



**EUROPEAN RESEARCH REPORT ON
EMPLOYMENT CHALLENGES AND
INNOVATIVE FORMS OF EMPLOYMENT
IN SPORT**

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Partner feedback version

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European Observatoire of Sport
and Employment (EOSE)
France, Europe - Coordinator



Fédération Nationale Profession
Sport et Loisirs (FNPSL)
France



Sportwerk Vlaanderen
Belgium



LUNEX
Luxembourg



Werkgevers in de Sport
Netherlands



Polytechnic Institute of Santarém /
Sport Sciences School of Rio Maior
(ESDRM) - Portugal



HELLENIC REPUBLIC
Ministry of Education,
Religious Affairs and Sports
General Secretariat of Sports



Arbetsgivaralliansen
Sweden



Sport Institute-National Research
Institute - Poland



Portuguese Swimming Federation
Portugal



Romanian Football Federation
Romania



Institute of Sports Research / Sports
University of Tirana - Albania

1 Executive summary

This executive summary brings together all of the main findings from the research. Far more detailed data and analysis is provided in later sections supported by a number of graphs and tables.

Background

Evidence from previous research suggests that European sport needs to improve the recruitment and retention of skilled workers in order to continue the professionalisation of its workforce, but traditional employment practices are holding this back. There is the possibility that some of the new forms of employment identified by the EU's *European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions* (Eurofound) and other more flexible strategies may help sport to boost access to skilled labour and make working in sport a more attractive option for stable employment and lasting careers.

IN-FORMS, a partnership of 12 organisations representing employers, universities, research institutes and sport federations in 10 countries, aims to promote innovation in EU sport employment and build the sector's capacity to use non-traditional approaches to improve employability and expand the supply of skilled labour. The project's main aims are to:

- Collect evidence of the potential of employment innovation to address recruitment and retention challenges.
- Inform policy and decision makers on sport employment needs and the potential of employment innovation to address these.
- Build the capacity of organisations and individuals in the sector to use new forms of employment.

IN-FORMS research

As part of its first phase of activity, the IN-FORMS consortium has carried out research into the current state of the European sport workforce, employer attitudes to sport employment, the realities of paid staff recruitment and retention and the potential of new forms of employment to address recruitment and retention issues.

The research took place in the second half of 2024 and the early months of 2025 and consisted of four strands:

- Statistical analysis of the European sport labour force using data provided by Eurostat, the EU's statistical agency
- Desk research covering sport employment issues and new forms of employment in the 10 partner countries and relevant policy and legal frameworks
- A first-ever multilingual survey of sport organisations across Europe on the topic of new forms of employment which gathered 2 264 valid responses
- Interviews with ?? sport employers and employees who had some experience of new forms of employment.

The sport workforce

In the period 2011 – 2023, the paid sport workforce grew by 32.3% which is almost four times the employment growth in all EU sectors (8.7%).

Findings from the survey suggest this growth is set to continue:

- 25.4% of the survey respondents reported that their staffing levels had increased over the previous 12 months
- 31.2% forecast that their staffing levels would increase over the following 24 months.

However, the sport labour force has some characteristics which make it unusual when compared with other EU employment sectors, in particular:

- A very high proportion of part-time contracts,
- A low and declining representation of women,

- A much higher representation of young workers, many of whom fail to be retained by the sector in their later years,
- A higher proportion of self-employed workers,
- A very large engagement of unpaid volunteers.

These characteristics are even more prevalent amongst workers with a sport and fitness occupation (sport coaches, instructors, officials, fitness and recreation instructors and programme leaders and professional athletes).

Both the desk research and the survey show there is a strong desire on the part of sport employers to address gender equity in the workforce.

In terms of the unusual age balance of the workforce, almost one half of the survey respondents felt that the sector would benefit from having older and more experienced staff.

Whereas sport employers value the flexibility of part-time and temporary contracts, they also recognise that they make it more difficult to retain skilled staff in the long run.

Despite the relatively high education levels of the sport workforce, employers see a mismatch between staff skills and the evolving demands of working in sport, especially in the light of emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence. This was underscored by findings from the survey where 84.1% of respondents agreed that the rapid development of the sport sector means staff need new skills.

The desk research suggested that, in addition to the characteristics outlined above, the sport sector, at least in some countries may have significant levels of undeclared work (workers being paid but not declaring their earnings to the authorities). Undeclared work isolates workers from social protections, is a highly precarious form of employment and tends to increase labour market segmentation.

The extent of undeclared work in sport is difficult to estimate with any confidence. However, there are some indications:

- An average of 29.6% of survey respondents agreed that many workers in the sport sector do not declare their earnings to the authorities
- Agreement with this statement was significantly above this average in Portugal, Bulgaria, Poland, Albania, Greece and Belgium.

The sport labour market

The unusual characteristics of the sport labour force probably reflect specific features of the European sport labour market:

- The sport sector has a high number of small, often under-resourced 'micro-business' organisations who struggle with the complexities of paid employment and lack financial stability to confidently offer full-time, permanent positions.
- Demand for employment in sport tends to fluctuate seasonally and in response to rising and falling financial resources and specific projects, initiatives and events.
- Work assignments are often offered in small packages, sometimes only a few hours per week.
- There is a high demand for weekend and evening work, especially in regard to workers with a sport and fitness occupation, such as coaches, activity leaders. This may deter workers with significant family responsibilities which may particularly apply to women.

These are the realities of the sport labour market and reflect current structures and consumer demand and would be difficult to change. However, the desk research suggests that more innovative employment practices such as new forms of employment could help to mitigate their effects.

Recruitment and retention in sport employment

There is evidence from the desk research and the survey that the recruitment of skilled staff is a challenge for sport organisations:

- 62.6% of survey respondents who had tried to recruit in the previous 12 months reported recruitment difficulties
- The top 5 respondent reasons for these difficulties were:
 - Lack of applicants with the right skills or qualifications
 - Unattractive salaries or benefits
 - Low number of applicants generally
 - Working hours do not fit applicants' personal or family responsibilities
 - Lack of applicants with the right work experience

Over 27% of survey respondents who had recruitment problems indicated that the recruitment of female staff was a particular challenge.

Retention of paid staff is also a challenge:

- 39% of survey respondents reported difficulties in retaining the staff they wish to keep
- The top five reasons given were:
 - Higher salaries offered by other employers
 - Better career progression opportunities elsewhere
 - Working hours no longer fit lifestyle
 - Better employment offers, e.g., permanent contracts
 - Changes in staff members' personal or family responsibilities

From the survey we can see that the retention of younger staff is indeed a challenge.

- Over 72% of survey respondents who had retention problems agreed that retaining staff under the age of 30 is a difficulty. The top five reasons offered were:
 - Salaries and benefits are not enough as they grow older
 - More attractive opportunities in other sectors
 - Lack of long-term career opportunities
 - Unstable work
 - Working hours no longer fit lifestyle

In terms of both recruitment and retention, the top 5 jobs with the most difficulties are:

- Sports coaches (over 60%)
- Middle managers (over 20%)
- Clerical and office staff/receptionists (over 15%)
- Operational staff (over 15%)
- Outdoor activity leaders and animators (over 10%)

The most critical workforce shortages, therefore, apply to sport coaches by a very wide margin.

The precarity of sport employment seems to be clearly understood by employers:

- 82.1% of survey respondents recognised the precarity of sport employment and felt it needed to be addressed.

COVID impact on recruitment and retention

The period of COVID pandemic lockdowns had a disproportionate impact on sport employment (a reduction of 3.7% between the end 2019 and 2020 compared to only 1.4% in EU employment overall). However, recovery since then has been significant and greater than other sectors (13.4% from the end of 2020 to 2023 compared to only 3.3% in other sectors).

- However, 28.9% of survey respondents agreed that recruitment and retention was more difficult since the pandemic compared to 30.4% who disagreed
- Countries where respondents' levels of agreement were significantly above this average included Ireland, Albania, Romania, Belgium, Bulgaria, France and Greece, suggesting that recruitment and retention post-COVID may be more problematic in those countries
- Countries where respondents' levels of agreement were significantly below this average were Luxembourg, Poland and Denmark.

Salaries and benefits

From all areas of research, it is clear that one of the most significant problems affecting recruitment and retention is salaries and benefits.

- 91.9% of survey respondents agreed that offering competitive salaries is important to recruit and retain skilled staff
- 57% identified unattractive salaries and benefits as the second most significant recruitment barrier
- 60% identified it as their number one retention difficulty
- 68.4% saw it as their main challenge in retaining younger staff.

However, most sport organisations may have little financial headroom to improve salaries. The desk research suggests that many sport organisations face ongoing financial pressures which result from:

- Inadequate government planning and support
- Inflation, particularly in energy costs
- Limited budgets which restrict future investment
- Difficulties in obtaining sponsorship
- Reduced or consistently low sport participation leading to low revenues.

It may also be the case that the high number of unpaid volunteers in the sector may also have a depressing effect on salaries and benefits.

There is a clear need for the sport sector to try to optimise salaries and benefits for its workforce without resorting to raising costs to consumers. Some new forms of employment such as platform work and self-employed portfolio work may have the potential to provide more attractive incomes.

New forms of employment

Research carried out by Eurofound identified nine categories of new forms of employment which the desk research suggested may be helpful in addressing recruitment and retention of paid staff in sport. These are:

Employee sharing: A group of employers hires workers and is jointly responsible for them. The concept is similar to temporary agency work, with the purpose of sharing staff to balance the human resources (HR) needs of companies while providing secure employment to workers, and the network itself does not aim to make a profit. This employment form refers to employees only.

Platform work: This involves the matching of supply and demand for paid labour through an online platform or app. Employment status is not clarified, but in most cases the worker is considered self-employed or freelance.

Job sharing: One employer hires several workers to jointly fill a single full-time position. It is a form of part-time work, the purpose of which is to ensure that the shared job is permanently staffed. This employment form refers to employees only.

Casual work: A type of work where the employment is not stable and continuous, and the employer is not obliged to regularly provide the worker with work but has the flexibility of calling them in on demand. This employment form refers to employees only and is sometimes known as a 'zero-hours contract'.

ICT-based mobile work: The employee or self-employed worker operates from various possible locations outside the premises of their employer (for example, at home, at a client's premises or 'on the road'), supported by modern technologies such as laptop and tablet computers. This is less 'place-bound' than traditional teleworking.

Self-employed portfolio work: This refers to small-scale contracting by freelancers, the self-employed or micro enterprises who work for a large number of clients.

Voucher-based work: The employment relationship and related payment are based on a voucher (generally acquired from a third party such as a governmental authority) rather than on an employment contract. In most cases, workers have a status between employee and self-employed.

Collaborative employment: This refers to specific forms of cooperation or networking among the self-employed that go beyond traditional supply chain or business partner relationships.

Interim management: A form of employment in which a company 'leases out' managers/technical experts to other companies temporarily to solve a specific management or technical challenge or to assist in economically difficult times.

Eurofound has tracked these employment forms from 2000 – 2020 in many sectors but did not cover the sport sector and can provide no evidence of its take-up in sport. The IN-FORMS survey attempted to fill this knowledge gap.

It should be noted that the survey questionnaire did not separately include collaborative employment and interim management because these were seen as minor variants of other new forms. Instead, the survey included one additional new form which the desk research identified as emerging in some countries. This was Intermittent Permanent Employment, a 'smoothed out' salary arrangement which tries to mitigate some of the disadvantages of temporary and seasonal work.

Emergence of new forms of employment in sport

From the survey, we can see:

- All of the new forms of employment included in the survey are present in the European sport sector
- Those with the 5 highest levels of implementation in the countries surveyed were:
 - Remote working (46%)
 - Self-employed portfolio work (30%)
 - Job sharing (24%)
 - Intermittent permanent employment (23%)¹
 - Casual work (21%)
- The 5 new forms of employment of which respondents were most aware were:

¹ The high implementation level for intermittent permanent employment may reflect the large number of responses from France where this practice is more common than in other countries.

- Remote working (75%)
- Self-employed portfolio work (66%)
- Job sharing (64%)
- Casual work (52%)
- Intermittent permanent employment (49%)²
- The new forms of employment that appeared most attractive to employers who had not tried them were:
 - Platform work (29%)
 - Employee sharing (23%)
 - All the others had a score of less than 10%.
- Those which appeared negatively attractive to those who had not tried them were:
 - Remote working (-16%)
 - Voucher-based work (-14%)

Employers' experience of new forms of employment in sport

- The top five new forms of employment which were most recommended by those who had used them were:
 - Intermittent permanent employment (79%)
 - Remote working (76%)
 - Job sharing (73%)
 - Employee sharing (66%)
 - Platform work (65%)
- Most of the new forms of employment in sport showed a low to medium level of female engagement (between 30 and 44) with the following exceptions:
 - Job sharing (50)
 - Remote working (46)
 - Self-employed portfolio work (the lowest at 29)
- It is notable that most of the new forms of employment showed a very low (1-14) or low (15-29) level of youth engagement with the following exception:
 - Casual work (low to medium at 30)

As part of the survey, respondents who had used the new forms of employment were asked to select the jobs which were covered by new forms of employment and their advantages and disadvantages based on their own experience. The options they were offered were based on an evaluation of Eurofound's new forms of employment as they might apply to sport.

² Possibly for the same reason.

Table 1: Overview of new forms of employment

New form of employment	Top 5 jobs most used for	Top 5 advantages	Top 5 disadvantages
Employee sharing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coaches Outdoor leaders Clerical/ Admin Fitness instructors Middle management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Access to workers with guaranteed skills Another organisation takes care of admin No need for training Worker has broader experience Responsive to fluctuating demand 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Difficulties of remote management Potential conflict of interest Worker does things differently Lack of team integration Complex admin
Platform work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coaches Fitness instructors Outdoor activity leaders Professional athletes Middle management Operational staff 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Easily identify skilled workers needed Only use the worker when needed Worker appreciated flexibility Low administration burden Tax and social security taken care of 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Potential conflict of interest because worker may also work for competitor Additional cost of platform fee Lower worker motivation Less management control Lack of team integration
Job sharing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clerical and admin Coaches Operational staff Middle management Fitness instructors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Someone available to take full responsibility when other absent Skill sharing Recruitment attraction to fit with worker's personal circumstances Retain skilled staff when personal circumstances change Increased staff loyalty 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Potential conflict between job sharers More complex to administer Communication and handover between skill sharers Difficulty managing two people in same job Competition between job sharers
Casual work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coaches Operational staff Clerical/ Admin Outdoor leaders Officials 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Flexibility to fluctuating demand Better value Easily identify casual workers for more stable employment Workers take care of tax and social security High levels of worker motivation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Casual workers less reliable Casual workers less loyal Need for additional worker training Casual workers less motivated than other workers Legal requirement to transition casual staff to more stable employment after a period

New form of employment	Top 5 jobs most used for	Top 5 advantages	Top 5 disadvantages
Intermittent permanent employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coaches • Clerical/ Admin • Middle management • Operational staff • Outdoor activity leaders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retain good and reliable staff • Stable workforce • Easy administration • Increased reliability through worker having more stable lifestyle • Good team integration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Still had to pay staff when demand and workload low • Complex salary administration • Unattractive to some staff who prefer more flexibility • Difficult contract negotiations
Remote working	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Middle management • Clerical/ Admin • Senior management • Coaches • Operational staff 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organisation more attractive to potential recruits • Increased worker loyalty and motivation • More flexibility in deploying workers to different locations • Recruit staff from outside immediate geographical area • Ability to measure worker performance on outcomes, not hours worked 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difficulty in remotely managing workers • Team communication and collaboration more difficult • Workers not feeling involved in organisation and culture • Workers take longer to learn the job • Remote workers less productive
Self-employed portfolio work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coaches • Fitness instructors • Outdoor activity leaders • Operational staff • Middle management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Easy access to type of workers needed • Workers take care of tax and social security • Organisation has no long-term commitment to worker • Worker can improve organisation because more broadly experienced • Worker more motivated because they enjoy independence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Worker less loyal to organisation • Potential conflicts of interest • Lack of team integration • Less motivated than employed staff • Greater job dissatisfaction
Voucher-based work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coaches • Clerical/ Admin • Operational staff • Fitness instructors • Middle managers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employment fully compliant with laws and regulations • Employment provides worker social protection • Employer receives a benefit for using this form of employment • Reduced administrative burden • Automatic calculation of salary, tax and social security 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Process to register with voucher system • Workers less committed/ motivated • Lack of continuity between different workers • Poor team integration • Difficulty in finding recruits for voucher-based work

In the case of six of the eight new forms of employment included in the survey respondents put sport coaches at the top of the list which suggests they are using new forms of employment to address their number one recruitment and retention need.

Alignment of the advantages of new forms of employment with employers' priorities

As part of the survey, respondents were asked to select their main priorities in regard to employment. These were then compared with the advantages which employers using the new forms of employment had identified. The following table summarises this analysis:

Employer's priority and % who selected it	Relevant new form of employment	Reasons
Flexibility in staffing based on organisational needs (51.2%)	Employee sharing	The employer can draw on a shared employee according to demand but has no ongoing commitment.
	Platform work	The employer can access a platform worker according to demand but has no ongoing commitment.
	Casual work	The employer can access a casual worker according to demand but has no ongoing commitment.
	Self-employed portfolio work	The employer can access a self-employed worker according to demand but has no ongoing commitment.
	Voucher-based work	The employer can find an appropriate voucher-based worker when needed but has no ongoing commitment.
Ability to retain skilled staff despite changing circumstances (47.9%)	Employee sharing	The shared employee can bring their skills back into the organisation when needed.
	Platform work	A platform worker who has proved their expertise can be rehired when needed.
	Intermittent permanent employment	Seasonal workers with the right skills and attitudes can be retained on a year-by-year basis.
	Casual work	A casual worker who has proved their expertise can be rehired when needed.
	Self-employed portfolio work	A self-employed worker who has proved valuable in the past can be contracted again.
Easy access to skilled staff despite changing circumstances (44.1%)	Employee sharing	The employers' alliance or sport federation provides the worker and ensures their qualifications.
	Platform work	Skilled workers can be hired from platform which guarantees their qualifications and skills.
	Intermittent permanent employment	Seasonal workers with the right skills and attitudes can be retained on a year-by-year basis.
	Self-employed portfolio work	Self-employed workers can be hired relatively quickly and should have the necessary skills. Depending on their availability they can be brought back into the organisation whenever appropriate.
Improving work/life balance and job satisfaction for staff (41.7%)	Platform work	The platform worker can choose assignments which fit their own circumstances.
	Job sharing	A worker can negotiate working hours which fit their personal circumstances.

Employer's priority and % who selected it	Relevant new form of employment	Reasons
	Intermittent permanent employment	The seasonal worker is permanently employed but they also have the option of finding additional employment in the periods when they are not needed on-season.
	Casual work	The casual worker can choose assignments which fit their own circumstances.
	Remote working	The remote worker can work from home and combine/balance work/ life responsibilities.
	Self-employed portfolio work	The self-employed worker has more freedom to choose assignments which fit their own circumstances.
Reducing the employer's administrative burden (payroll, HR etc.) (37.8%)	Employee sharing	The employers' alliance or sport federation takes care of the HR function.
	Platform work	The platform or the platform worker is responsible for tax and social security issues.
	Self-employed portfolio work	The self-employed worker is responsible for tax and social security payments. The employer simply manages a service contract.
	Voucher based work	The voucher agency takes care of tax and social security issues.
Cost effectiveness (35.5%)	Employee sharing	The employers' alliance or sport federation employs the shared employee and pays their full-time salary. The employer only pays for the hours they work.
	Platform work	The employer only pays for the hours the platform worker works. However, the platform will charge an additional service fee.
	Job sharing	The employer gets the combined skills of two workers but only pays one salary.
	Casual work	The employer only has to pay the casual worker for the hours they work. However, in most countries casual workers must be offered permanent employment after a certain period of employment (e.g., 12 months).
	Remote working	The employer may reduce their office space and other associated overheads such as heating and lighting. However, they may need to pay the worker an allowance for home working.
	Self-employed portfolio work	The employer only pays for the hours the self-employed worker works. However, the employer cannot be the self-employed worker's only contractor.
Easy access to staff with wider experience (27.8%)	Employee sharing	The shared employee works across a range of different organisations and gains wider experience.
	Casual work	The casual worker may have experience of other organisational processes.
	Platform work	The platform worker will work for a range of other organisations.
	Self-employed portfolio work	The self-employed worker will work for a range of other organisations.

Employer's priority and % who selected it	Relevant new form of employment	Reasons
Access to specialised expertise for specific projects or problems (27.1%)	Employee sharing	With a large enough pool of employees, the employers' alliance or sport federation should be able to provide specialists.
	Casual work	An employer may be able to find a casual worker with specialised skills.
	Platform work	Platforms may include specialist workers.

Obstacles to the use of new forms of employment in sport

Close to the end of the survey, when respondents had had the chance to review all the new forms of employment, they were asked about potential obstacles to their use.

Almost one half (47.8%) identified lack of knowledge about appropriate options. Almost as many identified legal restrictions (46.6%). 36.3% selected the need for more guidance and 33.8% felt new forms of employment were too complicated to implement or manage. All of these findings suggest:

- The sport sector needs more tailored information about the new forms of employment
- Employers (and probably employees) require more expert guidance on how to use them in line with legal requirements.

Work-life balance

Having working hours which are more compatible with family responsibilities and preferred lifestyle also emerged as an important factor influencing recruitment and retention. In terms of the wider benefits of the new forms of employment, some of them may have the potential to offer the worker more flexibility in this regard. We have already noted above that remote working (particularly from home) gives workers, especially women, the chance to create a more attractive work-life balance. The opportunity to align the responsibilities of earning an income and lifestyle may also be offered by some of the other new forms, in particular platform work, job sharing and self-employed portfolio work.

Meeting new skills demands

The desk research identified that new technologies like artificial intelligence are finding their way into the sport sector and that this has training implications. We also know from the survey findings that employers see a mismatch between the skills which staff currently have and the changing demands of working in the sector. 84.1% of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, 'The rapid development of the sport sector means staff need new skills.'

It is also clear that some of the new forms of employment raise training issues. Platform workers and remote workers, for example, need ICT skills. The managers of employee sharing schemes and remote workers need skills in how to manage staff performance remotely. Self-employed portfolio workers need entrepreneurial skills.

Conclusions

Based on the main findings from all strands of research, the IN-FORMS partners have summarised the following conclusions.

1. Recruitment and retention of paid staff is and will continue to be a problem, and the sport sector needs to find methods of addressing these.
2. The precarious nature of European sport employment has a negative impact on the workforce and the sector needs to find ways of making sport employment more stable.
3. Sport employers are very willing to address recruitment and retention challenges and the unusual characteristics of the workforce (in terms of part-time work, gender and age) but also want to maintain flexibility in employment.

4. New forms of employment are already showing some limited take-up in the sport sector and are proving their value, but sport employers and employees need more information, especially on how they work and the potential advantages and disadvantages of each.
5. In addition to information on new forms of employment, employers and employees need clear and objective guidance on how to select appropriate new forms of employment as appropriate to their needs, be aware of potential risks posed by the disadvantages and how to minimise these risks and ensure that their employment contracts meet legal requirements.
6. Only job sharing and remote working seem particularly relevant to the recruitment and retention of female workers. However, all of them appear to engage older workers rather than youth and therefore may help to retain younger sport workers into their later years.
7. Some of the new forms of employment offer the potential to increase incomes for some sport workers and this is an advantage which could be promoted.
8. Some of the new forms of employment offer the potential to allow workers to create a more acceptable work-life balance and this is an advantage which could be promoted.
9. The emergence of new technologies in the sport sector and the specific demands of some new forms of employment trigger new skills requirements. Both employees and employers need to be aware of these additional skill needs and be ready to address them.

2 Introduction to IN-FORMS

2.1 The drive for a professional sport workforce

The IN-FORMS project embraces the Council of Europe definition which identifies sport as *“all forms of physical activity which, through casual or organised participation, aim at expressing or improving physical fitness and mental wellbeing, forming social relationships or obtaining results in competition at all levels”*.

The European Union has increasing expectations for sport to deliver on a broad socio-economic agenda. There is a growing recognition of the potential of sport as a social and economic driver and, as a result, there is an increasing level of expectation from national governments for the sector to become a powerful tool linked to mainstream policy in education, health and the economy and for it to be used to promote social cohesion. At the same time the sector is evolving away from a predominantly amateur/voluntary-led model towards one which is based on professional service delivery.

These developments demand a workforce which is more highly skilled and broadly competent, yet sport organisations struggle to recruit and retain people with the right skills, especially in the wake of COVID and the subsequent recovery period. These recruitment and retention problems are holding back the professionalisation of the workforce.

There is evidence from earlier research that existing employment practices in the sector are a significant contributing factor. The traditional one-to-one employer/employee relationship is not always compatible with many of the specific features of the sport sector and the expectations from potential staff members. More creative, flexible and innovative approaches are needed which address these specific features, promote greater inclusion in the sport labour force and develop professionalisation further.

2.2 Building on the success of the recent FORMS project

IN-FORMS builds on earlier research. FORMS – the predecessor project – was a small-scale partnership (2021-2022), funded under Erasmus+ sport with five partners based in Belgium, France, Luxembourg, Netherlands and Portugal. Coordinated by EOSE, the main objective of FORMS was to focus for the first time on whether this need for innovation in sport employment could be at least partially addressed by some of the new forms of employment identified and tracked by the EU’s agency *The European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions* (Eurofound) over the period 2000 - 2020³. Eurofound had carried out research in a diverse range of other employment sectors such as retail, hospitality and agriculture, but provided no analysis which was directly relevant to the sport sector.

FORMS carried out preliminary and limited desk research and bottom-up consultation activities with a sample of sport employers and other key stakeholders. These revealed a keen interest in new forms of employment and an appetite to explore and develop them further in sport. They suggested and encouraged the implementation of a deeper analysis and the development of some practical tools to raise the level of awareness and understanding of these emerging forms of employment, and to propose some concrete and interactive solutions to encourage and support the use of appropriate forms in the national contexts.

IN-FORMS was designed as logical follow-up to keep up the momentum and as a direct response to the sector’s needs and expectations to broaden and deepen the research carried out by the FORMS project, to pursue the consultation with sport stakeholders (bottom-up approach) and to propose a series of innovative developments towards the modernisation of the sport labour market through the use of innovative forms of employment.

IN-FORMS has the following objectives:

1. Carry out qualitative and quantitative research into employment challenges in the sport sector and evaluate the potential of Eurofound’s new forms of employment to address these challenges.

³ A full explanation of Eurofound’s new forms of employment is given in Section 7 of this report.

2. Inform and support policy and decision makers on the potential for new forms of employment in sport.
3. Build the capacity of sport organisations, employees and the self-employed to adopt more innovative approaches to employment.
4. Raise awareness of the potential of innovation to address employment challenges in the EU sport sector.

This report is the first output from the project and summarises the findings from the research phase.

2.3 Objectives and scope of the research

The research phase was considered vital by the IN-FORMS partners because it was hoped that it would create a robust evidence base for the other three phases of work. The research phase had the following objectives:

- a) Identify and assess the current employment challenges facing European sport employers, particularly in regard to the recruitment and retention of paid staff.
- b) Identify and explore the European sport sector's current responses to employment challenges.
- c) Identify and evaluate the existence of new forms of employment in European sport with particular attention given to the experiences of employers, employees and the self-employed.
- d) Identify and assess the actual and perceived barriers to the adoption of new forms of employment in the sport sector and the types of support which employers may need to put them into practice.

The qualitative research covered the partners' home countries: Albania, Belgium, France, Greece, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania and Sweden. It also included statistical analysis for the EU-27 countries as a whole and an analysis of EU policy and legal frameworks relevant to employment.

The quantitative research was aimed at the whole of the EU-27 nations but also included some inputs from European countries outside the EU.

3 The research methodology

The research methodology consisted of four strands:

- Statistics on sport employment gathered from Eurostat and compiled and analysed by EOSE
- Desk research carried out by the partners
- A major survey of sport organisations across Europe
- Interviews with sport employers and sport employees

3.1 Statistics gathered from Eurostat

Since 2018, EOSE has maintained dialogue with senior researchers from Eurostat to compile and analyse all available statistics which exist for the sport sector at the European level. For countries with fewer statistics, EOSE has worked in parallel to supplement this data with additional statistics obtained through direct contacts with some National Statistics Offices (NSO). This work covers the period 2011-2023. Because the study began before Brexit and because of the UK's relatively large sport labour force (around one fifth of the former EU28), the UK continues to be included. Statistics from Eurostat and from NSOs are gathered through quarterly labour force surveys of the working population.

The scope of the analysis follows the Council of Europe's definition of sport, "*All forms of physical activity which, through casual or organised participation, aim at expressing or improving physical fitness and mental well-being, forming social relationships or obtaining results in competition at all levels*". Therefore, it only includes all types of workers in a sport organisation (defined by Eurostat as NACE 93.1) and all those with a sport and fitness occupation working in other types of organisations (defined by Eurostat as ISCO 342).

It does not, therefore, include workers employed in related sectors, for example, sport retail, sports goods manufacture or facility construction.

Explanatory notes on the statistical methodology are given in Annex 1.

3.2 Desk research

Each national partner was asked to complete a common desk research template, the overall aim of which was to collate as much information as possible to identify realities and challenges of sport employment in their countries, discover more about the penetration of new and emerging forms of employment and analyse them in the context of the sport sector (*e.g., potential use, working conditions, impact on labour market, strength and weaknesses*). The intention was to identify some good practice examples and draft conclusions on the emerging forms of employment in the sport sector to inform later deliverables. The partners' desk research would also inform the survey design and interview guides.

The template was to be filled in based on the partners' knowledge and understanding of sport employment and new forms of employment in their country and by actively looking for and referencing existing sources (*for example, research studies, papers, government policies, legislation etc.*) where these are available. They were also encouraged to contact people in their networks for possible sources, but they were not asked to do any original research (such as surveys, interviews) or data collection in this phase which focused on what sources already exist and can be found. However, if they could not find relevant sources, they were asked to offer their own impressions and opinions.

The desk research template consisted of the following sections:

- A. Sport employment in your country
- B. New forms of employment in your country in sectors other than sport
- C. New forms of employment in your country in the sport sector
- D. Legal, regulatory and policy context for new form of employment

The full desk research template is given in Annex 2.

The research was carried out in the summer and autumn of 2024. All national partners completed the template.

EOSE, as a European network organisation, did not complete a national research template. Instead, its researchers focused on EU employment statistics and policy frameworks/legislation with special attention to new forms of employment. EOSE also compiled relevant data from its statistical analysis of sport employment for 2023 and presented the trends since 2011 (Section 4 below).

3.3 Survey of European sport organisations

Once the statistical and desk research phases were complete, the partners used this knowledge to design an online survey using the Survey Monkey platform aimed at sport organisations in Europe. The purpose of the survey was to gather more quantitative data on the recruitment and retention of paid sport employees (directly employed and self-employed), the issues which affect these and knowledge and use of new forms of employment in sport. The draft survey questionnaire was tested in English, using the partners and sport stakeholders who were not members of the consortium, and adjusted in the light of feedback.

Following the testing phase, the survey was then translated into 18 European languages with the support of the partners and EOSE members and launched at the end of November 2024. All partners and EOSE members actively promoted the survey to organisations in their networks, and it remained open until the end of beginning of February 2025. All aspects of the survey were covered by the EU's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and respondents were only required to identify themselves if they wished to. They were also asked if they would be willing to take part in an interview conducted by the appropriate national partner.

In order to facilitate respondents' engagement with the survey and our analysis of results, most of the questions were closed, i.e., only requiring a yes/no answer, choice from a list of options or to show levels of agreement on a Likert scale.

The full text of the survey questionnaire is given in Annex 3.

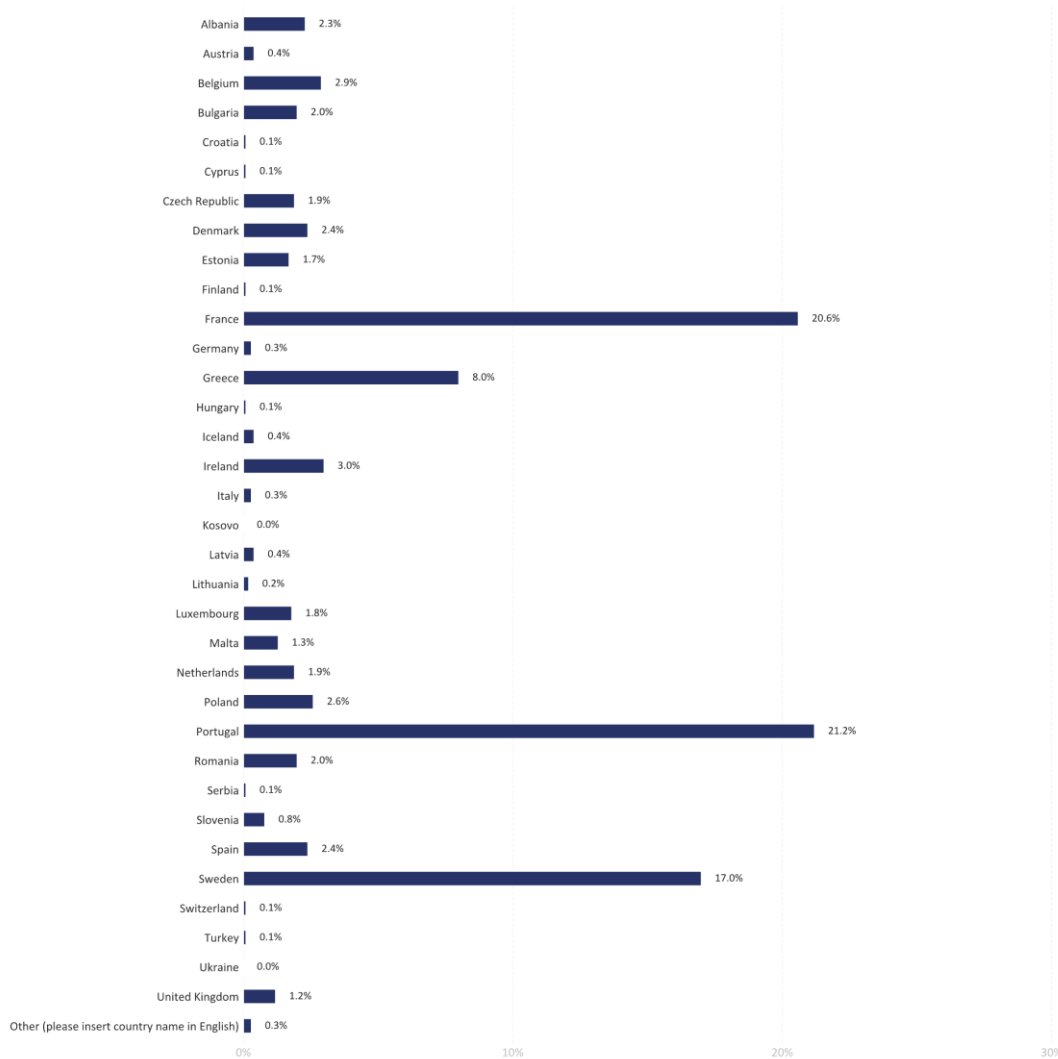
In order to maximise participation and provide a broad European perspective, the survey was open to sport organisations outside the EU. However, the majority of respondents were based in the EU27.

When the survey was closed and the data cleaned, there were 2 264 valid responses.

3.3.1 Country representation

The countries represented in the survey and their percentage representation were as follows:

Figure 1: Which country is your organisation registered in? If your country is not listed - choose 'Other' at the bottom of the list and insert the name of the country in English. (n=2264)

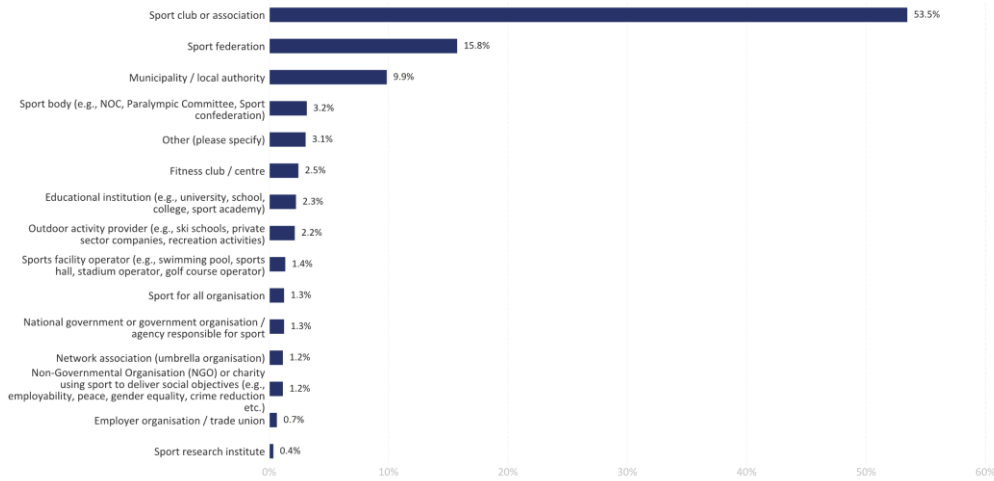


The comparatively high number of responses from Portugal, France, Sweden and Greece (all partner countries in the project) was probably due to the fact that these partners were either government entities (Portugal and Greece) or organisations with very close links to employers (France and Sweden).

3.3.2 Organisational types and sizes

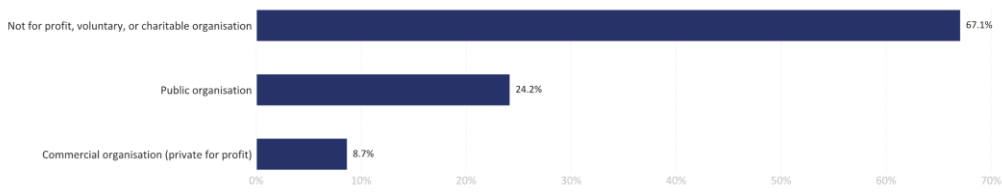
The majority of respondents represented sport clubs, followed by sport federations and municipalities.

Figure 2: Choose an option that best describes your organisation. (n=2264)



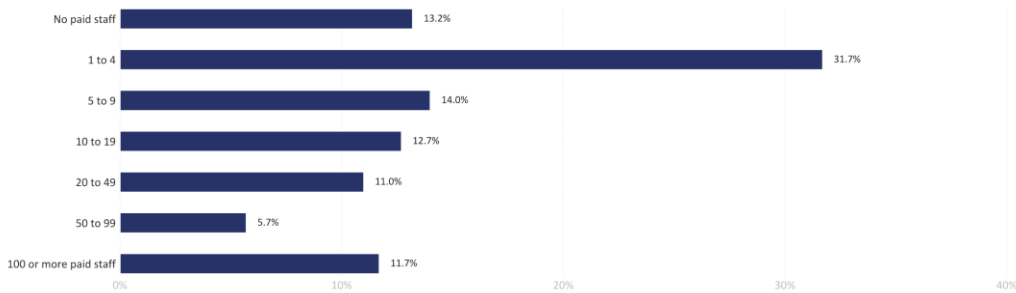
Over two thirds of respondent organisations were not for profit, voluntary or charitable organisations.

Figure 3: Which of these categories best describes your organisation? (n=2264)



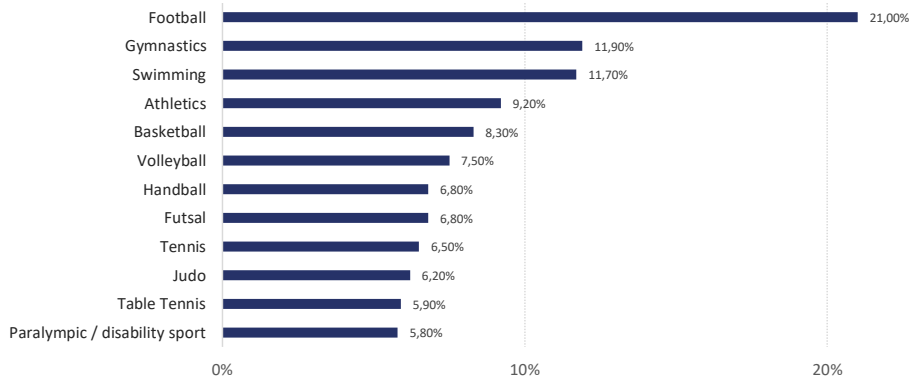
Reflecting the high number of sport clubs in the survey, the largest group of respondents represented organisations which were microbusinesses, employing fewer than 10 employees (45.7%).

Figure 4: Approximately how many paid staff work in your organisation in a typical year? Please, include all full-time and part-time staff, self-employed, as well as temporary/seasonal staff and paid apprentices/interns; for this question, do not include volunteers (n=2264)



3.3.3 Sports represented

Overall, 61 different sports were represented. The top 12 sports represented were:



3.4 Employer and employee interviews

To be completed when interviews are done.

4 Statistical overview of employment in the sport sector

In this section we summarise the key available findings from the statistical analysis.

4.1 Total sport employment 2011-2023

In 2023, 1 958 467 workers were employed in sport in the EU and UK. It grew by 32.3% from 2011 to 2023 according to the definitions provided in Section 3.1. This compares with EU employment growth in the same period of 8.7%⁴.

This represented 0.84% of the total employment (all economic sectors). As a percentage share of total employment in all economic sectors, there was a growth of about 0.14 percentage points over 12 years, suggesting that sport employment had become increasingly significant in the overall economy during this period.

The largest component of the total sport workforce comprises those with a sport and fitness occupation: athletes and players, sports coaches, instructors and officials, fitness and recreation instructors and programme leaders. They occupied 1 110 201 posts which represented 56.7% of total sport employment. Since 2011, the number of workers with a sport and fitness occupation grew by 39% which is 6.8 percentage points greater than the growth of total sport employment.

Possibility for graphs here from the stats report.

4.2 Gender

In 2023, sport workforce was predominantly male. There was a tendency for the female share of the workforce to decline over the period of study (47.9% of female workers in 2011, and 45% in 2023). Compared to the EU average (all economic sectors), the representation of females employed in the sport sector was lower by 1.7 percentage points (46.7% in all sectors versus 45% in sport employment).

Gender imbalance is even more evident among workers with a sport and fitness occupation: 56.6% men versus 43.4% women. This is 3.3 percentage points lower than the EU average for all sectors.

Female representation is not only lower than the EU average, but it has also declined over a 12-year period.

4.3 Age

In 2023, there was a notably higher percentage of youth employed in sport than the EU average for all sectors (25.9% in sport versus 8.7% in all sectors). This share rose from 22.9% in 2011. 49.9% were aged 25-49 (compared to 58.5% in all sectors) and 24.2% were aged 50+ (compared to 32.8% in all sectors).

As in the case of gender, this tendency was more pronounced among workers with a sport and fitness occupation. Here we find that 29.1% were in the 15-24 age bracket, i.e. 20.4 percentage points higher than the EU average for all types of employment.

In contrast to female employment, young workers are significantly overrepresented, and this tendency has increased, particularly in the recovery period from COVID.

4.4 Education

From the statistics we can see that people employed in sport had become better qualified over the period 2011-2023, with the proportion of workers with high level qualifications growing from 28% in 2011 to 39% in 2023. Despite this, in 2023, sport had a slightly lower percentage of workers with higher education qualifications than the EU average (39.8% in all sectors).

⁴ [Total number of employees in the European Union to 2023, Statista, 2025.](#)

However, sport and fitness workers on the whole are better qualified with 42.6% holding high level qualifications.

4.5 Types of employment contracts

From the 2023 statistics, we can see that more people employed in sport were on full-time contracts (56.8%) compared to part-time contracts (43.2%). This is a significantly higher percentage of part-timers compared to the EU average for all sectors (18.9%). For female workers, the share is higher – 50% of females had a part-time contract.

There was an even higher proportion of workers with a sport and fitness occupation on part-time contracts (almost one half) compared to total sport employment (47.4% vs 43.2%).

The proportion of self-employed people in total sport employment was much higher than the EU average for all sectors (22.2% in sport versus 13.1% in all sectors). It has risen by 4.3 percentage points since 2011. Male workers were slightly more likely to be self-employed compared to females. Slightly more than half of all self-employed workers in sport were over the age of 40 years.

In the case of sport and fitness workers, this tendency towards self-employment is more pronounced. Almost one third (31%) of workers with a sport and fitness occupation were self-employed, significantly higher than all those in total sport employment (22.2%).

The importance of self-employment in the sport sector is reflected in the survey when respondents were asked whether their organisation engaged self-employed people with almost one half saying that they did:

Figure 5: Does your organisation engage any self-employed people (e.g., contractors, freelancers)? (n=1526)



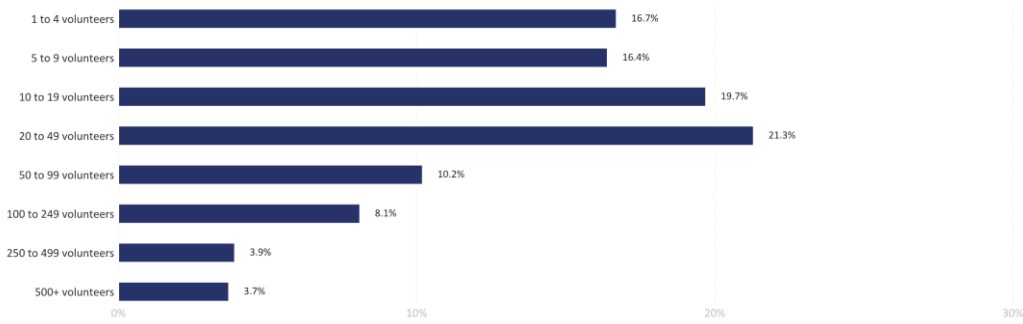
4.6 The role of volunteers

Volunteers play a role in other employment sectors, for example, social care and the performing arts, but sport has by far the largest voluntary workforce.

Eurostat does not collect statistics on volunteering. However, some general data is available. According to an earlier Erasmus+ sport project, V4V (using statistics derived from Eurobarometer), around 6% of the EU population aged 15 and above volunteer in sport which equates to around 12m citizens. This probably contributes around 97m hours of work per month which would be equivalent to over 608 000 full-time paid posts in sport organisations. In the survey conducted by V4V (2 723 respondents), 92.2% of respondents agreed that sport organisations could not provide the services they do without volunteers.

This was reflected in the IN-FORMS survey where 75.8% reported that they engage volunteers. Respondents also were asked approximately how many volunteers they engage on average each year:

Figure 6: Please indicate approximately how many volunteers your organisation engages on average each year? (e.g. coaches, board members, office and other helpers etc.) (n=1142)



Whereas the high proportion of volunteers in sport may be seen as positive for both organisations and volunteers, it may have an impact on certain aspects of paid employment, for example, salary levels and undeclared work (workers ‘informally’ being paid for their services without making tax or social security contributions).

5 Employment realities and challenges in the sport sector

5.1 Unusual features of the sport labour market

Research undertaken by an earlier FORMS⁵ project and reinforced by the partners' research suggested a number of features of the sport labour market which may contribute to the atypical characteristics of its labour force as highlighted in Section 4. These features include:

- There is a high number of small organisations (evidenced by the survey findings where 45.7% of respondents employed less than 10 staff), especially sport clubs. These have historically relied on volunteer staffing which is not governed by employment law and tends to be more flexible. For these organisations, transitioning from flexible volunteer arrangements to less flexible paid employment, governed by tighter regulation, is a challenge. Indeed, the ready supply of volunteers may possibly make transitioning to undeclared, rather than fully declared, employment more likely.
- These organisations are predominantly volunteer-run and often lack the administrative capacity to efficiently administer payroll and other human resource functions (e.g., recruitment, interviews, reviews etc.) needed to manage paid workers. This may constrain full-time or permanent employment and encourage a tendency towards self-employment and/or undeclared work.
- Some sport organisations are too financially unstable to feel confident about entering into formal employment contracts with staff on a long-term basis. Without additional financial support (for example, from public authorities or private sponsors) finding the money for permanent full-time employment contracts requires raising membership fees which might in turn reduce participation in sport, especially for economically disadvantaged participants which sport organisations may feel reluctant to do.
- Work in sport organisations is often intermittent due to school holidays, seasonal sports and financial fluctuations which contributes further to precarious employment.
- Work assignments are frequently offered in small packages, especially for the sport and fitness workers such as sport coaches which make it difficult to create a full-time career.
- The intermittent and fluctuating nature of sport employment make it more difficult for workers, especially those in the younger age groups, to foresee, plan and implement career progression in sport or to access training opportunities to support career progression.
- There is a high prevalence of 'unsocial hours' working with many assignments needed in the evenings and weekends which may act as a deterrent to workers with family responsibilities, more likely females.
- Many specialist staff such as coaches and trainers already have full-time 'day jobs' in other sectors which often makes additional employment complicated and unattractive.

It seems an enormous challenge to modify any of these demand side factors since they are very much a feature of the market for sport and physical activity services. Therefore, alternative approaches need to be explored, but these must conform to EU and national employment laws and regulations.

5.2 General recruitment and retention challenges

Through their desk research all partners mentioned recruitment and retention as significant issue in their countries.

Reasons offered by the partners were:

- Low salaries
- High unemployment rates in some countries which deter people from seeking long-term careers in sport
- Precarious work

⁵ [FORMS](#) (2021-2022) was a two-year, small collaborative project under Erasmus+ sport which carried out further research into the European sport labour market and examined the potential of new forms of employment to improve recruitment and retention.

- Seasonal work
- Lack of work experience
- Lack of required qualifications and skills
- Unattractive conditions of employment
- Lack of career development opportunities
- Lack of professional development opportunities
- Lack of motivation and personal qualities
- Geographical factors in rural areas
- Few working hours spread over a broader time frame
- Irregular and unsocial hours
- Multiple jobs leading to administrative burdens
- New skill requirements
- Organisational financial instability/budgets
- Competition from other sectors
- Strenuous and intensive work
- Mismatch between what employees expect and what employers offer
- Lack of opportunities for remote work
- Impact of Covid

Belgium highlighted various regional difficulties in employment regulations including restrictions on part-time work, association work, flexible work and the constantly changing regulatory framework.

Some countries felt that recruitment and retention was less of a problem but also mentioned:

- Disparities in salaries with the private sector, especially in niche areas such as law, finance and communication
- Difficulties in hiring coaches for smaller sports

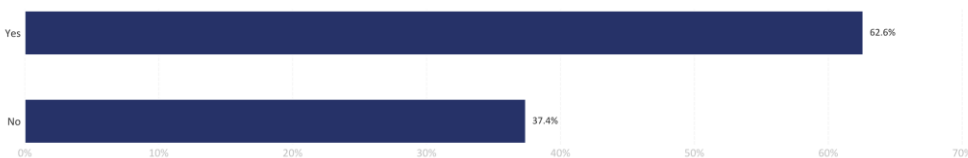
The Albanian partner highlighted the issue of emigration from the country as leading to skills shortages in most sectors.

5.2.1 Recruitment

The survey findings tended to confirm that recruitment of paid staff was a significant challenge for sport organisations.

Of those respondents who had attempted to recruit paid staff in the previous 12 months, nearly two thirds (62.6%) said they had encountered difficulties.

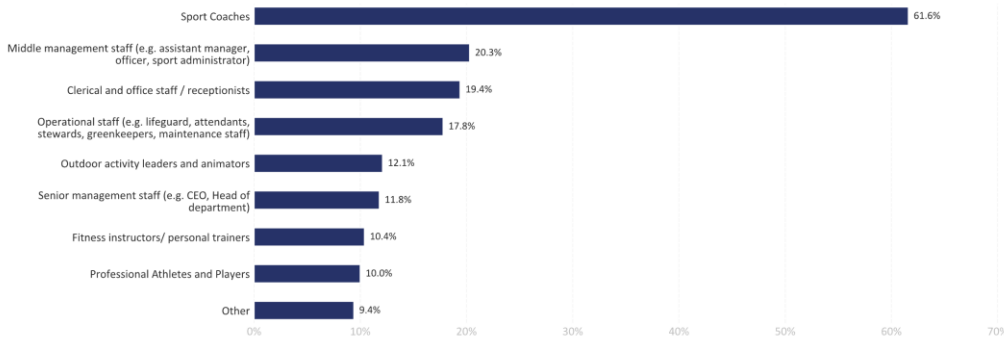
Figure 7: When you were trying to recruit paid staff, did you experience any difficulties? (n=1281)



Of those who had experienced recruitment difficulties, by far the largest proportion of these applied to sport coaches.

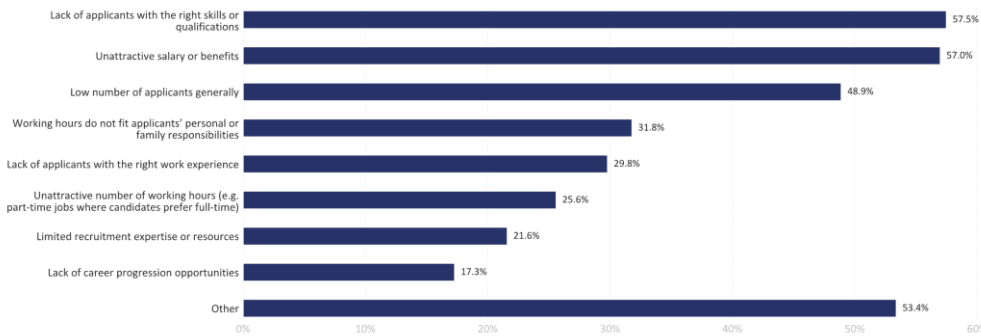
Με σχόλια [GC1]: We need to be sensitive to the fact that this does not show the recruitment problems for specific sectors. For example, if we only looked at respondents who were fitness clubs, fitness instructors/personal trainers may be much higher. Same for the outdoors.

Figure 8: Which of the following types of paid staff has it been difficult to recruit for? (n=770)



The reasons given were:

Figure 9: What, in your opinion, were the reasons for your recruitment difficulties? Choose up to 5 most important reasons. (n=781)

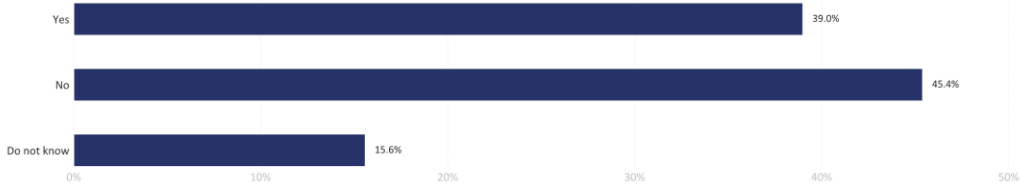


The highest percentages of the respondents (above one half) selected 'Lack of applicants with the right skills and qualifications' (57.5%) and 'Unattractive salary or benefits' (57%). Other issues such as 'Working hours do not fit applicants' personal or family responsibilities' and 'Unattractive number of working hours' were selected by fewer respondents, yet these remain significant. Interestingly, the 'Lack of career progression opportunities' was selected by only 17.3%, suggesting that this is less of an issue at the point of recruitment than the others.

5.2.2 Retention

From the survey results we can see that retention of paid staff is less of a challenge for sport organisations than recruitment. However, it is still significant that 39% reported they had difficulties in retaining paid staff that they wished to keep in their organisation.

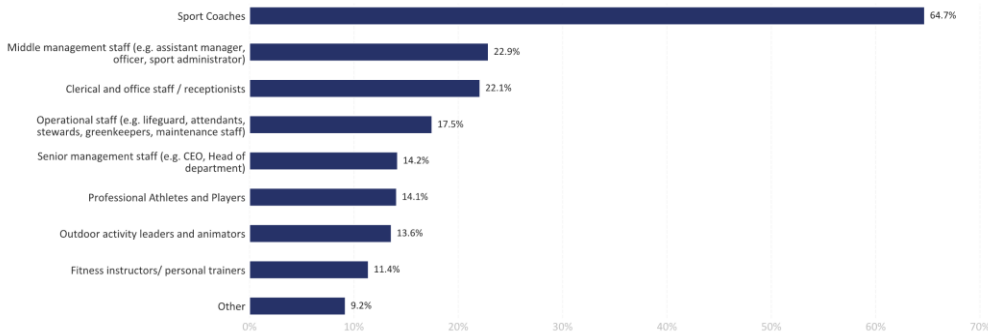
Figure 10: Do you have difficulties in retaining paid staff that you wish to keep in your organisation? (n=1929)



In terms of the occupations in which it was most difficult to retain staff, the findings are very similar to recruitment shown above.

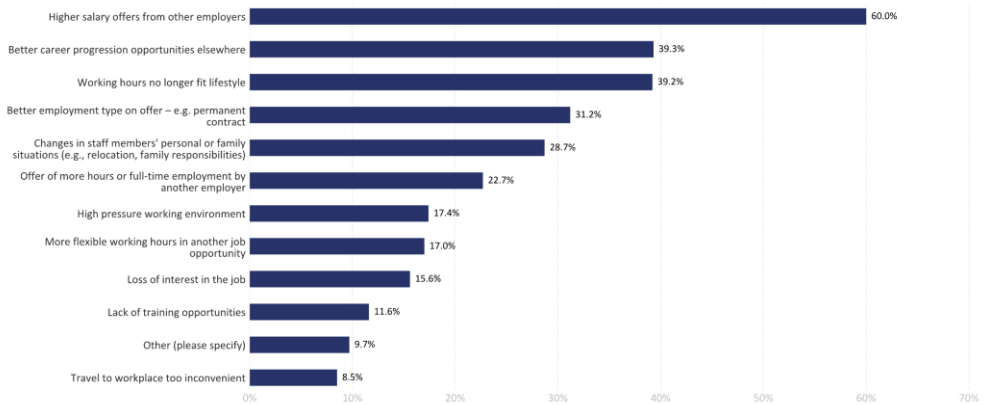
Με σχόλια [GC2]: See note above, similar.

Figure 11: Which of the following types of paid staff do you experience difficulties retaining? (n=737)



Those respondents also offered the following possible reasons for retention difficulties.

Figure 12: What, in your opinion, are the reasons for your difficulties in retaining paid staff? Choose up to 5 most important reasons (n=743)



When compared to the reasons for recruitment difficulties, we can see that the issue of uncompetitive salaries still tops the list with around the same level of support (60%). However, the issue of 'Better career opportunities elsewhere' now becomes much more significant (39.3% for retention and only 17.3% for recruitment). Other issues

relating to working hours and fit with personal and family responsibilities seem equally important in both recruitment and retention.

5.3 Gender imbalance

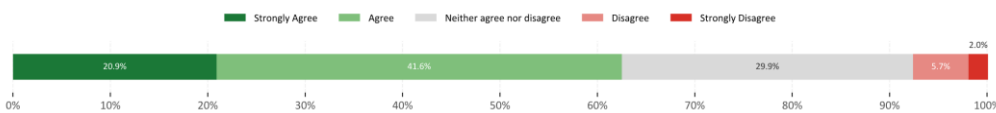
The relatively low representation of females presented in Section 4, especially in the ‘public facing’ sport and fitness roles such as coaches, personal trainers etc., is a matter of concern not only from the perspective of gender equity and making the best use of potential skills but also because the lack of obvious female role models may make it more difficult to attract girls and women into sport and physical activity.

The desk research revealed that the issue of gender imbalance is significant in almost all partner countries (with the exception of Sweden) and many possible reasons were offered. These included:

- Culture and gender stereotypes
- Lower salaries for women
- Less female participation in sport
- Less female participation in some perceived ‘masculine’ sports
- Lack of female role models in executive jobs
- Lack of career advancement opportunities
- Unsocial hours
- Inflexible employment conflicting with family responsibilities
- Employers’ concerns about pregnancy/maternity
- Difficulties in returning to fitness following childbirth
- Lack of mentoring and support programmes for women

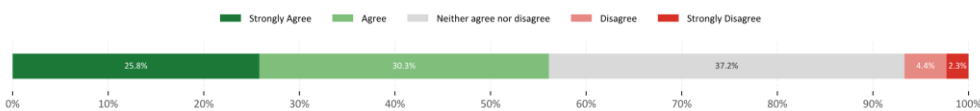
Respondents to the survey also appeared sensitive to the issue of gender equity. When asked to show their level of agreement with the statement ‘The sport workforce must become more inclusive in terms of gender and disability to make full use of available talent’, 62.5% either agreed or strongly agreed and only 7.7% disagreed or strongly disagreed.

Figure 13: Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statement: The sport workforce must become more inclusive in terms of gender and disability to make full use of available talent. (n=2014)



There was also a majority for those who agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, ‘The sport sector would benefit from having more women in executive and management positions’ (56.1%) versus only 6.7% who disagreed or strongly disagreed.

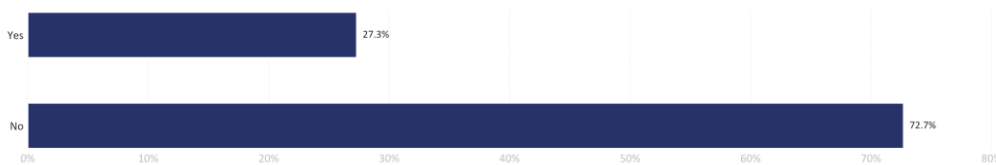
Figure 14: Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements: The sport sector would benefit from having more women in executive and management positions. (n=2014)



It seems important, therefore, to explore and address reasons for lower levels of women in the sport workforce and employment strategies which could increase female representation, including at the higher levels.

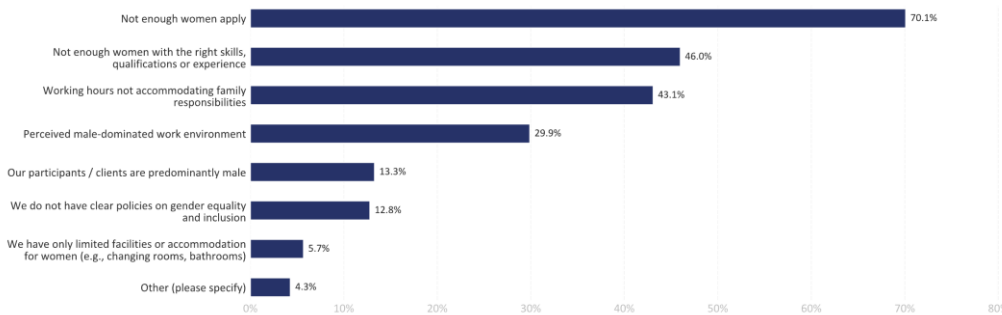
Despite the importance of gender equity in the sport sector and the relatively low representation of females, especially among those with a sport and fitness occupation, respondents to the survey who had experienced recruitment problems did not emphasise female recruitment as a very significant issue. Over one quarter (27.3%) said the recruiting women was particularly difficult.

Figure 15: Have you had difficulties recruiting enough female staff members in particular? (n=781)



However, of those who did, the reasons they gave are worth noting:

Figure 16: What reasons would you give for difficulties recruiting female staff members in particular? Choose up to 5 most important reasons. (n=211)



The fact that not enough women apply and that not enough women have the right skills, qualifications or experience may suggest that the pipeline of females attracted to work in sport and then go through the appropriate education and ongoing professional development is relatively narrow. Given that 46% felt that working hours do not accommodate family responsibilities and that 29.9% felt the work environment is perceived as being predominantly male may help to explain this.

5.4 Age imbalance

The statistics on the age profile of the sport workforce presented in Section 4 (high and growing numbers of young workers compared with low and reducing numbers of middle-aged and older workers) suggest that, compared to other sectors, a significant number of employees tend to leave sport employment after the age of 25. This is concerning because the sector is clearly losing talent relatively early in the workers' careers and that talent is being lost to other sectors.

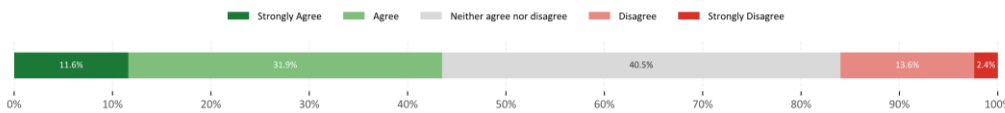
The desk research found that the retention of young workers was a significant issue in the partner countries. A very large number of possible reasons were offered:

- Low wages compared to other sectors
- Unfavourable working conditions and poor work/life balance
- Mismatch between young people's expectations and the reality of employment
- Unstable employment
- Lack of ongoing training opportunities
- Lack of career progression opportunities and information

- Lack of financial stability in the employing organisation
- Changes in family circumstances (e.g., children)
- Young people are now more volatile in their employment
- Parental disapproval of working in sport
- Difficult relationships with volunteer governance bodies
- High intensity leading to burnout
- Lack of mentoring programmes for young people

The relative immaturity of the sport workforce presents some concerns, particularly in terms of employers having staff with skills gained from many years of experience and continuing professional development. This is reflected in the survey findings where 43.5% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, ‘Sport organisations would benefit from having older and more experienced staff’ with only 16% disagreeing or strongly disagreeing.

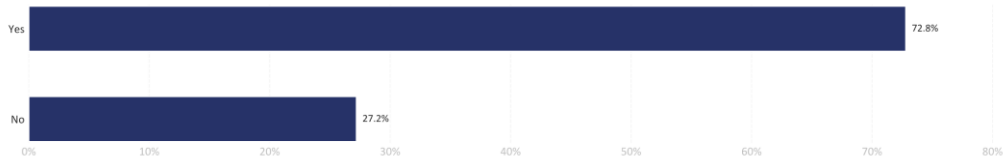
Figure 17: Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statement: Sport organisations would benefit from having older and more experienced staff. (n=2014)



This suggests that almost one half of sport employers see the potential benefits of a more mature and experienced workforce.

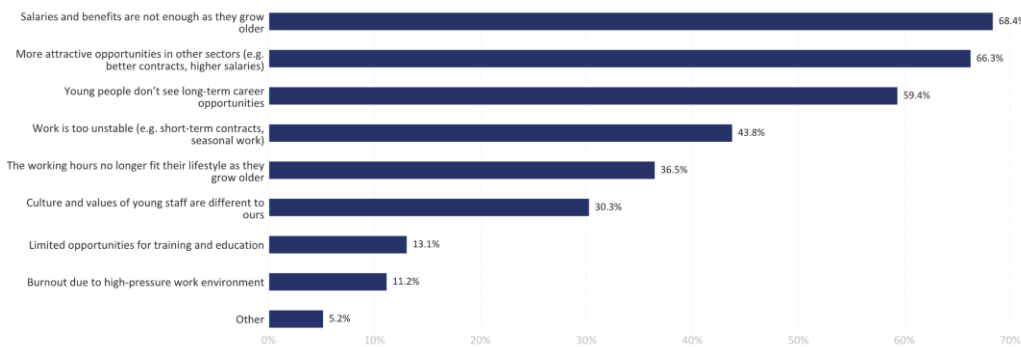
The survey findings tended to support the desk research suggestion that retention of younger staff is indeed a challenge. Of those who reported general retention problems, nearly three quarters (72.8%) said that retaining workers under the age of 30 was a particular problem.

Figure 18: Do you have any difficulties in retaining young staff members, under the age of 30, in particular? (n=743)



The reasons given were:

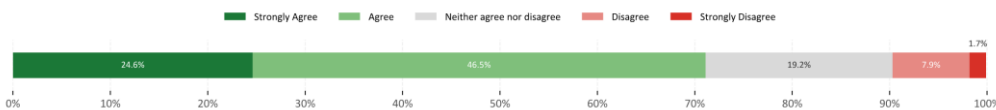
Figure 19: What, in your opinion, are the main reasons for difficulties in retaining young staff members, under the age of 30, in particular? Choose up to 5 most important reasons (n=534)



Over one half of these respondents highlighted the issues of salaries and benefits (68.4%) and reinforced the desk research finding that the sport sector tends to be uncompetitive because there are 'More attractive opportunities in other sectors' (66.3%). When compared with the reasons for general retention issues (Figure 12), we can see that career opportunities are much more significant when it comes to the retention of younger staff (39.3% for general retention compared to 59.4% for young people).

When addressing the specific issue of career development opportunities in sport, 71.1% either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, 'Lack of career progression opportunities makes it difficult for sport organisations to retain younger staff' with only 9.6% disagreeing or strongly disagreeing.

Figure 20: Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statement: Lack of career progression opportunities makes it difficult for sport organisations to retain younger staff. (n=2014)



5.5 Part-time and temporary employment

From the desk research, the partners identified the following common types of employment in sport in their countries:

- Permanent full-time employment
- Permanent part-time employment
- Temporary full-time employment
- Temporary part-time employment
- Self-employment
- Seasonal employment

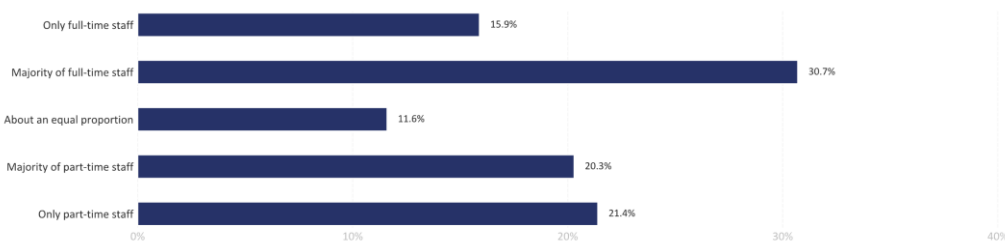
Some additions were noted in some countries:

- Permanent intermittent contracts
- Apprenticeship contracts

The desk research and statistics shown in Section 4 indicate that the sport sector, when compared to other sectors, has a very high proportion of part-time contracts. This is particularly evident for those who have a sport and fitness occupation.

This was strongly reflected in the survey where respondents were asked about the balance of full-time and part-time staff in their organisations.

Figure 21: What is the balance of full and part-time paid staff in your organisation? (n=1461)

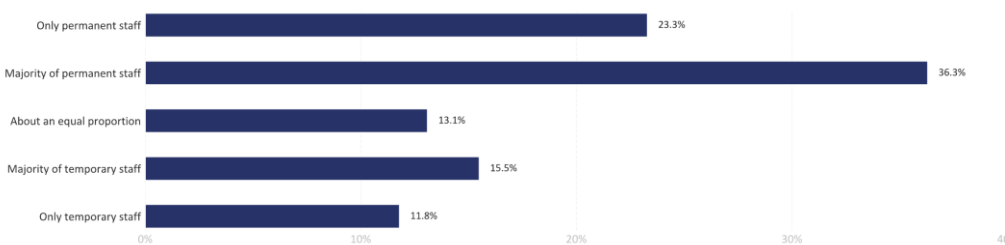


Therefore, almost half of the organisations surveyed (41.7%) indicated that they have either a majority of part-time staff or only part-time staff, with 11.6% indicating about an equal proportion.

Unfortunately, Eurostat only collects data on part-time, full-time and self-employed contracts. Therefore, official data on other types of contracts (for example, temporary and seasonal work and apprenticeships) is not available.

Although Eurostat does not provide statistics on temporary employment in the sport sector, the survey provided some data. When asked about the balance of permanent and temporary staff in their organisations, the findings were:

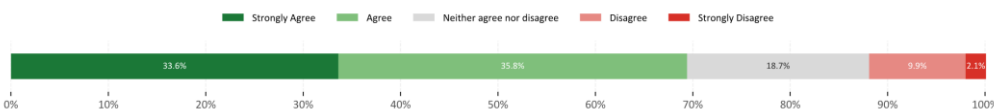
Figure 22: What is the balance of permanent and temporary paid staff in your organisation? (n=1469)



27.3% indicated that they either had a majority of temporary staff or only temporary staff with 13.1% showing an equal balance of the two.

Sport organisations clearly feel this has an impact on sport employment. Respondents were asked to show their level of agreement with the statement, 'Part-time and temporary jobs make it difficult for sport organisations to retain skilled staff.'

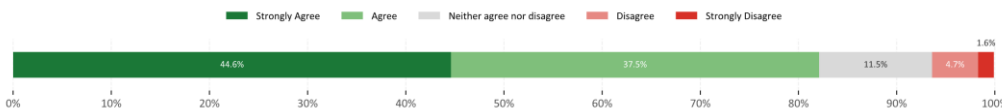
Figure 23: Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statement: Part-time and temporary jobs make it difficult for sport organisations to retain skilled staff. (n=2088)



Therefore, 69.4% of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that part-time and temporary work has a negative impact on retention.

They were also asked to show their level of agreement with the statement, 'A lot of work in the sport sector is precarious and we need to find ways to make sport employment more stable.'

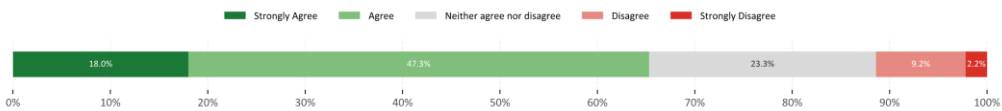
Figure 24: Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statement: A lot of work in the sport sector is precarious and we need to find ways to make sport employment more stable. (n=2088)



82.1% either agreed or strongly agreed.

However, the respondents could also see some advantages to sport organisations from this type of employment. 65.3% either agreed or strongly agreed that 'Part-time and temporary positions give sport organisations the flexibility they need for some roles in the sector.'

Figure 25: Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statement: Part-time and temporary positions gives sport organisations the flexibility they need for some roles in the sector. (n=2014)



5.6 Undeclared work

Undeclared work (sometimes referred to as 'informal employment' or 'the grey economy') is defined by the European Commission as "any paid activities that are lawful as regards their nature, but not declared to public authorities, taking into account differences in the regulatory systems of the Member States."

Undeclared work may come in different forms:

- The most common type is work carried out in a formal undertaking, **partially or fully undeclared**. Partially undeclared work is sometimes also called "**under-declared work**", "**envelope wages**" or "**cash-in-hand**"
- Another type is **undeclared "own account"** or **self-employed work**, where self-employed persons provide services either to a formal enterprise or to other clients, such as households.

Undeclared work contributes to the precarious nature of sport employment and creates disadvantages for undeclared workers because they have no access to job protection, unemployment/social security benefits, pensions, holiday pay, professional and career development and all the other advantages of a formal employment contract, thus reinforcing labour market segmentation.

Whereas Eurobarometer has carried out some research into undeclared work in the EU in general and some other sectors, there are no official data for sport. However, from their desk research the partners were concerned that this is a significant feature of sport employment in at least: Albania, Belgium, Greece and Portugal.

Sweden acknowledged that it had been a problem in the past with coaches and athletes but felt that this was now being addressed through collective agreements and lower tax rates for people with a limited number of hours and low salaries.

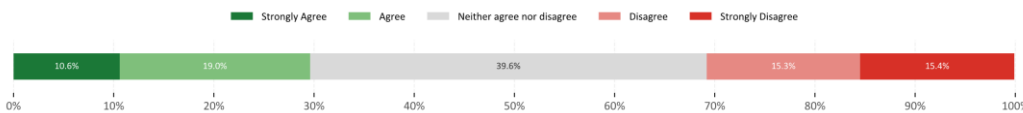
The desk research suggested reasons for undeclared work include:

- Limited organisational budgets
- Seasonal and temporary employment

- Complex employment regulations which deter employers from formal employment contracts
- Difficulty in finding a regular job
- Low salaries which leave little finance for tax and social security
- High levels of tax and social security contributions
- Low social welfare benefits
- High levels of unemployment

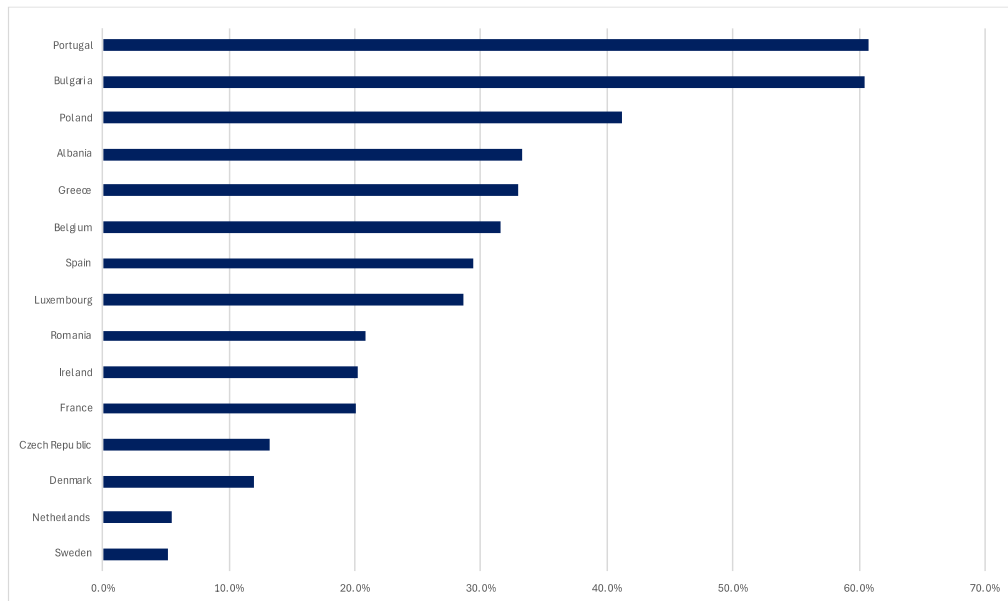
Findings from the survey suggest that undeclared work in sport is probably significant at least in some countries. When asked about the statement, ‘Many workers in the sport sector do not declare their earnings to the authorities’, 29.6% of all respondents either agreed or strongly agreed.

Figure 26: Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statement: Many workers in the sport sector do not declare their earnings to the authorities. (n=2014)



Of the 15 countries for which there were statistically significant samples, we can see that variations to this question by country were quite significant.

Figure 27: Agreement percentage to statement "Many workers in the sport sector do not declare their earnings to the authorities" by country



It should be noted that neither of these graphs shows the extent of undeclared work in these countries, only a level of awareness of the issue.

Possibly one of the strongest factors influencing undeclared work in the sport sector is the very high number of volunteers and the sector’s historic dependence on voluntary work, and there may be a grey area between volunteering and paid employment. Whereas reimbursing a volunteer’s legitimate expenses is entirely legal, in

most countries paying them for their 'voluntary' labour is not, yet it is possible to see how small employers with few robust HR and finance systems could easily give volunteers financial rewards on an informal basis.

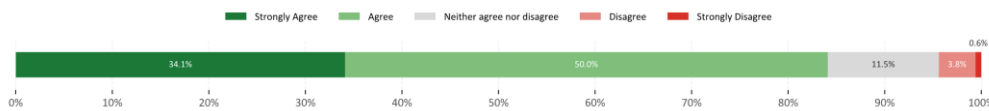
Because of the negative consequences of undeclared work, it seems important to find ways of addressing the issue through employment strategies which may include new forms of employment.

5.7 Skills gaps and mismatches

It is important to note that the relatively high education levels reflected in the statistics in Section 4 mostly cover qualifications gained through initial education and training (through universities and vocational providers). They do not necessarily reflect the relevance of that initial education and training to ongoing and changing skills demands in the sector.

From the survey, for example, we can see that 84.1% of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, 'The rapid development of the sport sector means staff need new skills.'

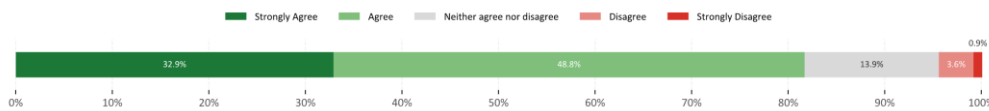
Figure 28: Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statement: The rapid development of the sport sector means staff need new skills. (n=2014)



As we see in Section 5.1.1 above, the most significant recruitment challenge facing sport employers is finding applicants with the right skills and qualifications.

Indeed, the majority of respondents felt better skills development opportunities for staff throughout their working lives would have a beneficial impact on recruitment and retention. 81.7% either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, 'The sport sector could recruit and retain more staff if there were more opportunities for them to develop skills throughout their careers.'

Figure 29: Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statement: The sport sector could recruit and retain more staff if there were more opportunities for them to develop skills throughout their careers. (n=2014)



5.8 The Impact of COVID

Although the highpoint of the pandemic lockdowns was four years in the past when the research took place, the partners were also concerned that the impact of COVID on sport employment may have continued.

From the statistics, key points for the period 2019-2020 (high point of the pandemic) include:

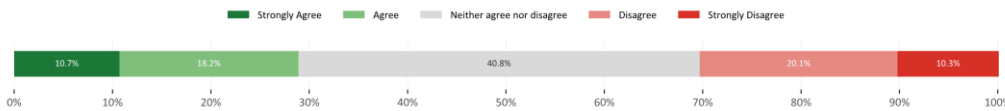
- A reduction of 3.7% in the total sport employment in which was more severe than the 1.4% decrease in total EU employment (all economic sectors). This was the first reduction of the total number of people employed in sport since the start point of the analysis in 2011. Workers with a sport and fitness occupation were more impacted with a reduction of -4.1%.
- There was a disproportionate impact on certain groups. Females, youth (15-24 age group), workers with high level qualifications, those with low level qualifications and those on part-time contracts were by far the most impacted by the pandemic.
- There was a rise in the percentage of self-employed workers in sport during that period.

The following the pandemic high point, 2020 to the end of 2023, showed significant signs of recovery. Key points include:

- A growth of 231 676 (+13.4%) persons employed in sport which is greater than the recovery in total EU employment (all economic sectors) which was 3.3%. This rise is most evident for those workers with a sport and fitness occupation (+17.5%). Whereas sport may have been more severely affected by the pandemic than other economic sectors, it is showing a strong ‘bounce-back’.
- However, recovery was not uniform across all the countries. By 2023, 18 of the 28 nations analysed had total sport employment which exceeded 2019 levels, but 10 of the nations had still not returned to, or exceeded, 2019 levels. These include Germany and the UK which have some of the largest sport labour forces.
- The representation of females in the workforce returned to pre-2019 levels.
- Young workers (15-24) gained 136 977 positions (+36.9%). This was the highest number of young workers joining the sport sector in the whole period 2011-2023. Once again, this gain was most evident in those having a sport and fitness occupation (+45.2%).
- There was an increase of 121 021 part-time contracts (+16.7%) compared to 132 795 full-time contracts (+13.6%) which suggests the balance of part-time to full-time positions in sport employment may have been returning to the pre-2019 situation.
- After the gain in the percentage of those with self-employed status in sport in the period 2019-2020 (+2.1 percentage points), by 2023 this percentage fell back to 2019 levels.

Respondents to the survey were also asked to show their level of agreement with the statement ‘It is more difficult for sport organisations to recruit and retain skilled staff following the Covid pandemic.’

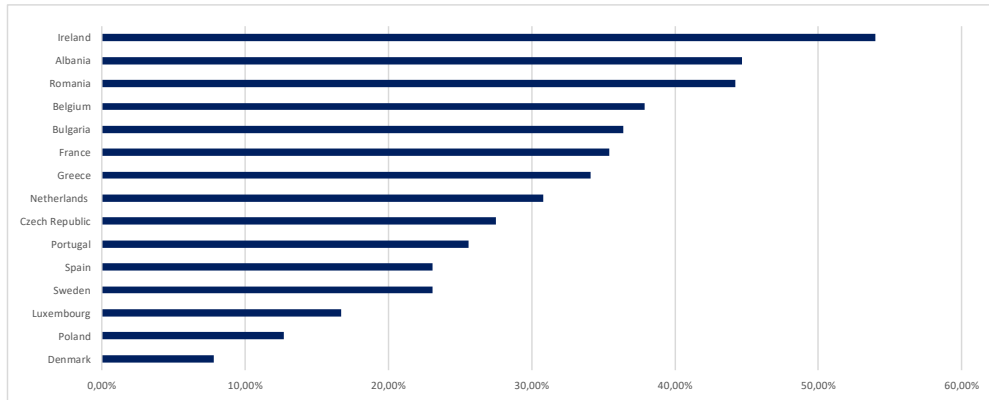
Figure 30: Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statement: It is more difficult for sport organisations to recruit and retain skilled staff following the Covid pandemic. (n=2088)



The results were fairly evenly balanced. 28.9% either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement whereas 30.4% either disagreed or strongly disagreed, with the largest group (40.8%) neither agreeing nor disagreeing. These findings probably reflect the uneven nature of the recovery across Europe.

Further analysis of the 15 countries for which sample sizes were statistically significant show the extent of variations.

Figure 31: Agreement percentage for statement "It is more difficult for sport organisations to recruit and retain skilled staff following the Covid pandemic." by country

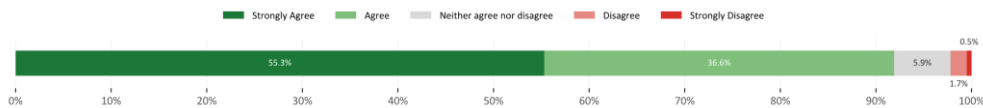


5.9 Incomes and benefits

It is notable that the desk research identified low salaries offered by sport employers as being an issue affecting both recruitment and retention in the sector. This is also reflected by the survey respondents who identified unattractive salary or benefits as the second greatest recruitment barrier (57%) and higher salary offers from other employers as being their number one retention problem (60%). The survey also identified that salaries and benefits not being enough as staff grow older as being their main challenge to retaining younger staff (68.4%).

Survey respondents were also asked to show their level of agreement with the following statement, 'Offering competitive salaries is important to recruit and retain skilled staff.'

Figure 32: Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statement: Offering competitive salaries is important to recruit and retain skilled staff. (n=2088)



In this case, 91.9% of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed.

The partners' desk research also suggested that low salaries also contributed to undeclared work since little money was left to make income tax and social security payments whilst maintaining a reasonable income.

However, the partners' desk research suggests that increasing salaries may be a particular challenge. It was noted that in almost countries, sport organisations faced a certain level of financial instability and lack of finance which often make it more difficult to compete with other employers, especially those in the private sector. Reasons given included:

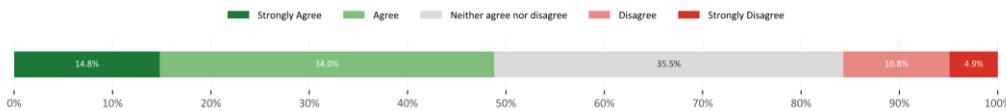
- Inadequate government planning and support
- Lack of access to government funding
- Inflation, especially in energy costs
- Limited budgets which restrict investment for the future
- Difficulties in obtaining sponsorship
- Reduced or consistently low sport participation levels leading to reduced revenue

Without a change in these circumstances, it seems important to find ways to optimise incomes for sport workers without imposing additional financial burdens on their employers. Some of the new forms of employment may offer at least partial solutions.

The comparatively high proportion of self-employed workers in sport which was noted in Section 4 may suggest some possible approaches. The reasons for this high level need to be explored further, but it is arguable that this may be linked to the low salaries and benefits associated with traditional forms of employment in many sport occupations.

For example, nearly one half of survey respondents (48.8%) agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, 'Many workers in the sport sector become self-employed because it improves their income potential.' Only 15.7% disagreed or strongly disagreed.

Figure 33: Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statement: Many workers in the sport sector become self-employed because it improves their income potential. (n=2014)



This may suggest that self-employment becomes one method which some sport workers use to address the comparatively low salaries associated with sport employment. Self-employment may represent one way of transforming the traditional small packages of directly employed work into a portfolio of service contracts which, when combined, provide an acceptable income and offer additional benefits such as better work-life balance, pensions and social protections. By implication, this advantage may apply to some of the other new forms of employment explored in Sections 7, 9 and 10 below.

5.10 The impact of emerging technologies on sport

During their desk research, the partners were asked to identify any research concerning the introduction of new technologies (for example, artificial intelligence) in the sport sector and its potential effect on employment (e.g. staff replacement), recruitment and training (e.g. new skills requirements triggered by new technologies).

This was possibly the most difficult question for partners to answer due to limited research findings. The following were mentioned often in relation to artificial intelligence (AI):

- Use by coaches and trainers in performance analysis, team management/preparation and talent scouting
- Promotion of new/less popular sports
- Social media to promote athlete branding
- Use by athletes, coaches and recreational participants to improve training plans
- Automation of administrative tasks
- E-sports
- Simulators
- Sales of tickets, membership and merchandise
- Remote working
- Machine translation

Netherlands mentioned in particular initiatives in education, training and continuing professional development which incorporate the use of new technologies.

Several partners identified the risks concerning job adaptation and job replacement but also highlighted the potential benefits of new technologies for the sport sector.

The survey did not collect data on this issue. However, some very useful information on the topic emerged from the employer and employee interviews.

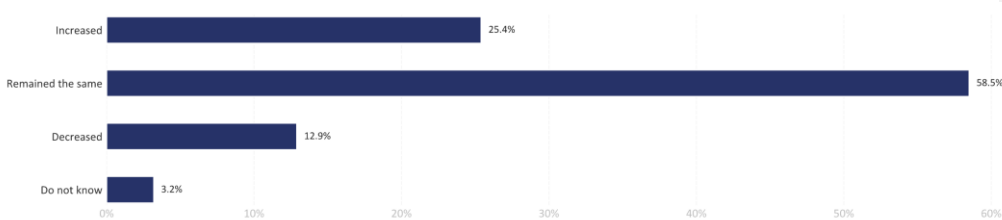
5.11 Short-term outlook for sport employment

There are clearly a number of challenges facing paid employment in sport. Nevertheless, there is clear evidence from the employment statistics outlined in Section 4 that sport employment continues to grow. Even following the severe impact of COVID on sport organisations during lockdown, the statistics show an impressive ‘bounce back’ (Section 5.8 above).

The survey respondents were asked two questions which are relevant.

Firstly, they were asked if, compared to 12 months ago, the number of people in their organisation had increased, remained the same or decreased:

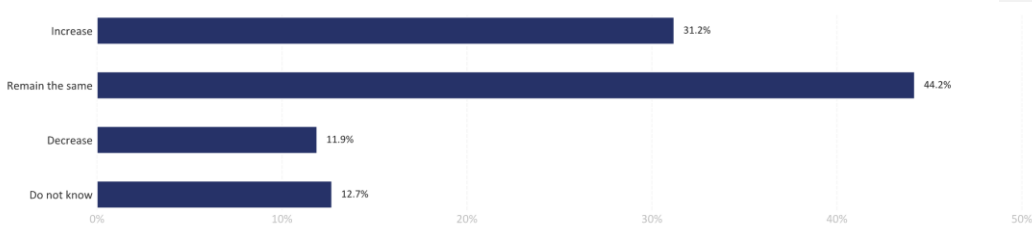
Figure 34: Compared to 12 months ago, the number of people employed in your organisation has... (n=2252)



Whereas just over one half (58.5%) indicated that the number of employees had remained the same, 25.4% said that the number had increased compared to only 12.9% who indicated a decrease. This would tend to confirm the statistical findings which show the sector’s employment growth.

Then the respondents were asked about how they think the number of people employed might change over the following two years.

Figure 35: How do you think the number of people employed in your organisation will change over the next 2 years? (n=2253)



This shows some level of optimism on the part of sport organisations with 44.2% predicting that it would remain the same, with 31.2% forecasting an increase and only 11.9% predicting decrease.

6 Existing initiatives to solve the employment challenges

6.1 EU

The EU, national governments and employers themselves have already begun to address some of the employment challenges highlighted above.

From EOSE's desk research, we identified that the EU's Employment Package (Section 5.2) contains the following measures:

- promoting and supporting self-employment, social enterprises and business start-ups
- transforming informal or undeclared work into regular employment
- encouraging decent and sustainable wages
- reducing labour market segmentation between those in precarious employment and those on stable employment
- anticipating economic restructuring
- developing lifelong learning
- reinforcing social dialogue

6.2 National Governments

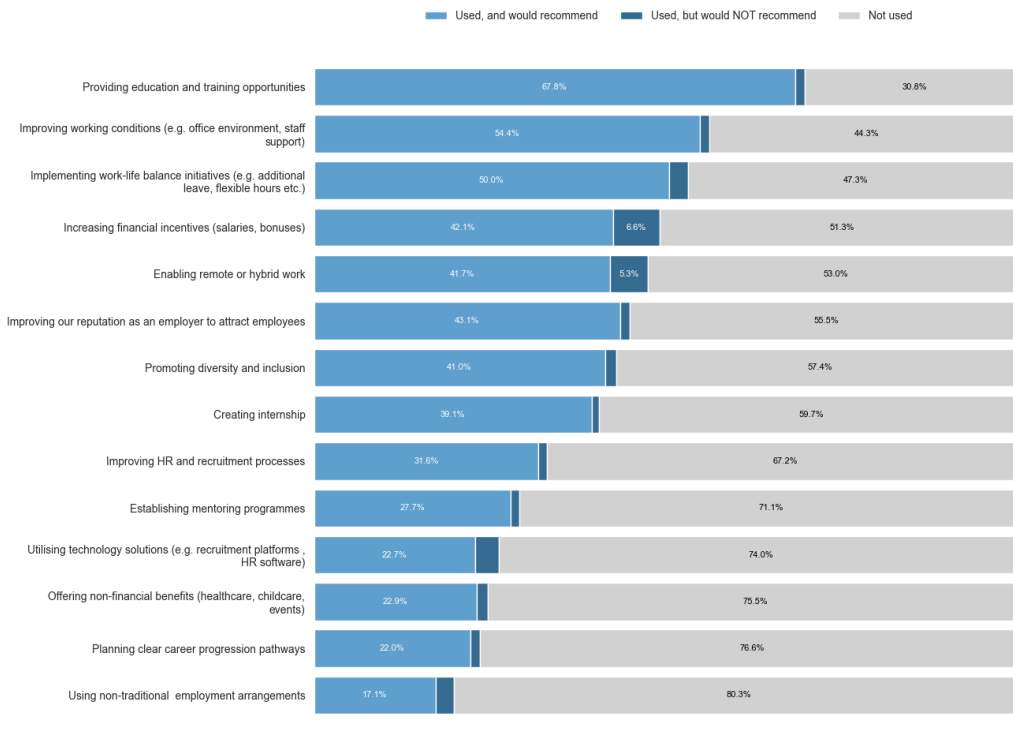
From the partners' desk research, we can also see a number of efforts by national governments and sport stakeholders/policy makers. These include:

- National employment and skills strategies
- Internships and scholarships
- Funding streams/initiatives for the continuing professional development of sport workers
- Increasing staff salaries in line with inflation
- Employment programmes targeting young people and the unemployed
- Programmes aimed at the 'feminisation' of the sport workforce
- Sport for All and Events programmes which specifically target unemployed sport graduates
- Dual career programmes for athletes
- Employment programmes specifically targeting disabled sport workers to achieve agreed quotas
- Promotion of some new forms of employment, in particular job sharing, employee sharing, platform work and intermittent permanent employment
- Programmes aimed at job transition and career change
- Employers and universities working together to improve the relevance of initial higher education
- Capacity building programmes to strengthen sport organisations as employers
- Knowledge-sharing networks on human resources in general and underrepresented groups in particular
- Measures to tackle undeclared work

6.3 Sport employers

Respondents to the survey were asked what types of solutions they had used to try to address recruitment and retention challenges and whether they would recommend these.

Figure 36: Have you used any of the following solutions to recruitment and retention challenges? Would you recommend them to other organisations?



It is interesting that, given the points noted earlier about the importance of salaries/incomes, ‘Increasing financial incentives (salaries and bonuses)’ ranks only number 5 on the list of those options tried and is the option with the highest number of respondents saying that they had tried it but would not recommend to others. This may underline the financial constraints which sport organisations face. ‘Softer’ approaches such as education and training initiatives, improving working conditions, implementing work/life initiatives and improving one’s reputation as an employer appear to be more frequently used and more likely to be recommended.

It is also significant that using non-traditional employment arrangements features last on the list (17.1%) which may suggest that new forms of employment are not currently widespread, known of or understood in the sport sector.

7 New forms of employment as identified by Eurofound

In the previous sections, we have looked at the sport labour force and some of its unusual characteristics and examined some of the recruitment and retention challenges which sport employers face.

In this section we look more closely at new forms of employment as identified by the EU's agency *The European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions* (Eurofound).

7.1 The Eurofound research

In its 2020 report⁶ which builds on 20 years of research, Eurofound noted that:

“Societal and economic developments, such as increased flexibility in the labour market and in-company policies or the broader use of advanced information and communication technology (ICT), can result in new forms of employment. These differ from established forms, either as regards the formal employer–employee (or client–self-employed) relationship or as regards work patterns and work organisation, including working time, place of work or the use of ICT.”

Eurofound defines these emerging employment practices as follows:

“Relationships between employers and employees that are different from the established one-to-one employment relationship. Consequently, employment relationships involving multiple employers for each employee, one employer for multiple employees for one specific job, or even multiple employer–multiple employee relationships are relevant.

“Networking and cooperation between the self-employed, especially freelancers, going beyond the usual types of relationships along the supply chain, the sharing of premises or the traditional conduct of project work.

“In addition, the relevant forms of employment could be, but do not necessarily have to be, characterised by:

- *a place of work other than the premises of the employer, where the employee is mobile and works from multiple locations, possibly including their own office (traditional teleworking is not considered)*
- *strong or prevalent support from ICT, including mobile phones, personal computers, tablets or similar, where this technology changes the nature of working relationships or patterns of work.”*

7.2 Eurofound's categorisation of new forms of employment

Eurofound organised what they believe to be new forms of employment into nine categories:

1. **Employee sharing:** A group of employers hires workers and is jointly responsible for them. The concept is similar to temporary agency work, with the purpose of sharing staff to balance the human resources (HR) needs of companies while providing secure employment to workers, and the network itself does not aim to make a profit. This employment form refers to employees only.
2. **Platform work:** This involves the matching of supply and demand for paid labour through an online platform or app. Employment status is not clarified, but in most cases the worker is considered self-employed or freelance.
3. **Job sharing:** One employer hires several workers to jointly fill a single full-time position. It is a form of part-time work, the purpose of which is to ensure that the shared job is permanently staffed. This employment form refers to employees only.
4. **Casual work:** A type of work where the employment is not stable and continuous, and the employer is not obliged to regularly provide the worker with work but has the flexibility of calling them in on demand. This employment form refers to employees only and is sometimes known as a 'zero-hours contract'.

⁶ Eurofound (2020), *New Forms of Employment: 2020*, New forms of employment series, Publications of the European Union, Luxembourg. <https://www.eurofound.europa.eu/publications/report/2020/new-forms-of-employment-2020-update>

5. **ICT-based mobile work:** The employee or self-employed worker operates from various possible locations outside the premises of their employer (for example, at home, at a client's premises or 'on the road'), supported by modern technologies such as laptop and tablet computers. This is less 'place-bound' than traditional teleworking.
6. **Portfolio work:** This refers to small-scale contracting by freelancers, the self-employed or micro enterprises who work for a large number of clients.
7. **Voucher-based work:** The employment relationship and related payment are based on a voucher (generally acquired from a third party such as a governmental authority) rather than on an employment contract. In most cases, workers have a status between employee and self-employed.
8. **Collaborative employment:** This refers to specific forms of cooperation or networking among the self-employed that go beyond traditional supply chain or business partner relationships.
9. **Interim management:** A form of employment in which a company "leases out" managers/technical experts to other companies temporarily and for a specific purpose. Unlike in a temporary employment agency, its staff are highly specialised experts who are sent to the receiving companies to solve a specific management or technical challenge or to assist in economically difficult times. Interim management has some elements of consultancy, but the expert has the status of an employee rather than of an external advisor. In practice, however, interim management is undertaken on the basis of self-employment in some countries.

The Eurofound report notes that *"in practice, a specific employment relationship can fall into more than one of the above categories (for example, platform workers tend to be portfolio workers)."*

Given the fact that Eurofound has been using approximately the same categories for 20 years may raise a question as to whether they can still be considered 'new forms of employment' or indeed whether sport organisations may see them as being innovative or non-traditional. Casual work, for example, has been a feature in sport for many years, especially when gathering a workforce for occasional sporting events or project-based work. We know from the employment statistics that self-employed portfolio work has been fairly widespread and growing in sport since 2011.

Furthermore, as Eurofound concedes, some of the categories overlap and share certain features. For example, interim management may be undertaken as a form of self-employment in some countries, and collaborative employment is really just a variant of self-employed portfolio work. The prevalent use of ICT is not only a feature of ICT-based mobile work but is also an important component in many examples of platform work.

Nevertheless, the Eurofound categories represent the only widely accepted framework across the EU and therefore it seems important to maintain some level of consistency with this during the IN-FORMS research.

7.3 Some key points regarding new forms of employment

Key findings from the Eurofound research are:

- Standard employment (i.e., not the new forms) is prevalent across the EU, but European markets are characterised by increasingly diverse forms of employment. Therefore, these new forms are likely to be enhancements to current employment practice, not replacements.
- Some emerging employment practices may continue to grow, due to transitions to the digital and a carbon-neutral economy and may have been accelerated by Covid.
- Many new employment forms are driven by the need for flexibility of employers/clients or workers. When new forms of employment are introduced, it is crucial to ensure that greater flexibility does not reduce workers' protection. Working time, employee representation, along with health and safety all need to be adequately addressed.
- For some new forms of employment, the ambiguity of employment status for workers, particularly employment versus self-employment, could contribute to greater labour market segmentation thereby reducing social inclusion.

Given the points noted above, it may be possible that these emerging employment practices could help to address some of the structural issues in the paid sport labour force and the recruitment and retention challenges which sport employers face.

However, as Eurofound notes above, there are risks and potential disadvantages involved in new forms of employment especially in regard to workers' rights and greater labour market segmentation/reduced social inclusion. Particular attention therefore should be given to EU and national policies, laws and regulations which are designed partly to protect the position of workers. These are outlined in the following section.

8 Relevant policy, legal and regulatory frameworks

8.1 The EU

All EU countries are subject to the policy, legal and regulatory frameworks established by the EU. Therefore, the EOSE team examined these in greater detail. This was important to understand better how sport employment might be influenced by the overarching requirements and to what extent new forms of employment may be compatible with these. These are explained in greater detail in [Annex 2](#).

Key Components in the EU Frameworks are:

The EU Employment Strategy (1997) which sets the common set of objectives and targets for employment policy and highlights the creation of more and better jobs. Points of emphasis are:

1. Boosting the demand for labour – guidance on job creation, labour taxation and wage-setting.
2. Enhanced labour and skills supply – addressing structural weaknesses in education and training and tackling youth and long-term unemployment.
3. Better functioning of the labour markets – reducing labour market segmentation and improving active labour market measures and mobility.
4. Fairness, combating poverty and promoting equal opportunities for all.

The EU's Employment Package (2012) emphasises promoting and supporting self-employment and business start-ups, transforming informal/undeclared work into regular employment and reducing labour market segmentation.

Potentially, all of these are relevant to the aims of IN-FORMS.

From a legal perspective, the following must be paid attention to when considering forms of employment:

- EU Rights at Work
- Transparent and Predictable Working Conditions
- Fixed Term Work
- Part-time Work
- Working Time Directive
- Work-Life Balance Directive
- Temporary Agency Work Directive
- Platform Work Directive
- Forthcoming Legislation on the Right to Disconnect
- Measures to Reduce Undeclared Work

8.2 The Partner Countries

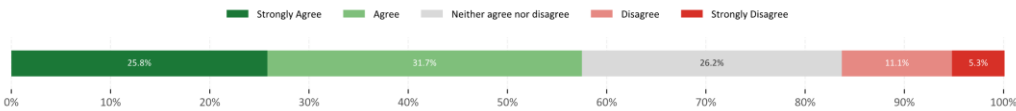
Generally speaking, the legal and regulatory frameworks (with the exception of Albania which is not an EU member country) reflect the overall EU employment framework. These are covered in detail, country by country, in [Annex 2](#). It is notable that only a few national legislative frameworks explicitly deal with new forms of employment, although some governments do have strategies for job creation which are relevant.

8.3 The impact of legal frameworks on sport employers

In the survey, respondents were asked about their level of agreement with the statement ‘Employment laws make it complicated for sport organisations to employ paid staff.’

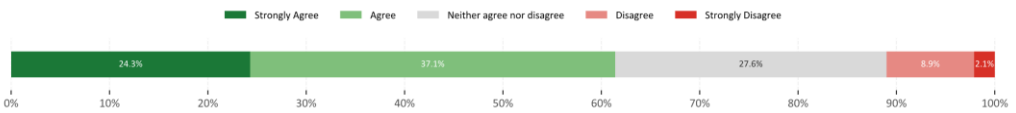
57.5% either strongly agreed or agreed, with only 16.4% indicating strongly disagree or disagree.

Figure 37: Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statement: Employment laws make it complicated for sport organisations to employ paid staff. (n=2088)



Respondents were also asked about their level of agreement with the statement, ‘Sport organisations need more expert guidance in recruiting and retaining skilled staff.’ 61.4% either agreed or strongly agreed with only 11% in disagreement.

Figure 38: Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statement: Sport organisations need more expert guidance in recruiting and retaining skilled staff. (n=2088)



Sport employers are clearly anxious about complying with employment laws and the majority would welcome more expert guidance. There is a strong possibility that this will be even more the case when it comes to new and non-traditional forms of employment where the confidence level is likely to be even lower.

9 The potential of new forms of employment for sport

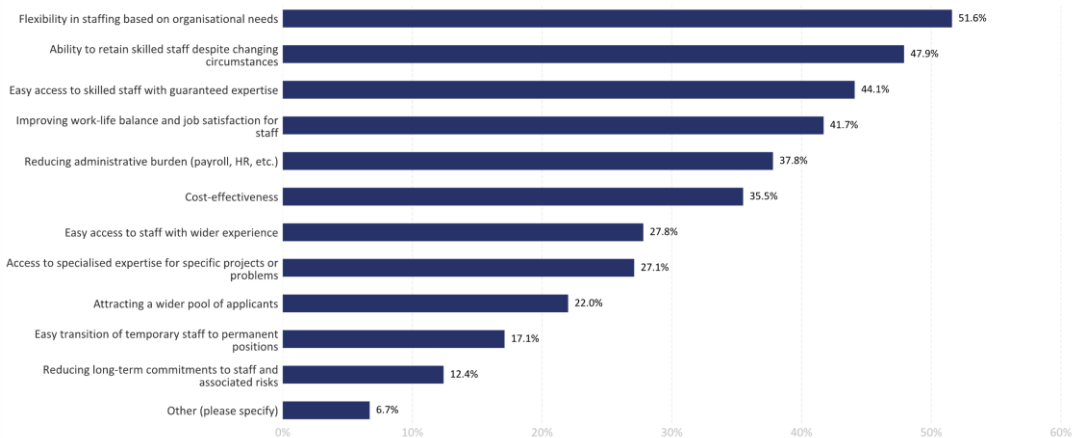
Whereas Eurofound explored the benefits and risks of the greater employment flexibility offered by new forms of employment in a range of other sectors, their research revealed no specific data concerning uptake in the sport sector. The IN-FORMS survey of sport organisations was intended to fill this knowledge gap.

Prior to the design of the survey questionnaire, the partners included in their desk research an evaluation of the potential benefits and risks of these new forms of employment for the sport sector and EU laws and regulations which may apply. The evaluations were based on the partners' knowledge of the sport sector and the research already undertaken, including the use of new forms of employment in other sectors in their countries, and Eurofound's own general analysis. These are summarised in the tables below.

Given the features of the sport labour market outlined in Section 4, the survey offered the opportunity to gain further insights into where employer priorities lie, and this was an important reference point when evaluating the new forms of employment.

Survey respondents were asked to identify their top five priorities in relation to the employment of paid staff.

Figure 39: Which of the following, in your opinion, are the top priorities for your organisation in relation to the employment of paid staff? Choose up to 5 most important priorities. (n=1961)



It is perhaps unsurprising, given some of the unusual features of the sport labour market outlined in Section 4 (fluctuating demand, small packages of work, unsocial hours etc.), that over one half of respondents (51.6%) highlighted the importance of flexibility in staffing based on organisational need. Additionally, they prioritised easy access to skilled staff with guaranteed expertise (44.1%).

Despite the need for flexibility, they also valued the ability to retain skilled staff despite changing circumstances (47.9%) and prioritised improving work-life balance and job satisfaction for their staff (41.7%).

Almost equally important was reducing administrative burdens (37.8%).

In addition to the employer priorities listed above, the evaluation also considered some of the other identified employment challenges, in particular:

- Gender imbalance
- Age imbalance
- Undeclared labour
- Need to maximise incomes

The question which the IN-FORMS partners needed to explore is whether some or all of the new forms of employment categorised by Eurofound could help to address these priorities and additionally begin to address some of the other atypical features of sport employment such as the relatively low representation of females and the high turnover of younger workers.

It was also necessary to ensure that any new forms of employment recommended for the sport sector are fully compliant with EU and national employment laws and regulations and do not introduce new risks/disadvantages which could not be mitigated by best practice guidance.

9.1 Employee sharing

This is defined by Eurofound as, “a situation in which a group of employers forms a network that hires one or several workers to be sent on individual work assignments with the participating employer companies.”

Table 2: Benefits and risks of employee sharing

Potential Benefits	Risks
<p>Flexibility in employment – much of the work done by sport and fitness workers takes place in small packages or seasonally at particular high points of demand during the year. For the employer, employee sharing is an efficient way of addressing these needs without having to resort to setting up a series of part-time or temporary positions which may prove to be unattractive to qualified coaches and trainers for example.</p>	<p>Difficulties in establishing a group of employers – this new form requires the setting up of an employers’ alliance or similar arrangement with the full confidence and commitment of all its members. Within the sport sector, this may be challenging, although some examples already exist in France. However, all organised sports have some form of national federation or governing body. These bodies already exist and employ staff and could take on responsibilities similar to those of an employers’ alliance.</p>
<p>Reducing administrative burdens – many organisations in the sport sector are small and lack experience and expertise in recruiting staff and managing HR processes. The potential for another ‘umbrella’ organisation to take over these responsibilities is likely to be attractive, especially if this organisation also takes responsibility for quality assuring the staff involved, by ensuring for example that they are appropriately qualified for the assignment.</p>	<p>The employer group may be difficult to maintain – this approach may prove to be too complex for both the employer group and the organisations involved. For the employer group, there are added needs in terms of HR administration and coordination. Additionally, the organisations involved need to make a financial contribution to the employer group’s administration costs even during periods when they are not receiving staff.</p> <p>Monitoring and managing staff remotely and across a range of working environments could be problematic.</p>
<p>Stable employment and improved social inclusion – from the employee’s perspective, this form of employment could replace a number of small and temporary part-time positions with one permanent full-time position under a single employer. This could have a positive impact on career development opportunities and reducing the precarity of sport employment. Since the worker is employed by the employer group, they are guaranteed the same conditions, treatments, protections and advantages enjoyed by other workers, for example, in-company training, social security access and employer pension contributions.</p>	<p>Additional stress and conflict – compared to employment in just one place of work, the shared employee must travel from one place to another and learn to adapt to different organisational expectations and working practices.</p>
<p>A more broadly competent workforce/career development – this type of employment, like Platform Work, provides employees with a broader range work experience. This can benefit employers and employees alike. The employer can benefit from staff who have current experience of working in other sport clubs and gyms and can therefore adopt and</p>	<p>Lack of employee loyalty and conflicts of interest – unlike permanent employees, the shared may not be so easily integrated into the culture of the organisation. Like the platform worker, the shared employee may be also working for competitor organisations such as other sport clubs or gyms. This potentially raises conflict of interest issues in the</p>

Potential Benefits	Risks
integrate their good practices. For the employee, they are likely to gain a wider range of skills which could enhance their career development opportunities which appears to be a particular issue in sport.	mind of the receiving employer. Difficulty in integrating into the receiving organisation may also create conflict with workers who are permanently based in the receiving organisation.

EU Regulations Relevant to Employee Sharing

Potentially all of the EU regulations listed in above for ICT-Based Mobile work are relevant to Employee Sharing, in particular **The Transparent and Predictable Working Conditions Directive** and **The European Working Time Directive**. However, it is important to note that at least 10 EU countries have national legislation which seeks to control employee sharing. These will need to be taken into account when considering the introduction of Employee Sharing.

9.2 Platform work

Eurofound defines this as, “A form of employment that uses an online platform to enable organisations or individuals to access other organisations or individuals to solve problems or provide services in exchange for payment.”

Table 3: Benefits and risks of platform work

Potential Benefits	Risks
<p>Better matching labour supply and demand – for the employer the platform provides ready access to the skilled labour they need. This is particularly relevant to the sport sector where employers are struggling to recruit skilled staff, often to address an unexpected need (for example, the demand for a new type of fitness class) or a small package of coaching hours. It would be especially valuable if sport platforms offered a guarantee of the qualifications held by workers on the platform.</p> <p>From the worker’s perspective, the platform provides access enhanced access to the labour market through being easily connected with employers who need their skills. This could be particularly attractive to new employees who lack work experience and the many coaches and trainers who have alternative day jobs and use sport employment as a way of supplementing their income in the evenings and weekends.</p>	<p>Unclear employment status – experience in other sectors such as ride-hailing services, courier services and food delivery have highlighted ambiguities in the worker’s employment status. This is particularly the case with platforms which coordinate self-employed workers but decide on the work organisation, employment and working conditions. In several countries there have been disputes over whether these workers are really self-employed or ‘disguised employees’ of the platform company who should be due all the usual benefits of permanent employment.</p>
<p>Flexibility – both the employer and the employee have greater freedom to choose the type of assignment, working hours and place of work which suits them. They are not bound by the less flexible traditional employment contracts. This could be especially attractive to smaller sport organisations who lack expertise in human resource management and, due to financial lack or instability, are reluctant to employ staff on a more permanent basis.</p>	<p>Lack of assignment choice/additional stress – in well-developed digital platforms, task assignment is usually carried out by an algorithm. The platform worker may actually have little choice in the jobs provided to them. Additionally, the volume, variety and intensity of work assignments may lead to higher stress levels.</p> <p>Lack of employee loyalty and conflicts of interest – unlike permanent employees, the platform worker is not absorbed into the culture of the organisation. Indeed, the platform worker may be also working for competitor organisations such as other sport clubs or gyms. This potentially raises conflict of interest issues in the mind of the employer.</p>

Potential Benefits	Risks
Stimulant to self-employment – the employee who experiences platform work may begin to realise that they can offer their services directly to sport employers and then move into self-employment or collaborative sport employment with others through a micro-enterprise. The sport sector already has a higher-than-average rate of self-employment which means this pathway is already well-established.	Reduced opportunities for career development – lack of opportunities for career development has been highlighted as a particular problem facing sport recruitment and retention. Platform work is unlikely to offer training and development (unless the platform worker pays for these themselves). Additionally, the platform is likely not to provide pathways for promotion to higher levels of responsibility and pay.
Potential to build stable employment – the worker may have the opportunity to combine many small or short-term assignments in a way which delivers the equivalent of a full-time salary. This could be especially useful to the sport sector where much work is part-time and precarious, features which deter young people from staying in the sector beyond maturity.	Fewer opportunities to negotiate pay – some platforms may offer the worker the opportunity to set pay rates, but in the case of others there may be no discretion available. Workers may feel compelled to accept what is on offer in order to access assignments.
Potential to transition undeclared workers into declared employment – the widespread introduction of platform work into the sport sector may begin to attract undeclared workers into legal employment. The benefits and flexibility of this approach may be sufficient motivators, especially if the platform takes care of their tax and social security arrangements.	Increased labour market segmentation⁷ – there is the danger that platform workers will remain in ‘secondary employment’, i.e., employment which is episodic and precarious and find it increasingly difficult to access ‘primary employment’ (permanent full-time and part-time) and all the additional benefits which go with this. Platform workers, therefore, get stuck in this groove.

EU Regulations Relevant to Platform Work

Potentially all of the EU regulations listed above for ICT-Based Mobile work are relevant to Platform Work, in particular **The Transparent and Predictable Working Conditions Directive**. In addition, on 9th December 2021, the European Commission made a proposal for a new directive ‘*On Improving Working Conditions in Platform Work*’. If passed through legislation in the Parliament, this would address cases of misclassification of platform workers and ease the way for such workers to be reclassified as employees, guaranteeing easier access to their rights as employees under EU law. Under the new rules, workers will have to be informed about the use of automated monitoring and decision-making systems (use of algorithms) and limit the types of platform worker data which the digital platform can process.

Expected legislation on the **Right to Disconnect** may also be relevant.

9.3 Job sharing

Eurofound defines Job Sharing as, “*employment relationships in which one employer hires several workers (but normally just two) to jointly fill a single full-time position. It is a form of part-time work, the purpose of which is to ensure that the shared post is permanently staffed*”.

Table 4: Benefits and risks of job sharing

Potential Benefits	Risks
Retention of skilled and experienced staff – this approach could be particularly attractive to sport employers who wish to retain the services of proven staff when their personal circumstances change, and full-time employment is no	Difficulties in finding more than one person to share a position – if the sport organisation is relatively large, it may be relatively easy to find another existing employee who also wants to share a position. However, many sport

⁷ For a fuller explanation of labour market segmentation, please refer to <https://www.eurofound.europa.eu/en/european-industrial-relations-dictionary/labour-market-segmentation>

Potential Benefits	Risks
longer an option. This could be particularly relevant to female employees who decide to start a family.	organisations are small, and it may be necessary to externally recruit someone to share the position.
<p>Recruitment of more female and disabled workers in the sport workforce – even today, in many countries the burden of childcare responsibilities is often taken up by females. Job sharing may help to address this difficulty and create more opportunities for women sport workers to remain in the workforce and through using the benefits of permanent employment (such as in-company training), build a long-term career in the sport sector.</p> <p>This form of employment could also benefit sport workers with disabilities who may feel the demands of full-time employment are too great for them.</p>	<p>Conflict and lack of collaboration - the job sharers need to be able collaborate effectively. They may also have quite different approaches to solving problems in the workplace which could generate conflict. To be optimally effective, the job-sharing arrangements should allow for some shared time in the workplace (or online) so that common approaches can be fostered and the potential for conflict reduced. There may also be challenges and new skills requirements for more senior managers responsible for the job-shared position.</p>
<p>Stable employment and improved work-life balance as an incentive to recruitment – from the employee’s perspective, this form of employment provides both stable and predictable employment and income whilst at the same time providing a balance with home and family responsibilities. This could be a recruitment attractor as well as an incentive to retention.</p>	<p>Additional stress and intensity – compared to full-time employment, Job Sharing, like other forms of part-time employment could increase the intensity of work and induce more stress.</p>

EU Regulations Relevant to Job Sharing

Currently, there are no specific legal frameworks across Europe to cover job sharing. However, employers planning to use this form of employment should be aware of [Directive 97/81/EC – the Framework Agreement on part-time working concluded by UNICE, CEEP and the ETUC \(trade unions\)](#)

9.4 Casual work

Eurofound defines this as, “A type of work where the employment is not stable and continuous, and the employer is not obliged to regularly provide the worker with work but rather has the flexibility of calling them in on demand.”

Table 5: Benefits and risks of casual work

Potential Benefits	Risks
<p>Flexibility in employment – for the employer, when facing increased demand (for example, additional fitness classes or occasional sport events) being able to readily draw on a pool of workers who have already been screened through a recruitment process can be an efficient form of working. Casual workers only need to be brought in as and when they are needed.</p>	<p>Reduced workforce stability and lower service standards – drawing on a pool of casual workers may have some efficiency gains for sport employers. However, there is a high likelihood that a number of different staff, for example, coaches and fitness instructors, will be involved in working with the same participants or classes but using their own individual coaching or training routines. From the point of view of service users, this can reduce the quality of the services they receive.</p> <p>Where there are work assignments which require a high level of coordination and collaboration, for example in sport events, the use of casual workers brought together on an ad hoc basis may make management more challenging and negatively affect teamwork.</p>

Potential Benefits	Risks
Easier access to the labour market – from the worker’s perspective, casual work may provide easier access to employment than the more complex demands of traditional permanent recruitment.	Increased labour market segmentation – there is the danger that, like platform workers, casual workers will remain in ‘secondary employment’ and find it increasingly difficult to access ‘primary employment’ and the additional benefits which go with this. Employment and income continue to be unstable.
Better fit with lifestyle and work-life balance – for some casual workers, this form of employment may also be a better fit for their lifestyles and work-life balance since they are not regularly required to be at work. This may be particularly attractive to young workers who do not require a stable income to support families and homes.	<p>Continuing the youth imbalance in sport employment – since this form of employment is likely to be more attractive to young workers, the widespread use of casual work could continue to maintain the high levels of youth in the sport labour force and depress representation of the older age groups.</p> <p>Conflicts with work-life balance/additional stress – whereas casual work may be attractive to some workers, its unpredictable demands may actually conflict with personal and family interests and responsibilities and increase stress levels.</p>
Potential to transition into stable employment – once the individual has gained work experience and proven their abilities through casual employment, this may increase their potential to gain more stable employment through permanent full-time or part-time positions.	Reduced opportunities for career development – lack of opportunities for career development has been highlighted as a particular problem facing sport recruitment and retention. Casual employment is less likely to offer training and development (unless the casual worker pays for these themselves) which could provide greater potential to move on to higher levels of responsibility and reward.

EU Regulations Relevant to Casual Work

Potentially all of the EU regulations listed in above for ICT-Based Mobile work are relevant to Casual Work, in particular **The Transparent and Predictable Working Conditions Directive and The European Working Time Directive**. However, it is important to note that most EU countries have national legislation which seeks to control casual employment, reduce the risks to casual employees and provide them with better opportunities to transition into more stable employment. The same applies to collective agreements in some countries. These will need to be examined on a country-by-country basis.

9.5 ICT-based mobile work

ICT-based mobile work is characterised by Eurofound as *“the work pattern of a worker (whether employed or self-employed) operating from various possible locations outside the premises of their employer (for example, at home, at a client’s premises or ‘on the road’), supported by modern technologies such as laptop and tablet computers.”*

Table 6: Benefits and risks of ICT-based mobile work

Potential Benefits	Risks
Greater inclusion for some – for example, addressing the needs of female workers who may have greater family responsibilities and prefer to work from home and those of disabled people who may be able to choose a workplace (including their home) which is more adapted to their specific needs.	<p>Greater exclusion for others – this approach requires a higher skillset, for example in self-management and ICT skills. Those lacking those skills may find this form of employment challenging. However, on the whole the sport workforce has higher than average levels of educational attainment and may be equal to these challenges.</p> <p>Additionally, this type of arrangement may not favour older workers who are less ‘tech-savvy’. This would be a challenge for the sport sector which needs to retain workers in the older age groups.</p>

Potential Benefits	Risks
<p>Flexibility – both the employer and the employee have greater freedom to choose the working environment which suits them. This may be of particular benefit to coordinators, coaches and personal trainers who may need to work in a variety of locations, including clients' premises.</p>	<p>Management complexity/health and safety – this approach may prove to be too complex for both employers and employees. For the employer, there are added needs in terms of coordinating, monitoring and managing staff remotely and across a range of working environments. It may also prove difficult to ensure the worker's health and safety when they are not on the employer's premises.</p> <p>Additionally, many employees may not wish the added responsibility which this type of working requires, especially at the same salary.</p>
<p>Autonomy/job satisfaction – the employee may have more direct control over their work activities when they are not office or centre-based. This may act as an incentive to staff retention.</p>	<p>Reduced collaboration, social isolation and exploitation – the sport sector relies heavily on a collaborative approach, but this type of working arrangement may reduce effective teamworking and skill sharing. Workers may miss everyday contact with colleagues and the social opportunities this provides.</p> <p>There is also the potential for 'limitless work', i.e., the home-based worker may be considered to be available at all hours.</p>
<p>Incentive to recruitment – the flexibility and autonomy provided by this type of employment may be highly attractive to many potential recruits.</p>	<p>Lack of unique selling point – so many employers are now offering this type of working arrangement.</p>
<p>Reduced financial overheads – the employer may be able to scale down their office accommodation, increase the efficiency of their operations and free up more financial resources for staff employment. This may be particularly attractive to smaller organisations in the sport sector who are deterred from employing staff because of lack of financial sustainability.</p> <p>From the worker's perspective, if some of their work is home-based, they reduce their travel to work expenses.</p>	<p>Redistribution of overheads to the employee – if the worker is home-based, they are then covering their energy costs and the cost of using part of their home as a workplace. Employers will need to consider compensating employees for these.</p>
<p>Decreased carbon footprint – from the employer's perspective, there may be opportunities to reduce energy consumption when fewer employees are office-based.</p>	<p>Increased carbon footprint – if employees are predominantly 'on the road', there is the potential for more carbon consumption through the use of their vehicles.</p>

EU Regulations Relevant to ICT-Based Mobile Work

The EU currently has no specific arrangements covering this type of employment, the following need to be considered:

- **The European Working Time Directive** which defines working time, maximum number of working hours, minimum rest periods and requirements around the recording of working time.
- **The European Framework Directive on Safety and Health at Work** which applies to all places of work.
- **The Work-Life Balance Directive** which highlights remote and flexible working hours as a way of improving work-life balance.
- **The Transparent and Predictable Working Conditions Directive** which requires information on places of work and work patterns is included in employment contracts.
- **Expected legislation on the Right to Disconnect.**

9.6 Portfolio work

Eurofound defines Portfolio Work as, “the small-scale contracting by freelancers, the self-employed or micro enterprises that work for a large number of clients.”

Table 7: Benefits and risks of portfolio work

Potential Benefits	Risks
<p>Retention of skilled and experienced staff in the sport sector – potentially portfolio work provides the sector with opportunities to retain the services of skilled and experienced staff who find it difficult to obtain full-time permanent employment commensurate with their expectations either for financial reward or flexibility. The further promotion of self-employment in the sport sector could be beneficial.</p>	<p>Precarious employment and greater stress – Portfolio Work involves an element of risk for the sport worker. Demand for their services may fluctuate unpredictably, as will their income. Indeed, some portfolio workers may find it hard to survive in a competitive market.</p> <p>On the other hand, over time, the self-employed worker may be able to accrue a stable client base to mitigate such fluctuations. Additionally, working successfully with the same client for a period may open up the possibility of transitioning into a permanent full-time position with that client.</p>
<p>Greater flexibility and less administration for the client organisation – the sport organisation client can enter into short-term service contracts with the self-employed person as a when they are needed.</p> <p>It may also prove to be bureaucratically less burdensome for the client sport organisation to manage some aspects of service delivery via service contracts rather than formal employment. This may be attractive to smaller organisations which lack an HR function.</p>	<p>Conflict and lack of collaboration – like many other emerging employment practices where flexible working arrangements apply and sport workers are engaged across a range of workplaces, there is the danger that the self-employed person finds it hard to integrate into different organisational cultures, conflicts occur and the potential for collaboration and teamwork are reduced.</p> <p>These challenges may require a different skillset on the part of the client employer in managing such situations satisfactorily.</p> <p>Unclear employment status - if the self-employed worker has a very narrow portfolio of clients, they could be deemed to be an employee of the one for whom they provide the most services. In this case, the client may have to acknowledge their employee status and lose the advantages of hiring self-employed workers.</p>
<p>Greater flexibility for the self-employed worker – from the sport worker’s perspective, self-employment, if the market is sufficiently great, offers the opportunity to pick and choose the assignments which fit their lifestyle and financial goals. Many staff may find the greater degree of independence and autonomy attractive.</p>	<p>Lack of social protections – like many other of these emerging employment practices, the self-employed portfolio worker receives no contributions to social security, pensions, unemployment benefit etc. from the employer. They need to address these issues themselves by building these costs into their business plan otherwise their future may be precarious.</p>
<p>Greater autonomy and innovation for the self-employed sport worker – for many in the sport sector, this may be a strong attractor. Additionally, the need to broaden their market share could lead to more innovation in the sector in the form of new or adapted services.</p>	<p>Demand for a wider skillset – workers may enter self-employment with the appropriate skills in their discipline, for example, coaching, outdoor leadership or personal training. However, they are likely to lack both skills and experience in areas vital to self-employment such as marketing, business planning, self-management, product or service development, accounting and other types of financial expertise. They will need either to gain these skills or to contract the services of others.</p>

Potential Benefits	Risks
<p>Inclusion of more female workers and retention of youth – given the flexible employment opportunities offered by this form of employment, portfolio working may prove attractive to female sport workers, for example, group exercise teachers and its further development may help to boost the representation of females in the sport labour force.</p> <p>Similarly, portfolio working may be attractive to younger workers who have the appropriate qualifications and may have gained work experience through part-time employment. Entering portfolio working on a long-term basis could be a way of retaining them in the sector.</p>	<p>Limited opportunities for skills development and career progression – the self-employed portfolio worker is very much ‘on their own’ when it comes to further training and education, the costs of which they will have to meet themselves.</p> <p>Unless the portfolio worker finds opportunities for permanent full-time employment or they move on to establishing an enterprise of their own where they employ others, their potential to progress in their careers may be limited.</p>

EU Regulations Relevant to Portfolio Work

Currently, there are no specific legal frameworks across Europe to cover portfolio work. The main area of legal interest is whether the self-employed person is truly self-employed or a ‘disguised employee’ who should receive the benefits of employment. However, it should be noted that EU is now taking more interest in the protections of people engaged in self-employment following the impact of Covid⁸.

9.7 Collaborative employment

According to Eurofound, this form of employment “encompasses specific forms of cooperation among self-employed workers that go beyond traditional supply chain or business partner relationships.”

Typically, self-employed workers form co-working arrangements where they share workspaces and back-office functions such as accounting or ICT by agreement and service contracts, but they do not form a legal entity.

The benefits and risks of Collaborative Employment were considered to be almost identical to those for Portfolio work. The major additional benefit is that self-employed workers can share working spaces and back-office functions which may reduce some overheads and overcome some of the entrepreneurial skills deficits which self-employed workers may face in areas such as marketing, business planning, ICT and accounting. There may also be some benefits in addressing the social isolation experienced by some self-employed workers. This may be particularly true for disabled sport workers who might find coworking a more supportive environment than solo self-employment.

EU Regulations Relevant to Collaborative Employment

There are no specific legal frameworks which apply to Collaborative Employment.

9.8 Voucher-based work

Voucher-based work is defined by Eurofound as, “the employment relationship and related payment are based on a voucher (generally acquired from a third party such as a governmental authority) rather than an employment contract.”

Eurofound notes that this form of employment takes place in only nine EU countries and is limited to some specific sectors such as household work (for example, cleaning and gardening) and agriculture. Take-up is relatively low.

⁸ <https://www.eurofound.europa.eu/en/publications/2024/self-employment-eu-job-quality-and-developments-social-protection>

Table 8: Benefits and risks of voucher work

Potential Benefits	Risks
<p>Simplified payment process – potentially useful for small, project-based, or seasonal jobs.</p> <p>May assist in transitioning actual or potential undeclared workers into formal employment – the use of voucher-based work applies mainly to jobs which are short-term, relatively informal and occasional. These are the types of jobs which are most likely to attract undeclared labour.</p>	<p>Limited rewards and long-term prospects – employees may receive lower salaries due to tax and social security deductions. This may limit the attractiveness of this employment form. Employees</p>
<p>Reduces the complexity of taxes and social security contributions for employers and employees – the government appointed agency takes care of calculations and deductions.</p>	<p>Lack of relevance to in-demand occupations in sport – traditionally voucher-based work has been applied to low skill jobs with few requirements for educational achievement. Currently, this model would not seem to apply to the occupations where there are real recruitment and retention challenges – mainly sport coaches and managers.</p>

EU Regulations relevant to voucher-based work

The **Transparent and Predictable Working Conditions Directive** and **The European Working Time Directive** are the most applicable.

9.9 Interim management

Eurofound describes Interim Management as, “a form of employment in which a company ‘leases out’ workers to other companies temporarily and for a specific purpose. Such leasing of workers is the main objective of the employer company, but, unlike a temporary employment agency, its staff is limited to highly specialised experts who are sent to the receiving companies to solve a specific management or technical challenge or assist in economically difficult times. In contrast to traditional fixed-term work arrangements, interim management has some elements of consultancy, but the expert has employee status rather than that of external advisor. In practice, however, in some countries interim management is done on the basis of self-employment.”

Table 9: Benefits and risks of interim management

Potential Benefits	Risks
<p>Access to specialist expertise on a short-term basis – this could be particularly valuable to the many small or under resourced sport organisations in the sector who struggle with specific functions such as HR, payroll, ICT and finance. Rather than employ staff member on a long-term basis, the organisation can call in an expert to address a specific problem.</p>	<p>Prohibitive cost – many organisations in the sport sector may struggle to cover the costs of hiring such an expert. However, when set against the costs of employing someone with those skills on a longer-term basis, the savings could be attractive.</p> <p>Alternatively, the interim management organisation or their employed managers may be attracted to the sport sector and its largely voluntary nature and be prepared to offer their services at reduced cost.</p>
<p>Capturing the experience/expertise of older workers and those with disabilities– the relatively youthful nature of sport labour force means that much valuable experience is lost to the sector and the advantages of multi-generational working are diminished. Many of the workers providing Interim Management are older and more experienced. The use of</p>	<p>Failure to integrate expertise and experience into the organisation – whilst hiring external expertise on a short-term basis may be a good temporary solution, there is the danger that the expertise is not shared across the organisation. No-one absorbs the lessons learned and develops the ability to adapt and apply that knowledge in the</p>

Potential Benefits	Risks
<p>these older interim managers may bring this experience back into the sector.</p> <p>This form of employment might also favour disabled managers who have specific knowledge and skills in the area of sport and disability. Accessing their experience and expertise may help to attract more paid workers with disabilities and disabled participants.</p>	<p>future. The sport organisation fails to develop its own capacity and becomes overly reliant on external experts.</p>
<p>Variety and autonomy – from the interim manager’s perspective, this form of working provides variety and a potentially endless series of assignments over which they have considerable control. The sport organisation receiving the interim manager could also gain valuable insights into the good practices of other organisations, some of which may be outside sport and be innovative for the sector.</p>	<p>Difficulties of management, integration and collaboration – monitoring and control may be an issue with this form of employment. The worker is formally employed by an interim management organisation, but they are then placed in another organisation. These management arrangements may be complex and lead to ambiguity and conflict.</p> <p>In addition, the interim manager may find it more difficult to integrate into the culture of the receiving organisation or build collaborative working relationships with permanent staff.</p>

EU Regulations Relevant to Interim Management

Currently, there are no specific legal frameworks across Europe to cover Interim Management. However, all other relevant areas of employment law apply.

10 New forms of employment – the sport employers’ experience

Much of the preliminary evaluation of new forms of employment resulting from the desk research was used to inform the design of the survey questionnaire. It was particularly important for the project to discover more about the application and relevance of new forms of employment in the sport sector, in particular:

- Current levels of awareness of new forms of employment
- Current levels of usage of new forms of employment
- Whether or not those with experience of new forms of employment would recommend their adoption
- Whether or not those who had no experience of new forms of employment could see potential value to their organisation
- The advantages and disadvantages of new forms of employment identified by those who had used them
- The types of occupations which had been used for new forms of employment
- Any external organisations which had participated in or supported the new form of employment
- The demographics of the workers who had been involved in the new form of employment.

The questions used in this part of the survey and the findings are given below. In each case, the questions were worded in a way which explained the new form of employment and sport specific examples were given to aid understanding. These can be seen in the full text of the survey questionnaire (Annex 3).

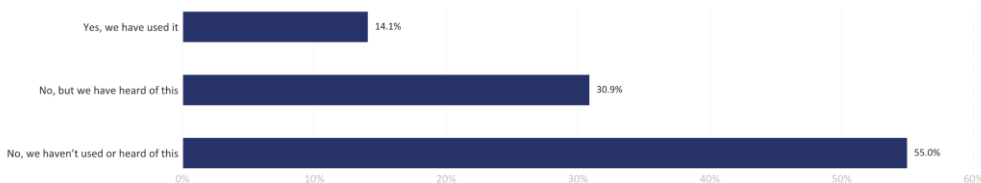
It is important to note that two of the Eurofound new forms of employment, Collaborative Employment and Interim Management, were not dealt with separately in the questionnaire because of their similarity/overlap with other new forms (see Section 7.3 above). Questions relevant to each were included in other sections.

In addition, one new form of employment, not mentioned by Eurofound but found during the desk research as being prevalent in the sport sector in some countries, was added. This is Intermittent Permanent Employment which is used by some sport employers to mitigate some of the problems caused by seasonal employment. This is covered in section 10.5 below.

The following sections show the survey findings for each new form.

10.1 Employee sharing

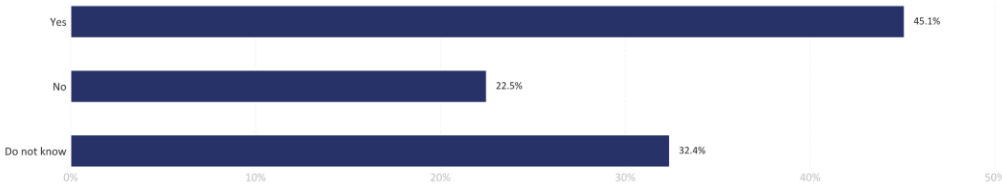
Figure 40: One organisation employs workers and then shares them across different organisations when they are needed, for a fee based on the number of hours worked. (n=1785)



This shows a relatively high level of awareness (14.1% have used it and 30.9% having heard of it).

Only those who said they had not used Employee Sharing were then asked:

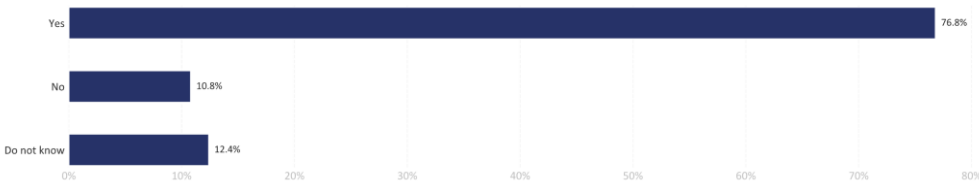
Figure 41: You said that you have not used services of a worker who is employed by another organisation and shared across different organisations when they are needed, for a fee based on the number of hours worked. Do you think this form of employment could be useful for your organisation? (n=1520)



Employee sharing therefore appears to be relatively attractive with almost one half (45.1%) saying it could be helpful in the future.

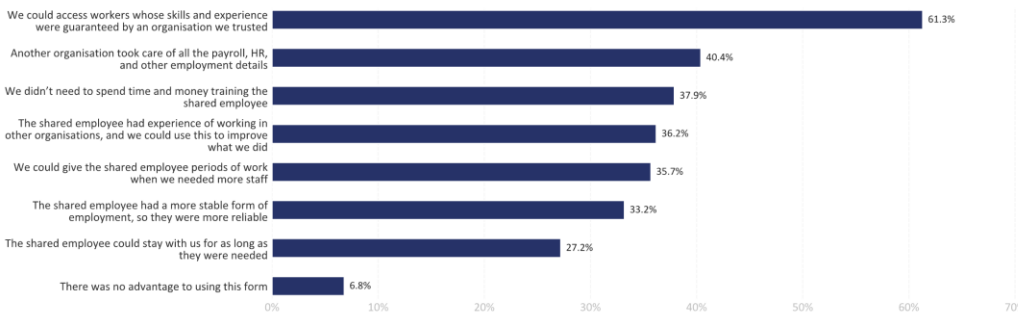
Only the respondents who said they had used Employee Sharing were then asked about their opinions and experiences.

Figure 42: Would you recommend this form of employment as a good solution to other sport organisations? (n=241)



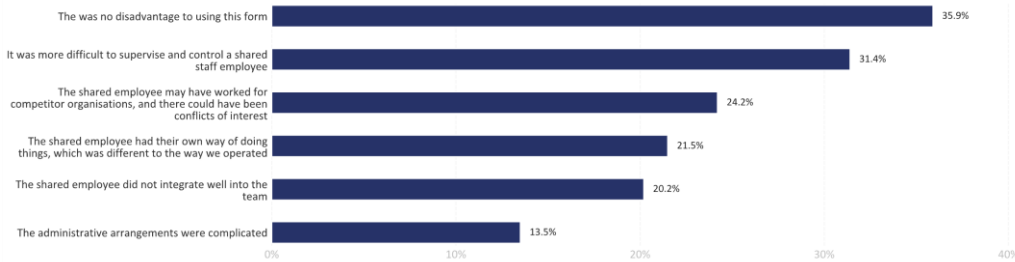
Over three quarters (76.8%) of those who had used employee sharing said they would recommend it to others.

Figure 43: What, in your opinion, were the main advantages of this form of employment? (n=235)



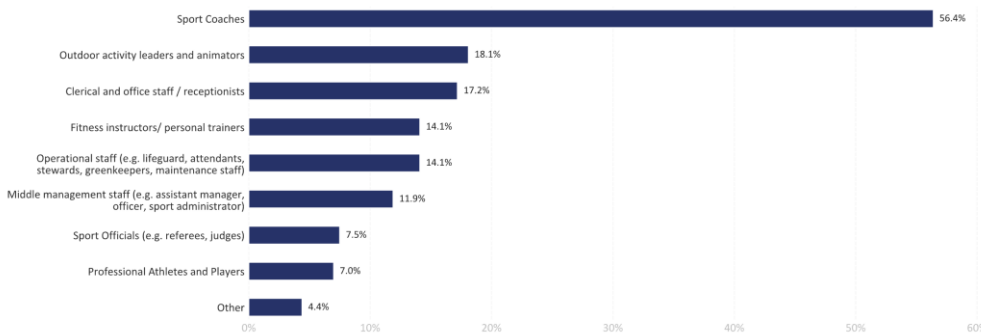
Over one half (61.3%) felt that employee sharing provided easy access to skilled and experienced staff. They also acknowledged the reduced administrative (40.4%) and training burdens (37.9%). It was also clearly valuable that employee sharing provided them with staff experienced in working for other organisations (36.2%) and the flexibility employee sharing offered when responding to greater demand (35.7%).

Figure 44: What, in your opinion, were the main disadvantages of this form of employment? (n=223)



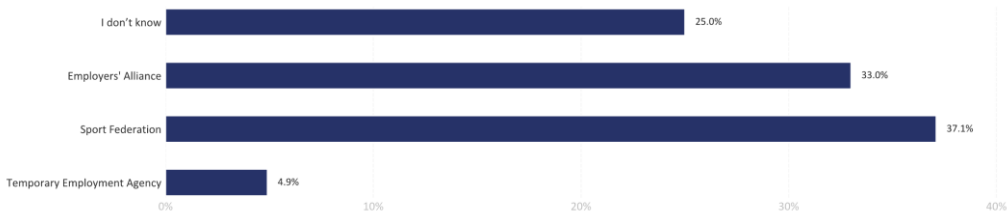
Interestingly, the highest percentage of organisations using employee sharing felt there were no disadvantages (35.9%). The greatest disadvantage chosen was the difficulty of supervising and controlling the shared employee (31.4%). Around one quarter (24.2%) were concerned about conflict of interest because the shared employee may have also worked for competitor organisations (a particular issue in sport where clubs are involved in competitions with other clubs). Slightly less found the shared employee had their own way of doing things which was different to the organisation’s processes and 20.2% identified problems with team integration.

Figure 45: Which of the following jobs did you use this form of employment for? (n=227)



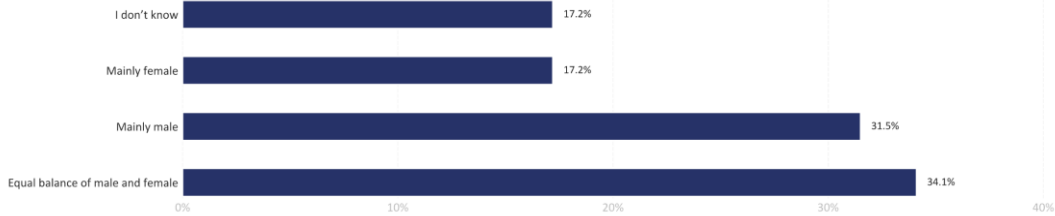
Just over one half were using employee sharing with sport coaches and far fewer for clerical and admin posts (18.1%) and operational staff (17.2%). Compared to sport coaches, the use of shared employment for outdoor activity leaders/animators and fitness instructors/personal trainers was relatively low. However, this probably reflects the low representation of these types of organisations in the survey.

Figure 46: What type of organisation did you get the staff member from? (n=224)



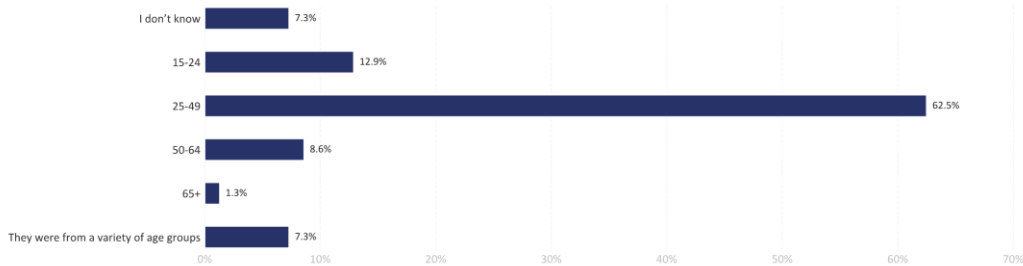
Overall the greatest percentage of organisations (37.1%) were getting their shared employees from a sport federation, but this possibly will vary on a country-by-country basis.

Figure 47: On average, what was the gender balance of the staff involved? (n=232)



Employee sharing, therefore, appears to engage almost twice as many males than females.

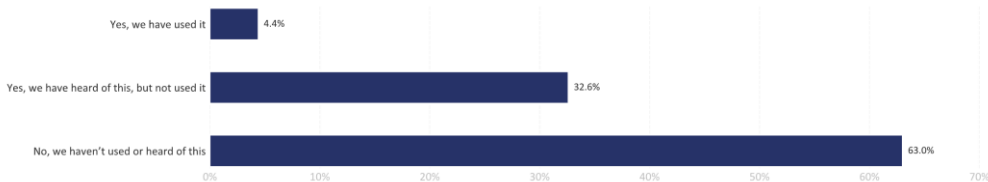
Figure 48: On average, how old were the staff involved? (n=232)



Employee sharing, therefore, appears to engage far more workers in the 25-49 age group (62.5%) compared to any other.

10.2 Platform work

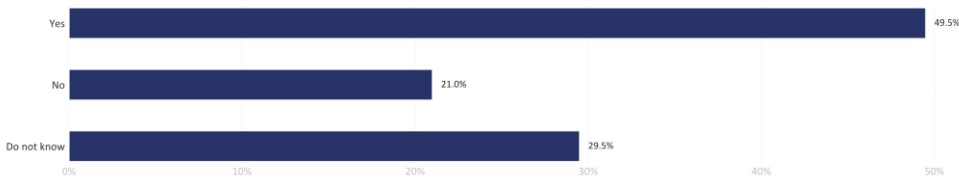
Figure 49: Skilled workers make themselves available on a digital platform, and employers can hire their services when they need them. c (n=1743)



Compared to shared employment above, platform work seems less well known with only 4.4% saying they had used it and 32.6% saying they had heard of it.

Only those who said they had not used Platform Work were then asked:

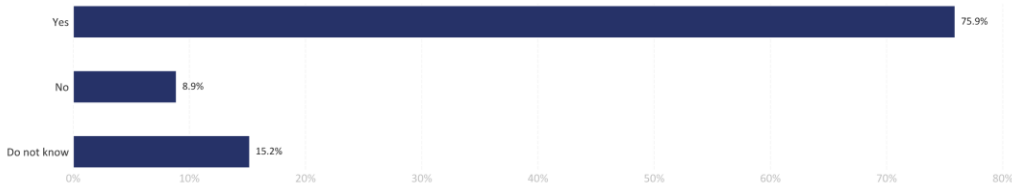
Figure 50: You said that you have not used a digital platform where skilled staff make themselves available for hire when needed. Even though you have not used this form of employment, do you think it could be helpful to your organisation in the future? (n=1654)



More than twice as many of those who had not used platform work felt it could be helpful to their organisation (49.5%) compared to those who felt it would not be (21%).

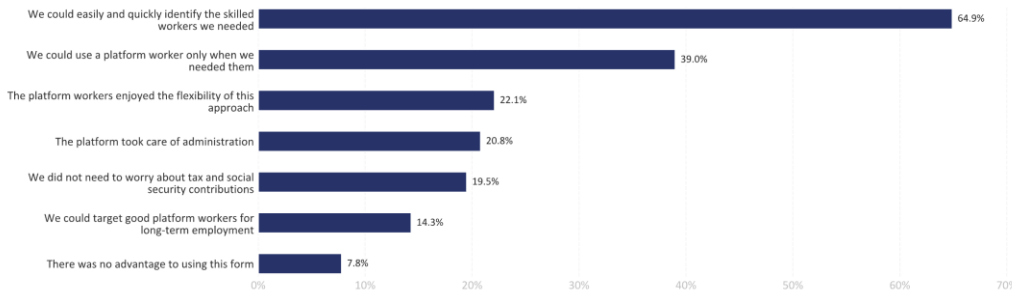
Only the respondents who said they had used Platform Work were then asked about their opinions and experiences.

Figure 51: Would you recommend this form of employment as a good solution to other sport organisations? (n=79)



Just over three quarters (75.9%) of those who had used platform workers said they would recommend it to others with only 8.9% saying they would not.

Figure 52: What, in your opinion, were the main advantages of this form of employment? (n=77)



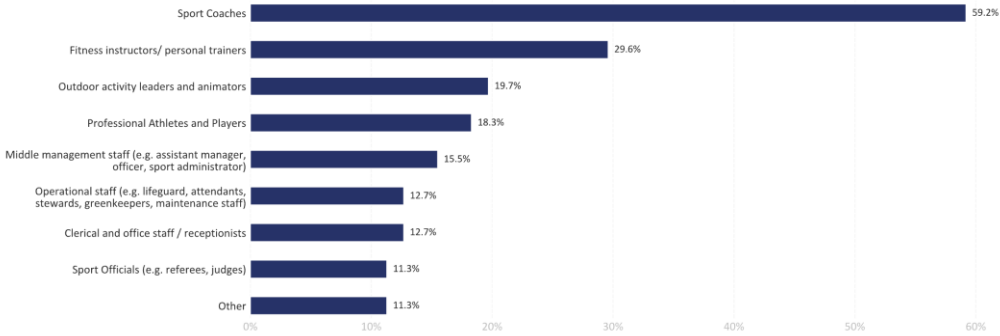
Nearly two thirds (64.9%) identified easy and quick access to skilled workers as the main advantage. Over one third (39%) appreciated the flexibility in only using platform workers when they were needed and 22.1% felt the platform worker also appreciated the flexibility of this type of employment. Fewer percentages saw an advantage in the reduced administrative burdens for themselves.

Figure 53: What, in your opinion, were the main disadvantages of this form of employment? (n=71)



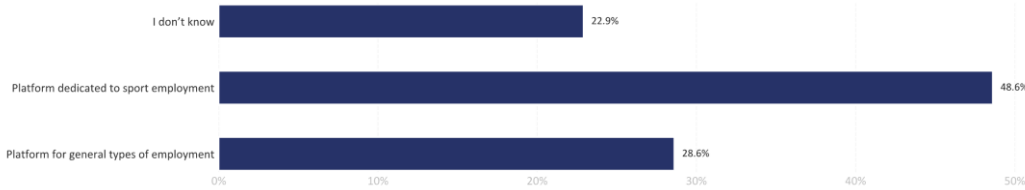
Almost one third (32.4%) reported no disadvantage. Like employee sharing above, there were concerns about potential conflicts of interest because the platform worker may also work for competitors as being the main disadvantage. (33.8%). Other identified disadvantages were the additional cost of using a platform worker (28.2%), less motivation on the part of the platform worker (22.5%), less management control (21.1%) and poor team integration (19.7%).

Figure 54: Which of the following jobs did this form of employment apply to? (n=71)



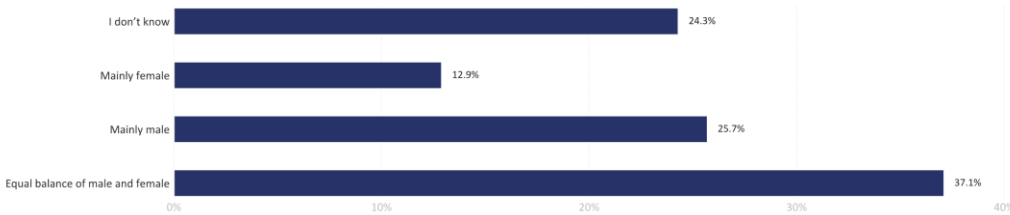
Once again, platform work seems much more applicable to sport coaches than other types of workers. However, now (compared to employee sharing) we can see greater use for fitness instructors/personal trainers (29.6%) and outdoor staff (19.7%). Perhaps surprisingly, platform work also seems applicable to professional athletes and players (18.3%). The use of platform work for middle management staff may suggest a form of interim management (which was not included as a category in the survey).

Figure 55: Which type of platform did you get the staff member from? (n=70)



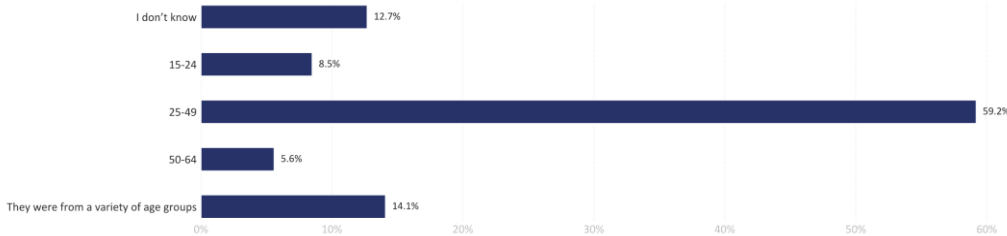
Unsurprisingly, given the high use of platform work for sport coaches, fitness instructors/trainers and outdoor staff, the highest percentage (48.6%) obtained their worker from a platform dedicated to sport. It is likely that the 28.6% who used a general employment platform were doing so for managers, operational staff and clerical workers.

Figure 56: On average, what was the gender balance of the members of staff involved? (n=70)



Similar to employee sharing, platform work in sport seems more applicable to males than females (25.7% versus 12.9%).

Figure 57: On average, how old were the members of staff involved? (n=71)



Again, like employee sharing, we see a very high representation of those in 25-49 age group (59.2%).

10.3 Job sharing

Figure 58: Two or more members of staff share the responsibilities and duties of one full-time position. (n=1725)



Job sharing appears to be very well known with 23.5% saying they had used it and 39.7% saying they had heard of it.

Only those who said they had not used Job Sharing were then asked:

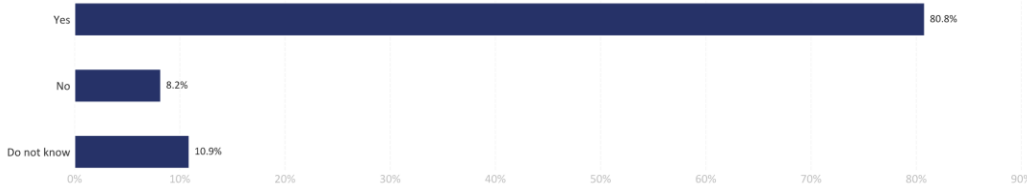
Figure 59: You said that you have not used a system where two or more members of staff share the responsibilities and duties of one full-time position. Even though you have not used this form of employment, do you think it could be helpful to your organisation in the future? (n=1307)



Job sharing does not seem so attractive as employee sharing and platform work with only 37% saying it would be helpful to them in the future and nearly as many (30.1%) saying it would not. This is possibly because job sharing is fairly well-known, and respondents had thought about using it in the past and had rejected the idea.

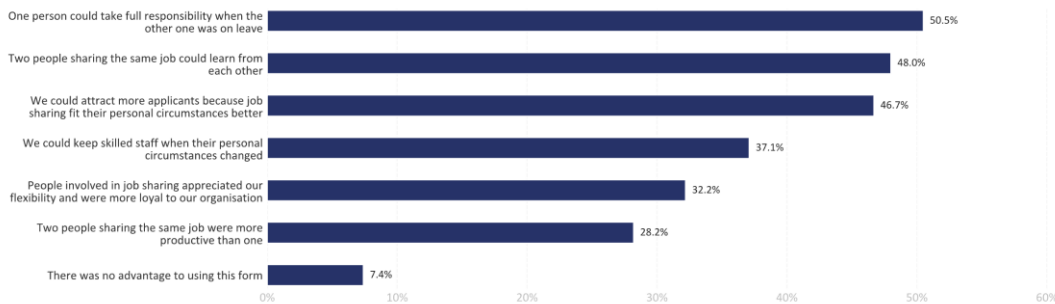
Only the respondents who said they had used Job Sharing were then asked about their opinions and experiences.

Figure 60: Would you recommend this form of employment as a good solution to other sport organisations? (n=402)



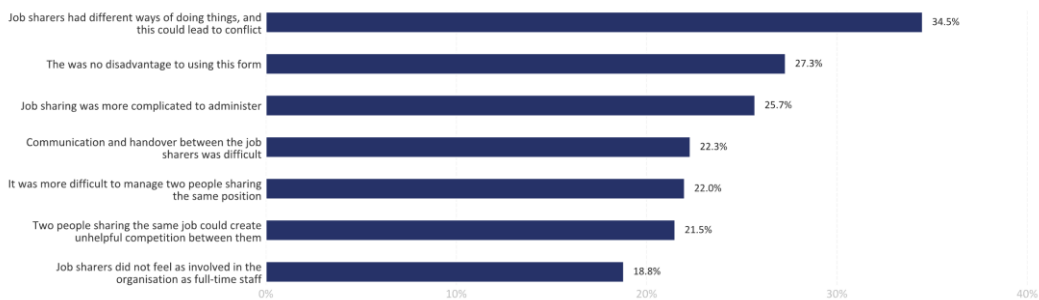
Despite the lower level of attractiveness of job sharing noted above, over three quarters (80.8%) would recommend it to others with only 8.2% saying they would not.

Figure 61: What, in your opinion, were the main advantages of this form of employment? (n=394)



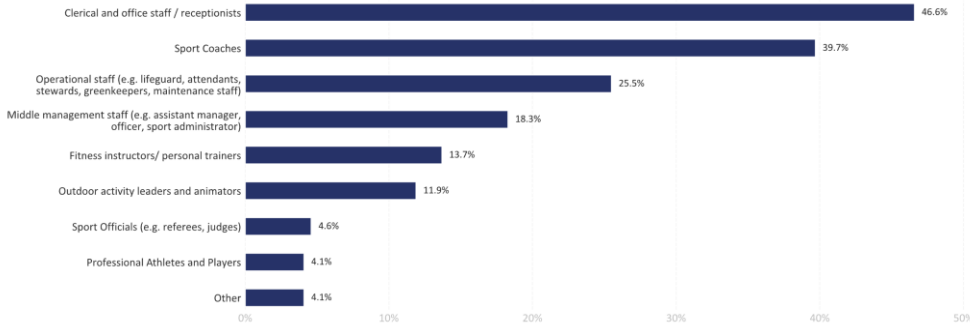
Just over one half (50.5%) identified the flexibility offered by job sharing because one person can take full responsibility when the other was on leave. There were also advantages in co-learning (48%). Job sharing also would appear to have advantages in recruiting staff. 46.7% felt that job sharing could attract more applicants because the arrangement would fit personal circumstances better. There was also a retention advantage because the organisation can keep skilled staff when personal circumstances change (37.1%) and 32.2% thought it would increase loyalty to the organisation. 28.2% identified productivity gains.

Figure 62: What, in your opinion, were the main disadvantages of this form of employment? (n=377)



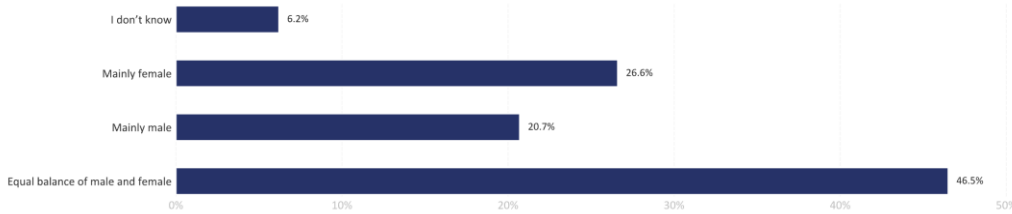
Over one quarter (27.3%) felt there were no disadvantages. However, there are clearly some issues to consider. 34.5% thought having two people sharing the same post could lead to conflict and 25.7% found it harder to administer (thus perhaps increasing the administrative burden). 22.3% found communication and handover between the job sharers was difficult and almost as many (22%) experienced greater management difficulties.

Figure 63: Which of the following jobs did this form of employment apply to? (n=388)



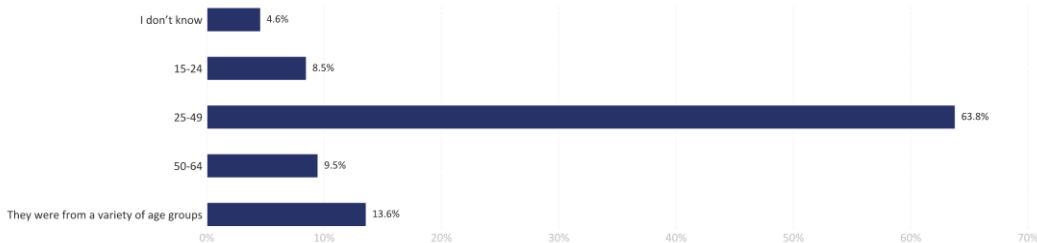
This was the only new form of employment for which sport coaches appeared not the most applicable (39.7%). The role with the highest percentage of users was clerical and office staff/receptionists at 46.6%. It also appears attractive to operational staff (25.5%) and middle managers (18.3%). Once again, the lower representation of fitness clubs and outdoor activity providers in the survey may explain the lower usage with fitness instructors/personal trainers (13.7%) and outdoor staff (11.9%).

Figure 64: On average, what was the gender balance of the members of staff involved? (n=387)



This was the only new form of employment in which females appear to be more mainly involved than males (26.6% versus 20.7%). This possibly reflects one of the key main advantages of job sharing – a better fit with personal circumstances.

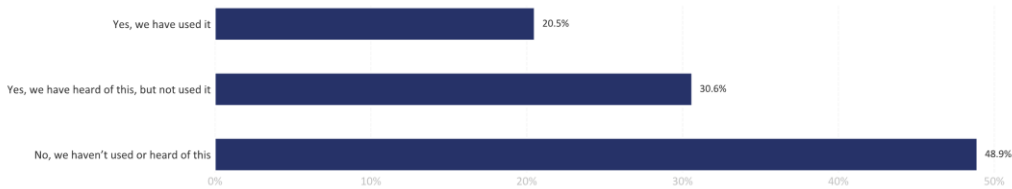
Figure 65: On average, how old were the members of staff involved? (n=390)



Similar to most of the other new forms of employment, job sharing appears to involve a significant majority of those in the 25-49 age group (63.8%).

10.4 Casual work

Figure 66: An organisation has an employment contract with a member of staff without guaranteeing a minimum number of hours. They only call them in for work when they are needed and only pay them for the hours they work. Example: a sport events organisation sets (n=1694)



Casual work appears to be fairly well-known with 20.5% saying they had used it and 30.6% saying they had heard of it.

Only those who said they had not used Casual Work were then asked:

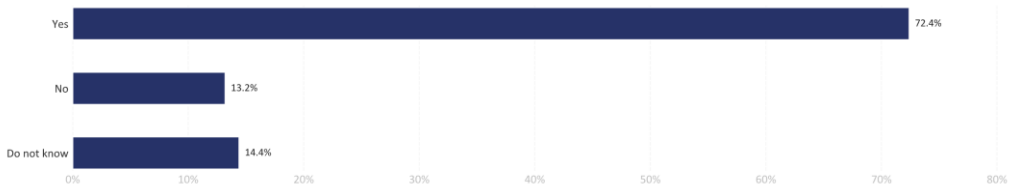
Figure 67: You said that you have not used an employment contract where a member of staff is only called in for work when needed without a guarantee of minimum hours. Even though you have not used this form of employment, do you think it could be helpful to your organisation in the future? (n=1335)



In terms of attractiveness, there is a fairly even balance of those who felt it would help their organisation (35.5%) and those who said it would not (34.5%). Like job sharing, this may be because it is quite widely used in the sector and respondents would already have formed an opinion. It is also a form of employment for which there are increasing legal restrictions which may have been known to the respondents.

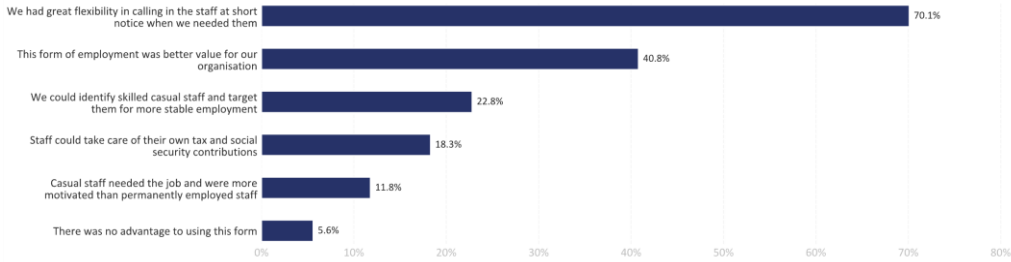
Only the respondents who said they had used Casual Work were then asked about their opinions and experiences.

Figure 68: Would you recommend this form of employment as a good solution to other sport organisations? (n=341)



Slightly less than three quarters (72.4%) said they would recommend it to others, but the percentage of those who said they would not is slightly higher than most other new forms (13.2%).

Figure 69: What, in your opinion, were the main advantages of this form of employment? (n=338)



The flexibility of casual work – being able to call in staff at short notice when needed – was seen as the greatest advantage by users (70.1%). Users also appreciated better value for the organisation (40.8%) presumably because the casual worker is only paid for the hours they work and there may be no additional costs such as paid holidays, sick pay etc. 22.8% also found they could target a skilled casual worker for more stable employment such as regular permanent or part-time employment. It is however worrying that 18.3% said the staff could take care of their own tax and social security. This might suggest that there is an element of undeclared work associated with casual employment.

Figure 70: What, in your opinion, were the main disadvantages of this form of employment? (n=331)

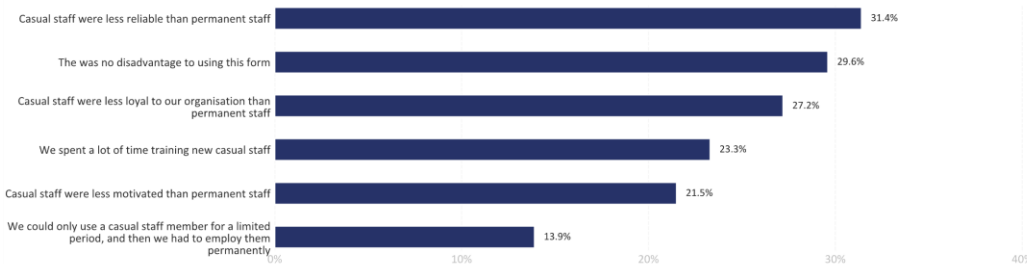
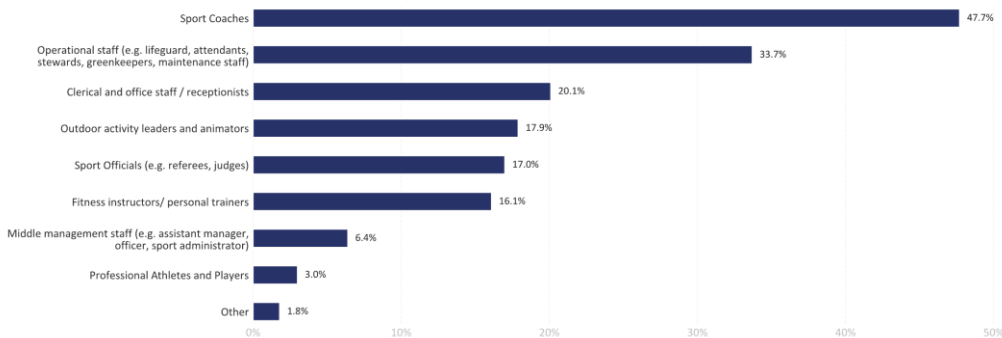
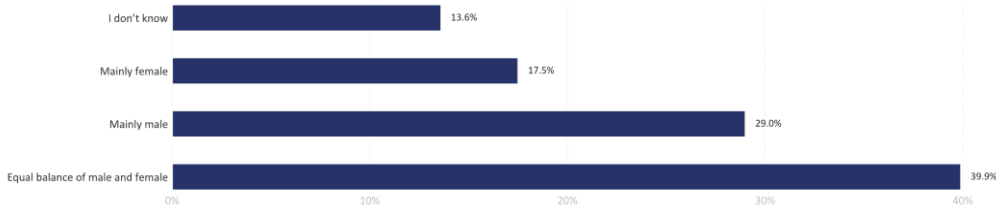


Figure 71: Which of the following jobs did this form of employment apply to? (n=329)



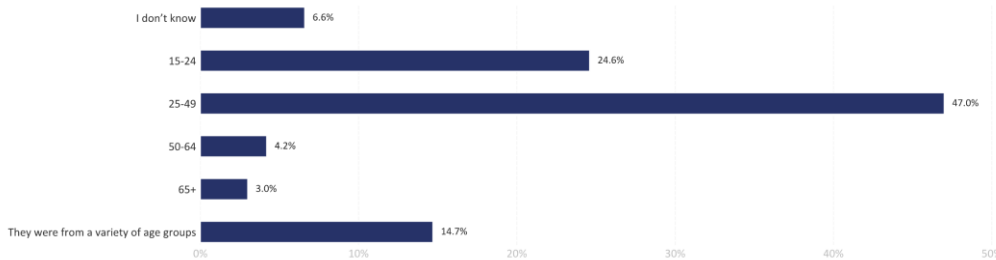
Similar to most other new forms of employment, casual work appears most applicable to sport coaches but at 47.7% this is significantly lower than the percentages for employee sharing and platform work. The fact that one third (33.7%) said they were using casual work for operational staff may underscore findings from the desk research that this form of employment is more associated with occasional sporting events.

Figure 72: On average, what was the gender balance of the members of staff involved? (n=331)



The higher representation of males is similar to most other new forms of employment with the exception of job sharing.

Figure 73: On average, how old were the members of staff involved? (n=334)

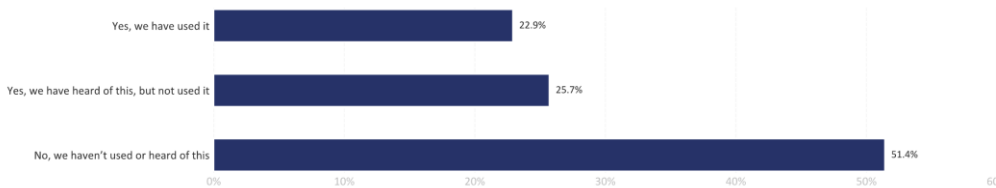


Whereas those in the 25-49 age group are still the largest percentage (47%), this is lower than their representation in all the other new forms of employment and the only one which seems more applicable to the younger age group (24.6%). This might suggest, as Eurofound proposes, that casual work is an easier route into sport employment than many others.

10.5 Intermittent permanent employment

This was the one new form of employment which was added to the Eurofound categories because it emerged from the partners' own desk research.

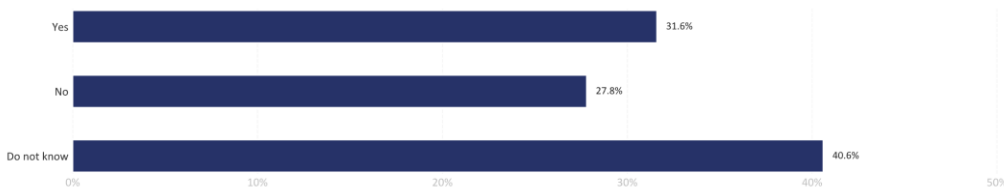
Figure 74: An organisation gives their staff member a permanent employment contract with an agreed number of hours to be worked over the year. The weekly / monthly working hours are irregular due to peaks in demand or seasonality. Despite the irregularity, staff member is paid a fixed monthly salary based on 1/12 of the total yearly working hours to ensure a stable monthly salary. Have you used this form of employment? (n=1663)



Perhaps surprisingly, since Eurofound did not identify it, intermittent permanent employment appears to be quite well-known in the sector. Perhaps it is more prevalent in sport – or at least those countries most represented in the survey. 22.9% said they had used it and 25.7% said they had not used it but heard of it. However, the percentage of those who had heard of it is lower than employee sharing, platform work, job sharing or casual work.

Only those who said they had not used Intermittent Permanent Employment were then asked:

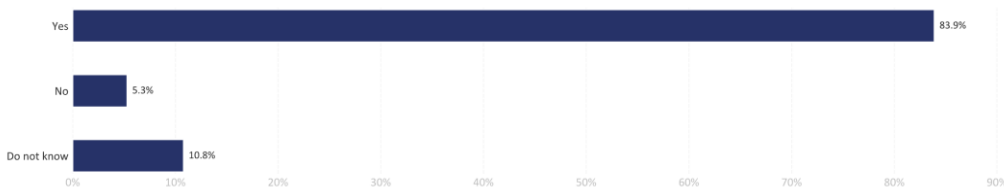
Figure 75: You said that you have not used an employment contract with an agreed number of hours over the year, with irregular weekly/monthly hours but a fixed monthly salary. Even though you have not used this form of employment, do you think it could be helpful to your organisation in the future?(n=1275)



In terms of attractiveness, the findings here are relatively balanced with 31.6% saying it could be helpful to them and 27.8% saying it would not. This may be because it is primarily designed to overcome some of the challenges faced by employers who are mainly involved in seasonal sports such as skiing and tennis.

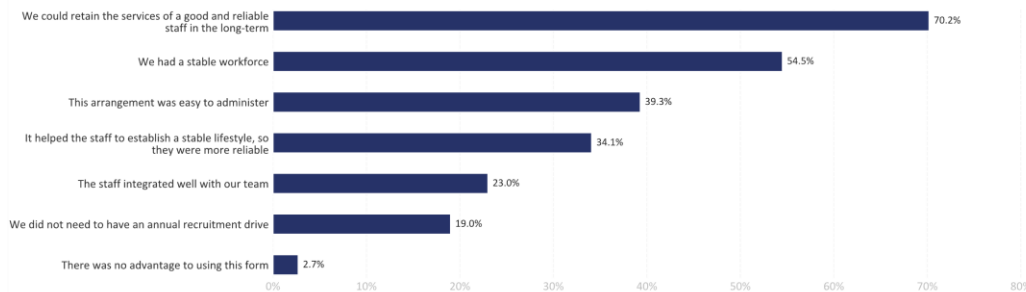
Only the respondents who said they had used Intermittent Permanent Employment were then asked about their opinions and experiences.

Figure 76: Would you recommend this form of employment as a good solution to other sport organisations? (n=378)



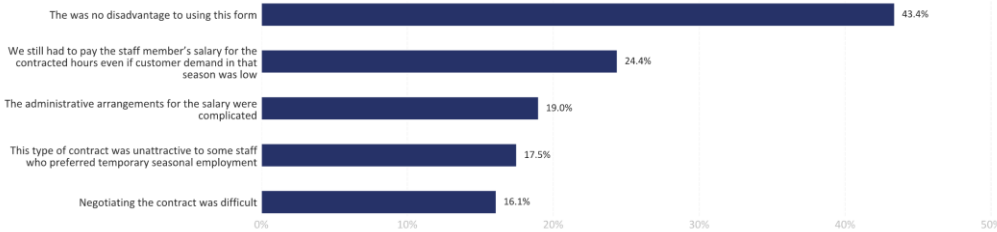
Once again, the experience of users appears to be positive with 83.9% able to recommend it to others.

Figure 77: What, in your opinion, were the main advantages of this form of employment? (n=369)



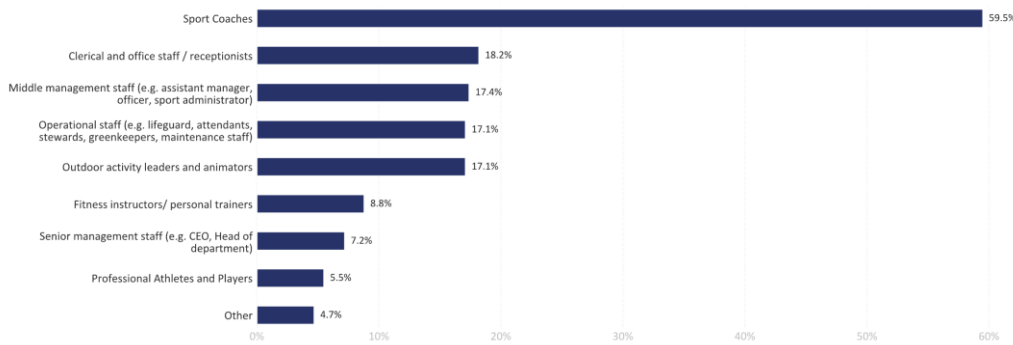
The main advantages here appear to apply to staff retention. Nearly three quarters (70.2%) said it enabled them to retain the services of good and reliable staff in the long-term and 54.5% thought it contributed to a stable workforce. The administrative burden does not seem significant with 39.3% feeling it was easy to administer and 19% seeing an advantage in not having to mount an annual recruitment drive. There also appear to be advantages for the employee with 34.1% saying it contributed to a stable lifestyle for the worker which in turn improved reliability.

Figure 78: What, in your opinion, were the main disadvantages of this form of employment? (n=348)



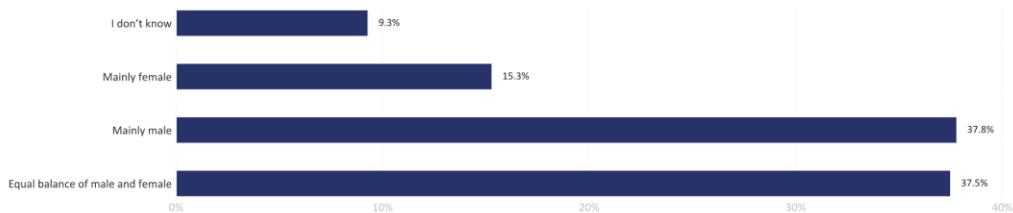
The greatest percentage (43.4%) felt there were no disadvantages. However, there may be financial costs for the stability which intermittent permanent employment brings. 24.4% said that they had to pay salaries even when customer demand was low in the season. Although when asked about advantages (Figure 77), 39.3% said it was easy to administer, 19.3% thought administrative arrangements for the salary were complicated and 16.1% said it was difficult to negotiate the contract. It is also worth noting that 17.5% said this type of contract was unattractive to some staff who favour temporary seasonal employment.

Figure 79: Which of the following jobs did you use this form of employment for? (n=363)



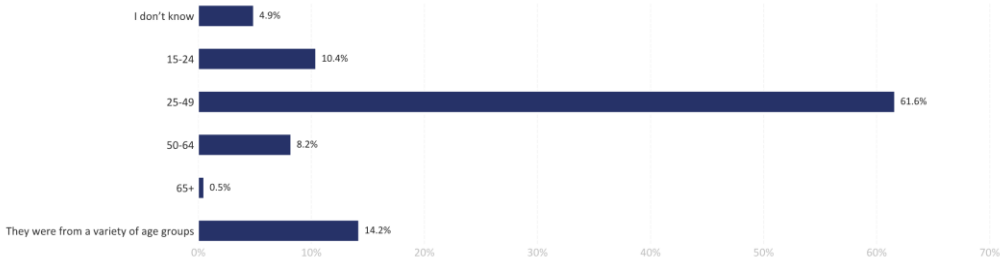
Once again, sport coaches top the list, but it is also significant that 18.2% are using it for clerical and office staff, 17.4% for middle managers, 17.1% for operational staff and the same percentage for outdoor staff.

Figure 80: On average, what was the gender balance of the members of staff involved? (n=365)



Like most of the other new forms of employment, intermittent permanent employment involves mainly males (37.8% versus 15.3% females). This is actually the highest percentage of male representation in all the new forms of employment. Possibly this reflects the fact that it will be most attractive to a family's principal earner who, even today, is more likely to be male than female.

Figure 81: On average, how old were the members of staff involved? (n=365)



At 61.6%, those in the 25-49 age group is the largest and this is similar to most other new forms of employment.

10.6 Remote working

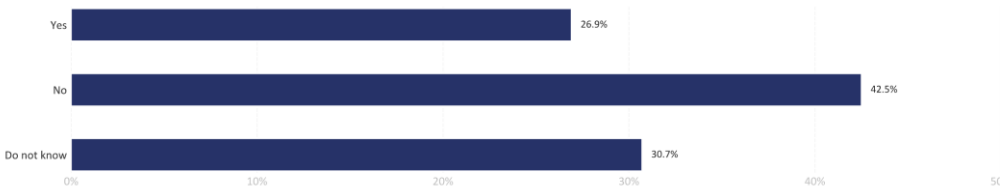
Figure 82: A member of staff works from outside the office for some or all working time. Have you used this form of employment? (n=1636)



Given the extent of remote working which considerably accelerated during the COVID pandemic, it seems surprising that 24.4% said that they had not heard of it. However, there is a clearly high level of implementation (46.4%) and awareness with 29.2% saying they had heard of it.

Only those who said they had not used Remote Working were then asked:

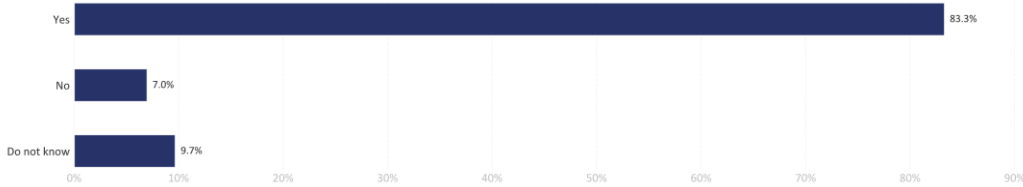
Figure 83: You said that you have not used a working arrangement where a member of staff works from outside the office for some or all working time. Even though you have not used this form of employment, do you think it could be helpful to your organisation in the future? (n=871)



This was only one of two new forms of employment which appeared to have negative attractiveness with 42.5% saying remote working would not be helpful to them in the future versus only 26.9% who said that it would. This may possibly be because it is well-known and well-established and respondents had had time to evaluate its potential usefulness to them.

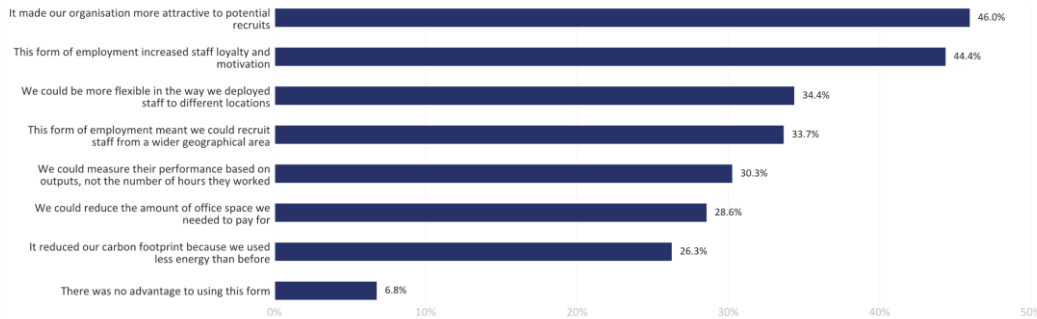
Only the respondents who said they had used Remote Working were then asked about their opinions and experiences.

Figure 84: Would you recommend this form of employment as a good solution to other sport organisations? (n=754)



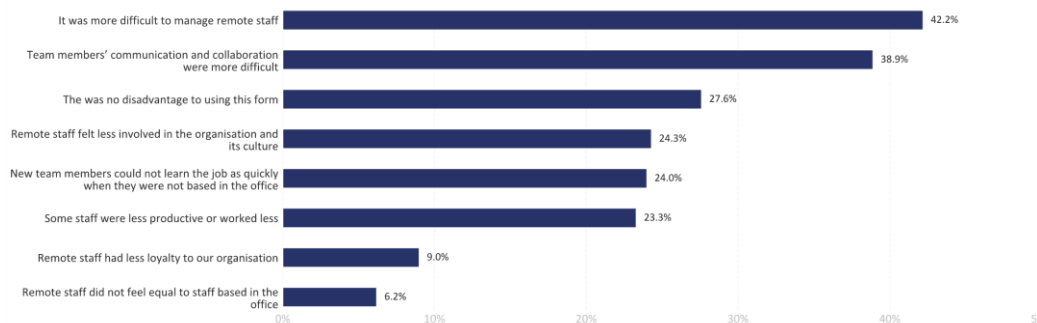
Despite the apparent negative attractiveness, users seem very willing to recommend it to others (83.3%).

Figure 85: What, in your opinion, were the main advantages of this form of employment? (n=735)



Remote working appears to have advantages for both recruitment and retention. Almost one half (46%) thought it made their organisation more attractive to potential recruits and almost as many (44.4%) said it increased staff loyalty. Additionally, 33.7% said it enabled them to recruit from a wider geographical area. There were also identified advantages for flexibility with 34.4% saying that they could be more flexible in the way they deploy staff to different locations. There may also be simplifications in management processes since almost one third (30.3%) said they could measure staff performance base on outcomes, not the number of hours worked.

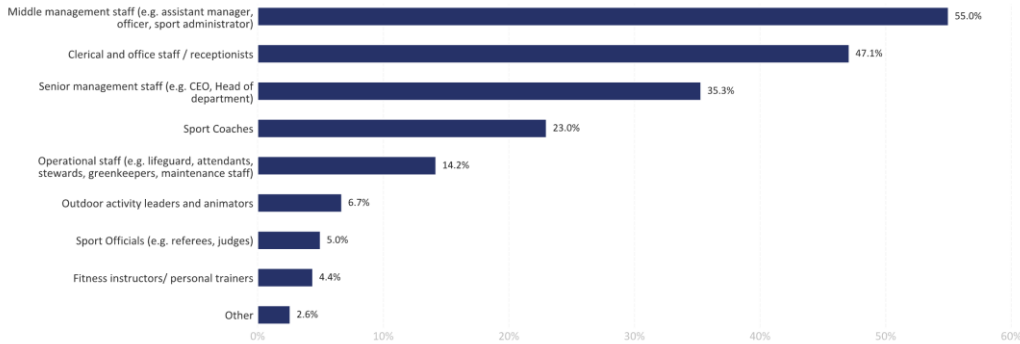
Figure 86: What, in your opinion, were the main disadvantages of this form of employment? (n=725)



Despite the potential management simplification suggested when respondents were asked to identify advantages, most of the disadvantages of remote working appear to apply to management and organisation/team integration. Almost one half of users (42.2%) thought it was more difficult to manage staff remotely. 38.9% said that team members' communication and collaboration were more difficult, and that remote staff felt less involved in the organisation and its culture. It is concerning that around a quarter (24%) said that new team members could not

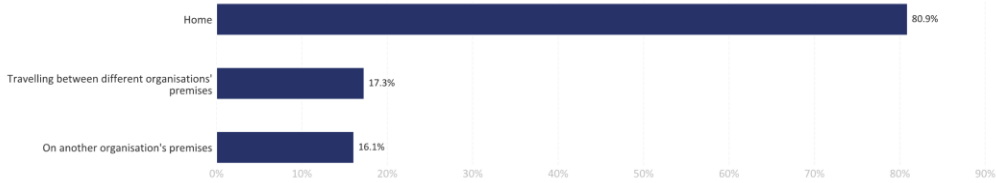
learn the job as quickly when they were not office based. Almost as many (23.3%) said some staff were less productive or worked less.

Figure 87: Which of the following jobs did this form of employment apply to? (n=734)



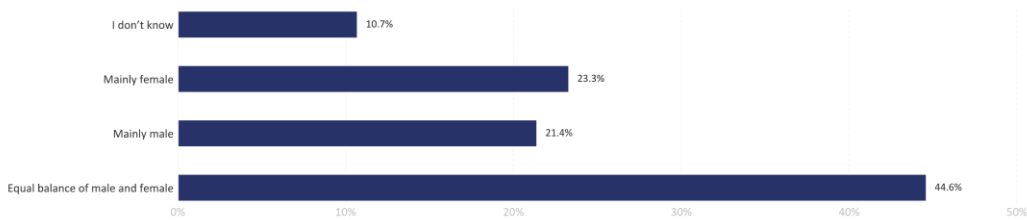
Similar to job sharing, remote working involved sport coaches and other sport and fitness workers much less than the other new forms of employment. However, it is clearly more applicable to middle managers who were in the majority at 55%, clerical and office staff/receptionists (47.1%) and senior management staff (35.3%).

Figure 88: Where does the staff member mainly work from? (n=721)



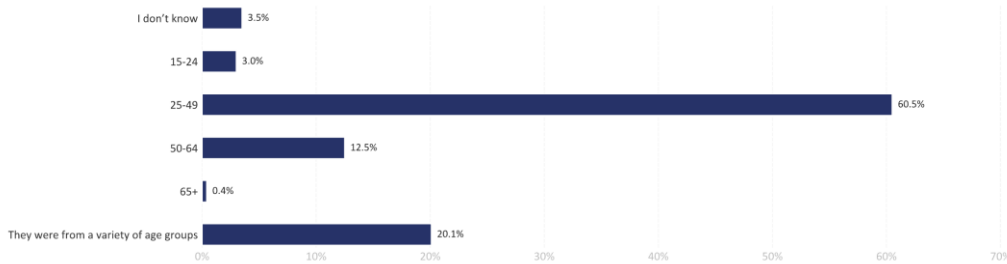
Home appears to be the most popular location for remote working at 80.9% but it is also notable that when combined 33.4% of respondents also had remote workers in other locations.

Figure 89: On average, what was the gender balance of the members of staff involved? (n=735)



Like job sharing, although less so, remote working appears to be more applicable to females than males (23.3% mainly females versus 21.4% mainly males).

Figure 90: On average, how old were the members of staff involved? (n=737)



In the case of remote working, young employees are very much in the minority at only 3%. This may be because remote working is not appropriate to the type of job (for example, sport coaches and operational staff) or because employers do not feel younger workers can be trusted to work remotely.

10.7 Self-employed portfolio work

Figure 91: A skilled self-employed worker has service contracts with a range of different organisations. Have you used this form of employment? (n=1615)



Clearly, self-employed portfolio work is quite well-known with 30.1% having used it and 35.5% having heard of it. However, given what we know from the statistics about the higher-than-average incidence of self-employment in the sport sector, it may be surprising that those who have heard of it is not a higher percentage.

Only those who said they had not used Self-employed Portfolio workers were then asked:

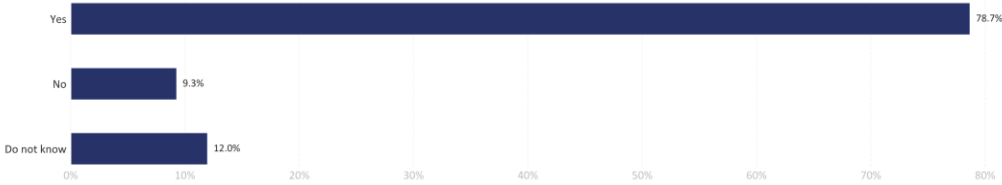
Figure 92: You said that you have not used services of a skilled self-employed worker who has service contracts with a range of different organisations. Even though you have not used this form of employment, do you think it could be helpful to your organisation (n=1117)



It may also be surprising that only 32.9% thought this might be helpful to their organisation in the future with almost as many (29.5%) saying that it would not.

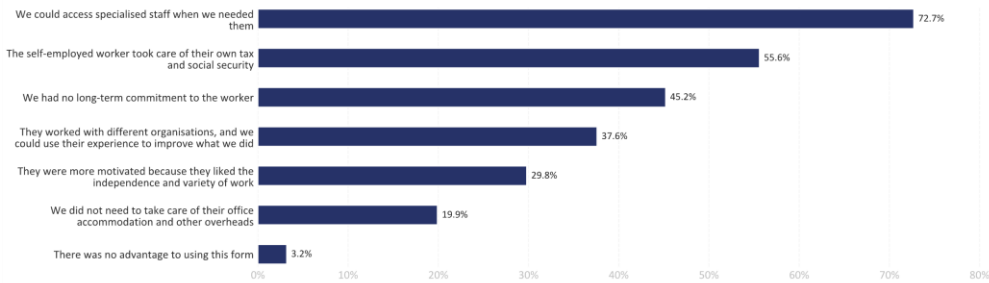
Only the respondents who said they had used Self-Employed Portfolio workers were then asked about their opinions and experiences.

Figure 93: Would you recommend this form of employment as a good solution to other sport organisations? (n=474)



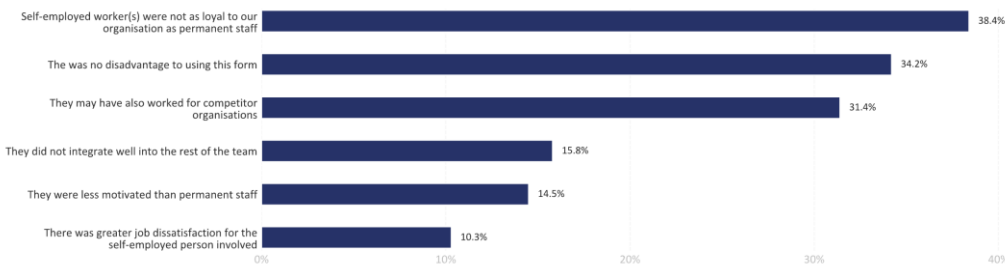
Like most of the other new forms of employment, the percentage of those who had used it and are prepared to recommend it to others is over three quarters (78.7%) and those who would not is relatively low.

Figure 94: What, in your opinion, were the main advantages of this form of employment? (n=473)



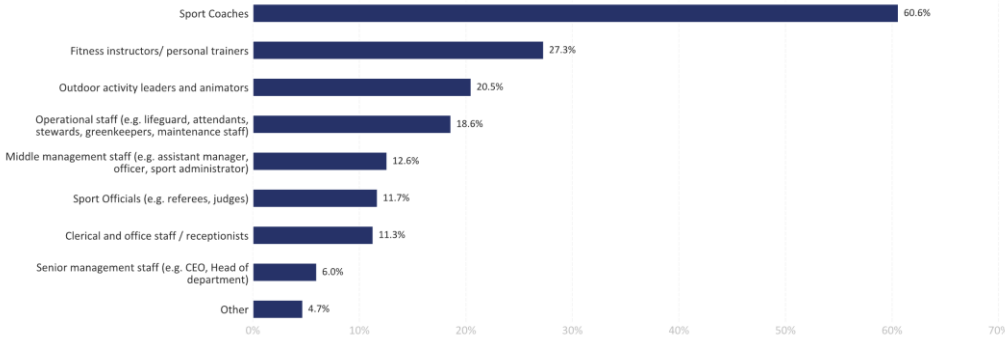
Once again, we see that users appreciate the flexibility offered by self-employed portfolio work with 72.7% choosing access to specialised staff when they are needed and 42.5% selecting no long-term commitment to the worker. Users also appeared to welcome the reduced administrative burdens with 55.6% choosing the advantage of the self-employed worker taking care of their own tax and social security. Users also appear to like the fact that the worker is more broadly experienced, and this was of value to the organisation (37.6%) and that the self-employed were more motivated because they liked independence and a variety of work (29.8%).

Figure 95: What, in your opinion, were the main disadvantages of this form of employment? (n=456)



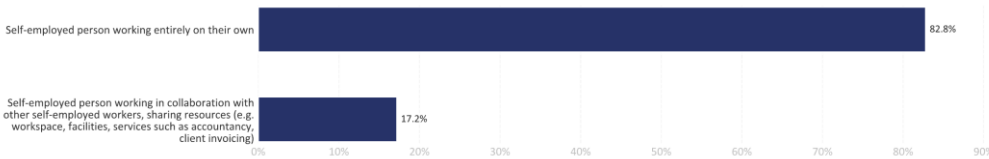
Over one third (34.2%) felt there were no disadvantages to self-employed portfolio work. The principal disadvantages appear to be less loyalty to the organisation (38.4%) and concerns about conflicts of interest because the worker may also work for competitors (31.4%). Whereas team integration is identified as a problem, it was only selected by 15.8%.

Figure 96: Which of the following jobs did this form of employment apply to? (n=469)



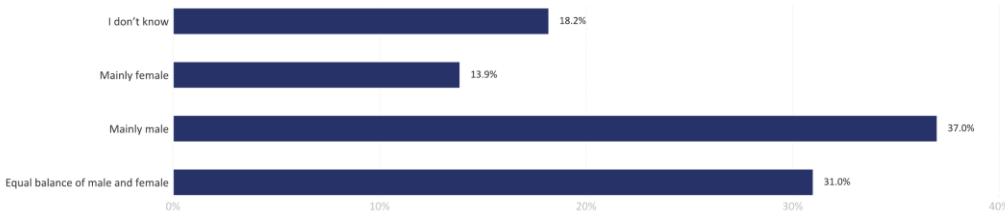
Similar to many other new forms of employment, self-employed portfolio work appears most applicable to sport coaches (60.6%). Over one quarter (27.3%) said they were using it for fitness instructors and nearly as many (20.5%) with outdoor staff. Given the relatively low numbers of these types of organisations in the survey sample, it may be that this type of work is more extensive in these subsectors.

Figure 97: Which type of person did you use? (n=459)



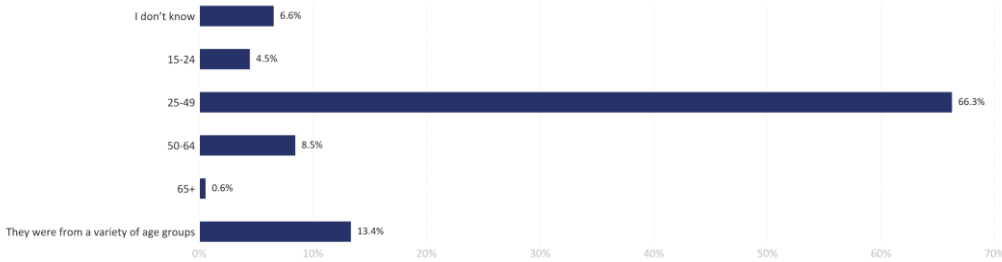
One purpose of this question was to find out more about the extent of collaborative employment where self-employed workers share some facilities and functions such as a co-working space, common reception services and accountancy. The responses to this question suggest that it is not very widespread in the sport sector with only 17.2% selecting it as an option.

Figure 98: On average, what was the gender balance of the self-employed people involved? (n=468)



Once again, we can see that self-employed portfolio work mainly involves men (37% compared to only 13.9% mainly females). The higher proportion of male workers in this category confirms what was discovered in the analysis of the official Eurostat data.

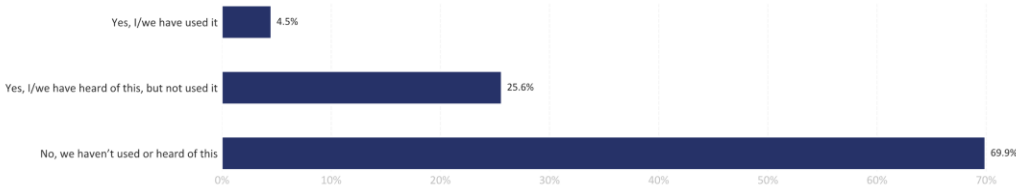
Figure 99: On average, how old were the self-employed people involved? (n=469)



Similar to most of the other new forms of employment, self-employed portfolio work seems to engage more of those in the 25-49 age group. This is also consistent with analysis of the official Eurostat data.

10.8 Voucher-based work

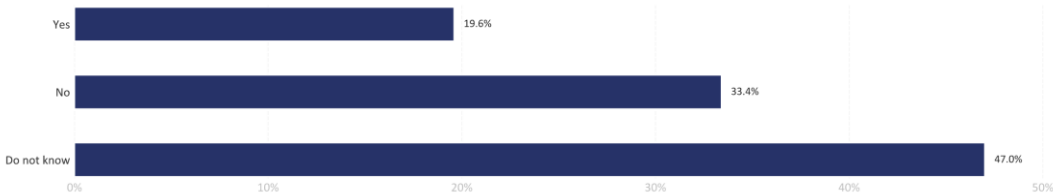
Figure 100: Staff are legally registered and paid for certain services (e.g. domestic work, childcare, gardening, maintenance) through “vouchers” obtained from a third party (such as a government agency) through a simplified employment process. Have you used this form of employment? (n=1581)



Eurostat found voucher-based work as being widespread in only a few European countries, so it seems unsurprising that only 4.5% said they had used it and only 25.6% saying they had heard of it.

Only those who said they had not used Voucher-based workers were then asked:

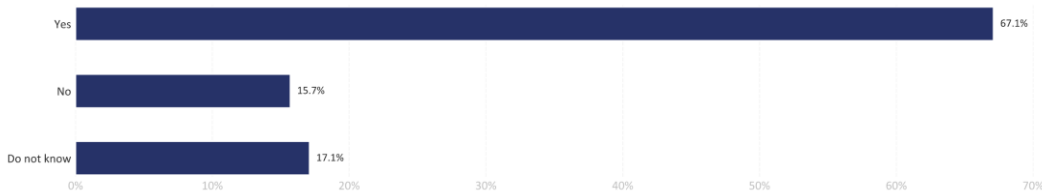
Figure 101: You said that you have not used a system where workers are declared and paid through “vouchers” obtained from a third party, like a government agency, for certain services. Even though you have not used this form of employment, do you think it could be helpful to your organisation? (n=1502)



This was only one of two new forms of employment which appears to have negative attractiveness to the respondents. Only 19.6% felt it could be helpful to their organisation and 33.4% saying that it would not. This may possibly because it appears from the description to be quite a complex arrangement.

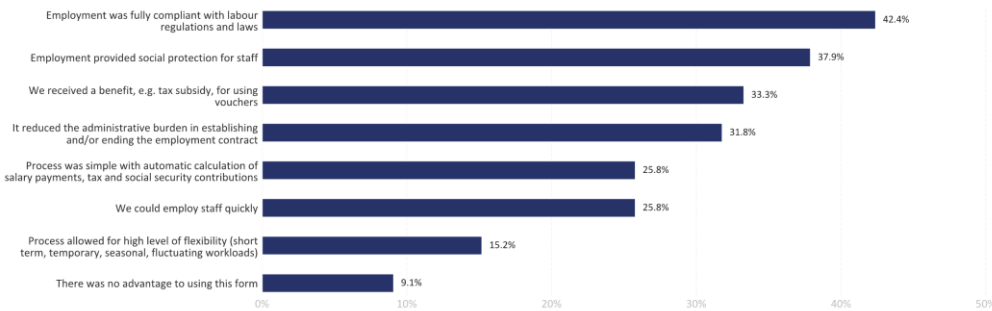
Only the respondents who said they had used Voucher-based workers were then asked about their opinions and experiences.

Figure 102: Would you recommend this form of employment as a good solution to other sport organisations? (n=70)



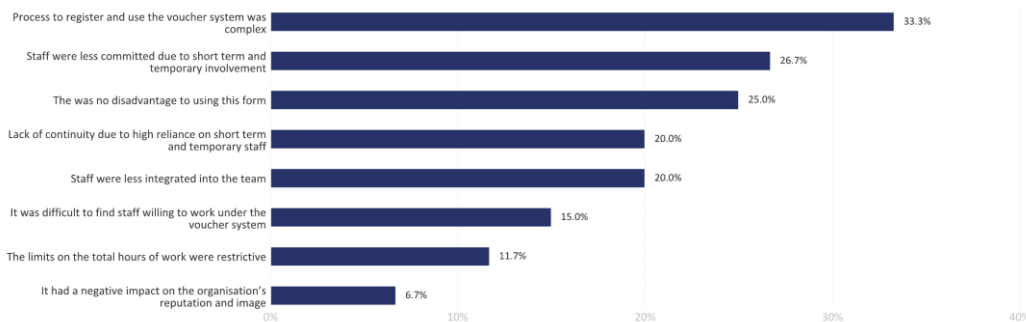
Interestingly, this was also the new form of employment in the survey with the highest number of users saying they would not recommend it, although this only stands at 15.7%.

Figure 103: What, in your opinion, were the main advantages of this form of employment? (n=66)



Given that one of the main objectives of voucher-based work is to bring undeclared workers into formal employment, it is not surprising that the two advantages with the highest percentage of respondents are employment fully compliant with labour regulations and laws (42.4%) and employment provided social protection for staff (37.9%). There may also be advantages to cost-effectiveness since one third appreciated the fact that they received a financial benefit for employing voucher-based workers. Despite the apparent complexity of voucher-based work, nearly as many of users (31.8%) felt that it reduced their administrative burden and 25.8% found the process simple. There were also some elements of flexibility with 25.8% saying it enabled them to employ staff quickly and 15.2% saying it provided a high level of flexibility in terms of fluctuating demand.

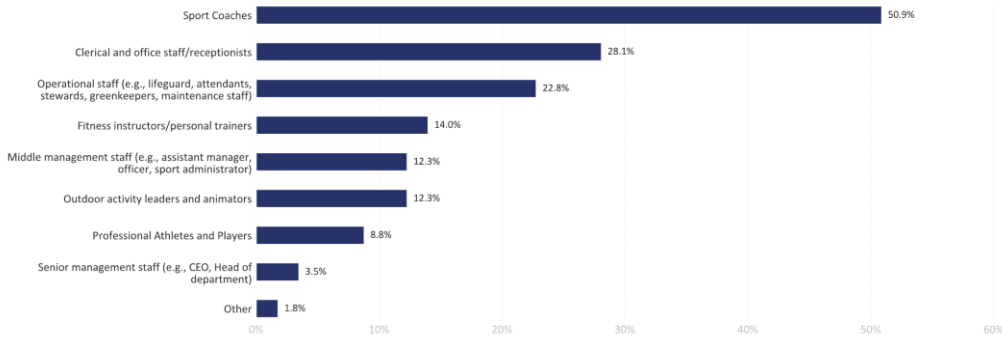
Figure 104: What, in your opinion, were the main disadvantages of this form of employment? (n=60)



Despite the 31.8% of users who found voucher-based work reduced administrative burdens, we can also see that slightly more (33.3%) said the process to register and use the system was complex. Other selected disadvantages appear to relate to lack of commitment by the staff member (26.7%), lack of continuity due to short-term and

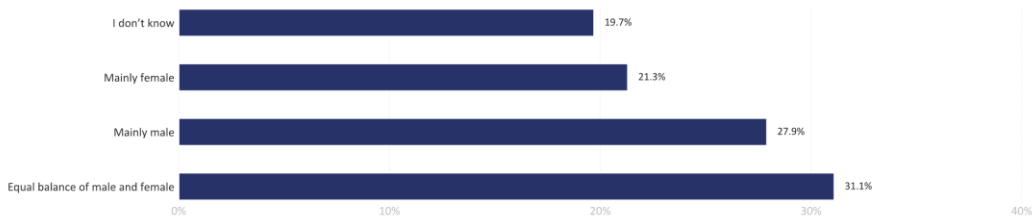
temporary employment (20%) and lack of team integration (20%). Notably, of all the new forms of employment in the survey, voucher-based work received the lowest percentage of respondents who said there were no disadvantages.

Figure 105: Which of the following jobs did you use this form of employment for? (n=57)



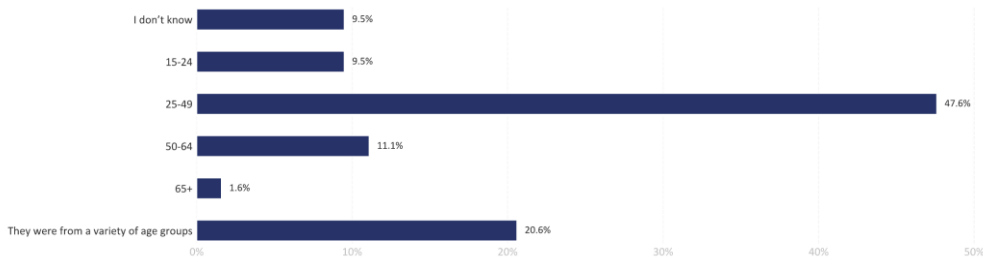
Like many of the other new forms of employment, voucher-based work appears to be most applicable to coaches in the sport sector (50.9%), but it is also being used for clerical and office staff/receptionists (28.1%) and operational staff (22.8%).

Figure 106: On average, what was the gender balance of the members of staff involved? (n=61)



Although once again males are mainly involved in this new form of employment (27.9% mainly men, versus 21.3% mainly female) the gap between the two is relatively narrow. Possibly this reflects the tendency for more females than males occupying clerical and administrative posts.

Figure 107: On average, how old were the members of staff involved? (n=63)



Once again, we can see that this form of employment mainly engages the 25-49 age group (47.6%). The representation of the younger group is only 9.5%.

10.9 Summary of sport employers' responses to new forms of employment

The tables on the following pages attempt to summarise the main points emerging from employers' views and experiences of new forms of employment.

The ratings have been developed in the following way:

- Implementation level: % who said they used it
- Awareness level: % who said they had heard of it combined with the % of those who said they had used it.
- Immediate attractiveness: % who said it might be of value minus % who said it would not
- Recommended by users: % of users who said they would recommend minus % who said they would not
- Female engagement: % of users who said an equal balance of males and females divided by 2 and then added to the % who said mainly female
- Youth engagement: % of users who said they were from a variety of age groups divided by 3 and then added to % who said 15-24.

These have then been placed in the following bands:

Bands: Very negative = Minus 15 and below; Negative = 0 - minus 14; Very low = 1-14; Low = 15-29; Low to medium = 30-44; High medium 45-59; High = 60-74; Very high = 75+

Table 10: Summary of survey responses regarding new forms of employment

Employee sharing									
Implementation level	Awareness level	Attractiveness to non-users	Recommended by users	Top 5 advantages	Top 5 disadvantages	No disadvantage reported by users	Top 5 relevant jobs	Female engagement	Youth engagement
Very Low (14)	Low to medium (45)	Low (22)	High (66)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to workers with guaranteed skills • Another organisation takes care of admin • No need for training • Worker has broader experience • Responsive to fluctuating demand 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difficulties of remote management • Potential conflict of interest • Worker does things differently • Lack of team integration • Complex admin 	Low to medium (36)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coaches • Outdoor leaders • Clerical/ Admin • Fitness instructors • Middle management 	Low to medium (34)	Low (15)

Platform work									
Implementation level	Awareness level	Attractiveness to non-users	Recommended by users	Top 5 advantages	Top 5 disadvantages	No disadvantage reported by users	Top 5 relevant jobs	Female engagement	Youth engagement
Very low (4)	Low to medium (37)	Low (29)	High (65)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Easily identify skilled workers needed • Only use the worker when needed • Worker appreciated flexibility • Low administration burden • Tax and social security taken care of 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conflict of interest • Additional cost of platform fee • Lower worker motivation • Less management control • Lack of team integration 	Low to medium (32)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coaches • Fitness instructors • Outdoor activity leaders • Professional athletes • Middle management • Operational staff 	Low medium (32)	Very Low (13)

Job sharing									
Implementation level	Awareness level	Attractiveness to non-users	Recommended by users	Top 5 advantages	Top 5 disadvantages	No disadvantage reported by users	Top 5 relevant jobs	Female engagement	Youth engagement
Low (24)	High (64)	Very low (7)	High (73)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Someone available to take full responsibility when other absent • Skill sharing • Recruitment attraction to fit with worker's personal circumstances • Retain skilled staff when personal circumstances change • Increased loyalty 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential conflict between job sharers • More complex to administer • Communication and handover between skill sharers • Difficulty managing two people in same job • Competition between job sharers 	Low (27)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clerical and admin • Coaches • Operational staff • Middle management • Fitness instructors 	Medium (50)	Very low (13)

Casual work									
Implementation level	Awareness level	Attractiveness to non-users	Recommended by users	Top 5 advantages	Top 5 disadvantages	No disadvantage reported by users	Top 5 relevant jobs	Female engagement	Youth engagement
Low (21)	Medium (52)	Very low (1)	Medium (59)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flexibility to fluctuating demand • Better value • Easily identify casual workers for more stable employment • Workers take care of tax and social security • High levels of worker motivation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Casual workers less reliable • Casual workers less loyal • Need for additional worker training • Casual workers less motivated than other workers • Need to transition casual staff to more stable employment after a period 	Low to medium (30)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coaches • Operational staff • Clerical/ Admin • Outdoor leaders • Officials 	Low to medium (38)	Low to medium (30)

Intermittent permanent employment									
Implementation level	Awareness level	Attractiveness to non-users	Recommended by users	Top 5 advantages	Top 5 disadvantages	No disadvantage reported by users	Top 5 relevant jobs	Female engagement	Youth engagement
Low (23)	Medium (49)	Very low (4)	Very high (79)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retain good and reliable staff • Stable workforce • Easy administration • Increased reliability through worker having more stable lifestyle • Good team integration • No need for annual recruitment drive 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Still had to pay staff when demand and workload low • Complex salary administration • Unattractive to some staff who prefer more flexibility • Difficult contract negotiations 	Low to medium (43)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coaches • Clerical/ Admin • Middle management • Operational staff • Outdoor activity leaders 	Low to medium (34)	Low (15)

Remote working									
Implementation level	Awareness level	Attractiveness to non-users	Recommended by users	Top 5 advantages	Top 5 disadvantages	No disadvantage reported by users	Top 5 relevant jobs	Female engagement	Youth engagement
Medium (46)	Very high (75)	Very negative -16	Very high (76)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organisation more attractive to potential recruits • Increased worker loyalty and motivation • More flexibility in deploying workers to different locations • Recruit staff from outside immediate geographical area • Ability to measure worker performance on outcomes, not hours worked 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difficulty in remotely managing workers • Team communication and collaboration more difficult • Workers not feeling involved in organisation and culture • Workers take longer to learn the job • Remote workers less productive 	Low (28)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Middle management • Clerical/ Admin • Senior management • Coaches • Operational staff 	Medium (46)	Very low (10)

Self-employed portfolio work									
Implementation level	Awareness level	Attractiveness to non-users	Recommended by users	Top 5 advantages	Top 5 disadvantages	No disadvantage reported by users	Top 5 relevant jobs	Female engagement	Youth engagement
Low to medium (30)	High (66)	Very low (3)	High (70)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Easy access to type of workers needed • Workers take care of tax and social security • Organisation has no long-term commitment to worker • Worker can improve organisation because more broadly experienced • Worker more motivated because they enjoy independence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Worker less loyal to organisation • Potential conflicts of interest • Lack of team integration • Less motivated than employed staff • Greater job dissatisfaction 	Low to medium (34)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coaches • Fitness instructors • Outdoor activity leaders • Operational staff • Middle management 	Low (29)	Very low (9)

Voucher-based work									
Implementation level	Awareness level	Attractiveness to non-users	Recommended by users	Top 5 advantages	Top 5 disadvantages	No disadvantage reported by users	Top 5 relevant jobs	Female engagement	Youth engagement
Very low (5)	Low to medium (32)	Negative (-13)	Medium (51)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employment fully compliant with laws and regulations • Employment provides worker social protection • Employer receives a benefit for using this form of employment • Reduced administrative burden • Automatic calculation of salary, tax and social security 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Process to register with voucher system • Workers less committed/ motivated • Lack of continuity between different workers • Poor team integration • Difficulty in finding recruits for voucher-based work 	Low (25)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coaches • Clerical/ Admin • Operational staff • Fitness instructors • Middle managers 	Low to medium (37)	Low (16)

10.10 Alignment of new forms of employment with sport employers' priorities

The partners also felt it would be important to see which of new forms of employment may be relevant to the employment priorities which the survey respondents selected (see Figure 39).

The following table shows the results:

Table 11: Alignment of new forms of employment with sport employers' priorities

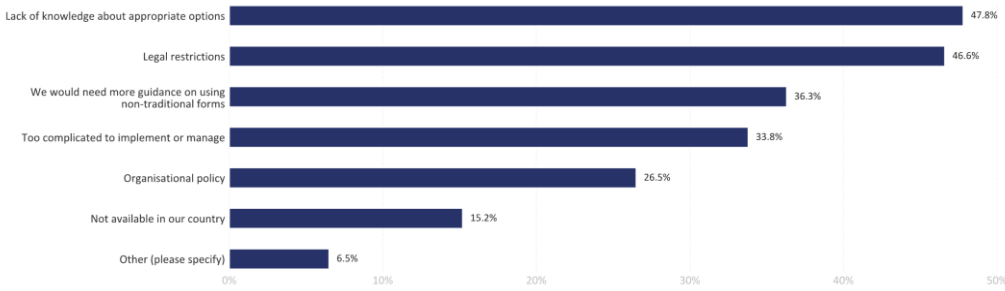
Employer's priority and % who selected it	Relevant new form of employment	Reasons
Flexibility in staffing based on organisational needs (51.2%)	Employee sharing	The employer can draw on a shared employee according to demand but has no ongoing commitment.
	Platform work	The employer can access a platform worker according to demand but has no ongoing commitment.
	Casual work	The employer can access a casual worker according to demand but has no ongoing commitment.
	Self-employed portfolio work	The employer can access a self-employed worker according to demand but has no ongoing commitment.
	Voucher-based work	The employer can find an appropriate voucher-based worker when needed but has no ongoing commitment.
Ability to retain skilled staff despite changing circumstances (47.9%)	Employee sharing	The shared employee can bring their skills back into the organisation when needed.
	Platform work	A platform worker who has proved their expertise can be rehired when needed.
	Intermittent permanent employment	Seasonal workers with the right skills and attitudes can be retained on a year-by-year basis.
	Casual work	A casual worker who has proved their expertise can be rehired when needed.
	Self-employed portfolio work	A self-employed worker who has proved valuable in the past can be contracted again.
Easy access to skilled staff despite changing circumstances (44.1%)	Employee sharing	The employers' alliance or sport federation provides the worker and ensures their qualifications.
	Platform work	Skilled workers can be hired from platform which guarantees their qualifications and skills.
	Intermittent permanent employment	Seasonal workers with the right skills and attitudes can be retained on a year-by-year basis.
	Self-employed portfolio work	Self-employed workers can be hired relatively quickly and should have the necessary skills. Depending on their availability they can be brought back into the organisation whenever appropriate.
Improving work/life balance and job satisfaction for staff (41.7%)	Platform work	The platform worker can choose assignments which fit their own circumstances.
	Job sharing	A worker can negotiate working hours which fit their personal circumstances.
	Intermittent permanent employment	The seasonal worker is permanently employed but they also have the option of finding additional employment in the periods when they are not needed on-season.
	Casual work	The casual worker can choose assignments which fit their own circumstances.
	Remote working	The remote worker can work from home and combine/balance work/ life responsibilities.

Employer's priority and % who selected it	Relevant new form of employment	Reasons
	Self-employed portfolio work	The self-employed worker has more freedom to choose assignments which fit their own circumstances.
Reducing the employer's administrative burden (payroll, HR etc.) (37.8%)	Employee sharing	The employers' alliance or sport federation takes care of the HR function.
	Platform work	The platform or the platform worker is responsible for tax and social security issues.
	Self-employed portfolio work	The self-employed worker is responsible for tax and social security payments. The employer simply manages a service contract.
	Voucher based work	The voucher agency takes care of tax and social security issues.
Cost effectiveness (35.5%)	Employee sharing	The employers' alliance or sport federation employs the shared employee and pays their full-time salary. The employer only pays for the hours they work.
	Platform work	The employer only pays for the hours the platform worker works. However, the platform will charge an additional service fee.
	Job sharing	The employer gets the combined skills of two workers but only pays one salary.
	Casual work	The employer only has to pay the casual worker for the hours they work. However, in most countries casual workers must be offered permanent employment after a certain period of employment (e.g., 12 months).
	Remote working	The employer may reduce their office space and other associated overheads such as heating and lighting. However, they may need to pay the worker an allowance for home working.
	Self-employed portfolio work	The employer only pays for the hours the self-employed worker works. However, the employer cannot be the self-employed worker's only contractor.
Easy access to staff with wider experience (27.8%)	Employee sharing	The shared employee works across a range of different organisations and gains wider experience.
	Casual work	The casual worker may have experience of other organisational processes.
	Platform work	The platform worker will work for a range of other organisations.
	Self-employed portfolio work	The self-employed worker will work for a range of other organisations.
Access to specialised expertise for specific projects or problems (27.1%)	Employee sharing	With a large enough pool of employees, the employers' alliance or sport federation should be able to provide specialists.
	Casual work	An employer may be able to find a casual worker with specialised skills.
	Platform work	Platforms may include specialist workers.

10.11 Perceived obstacles to the use of new forms of employment

Finally, in this section of the questionnaire, respondents were asked, 'What types of obstacles, in your opinion, might prevent your organisation from using non-traditional forms of employment?'

Figure 108: What types of obstacles, in your opinion, might prevent your organisation from using non-traditional forms of employment? (n=1560)



At this point in the survey questionnaire, respondents had had the opportunity to review all of the new forms of employment we included, so their responses to this question are important and may point us in the direction of understanding more about what the sport sector needs.

Almost one half (47.8%) identified lack of knowledge about appropriate options. Almost as many identified legal restrictions (46.6%). 36.3% selected the need for more guidance and 33.8% felt new forms of employment were too complicated to implement or manage. All of these findings suggest:

- The sport sector needs more tailored information about the new forms of employment
- Employers require more expert guidance on how to use them in line with legal requirements.

11 Conclusions

Employment in European sport has grown by 32% in the period 2011-2023, nearly four times the growth of employment in all EU sectors and 31% of survey respondents predict their staffing levels will continue to grow. It is perhaps not surprisingly that sport may face recruitment and retention challenges, and all strands of research, particularly the survey findings, confirm that these challenges are very real with a particular impact on workers with a sport and fitness occupation (those, like sport coaches, who work directly with members, customers and clients). There are also difficulties in recruiting and retaining staff for other positions, such as middle managers and clerical staff, but these are less severe.

1. Conclusion: recruitment and retention of paid staff is and will continue to be a problem, and the sport sector needs to find methods of addressing these.

It is also evident that the nature of labour demand in the sport sector (a large number of financially struggling 'micro-businesses' who lack expertise in human resource management, fluctuating and uneven demand, small packages of available work, unsocial hours etc.) has tended to create an employment environment which is heavily dependent on part-time and temporary contracts, a higher-than-average level of self-employment and the possibility (at least in some countries) of significant levels of undeclared work.

When compared with many other European employment sectors, much sport employment may be characterised as unstable and precarious. Many of the advantages of more stable employment, in particular sufficient and predictable incomes, the ability to plan long-term careers and engage in continuing professional development are being missed.

There is also evidence that the nature of sport employment may be restraining the number of women joining the workforce and the number of young workers being retained in the sector as they grow older.

2. Conclusion: the precarious nature of European sport employment has a negative impact on the workforce and the sector needs to find ways of making sport employment more stable.

Sport employers are clearly aware of the general recruitment and retention challenges they face, the precarious nature of working in sport and the specific problems of recruiting enough women and the potential benefits of retaining younger staff. They also appear willing to tackle these issues.

Nevertheless, they also see the advantages of current employment practices, particularly in the flexibility they offer in meeting fluctuating demand and contracting with employees for relatively small packages of work.

From all strands of research, we can see that sport employers have tried a number of possible solutions, for example, providing more education and training for their staff, improving working conditions, implementing work-life balance initiatives and even increasing salaries and benefits, but the problems still persist.

3. Conclusion: sport employers are very willing to address recruitment and retention challenges and the unusual characteristics of the workforce but also want to maintain flexibility in employment.

A desk-based evaluation of Eurofound's new forms of employment suggested that they may have the potential to address recruitment and retention challenges and the precarious nature of working in sport whilst still offering employers the flexibility they need.

However, until the IN-FORMS survey was complete, there was no robust evidence about the uptake of new forms of employment in sport, the attitudes of employers to these new forms or the experiences of employers who had used them.

The findings indicate that all of the new forms of employment included in the survey are already present to a certain extent. Those who have used them were able to indicate which jobs were most appropriate for each, specify advantages and disadvantages and supply some previously unknown demographic data on the workers who were taking part. In most cases, more than 60% of users were ready to recommend the new form of employment they had tried to other organisations. The only exceptions being casual work (59%) and voucher-based work (51%).

However, not all new forms of employment are being adopted at the same rate. Remote working, for example, is by far the most popular (46%), followed by self-employed portfolio work (30%). Indeed, some of the ones which were most highly recommended by users had either a low or very low implementation levels. Examples include employee sharing (implemented by only 14% of respondents but recommended by 66% of users) and platform work (implemented by only 4% of respondents but recommended by 65%).

Generally speaking, it seems the sport sector's awareness of these new forms of employment remains relatively low. The only new forms of employment which showed an above 50% level of awareness were remote working (75%), self-employed portfolio work (66%) and job sharing (64%). Evidence from the employee interviews also suggests that employees also lack information.

Furthermore, it must be noted that, despite the high levels of recommendations from users, most of the new forms of employment did not appear to be particularly attractive to non-users. Most had an attractiveness score below 10 and indeed two of them (remote working and voucher-based work) achieved negative attractiveness scores.

The low level of take-up of the new forms of employment which are already proving their value to users, the low level of awareness and apparent attractiveness to non-users should be taken in the context of 48% of survey respondents saying that lack knowledge about the appropriate options for new forms of employment.

4. Conclusion: new forms of employment are already showing some limited take-up in the sport sector and are proving their value, but sport employers and employees need more information, especially on how they work and the potential advantages and disadvantages of each.

It is also notable that new forms of employment in sport are not 'one size fits all'. Clearly from the desk-based evaluation and the survey findings, each one has particular advantages and disadvantages which may be appropriate to different employment contexts and needs. Intermittent permanent employment, for example, is particularly relevant to seasonal employment whereas casual work may be more appropriate when staffing an occasional event or project. Voucher-based work may be especially useful in bringing undeclared workers (possibly 'volunteers' who are receiving unofficial payments) into formal employment.

Employers also need to be aware that the disadvantages associated with each new form of employment may present a risk for them, and they need to put in place measures to minimise these risks. Much the same applies to employees. Each new form of employment presents some risks for them. Remote workers, for example, may feel less involved in the organisation and may take longer to learn the job. Shared employees, platform workers and portfolio workers may find it harder to adjust to a new organisation's culture and to integrate well into the team. Like the employer, they need to be aware of these possibilities before entering into these new forms of employment.

Additionally, we can see from the survey that respondents see legal restrictions (47%) as being a potential obstacle to the take up of new forms of employment and that 36% said that they would need more guidance on using new forms of employment. Preliminary analysis of EU employment directives and national legislation in the partner countries suggests that legal restrictions do not present obstacles to new forms of employment which cannot be overcome and indeed the new forms of employment appear to be consistent with the EU's Employment Package. However, almost half of the respondents clearly lack confidence when it comes to employment law, and they need support.

5. Conclusion: in addition to information on new forms of employment, employers and employees need clear and objective guidance on how to select appropriate new forms of employment as appropriate to their needs, be aware of potential risks and how to minimise these risks and ensure that their employment contracts meet legal requirements.

In terms of promoting gender equity in the sport workforce, the results were not so positive. Only two of the new forms of employment showed a medium level of female engagement: job sharing and remote working. All the others fell below the medium level with the lowest level of female engagement being self-employed portfolio work.

In terms of age, all the new forms of employment showed either low or very low levels of youth engagement. The only exception being casual work which showed a low-to-medium level. Since the older age groups are taking part far more in new forms of employment, this may actually be helpful in helping to retain younger workers if they can see that a new form of employment could increase their chances of building a long-term career. However, formal

casual work (as opposed to undeclared work) may represent an easy and legitimate point of access to sport employment.

6. Conclusion: only job sharing and remote working seem particularly relevant to the recruitment and retention of female workers. However, all of them appear to engage older workers and therefore may help to retain younger sport workers into their later years.

Of all the possible reasons for recruitment and retention problems identified in the desk research and survey findings, uncompetitive salaries and benefits emerge as a critical issue. Yet, we also know that many sport organisations have little financial headroom when it comes to improving salaries.

Is it possible that some of the new forms of employment could begin to address this problem by offering opportunities for sport workers to maximise incomes? Some of them seem to have this potential. For example, platform work and self-employed portfolio work give the worker a chance to access many potential service contracts within the same timeframe and by doing so bring their income up to an average level or possibly even exceed average earnings. If skilled and experienced staff can see the possible financial benefits of some of the new forms of employment, this may have a positive impact on retaining them within the sport sector.

This was partly supported by one finding from the survey where nearly one half of survey respondents (48.8%) agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, 'Many workers in the sport sector become self-employed because it improves their income potential.' Only 15.7% disagreed or strongly disagreed.

7. Conclusion: some of the new forms of employment offer the potential to increase incomes for some sport workers and this is an advantage which could be promoted.

Having working hours which are more compatible with family responsibilities and preferred lifestyle also emerged as an important factor influencing recruitment and retention. In terms of the wider benefits of the new forms of employment, some of them may have the potential to offer the worker more flexibility in this regard. We have already noted above that remote working (particularly from home) gives workers, especially women, the chance to create a more attractive work-life balance. The opportunity to align the responsibilities of earning an income and lifestyle may also be offered by some of the other new forms, in particular platform work, job sharing and self-employed portfolio work.

8. Conclusion: some of the new forms of employment offer the potential to allow workers to create a more acceptable work-life balance and this is an advantage which could be promoted.

Perhaps the final major issue arising from the research is skills development. We know from the desk research that new technologies like AI are finding their way into the sport sector and that this has training implications. We also know from the survey findings that employers see a mismatch between the skills which staff currently have and the changing demands of working in the sector. It is also clear that some of the new forms of employment raise training issues. Platform workers and remote workers, for example, need ICT skills. The managers of employee sharing schemes and remote workers need skills in how to manage their performance remotely. Self-employed portfolio workers need entrepreneurial skills.

9. Conclusion: the emergence of new technologies in the sport sector and the specific demands of some new forms of employment trigger new skills requirements. Both employees and employers need to be aware of these additional skill needs and be ready to address them.

12 Informing Phase 2 and 3 - Policy implications and recommendations

13 Annexes

13.1 Notes on the Sport Employment Statistics

13.2 Desk Research Template

13.3 Survey Questionnaire

13.4 Interview Guide and Summaries

14 The EU Employment Legal and Regulatory Framework

14.1 The EU Employment Strategy

The EU has had an Employment Strategy since 1997. The purpose is to establish a common set of objectives and targets for employment policy and the creation of more and better jobs throughout the EU.

One key component is the [Employment Guidelines](#) which target four key domains:

1. Boosting the demand for labour – guidance on job creation, labour taxation and wage-setting.
2. Enhanced labour and skills supply – addressing structural weaknesses in education and training and tackling youth and long-term unemployment.
3. Better functioning of the labour markets – reducing labour market segmentation and improving active labour market measures and mobility.
4. Fairness, combating poverty and promoting equal opportunities for all.

Potentially, all of these are relevant to the aims of IN-FORMS.

14.2 The EU Employment Package

Launched in 2012 this has measures which are relevant to IN-FORMS:

- promoting and supporting self-employment, social enterprises and business start-ups
- transforming informal or undeclared work into regular employment
- encouraging decent and sustainable wages
- reducing labour market segmentation between those in precarious employment and those on stable employment
- anticipating economic restructuring
- developing lifelong learning
- reinforcing social dialogue

14.3 EU Rights at Work

Every EU worker has minimum rights relating to:

- **health and safety at work:** general rights and obligations, workplaces, work equipment, specific risks and vulnerable workers
- **equal opportunities for women and men:** equal treatment at work, pregnancy, maternity leave, parental leave
- **protection against discrimination** based on sex, race, religion, age, disability and sexual orientation
- **labour law:** part-time work, fixed-term contracts, working hours, employment of young people, informing and consulting employees

Transparent and Predictable Working Conditions

All workers in the EU will have the right to:

- more complete **information on the essential aspects of their work**, to be received early and in writing,
- a limit to the **length of probationary periods** at the beginning of the job to six months,

- **take up another job** with another employer; any restrictions to this right need to be justified on objective grounds,
- **be informed within a reasonable period in advance when work will have to be done** – especially for workers with unpredictable working schedules and on-demand work,
- **effective measures that prevent abuse** of zero-hour contract work, meaning work contracts without a fixed number of working hours,
- receive a written reply to a **request for transfer** to another more secure job, and
- **receive cost-free mandatory training** related to the job where the employer has a duty to provide this.

Fixed Term Work

The directive and the agreement on fixed-term work forbid employers to treat fixed-term workers less favourably than permanent workers, unless different treatment can be justified on objective grounds. To prevent abuse of successive fixed-term contracts, EU Member States, after consultation with the social partners, must put in place one or more of the following limits:

- the objective reasons that would justify the renewal of fixed-term contracts or relationships
- the maximum total duration of successive fixed-term employment contracts and relationships
- the permitted number of renewals.

Part-Time Work

The EU states that new forms of flexible working can bring benefits for employers and employees alike, but part-time work has to be on a fair footing.

A Framework Agreement between Europe’s employers and trade unions **aims** to:

- eliminate unjustified discrimination against part-time workers and improve the quality of part-time work.
- facilitate the development of part-time work on a voluntary basis
- contribute to the flexible organisation of working time in a way that takes account of employers’ and workers’ needs.

A Framework Agreement **requires** that part-time workers’ employment conditions may not be less favourable than those of comparable full-time workers, unless there are objective reasons for different treatment.

It also **strongly encourages** employers, as far as possible, to take account of employees’ preferences and their requests to transfer from full-time to part-time employment or vice versa. Employers should also **facilitate** access to the relevant jobs.

Working Time Directive

The [EU’s Working Time Directive \(2003/88/EC\)](#) requires EU Member States to guarantee the following rights for all workers:

- **a limit to weekly working hours**
 - the average working time for each seven-day period must not exceed 48 hours, including overtime
 - depending on national legislation and/or collective agreements, the 48-hour average is calculated over a reference period of up to 4, 6 or 12 months
- **a rest break** during working hours if the worker is on duty for longer than 6 hours
- **a minimum daily rest period**
 - in every 24 hours a worker is entitled to a minimum of 11 consecutive hours of rest
- **a minimum weekly rest period**

- for each 7-day period a worker is entitled to a minimum of 24 uninterrupted hours in addition to the 11 hours' daily rest
- **paid annual leave** of at least 4 weeks per year
- **extra protection in case of night work**
 - average working hours must not exceed 8 hours per 24-hour period,
 - night workers must not perform heavy or dangerous work for longer than 8 hours in any 24-hour period,
 - night workers have the right to free health assessments and, under certain conditions, to transfer to day work.

Work-life Balance

This [Directive](#) includes:

- Introduction of **paternity leave**. Fathers/equivalent second parents will be able to take at least **10 working days** of paternity leave around the time of birth of the child, **compensated** at least at the level of sick pay.
- Strengthening of the existing right to 4 months of **parental leave**, by **making 2 out of the 4 months non-transferable** from a parent to another and **compensated** at a level to be set by Member States. Parents will also have the right to request to take the leave in a flexible way (e.g. part-time or in a piecemeal way).
- Introduction of **carers' leave** for workers providing personal care or support to a relative or person living in the same household. Working carers will be able to take **5 days per year**.
- Extension of the existing right to request **flexible working arrangements** (reduced working hours, flexible working hours and flexibility in place of work) to **all working parents of children up to at least 8 years old, and all carers**.

14.4 EU Legal and Regulatory Provisions Specific to New Forms of Employment

Temporary Agency Work

Although this [Directive](#) explicitly refers to agency work, it is possible that it may apply to workers in an employee sharing scheme which would be relevant to IN-FORMS.

The Directive:

- lays down the principle of non-discrimination, regarding the essential conditions of work and of employment, between temporary workers and workers who are recruited by the user company.
- ensures greater transparency and increases confidence in the temporary work sector. It thus improves protection for the workers concerned while giving greater flexibility to companies.
- protects the same rights for temporary workers who are pregnant as those of permanent workers.
- ensures that temporary workers should have the same access to amenities and collective services at work.
- instructs the user company to inform temporary workers of any permanent vacancies.

A further EU directive ([91/383/EEC](#)) ensures that fixed-term and temporary agency workers, who are more exposed to the risk of accidents at work and occupational diseases than other workers, have the same level of safety and health protection at work as other employees.

Platform Work

In February 2024, the European Parliament adopted a [Directive on Platform work](#). This establishes the following:

The new law introduces a presumption of an employment relationship (as opposed to self-employment) that is triggered when facts indicating control and direction are present, according to national law and collective agreements, and taking into account EU case law.

The directive obliges EU countries to establish a rebuttable legal presumption of employment at national level, aiming to correct the imbalance of power between the digital labour platform and the person performing platform work. The burden of proof lies with the platform, meaning that it is up to the platform to prove that there is no employment relationship.

The right to disconnect

The right to disconnect is not defined in EU law. However, the EU Parliament is very aware of the increasing impact of mobile technology on working conditions and wants to introduce legislation. On 21 January 2021 it called on the Commission to come up with a law [allowing employees to disconnect from work](#) during non-work hours without consequences and setting minimum standards for remote work.

The EU Parliament noted that interruptions to non-working time and the extension of working hours can increase the risk of unremunerated overtime, can have a negative impact on health, work-life balance and rest from work; and called for the following measures:

- Employers should not require workers to be available outside their working time and co-workers should refrain from contacting colleagues for work purposes
- EU countries should ensure that workers who invoke their right to disconnect are protected from victimisation and other repercussions and that there are mechanisms in place to deal with complaints or breaches of the right to disconnect
- Remote professional learning and training activities must be counted as work activity and must not take place during overtime or days off without adequate compensation

14.5 Undeclared Work

Within the last ten years, all Member States introduced various measures to step up their efforts in the fight against undeclared work, given its negative consequences. Most of them are in the area of deterrence measures to influence people's behaviour with stricter sanctions or focusing on more effective inspections. In addition, Member States use preventive measures such as

- tax incentives
- amnesties
- awareness raising

to decrease the incidence of undeclared work and facilitate compliance with existing rules.

The [European Platform tackling undeclared work](#) enhances **cooperation between Member States' relevant authorities and other actors involved** to fight undeclared work more effectively and efficiently while fully respecting national competences and procedures.

15 Legal and Regulatory Frameworks in the Partner Countries

Generally speaking, the legal and regulatory frameworks (with the exception of Albania which is not an EU member country) reflect the overall EU employment framework. Some examples are given below. It is notable that only a few national legislative frameworks explicitly deal with new forms of employment, although some governments do have strategies for job creation which are relevant.

15.1 Albania

Although Albania is not part of the EU, it has a similar set of employment laws and strategies, some of which are relevant to the sport sector and new forms of employment.

The Albanian Labor Code governs employment relationships, outlining provisions for various contract types, including part-time, work-from-home, teleworking, fixed-term, and indefinite-term contracts. It mandates written employment contracts and stipulates conditions for working hours, overtime, minimum wage, social security contributions, and non-discrimination. The Labor Code facilitates new employment forms by recognizing diverse contract types, such as teleworking and part-time arrangements, which can be advantageous in the sports industry. However, strict requirements for written contracts and adherence to specific working conditions may pose administrative challenges for organizations seeking flexible employment models.

Law on Sports (Law No. 79/2017, amended by Law No. 105/2020) regulates the functioning and organization of sports activities in Albania, including the legal status of sports entities, athletes, and coaches. It sets standards for professional qualifications, rights, and obligations of individuals involved in sports. It provides a structured framework for sports-related professions, potentially facilitating the formalization of employment in the sector. However, stringent qualification requirements and regulatory standards may limit the adoption of unconventional employment forms, such as freelance coaching or short-term contracts, thereby presenting barriers to flexibility.

The Law on Protection from Discrimination ensures equality before the law and prohibits discrimination in employment based on various grounds, including gender, race, and disability. It mandates equal treatment in recruitment, remuneration, and access to professional development. By enforcing non-discriminatory practices, this law facilitates inclusive employment opportunities in the sports sector, encouraging diversity and equal access to new forms of employment. Compliance requirements may necessitate additional training and policy adjustments for sports organizations, potentially posing implementation challenges.

The Law on Safety and Health at Work mandates employers to ensure safe and healthy working conditions, conduct risk assessments, and implement preventive measures to protect employees' well-being. In the context of new employment forms, especially remote or freelance work in sports, ensuring compliance with health and safety regulations can be complex. While the law aims to protect workers, it may present barriers to flexible employment arrangements if organizations find it challenging to meet safety obligations outside traditional work environments.

The National Employment and Skills Strategy 2023-2030 aims to enhance employment opportunities and skills development in Albania. It emphasizes the promotion of new forms of labour, supports short-term intensive employment, and encourages flexibility at work, including digital solutions and the emergence of new occupations. The strategy actively facilitates innovative employment practices by advocating for flexible work arrangements and the integration of digital solutions. In the sports sector, this could translate to support for roles such as virtual coaching, online fitness training, and other digitally mediated sports professions, thereby promoting adaptability and modernization.

While Albania's legal and policy frameworks provide avenues to facilitate new forms of employment in the sports sector, certain regulatory requirements may pose challenges. Organizations should carefully navigate these laws to effectively implement innovative employment practices while ensuring compliance.

15.2 Belgium (Flanders)

Flanders has a complex set of laws and regulations governing employment and in some cases employment in sport.

The Labour Law of 16 March 1971 and the Royal Decree on the working hours and employment at night and on Sundays and public holidays of employees in the sociocultural sector (Royal Decree of 16 June 1999) and the collective labour agreement of 25 October 1999 set the minimum and maximum limits of working hours, employment agreements, work regulations and flexibility of working hours. In the case of sport, these are judged to provide too little flexibility to address the seasonal nature of demand fluctuation in the sector.

The Law of 3 July 1978 on employment contracts (Employment Contracts Law) is judged to require a high level of administration for the various and different types of employment contracts which tends to act as a deterrent to sport organisations employing staff, and there is a need for administrative simplification.

A Law of 8 April 1965 requires employers to provide an employment regulation that determines the mutual rights and obligations of employee and employer. The work regulations contain information about working hours, holidays, payment of wages, notice periods and more. In general, the amount of administration for the different types of contracts and the specific terms and conditions per contract make organisations anxious to take the step to employ themselves. Once again, there is a need for administrative simplification.

Article 17 of the Royal Decree of 28 November 1969, concerning social security for employees, (amended by royal decree of 3 September 2010) implies that certain employers in the sociocultural and sports sectors are in some cases exempt from the obligation to pay social security contributions for certain employees, including animator, leader, monitor, coordinator, coach, youth sports coordinator, groundskeeper, equipment manager, referee and judge. Its provisions tend to encourage the employment of staff in these roles since it allows the employee to earn up to €7,460 per year with a fixed income tax of only 10% with no social security contributions.

The Law of 24 July 1987 on temporary work, temporary agency work and the posting of workers for the benefit of users (Temporary Agency Work/Employment agency Law) covers the performance of temporary work and the posting of workers to a user company. However, it imposes contractual restrictions and burdens which act as a deterrent to sport employers attempting to use these provisions.

The Decree of 8 November 2013 on the promotion, coordination and subsidisation of employment in the sports sector facilitates the employment of sports technical, logistical and administrative staff within the sports sector and determines, among other things, the recognition and subsidization of an organization that is responsible for the coordination and employment of a pool of sports supervisors and sports assistants. For each policy plan period, one organisation is appointed for the coordination and employment of a pool of sports supervisors and sports assistants. Since 2014, this has been Sportwerk Vlaanderen. This organization has built up enormous experience with regard to sports and employment over the years and promotes the concept of shared employment.

Regulation of labor relations, establishment of a Labor Inspection Body and other provisions. (Law No 2639/1998) regulates special forms of employment, in particular part-time employment.

Article 67 Law No 4808/2021 regulates the new form of working from distance such as platform work with the use of technology.

Presidential Degree No. 80 December 4, 2022, Issue 1, Sheet No. 222 is essentially a codification of the legislation governing individual labor law, which includes the basic regulations for the employment contract, its meaning and content, its preparation and termination, working time (hours and leaves) and remuneration, etc.

15.3 France

In France, all the national laws and regulations governing labour law are listed in the «Code du Travail», drafted for the first time in 1910. This exhaustive document governs all relations between the employer and the employee, from the start to the end of the contract (hiring process, working conditions, suspension or termination of the employment contract etc.). This is not a frozen document. New decrees and regulations laws are regularly amended or added to better adapt to the reality of changes and new dynamics observed in the working environment.

When it comes to choosing a type of employment contract when hiring an employee, knowledge of the Labour Code (Code du Travail) is essential. The type of contract that will be chosen will necessarily belong to a defined and regulated category of the Labor Code. The Labor Code represents the first level of labour law. A second level exists

in certain sectors of activity. This second level is called a National Collective Agreement. It makes it possible to adapt the rules of the Labor Code to the specific situations of a sector or activity.

The agreement can promote the emergence of new forms of employment in a sector if an agreement is reached between representatives of employers and employees. The Collective Agreement makes it possible to adapt the organization of work within the limits provided for by the Labor Code.

Therefore, it exists in France two levels that regulate the relationships between the employer and the employee:

1. The Labor Code
2. The Collective Agreement specific to each sector of activity (e.g. sport, banking, real estate)

There is a National Collective Sport Agreement (CCNS) which was officially signed in 2006 following seven years of negotiation. Relatively recent compared to other Collective Agreements, the CCNS has undergone many changes since its official recognition. The CCNS has made it possible to make employment in the sports sector more flexible and secure in France. The CCNS, for example, offers the possibility of increasing the working time of a part-time employee in case of a peak in activity. That possibility is offered by the CCNS and not the Labor Code.

The most important advantage of the CCNS is to bring together around the same negotiating table all the stakeholders (employees and employers) who are aware of the difficulties or improvements that must be made to the sports sector in terms of employee/employer relationships, while remaining within the framework of labour law as defined in the Labor Code. The CCNS has played an important role in the emergence of new forms of employment in sport, in particular by having established the Permanent Intermittent Contract (CDII), that is one of the most used working contracts in sport in France.

15.4 Greece

As well as **general employment legislation** (similar to the labour codes discussed above), Greece also has **Article 67, Law No. 4808/2021** which regulates new forms of employment which involve working from a distance (including platform work supported by the use of technology) and a Presidential Decree No. 80 which codifies legislation governing individual labour law which includes the basic regulations for the employment contract, its meaning and content, its preparation and termination, working time (hours and holidays) and remuneration, etc.

15.5 Luxembourg

By comparison, Luxembourg has only one relevant legal requirement, the [Labour Code \(April 2021\)](#) contains provisions applicable to all employees exercising an activity on the territory of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg all legal, regulatory and administrative provisions, as well as those resulting from collective agreements declared to be of general application or an arbitration decision.

15.6 Poland

In line with other partner countries, Poland has a **Labour Code** which regulates employment relationships in all sectors including sport. It defines terms and conditions of employment, such as types of employment contracts, working hours, holidays, overtime, leaves, benefits, minimum wage for a full-time employee, termination of employment, and severance.

There is also a **Civil Code** which regulates employment forms that may fall outside traditional employment relationships, such as contracts for specific tasks or freelance agreements. These contracts must adhere to the general principles of contract law outlined in the Civil Code, including obligations, liability, and termination terms.

In addition, there is also a **Sports Law** which regulates the functioning of sports organisations, including the employment of athletes and coaches. This law provides specific provisions regarding the rights and duties of sports professionals, contractual agreements, and the organisation of sports events. It can affect how employment relationships are structured in the sports industry.

Like all EU states, Poland has **anti-discrimination Laws** that apply to all sectors, including sports. Any new form of employment must ensure non-discrimination based on gender, age, disability, race, religion, or other protected characteristics. This is crucial in creating fair and inclusive employment practices in sports.

Relevant to the promotion of new forms of employment, the country also has the **Good Governance Code for the Polish Sports Associations** which is a non-legislative tool. It is a handbook, a collection of recommendations and best practices that can be useful for management boards wishing to reform their sports organisations.

15.7 Portugal

Portugal has a **Labour Code, Law No. 7/2009 (12 February)**. This is a general legal document that regulates labour relations between employees and employers, namely the employment contract and its different modalities and specific information on: place of work, remuneration, number of hours, allowances, vacation periods, absences, termination of employment, dismissal and collective labour disputes, and so on. As such, it does not act as a barrier or facilitator of new forms of employment.

However, there are also laws which cover the **Legal Regime of the Sports Practitioner's Employment Contract embodied in Law No. 54/2017, the Sports Training Contract and the Representation or Intermediation contract**. This establishes the relationship between a sport employer and employee and the status of a Sport Entrepreneur. The Sports Training Contract is entered into between a training entity and a sports trainee, under which the latter undertakes to provide the latter with adequate training for the development of their technical capacity and the acquisition of knowledge necessary for the practice of a sport, being the sports trainee obliged to perform the tasks inherent to that training. It can be a facilitator of new forms of employment.

The **Regulatory Ordinance No. 367/2012** establishes regulated professions in the sport sector and designates a competent authority to carry out the recognition of professional qualifications. Establishing rules for the exercise of sports professions is judged to be an element that facilitates the conditions for reconciling new forms of employment and professional practice. In addition, the **Law No. 106/2019** establishes an access regime and exercise of sport coach activity. A similar **Law No. 39/2012** covers a similar requirement for technical directors in gyms, academies and health clubs.

Portugal's **Employment and Vocational Training Institute** promotes the Activar.pt and Investe Jovem programmes which provide a stimulus for job creation, the hiring of interns and promotion of young entrepreneurs which may facilitate the emergence of new forms of employment, both of which may be helpful to the labour market integration of youth, women and the disabled.

15.8 Netherlands

Like all other EU states, Netherlands has a raft of employment legislation which reflects the EU framework. There is also a collective agreement for sport which must be acknowledged. Relevant to the topic of the IN-FORMS project, the Dutch partner notes, "These laws provide everyone (individuals and companies) with the same set of regulations in order to create a 'level playing field' for all who intend to create new forms of employment. In a way, these regulations facilitate new forms of employment through a clear framework in which all parties have to adjust to the same set of rules. At the same time the number of laws, rules and regulations provide a load of information and restrictions which make it hard for new players to comply with all the requirements."

15.9 Romania

Romania only has three legislative instruments relevant to sport employment.

The Labour Code regulates employment, the rights and obligations of employers and employees in dependent relationships. This is judged to impose employment contracts as the main solution for employment and this limits the potential for flexibility.

The [Sports Law](#) regulates the employment of athletes, coaches and technical staff based on a Sports Activity Contract. The taxation imposed by this law brings Sport Activity Contracts close to Employment Contracts in terms of financial burden.

The [Civil Code](#) regulates self-employed contracts and provides limited facilities in rather limited circumstances. Generally speaking, microenterprises are under financial pressure with the numbers having decreased drastically in recent years.

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