatively unimportant and amounts only to about 20 % of all the work done in the framework of Swiss sport clubs.

Yet, it is important to note that paid work has become more important since 1996 when it only accounted for about 10 % of the whole work effort in the Swiss sport clubs. Since then, the number of paid workers has almost doubled while the number of volunteers (minus 19 %) as well as the total work done by them (minus 13 %) has decreased substantially. However, this trend towards a higher share of paid work

⁶Of these 14 persons, six hold a position in the club’s board (president, CFO, secretary etc.), a further seven are directly involved in sports as coaches, managers or referees and one person has other tasks such as caring for the equipment.

Table 22.6 Voluntary and paid work in Swiss sport clubs, 1996 and 2010

	1996	2010
Voluntary work^a		
Number of volunteers per club	13	14
Number of volunteers per 100 active members	13	13
Average work load per month	11 h	12 h
Total number of volunteers	350,000	285,000
Number of full-time equivalents	24,000	21,000
Economic value	1.0–1.3 billion €	1.0–1.3 billion €
Paid work^b		
Number of paid workers per club	<1	<1
Share of clubs with paid workers	15 %	14 %
Share of workload of paid workers of total club work	10 %	20 %
Average work load per month	45 h	48 h
Total number of paid workers	10,000	17,500
Number of full-time equivalents	2,800	5,300
Economic value	120–160 million €	250–330 million €

^aUnpaid personnel and personnel receiving less than 1,350 € per year. The number of volunteers excludes persons doing informal auxiliary services (see text)

^bPersons getting paid more than 1,350 € per year

appears to be confined to bigger clubs and has not yet spread to the club system as a whole: As in the 1990s, only about one in seven clubs has currently paid workers at all.

Voluntary work keeps on being a decisive resource of club sports. In fact, 92 % of all clubs in the 2010 survey subscribe to the view that their club lives primarily on voluntary work. In addition, professional work does not appear to be a viable alternative to voluntary work on a large scale. Our estimates regarding the economic value of voluntary and paid work done in the clubs in Table 22.6 suggest that membership fees and other earnings would have to increase beyond most members' willingness to pay if voluntary work were to be substituted by professional work. The more so, because the numbers in Table 22.6 only refer to formal volunteers (board members, coaches, referees etc.) and not to all persons who occasionally help in the club, e.g. when organising a sociable event or when kids need driving to facilities. A further estimate suggests that there are an additional 450,000 persons doing such auxiliary services amounting to about 6 h per person and month in the clubs.

Furthermore, the current study of Schlesinger et al. (2014) shows that there is only a marginal correlation between club size and the relative number of volunteers. However, there are more volunteers in rural regions compared to sport clubs in an urban environment, and in traditional sport clubs supporting competitive sports volunteering is more important than in clubs with growth-oriented goals (Schlesinger and Nagel 2013). Multilevel analyses indicate that besides these structural characteristics also individual determinants play a role with regard to the engagement of club members as volunteers. Whereas the percentage of women in volunteer

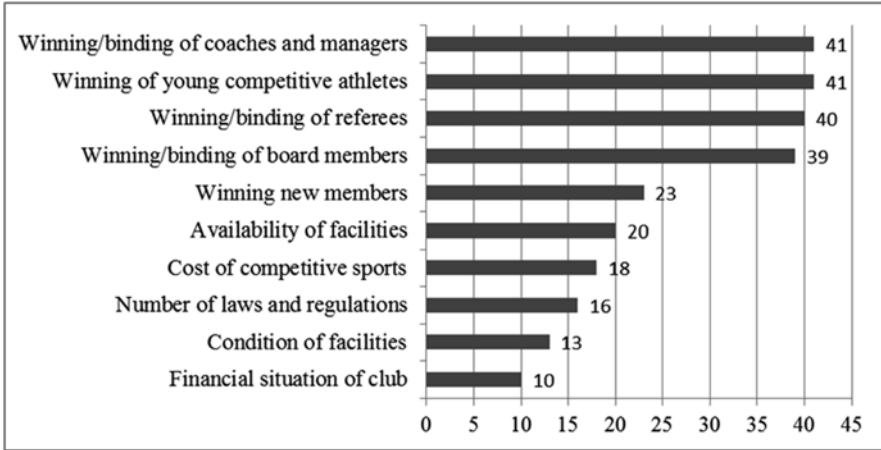


Fig. 22.3 Ranking of selected problems faced by Swiss sport clubs, 2010 (per cent share of clubs which regard the problems as major). Note: Of a total of 22 problems assessments were asked; the figure only includes a number of problems that were particularly often claimed to be major

positions is nearly equal to their membership rates, higher income and education, children belonging to the same club, long-term club membership and especially a strong identification with the club have a positive effect on the willingness to volunteer. In addition, the satisfaction with the job as volunteer correlates positively with the willingness of long-term volunteering. The following factors are relevant for the volunteer job satisfaction (see Schlesinger et al. 2013): task design, leadership, support, recognition, material incentives. Finally, it has to be pointed out that about half of the volunteers could be characterised as stable whereas the other half occasionally or often think about terminating their volunteering.

Against this background it is hardly surprising that finding volunteers and helpers is one of the most serious problems faced by many clubs. As Fig. 22.3 shows, about 40 % of all clubs claim that winning and binding coaches, referees and board members are major problems. A similar share of clubs also mention recruitment problems with respect to young athletes whereas general membership problems appear to affect less than a quarter of the clubs. Facilities, cost and financial issues as well as legal ramifications also appear to be an important challenge for between 10 and 20 % of all clubs.

Looking at the results in Fig. 22.3 one could also conclude that only a minority of all clubs mention the quoted major problems and that it is anyway not entirely clear what a major problem implies. Against this background, the 2010 club survey included an additional question asking which of the problems clubs saw as *life-threatening*. More than two thirds of all clubs (68 %) do not mention any life-threatening problems despite occasionally identifying some problems as major. However, a rough fifth of all clubs (18 %) report one life-threatening problem and a further 14 % two or more such problems. As suggested by Fig. 22.3, *life-threatening* problems most often refer to

voluntary work and the winning and binding of members. Small clubs (37 %) appear to be affected by life-threatening problems more often than large clubs (22 %) which suggests that some of these clubs may vanish or merge in the future thus confirming the trend towards a smaller number of, on average, larger clubs mentioned above.

22.5 Differences Between the Swiss Language Regions

According to the discussion in Sects. 22.3 and 22.4 the system of sport clubs in Switzerland is highly differentiated, and there is variation with respect to club size and the sport that is done in the framework of the club. Further differences with respect to community size as well as gender and age structure are discussed in the full study (Lamprecht et al. 2012) that also includes analyses of a special feature of the Swiss sport system that are discussed briefly in this section: differences with respect to language region.

In the context of a book on sport clubs in Europe the three major language regions of Switzerland—German (72 % of the population), French (24 %) and Italian (5 %)—are of interest for two reasons: First, there is the question whether there are differences between the three culturally different regions, and second, whether these differences are in any way related to general (cultural) characteristics of the neighbouring countries, i.e. whether clubs from the German speaking part of Switzerland are more similar to German and Austrian clubs than to clubs from the French speaking part of Switzerland which might, in turn, be more similar to French clubs.

As other analyses have shown (Lamprecht et al. 2008, 2014; Stamm and Lamprecht 2011; Studer et al. 2011), sports participation in general differs substantially between the three regions: 71 % of the German speaking population claims to participate in sport at least once per week whereas these shares are considerably lower in the French (63 %) and Italian (56 %) speaking parts of Switzerland. According to the latest Eurobarometer study (European Commission 2014), these differences correspond to differences in the neighbouring countries of Switzerland: Germany (48 %) has the highest participation rate of persons doing sport at least once a week, followed by Austria (45 %), France (43 %) and Italy (30 %).

Against this general background it is not surprising that the German speaking part of Switzerland has more sport clubs per 1,000 inhabitants than the other language regions (see Table 22.7). As Table 22.7 shows, there is also a number of further differences: Clubs tend to be bigger but have less voluntary workers in the French speaking part of the country which might explain the higher share of staff cost in total expenses. In the Italian speaking region, the share of young members and the number and workload of volunteers is bigger than in the other two areas. These two findings may well be connected as a large number of children may lead to a greater demand for youth coaches. In view of the fact that children's membership fees usually are a lot lower than adults' fees, it is also striking that membership fees appear to be more important in the Italian speaking part of Switzerland than in the other regions.

Table 22.7 Selected characteristics of Swiss sport clubs by language region, 2010 (Lamprecht et al. 2014)

	German	French	Italian	Switzerland
Active club members as a percentage of population ^a	26	25	14	25
Club memberships as a percentage of population ^a	30	30	18	29
No. of clubs per 1000 inhabitants	2.8	2.2	2.2	2.5
Average size of clubs (members)	123	153	129	110
5 Sports most often practised in clubs	Gymnastics Fitness training Rifle shooting Football Athletics	Football Rifle shooting Gymnastics Volleyball Skiing	Football Gymnastics Athletics Floorball Basketball	Gymnastics Rifle shooting Football Fitness training Athletics
Share of children and adolescents ^b	37	32	43	35
No. of volunteers per 100 active members	14	11	17	14
Average workload of volunteers per month	11	11	15	12
Membership fees as a percentage of earnings	40	35	52	39
Cost of staff as a percentage of expenses	31	50	32	36
Percentage of clubs with one or more life-threatening problems	31	36	34	32

^aAll data were taken from Lamprecht et al. (2012) except active and general club memberships

^bPersons aged 20 years and younger

In sum, there appears to be a marked difference between the reliance on voluntary work and the share of young members between the Italian and French speaking parts of Switzerland with the German speaking part taking the middle ground between these two poles. It is difficult to relate these finding to general cultural preferences in the three language regions in Switzerland or to the characteristics of clubs in the neighbouring countries Austria, France, Germany and Italy. Overall, the French and Italian regions appear to react somewhat differently to the generally lower interest in sport and sport clubs: In the Italian speaking part of Switzerland, clubs are particularly popular with children but do not appear to be too attractive for adults. This conforms to data from the Sport Switzerland 2008 study that shows similar sport participation rates for kids and adolescents in all three language regions but a particularly steep drop in sports participation for adults in the Italian part of Switzerland. In the French speaking part of Switzerland, on the other hand, the interest in voluntary work appears to be smaller than in the German speaking part which also appears to be the case in the corresponding neighbouring countries.

This finding corresponds with the results of current studies on volunteering in Switzerland (e.g. Stadelmann-Steffen et al. 2010) that show generally higher rates of volunteering in the German speaking part for different fields of the club system. Thus, the sports clubs in the French speaking part need some compensation with paid work that is—as shown before—more prevalent in larger clubs that may be able to afford it.

Interestingly, however, the larger average size of clubs in the French speaking part of Switzerland contradicts the findings from the neighbouring countries because the average size of clubs appears to be bigger in Germany and Austria than in France. Overall, however, clubs in Switzerland tend to be smaller than in the neighbouring countries. Together with the fact that (club) sport appears to be particularly popular in Switzerland, this explains the higher density of clubs in Switzerland. Apart from these findings, there are no clear correspondences between the Swiss language regions and the neighbouring countries, however.

22.6 Summary and Concluding Remarks

We can conclude that there is a differentiated and important system of sport clubs in Switzerland that has a long tradition and nowadays includes over 20,000 clubs and about 20 % of the country's population. Public authorities in Switzerland usually do not initiate—apart from sport at school—their own sport programmes. However they support private initiatives, especially sport clubs which are still the most important organisational *player* in the private sport sector. Even though they are no longer the most important setting for sports participation—independent sports are even more popular—clubs still play a crucial role in the sport system, particularly with respect to regular, competitive, youth and team sports. As participation in competitions is usually no prerequisite to become an active member, clubs often need to maintain differentiated internal structures for recreational as well as competitive members and for different age groups with specific needs. Particularly for children and adolescents they offer a broad range of different sports and about half of the population aged between 10 and 19 years is currently member of a sport club.

Voluntary work is the most important resource of sport clubs but also constitutes their biggest challenge: If clubs report *major* or *life-threatening* problems these very often relate to voluntary work. Yet, it is also important to note that there is no way around voluntary work despite it becoming an increasingly scarce resource. Although the majority of the sport clubs in Switzerland has less than 200 members, some strain appears to have been taken from clubs in the past few years by merging or growing into bigger and more work-effective units without becoming overly professionalised. Against this background, the claim that sport clubs are doing much for the common good has quite a lot going for it: Sport clubs integrate large groups of people and promote their health, are operating at a comparably low cost and appear to offer something that is in demand by around a fifth of the population. And most likely they will achieve these various welfare functions also in the future.

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