



F R E D E R I C K
U N I V E R S I T Y

School of Business and Law

Analysis of the Development of Women's Football in Cyprus: Self-Sustainability
and Key Factors Leading to Success

by

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Abstract

This thesis was conducted as an overall analysis of the women's football development in Cyprus and the key factors leading to success with an emphasis on self-sustainability of clubs. The women's football industry in Cyprus is a small one, consisting of only six teams at the time this research was completed. (It should be noted that there were seven teams at the inception of the research, however one team, Geroskipou Ladies, folded in January 2023 due to lack of funding). At the time of this research, there was no other documented research on the industry of women's football in Cyprus; however, there have been many researches done on women's football in other more successful countries such as England and Spain. This research will attempt to act as a guide to help the development and promotion of women's football in small countries that have little investment and not a lot of support from outside sources. Qualitative and quantitative data make up the findings of this report and were analyzed to give a bigger picture of the overall climate of women's football in Cyprus at the time of the research being conducted. The goal of this research is to be able to help grow women's football in Cyprus by providing key factors that can help lead to success, as well as self-sustainability guidelines.

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Secondly, I would like to thank all the women's football teams in Cyprus who helped provide information for this research and those who were interviewed.

Lastly, I would like to thank all the women and girls who play football in Cyprus and continue to give everything they have for the sport that they love. I hope this research can help provide guidelines for a better future for all of us.

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1. Introduction

1.1 Overview of Women's Football in Cyprus

Women's football is one of the fastest growing sports markets in the world. After recent viewing successes with the 2019 Women's World Cup and the UEFA Women's Champions League, interest in the sport has taken off at a high trajectory. However, not all trajectories are created equal. "Politically, the sport system claims 'Sport for all.' Still, there is a discrepancy between visions and reality. Sports recruits unequally regarding gender, race, age, class, income, and other socio-cultural distinctions" (Tangen, 2021).

The focus of this research will be to examine the development structure of women's football in Cyprus to analyze *how a small country can improve their women's football environment*, as well as assess if women's football can be *sustainable without high amounts of private investment*. This study will also strive to understand what *key factors* lead to success of women's football teams in Cyprus and if that success can be attainable for all clubs *to create a more competitive domestic football league*, therein turn helping with the success of the Cyprus Women's National Team success. The question will also be asked if it is possible for Cyprus women's football to reach levels of success that other larger European countries have achieved.

1.2 Research Purpose

This study is aimed to analyze small markets of women's football with the goal of being able to fill a void in this field. Many studies have been done on top leagues and countries around the world, however there is little to no research done on smaller countries. The research done on top leagues is not applicable to lower ranked countries as the same practices cannot be applied due to extreme differences in funding, promotion, and overall interest in the sport. This information will be highly valuable in helping to create a developmental program suitable for countries without much success or investment, where little help in development and guidance is given from UEFA or FIFA.

1.3 Research Significance

This paper will analyze research done on the women's football market done by various governing bodies (e.g., UEFA, FIFA) and assess statistical data as well as the plans implemented by these bodies for the future growth and development of women's football. It will also include an in depth look at player perspectives of women's football in Cyprus through quantitative and qualitative questioning. By doing this, a bigger picture of the scope of the current climate of women's football in Cyprus can be made and an assessment can be made of how this system can be improved into a more professional environment. This paper will also analyze the financial aspect of women's football in Cyprus to assess if there is the possibility for women's football clubs to be self-sustainable, therefore creating a foundation for future growth and development. Interviews with team management will also provide an in-depth look as to the inner workings of the women's football clubs and provide a baseline for development.

1.4 Research Objectives

The objectives of this research will be *to define clear factors* that lead to success of certain women's football clubs in Cyprus, as well as abroad. These factors will then be analyzed further to determine if they can be applied leaguewide to create a more competitive football environment, thus leading to the creation of better players and increasing the overall performance of the Cyprus Women's National Football Team.

Another objective will be to use financial data *to create a baseline of standards* that are required for women's football teams in Cyprus to be able to function at a professional level by becoming self-sustainable.

1.5 Key Research Questions

The main question that this paper will examine is if *self-sustainability* of women's football clubs in Cyprus is possible, and, if so, how it can lead to *a more competitive environment*.

The sub-questions that this paper will also examine are the key factors that lead to success to establish *if these factors be applied* leaguewide. It will also be asked if women's football in Cyprus can reach levels of success that other major European countries have achieved.

2. Literature Review

2.1 An Attempt at the Same

2.1.1 Values

Women's football, compared to men's football, is extremely underdeveloped in terms of salaries, investment, viewership, and development. Not only do men's and women's football have large discrepancies among them, in women's football itself there are huge differences between countries that have developed their women's football programs and those who have not achieved such success. Regarding the differences between men's and women's football development, Havik, Elardt, and Hasselgren (2015) state that this is due to the fact that in the initial phase of the development of women's football it was compared to men's football and attempted to be developed in the same way. They state that men's and women's football are much different due to physical differences between men and women, and the values and attributes from men's football are not the same when it comes to women's football and thus, should not be treated the same. Culvin (2019) also states that, "Women who enter a career as a professional footballer, face considerable challenges not least on the basis of legitimacy."

Not only do men's and women's football differ on physical levels and financial levels, but they also differ in terms of what teams should be trying to promote. "...competitive advantages arise under the condition that the organization can use its organizational capabilities for formulating and implementing the value-creating strategies that are not executed by the competing teams (Kim, 2022)." When analyzing this, it can be said that in men's football, fans are born. They are inducted into a team from the moment they open their eyes depending on which team their family members support. With women's football becoming an up-and-coming sport, many fans get to choose what team they support. This provides advantages and disadvantages depending on how you want to view this situation. A disadvantage of this is that there are less immediate fans, however an advantage is that women's football clubs can garner fans based on their ideals and values depending on what they choose to promote to potential fans, which is the main point that Havik, Elardt, and Hasselgren (2015) speak to.

Examining further, Shaw and Amis (2001) state that “marketing personnel who are keen to sponsor women’s sport will have to overcome barriers that mitigate against making such an investment.” This is due to the perceived notion that men’s sports are more interesting and attract more attention than women’s sports. However, this has not proven to be the case if we look, for example, at the United States Women’s National Team (USWNT), who have become household names for most American’s who follow sports compared to the US Men’s National Team that is regarded, plainly, as a joke compared to most other countries. The USWNT has not only gained attention due to their incredible success, but the values that their players portray for themselves and how they relate to their fanbase as being the underdogs of US football, as even though they were the more successful of the two national teams, they were much underpaid compared to their men’s counterparts. It was not until 2022 that the US Soccer Federation (USSF) agreed with the men’s and women’s national teams on a collective bargaining agreement that would see the two teams splitting all funding and prize money earned.

2.1.2. Economic Differences and Gender Bias

Another facet of women’s football that plays a key role in the development and sustainability is the economic factors for players. Women’s football players earn staggeringly less money than men’s football players, therefore making it impossible for most female football players to have their main source of income from football. Culvin states, “In pursuing such possible advancements, professional women footballers will naturally experience football in diverse ways based on the gendered habitus instilled during childhood, sexuality, ethnicity and the socio-political contexts in which they operate (2019).” Because of stereotypes and stigmas regarding female athletes and female football players particularly, there is a general bias against the sport that creates an internal environment that negatively impacts the sport. “Women enter a field of employment, which offers little or no economic security, a short career and a bolted-on version of the men’s game, with little policy consideration for their needs as professionals (FIFPro, 2017 via Culvin, 2019).

“According to De Bosscher et al. (2006), initiatives and programmes related to these targeted areas (i.e. nine pillars) sustain the foundations of a country’s international success. For example, countries that invest more financially in their elite sport system

would be expected to create more opportunities for athletes to train under ideal circumstances. In the same way, high-quality facilities, the existence of clear athlete pathways, a strong organisational structure, an established national competition, opportunities for players to train with specialised and qualified coaches and participate in international competitions are all examples of what constitutes a sport system that supports the development of young talents into elite athletes. Similarly, sport systems that encourage a continuous and proactive exchange of information with sport medicine professionals and incentivise the creation of talent identification and development structures contribute to maximising athletes' potential, thus increasing a country's chances of achieving international sporting success. (Valenti, 2019)

Valenti makes a valid point, attributing to the systematic approach towards the development of sports. However, these organizational structures are not easily achieved by smaller countries. This structural element would fall onto the Cyprus Football Association, who is the governing football body for the Cyprus men's, women's, and youth national teams, as well as the various men's professional leagues and Cyprus Women's Championship. When defining an organization, it can be said that "Organizations are bundles of resources and capabilities in which the potential deployment of valuable, rare, imperfectly imitable, and non-substitutable resources generate sustainable competitive advantages adequate for value creation (Barney, 1991; Penrose, 1959; Peteraf, 1993 via Kim, 2022)."

The Cyprus men's and women's national teams are both ranked outside of the top-100 FIFA ranked nations, with the men's national team ranked at 111th and the women's team 125th (FIFA, 2023a). The low ranking is a clear indicator of the lack of development and progression compared to other European countries. In Kim's analysis, "The capabilities of a firm represent the capacity to deploy resources that have been purposely integrated to achieve strategic objectives and decisions for competitive performance (2022)." Not only are there differences on the national level, but on the domestic level, there is only one women's football league that is not fully professional, compared to more than three division of men's football leagues, with the top two leagues being a higher professional status to the women's football team that currently only has six registered teams. The next segment will examine the club factors of women's football in Cyprus.

2.2 Clubs

2.2.1 Financial Management

A major problem in women's football in countries where women's football is underdeveloped is the emergence of top teams who are continuously successful regarding competitions and investment, and teams who lack proper financial and managerial investment. When women's football in Sweden started to take off as a sport in 2003, Umeå created a huge gap between themselves and the competition due to the maturity of the club financially and statistically compared to other teams (Havik, Elardt, and Hasselgren, 2015). This is true in Cyprus as well, where there is a culture and belief that only one real professional team exists and that if you want to be considered a successful and professional football player you need to be on that team.

One problem that clubs have when trying to become more professional is that the clubs invest in the wrong areas, such as one "star" player instead of investing in promotion and team resources. These economic choices are key when trying to professionalism women's football because misguided investments can lead to the temporary success of clubs but in the end these clubs cannot sustain their investment and end up folding. Havik, Elardt, and Hasselgren (2015) agree with this, stating that, "The money that a club earns has to be allocated more carefully..."

In terms of field usage, Perechuda (2019) states, "The majority of researched clubs...do not possess their own sports infrastructure, but instead use facilities belonging to local government units through lease, tenancy, or usage agreements." Without having their own facilities, clubs can keep running costs low and by sharing a field with other teams even lower. However, when looking at professional clubs this is not the case. Most men's football teams have their own fields, or a specified group of other teams who develop and share the field. To save money, clubs with less economic abilities must share training and match day pitches with other clubs to be able to keep expenditures in line with financial abilities.

2.2.2 Structure

Structural issues are another problem in women's football within clubs. Also stemming from the issue of allocation of resources, clubs must focus on having full-time staff and developing a

system that stems from the top down to allow success of clubs on, but more importantly, off the field. “Organizational capabilities are a subset of a firm’s resources and can be defined as the tangible and intangible assets that enable a firm to take full advantage of the other resources it controls (Kim, 2022).” Structurally, when comparing the physical and financial differences between men’s and women’s football these capabilities are defiant of the ability to succeed as an organization. These intangible assets Perechuda describes as, “resources such as investment in human capital, value of football player or value-added intellectual coefficient (Perechuda, 2016, via Perechuda 2020).” Kim continues, “it represents a unique combination of sets of skills, processes, technologies, and human abilities that can differentiate an organization.” In football, the differences are not only prevalent between men’s and women’s football, but also in women’s football and possibly even more so, creating a divide in the ability of some women’s teams to be successful.

When discussing the advancement of women’s football in England, which is one of the top European and global women’s football leagues in terms of success, investment, and ratings, Culvin (2019) states the following about the restructuring of the FA Women’s Super League that took place in 2019:

“The latest restructure is problematic in many ways, not least on the basis of whether there will be a sufficient number of teams with the financial capacity to sustain full time status. This is due to several reasons which include: an over-reliance on often inconsistent men’s clubs - both economically and commercially; low attendance figures; and an inadequate number of elite players with the ability to enhance the competition.”

These concerns about the restructure are completely valid and are relevant to any league that aims to be fully professional. But one main question comes up with regards to this statement: If this is a concern in one of the biggest women’s football leagues in the world, what does that mean for smaller, less developed leagues? Obviously full professional status is not possible for most European countries, however these concerns can also be carried over into semi-professional and amateur leagues, especially if those countries are small and have a limited player pool and low investment. The low number of investment capital in women’s football leads to players having to

work more than one job and therefore it is nearly impossible to create a more professional environment.

2.3 Commercial

2.3.1 Attendance, Promotion, and Investment

Havik, Elardt, and Hasselgren (2015) point out that low attendance figures for matches are a key problem in women's football, which effect the potential for media coverage. This also is true in terms of sponsorship, as without attendance and viewership the sponsorship in women's football cannot increase. In Cyprus, viewership is limited, with only one game per week being streamed live on television and match attendances are extremely low. Havik, Elardt, and Hasselgren state that, "If clubs do not realize the value of gaining spectators both on TV and at the stadiums it will be difficult to increase the commercial value for women's football (Erlandsson via Havik, Elardt, and Hasselgren, personal communication, March 23, 2015)."

In Cyprus there is only one club that would be considered financially stable and fully professional and that is Apollon Ladies. They have qualified for the UEFA Women's Champions League consistently over the last ten years and have created a gap between themselves and other Cypriot clubs. This is problematic when considering the attempt to create a professional women's football environment in Cyprus, as Kim (2022) states, "The concept of competitive performance occurs only when there is a situation of resource heterogeneity (different resources across professional sports teams) and resource immobility (the inability of competing teams to obtain capabilities from other teams)." These lower clubs often have difficulty with investment and financial resources, which is normal in a country where women's football is underdeveloped. "...on lower club levels the main income is based on local companies and because of the sponsor market being rather saturated, it becomes more difficult to gain money resulting in difficulties to run the organization due to scarce resources (Erlandsson via Havik, Elardt, and Hasselgren, personal communication, March 23, 2015)."

With the bias of women's sports being predominant in Cyprus, it can be agreed when Pfister states "without sponsors or a redistribution of the overall profits generated by football, the professionalization of women's football is impossible. And if the players' performance is

inadequate and the games are not sufficiently attractive, the prejudice is reinforced that women cannot play football and that it is not worthwhile reporting on their matches” (Pfister, 2010). Valenti (2019) agrees with this statement and continues that, “the lack of media coverage is identified as a factor that contributes to the marginalization of the sport as it impedes the women’s game from attracting sponsors which, in turn, would have an effect on the game and its development.”

2.3.2 Absorption of Women’s Teams

There are also mixed views on the absorption of women’s football teams by men’s football teams, with Culvin stating, “Previous research supports the notion of women simply added on to men’s clubs often positioned as charitable causes and deemed positive for public relations (Woodward, 2007; Burton, 2015; Fielding-Lloyd et al. 2018, via Culvin 2019).” This is a key point, as new legislation from UEFA states that all men’s clubs who participate in European competitions must have a women’s sector of their clubs. The effects of being paired with a men’s professional team are not as enticing as it would seem. Later information will compare the statistical information taken from women’s clubs who are partnered with a men’s club and stand-alone women’s clubs. Many women’s clubs prefer to have a separate enterprise, as they don’t want to be controlled in their management of the club. However, for many women’s clubs, partnering with a men’s club is the only way that they can have the financial support they need to continue, therefore making them feel indebted to their men’s team.

2.4 Literature Review Conclusion

The information provided by the research shows that there are several key factors that need to be considered when analyzing the current state of development of women’s football in Cyprus, specifically from a structural and financial perspective. However, these are not the only factors that should be taken into consideration. The concept of values and gender bias play vital roles in the perception of women’s football and by ignoring these would be a critical mistake when trying to promote and develop the sport. These later factors are the factors that provide the most resistance when trying to promote women’s football, as without the correction and desire to fix these issues, the other points are moot.

3. Secondary Research

There is not much documented or researched on the self-sustainability of women's sports in Europe, especially in regard to women's football. However, by analyzing other sports fields as well as reports and implemented plans and statistical reports by different governing bodies we can understand the key elements that lead to success of women's football in different countries as well as factors that help clubs to become self-sustainable to have an overall idea of what factors ultimately lead to success.

Success in women's football at club level in Europe is generally defined by two factors:

1. The level of competition in the country the team is playing in and how well the team does in that league, and
2. Does the team compete in the UEFA Women's Champions League and how well they do in the competition.

These two factors are not only defining for any specific team, but for the overall level of women's football in each country. There are certain countries that are notorious in Europe for being "powerhouses" of women's football when it comes to both factors, such as England, France, Germany, and Spain. These countries have top rated leagues, as well as a record of success in the UEFA Women's Champions League. The UEFA Women's Champions League has been running since 2001, and since then the competition has been won by teams from the "powerhouse" countries a total number of times:

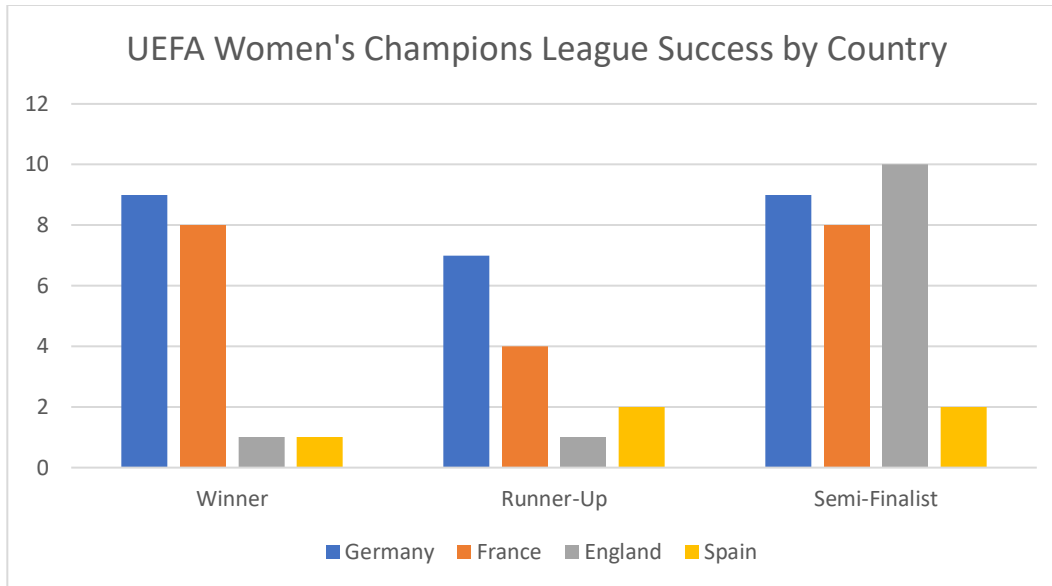


Chart 1 - UEFA Women's Champions League Success by Country

As of the current UEFA Club Coefficient Rankings (2023), the top 15-ranked women's football teams in Europe are the following:

1. Barcelona (Spain)
2. Lyon (France)
3. Wolfsburg (Germany)
4. PSG (France)
5. Bayern Munich (Germany)
6. Chelsea (England)
7. Arsenal (England)
8. Manchester City (England)
9. Juventus (Italy)
10. Atlético Madrid (Spain)
11. Slavia Praha (Czech Republic)
12. Real Madrid (Spain)
13. Rosengård (Sweden)
14. St. Pölten (Austria)
15. Brøndby (Denmark)

According to the UEFA Association Club Rankings (2023), the top five country associations are the following:

1. France
2. Germany
3. Spain
4. England
5. Italy

As of March 2023, the FIFA Women's World Rankings for the ranking of association national teams are the following:

1. United States
2. Germany
3. Sweden
4. England
5. France
6. Canada
7. Spain
8. Netherlands
9. Brazil
10. Australia

By looking at the statistical data and rankings, it is clear that there is a general theme in regards to European countries through team, league, and national team success. The statistics for Cyprus are the following:

- UEFA Women's Champions League: 0 appearances past round of 32
- UEFA Club Coefficient Ranking for top-rated team: Apollon Ladies – 45 (out of 129)
- UEFA Association Ranking: 20 (out of 47)
- FIFA ranking for Cyprus Women's National Team: 125 (out of 187)

FIFA is the international governing body for football. They create rules of the game, set regulations, and are the backbone of all the other football federations across the globe. In 2019 FIFA released their first FIFA Women’s Football Benchmark Report after a hugely successful 2019 Women’s World Cup that was record breaking in terms of sponsorship, promotion, viewing, and attendance numbers. The report highlights key statistics as well as league success and growth as a guideline for the success of individual clubs worldwide. In 2022 FIFA released a third edition of the report after a second publication in 2021, highlighting five different aspects of women’s football: Sporting, Governance, Financial Landscape, Fan Engagement, and Players.

3.1 Social Media, Visibility, and Streaming

In terms of Sporting, the FIFA Benchmark Report (2022) notes that the average number of teams per league globally is 12, with the average number of games played across entire leagues is 138, and the average range for the running of leagues was 233 days. One key statistical factor that the report highlights is regarding sporting competitiveness, where it states that only 13% of leagues in the last three years had the same league winner, 20% had a different champion each year, and majority of leagues were two out of three years by the same team (67%). This directly correlates with social media following of the clubs analyzed, with the following social media impact:

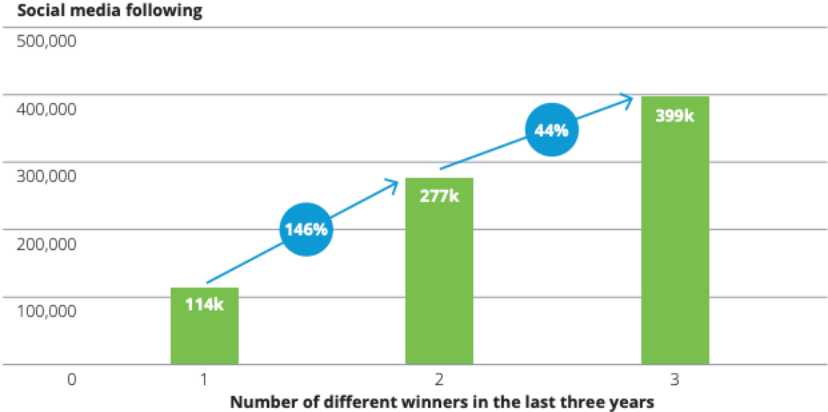


Chart 2 - Source: FIFA/Deliotte Analysis

Social media impact is a huge indicator of league popularity and success, and it can be calculated and compared to other leagues, teams, etc. In Cyprus, the following social media following information is for the different Cypriot teams:

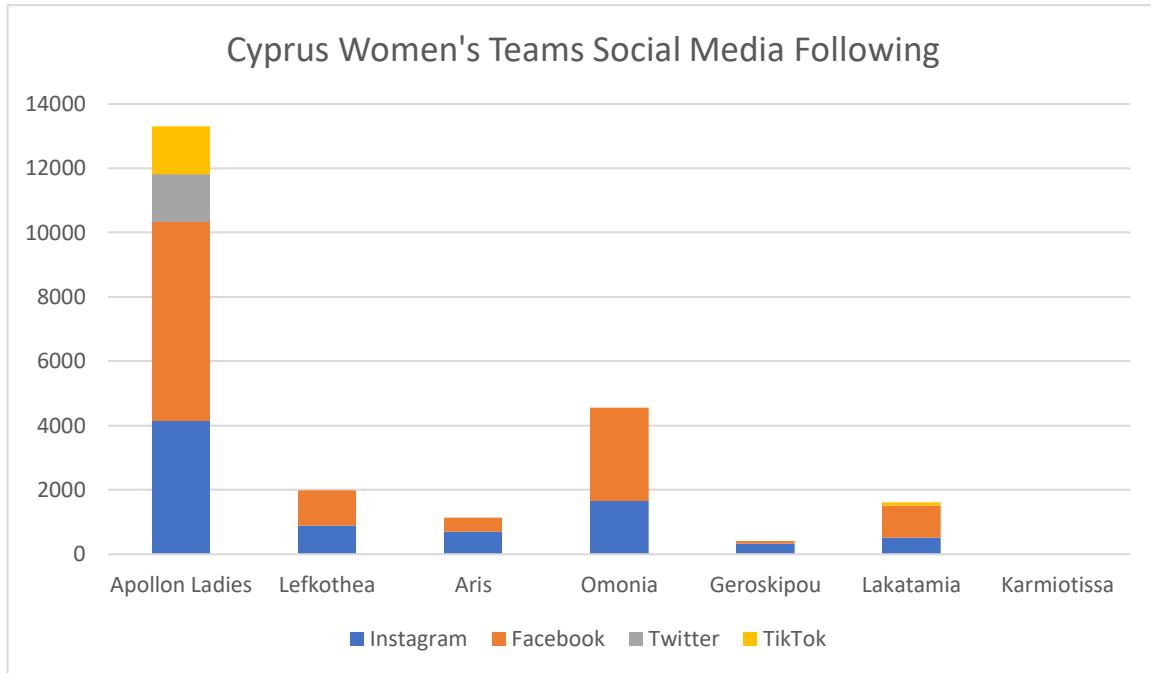


Chart 3 - Cyprus Women's Teams Social Media Following

*Note: Statistics do not include club academy social media following

Social media following is an indicator of league popularity, and a key factor in a club's ability to gain sponsorships along with matchday attendance and overall success of clubs. Compared to the FIFA/Deloitte data, the Cyprus Women's Championship is far behind their statistical factors for other clubs. The same team has also won the league the last three seasons (Apollon Ladies) putting the Cyprus Women's Championship into the 13% category as defined by FIFA. With league competitiveness and social media following being correlating factors, it is clear that in Cyprus there is a big discrepancy between Apollon Ladies and the rest of the teams that compete in the Cyprus Women's Championship. The Cyprus Women's Championship also does not have their own social media accounts, but shared with all other leagues in the Cyprus Football Association social media platforms.

Along with social media, streaming and visibility is another key factor that can help to draw fans in, however it is still underused, as sometimes it can be costly for clubs. UEFA is the European governing football body and is responsible for managing their member associations, setting up European international tournaments, and helping their member associations structurally and financially. In the *UEFA Business Case for Women's Football Report (2022)*, they highlight fan engagement, visibility, and fan base statistical information as a base to help clubs understand what fans are interested in, how to get them engaged, and how to keep them coming back for more. In terms of visibility, UEFA states the following:

The limited visibility of the women's game is a key barrier that is preventing it from increasing its fan base and unlocking its potential both on and off the field. With almost two thirds of clubs and leagues identifying greater coverage as a key factor for developing women's football, and spending on marketing and promotion at women's football clubs being relatively low, there is a clear opportunity to invest in increasing awareness of the game. As national associations, leagues and clubs take steps to achieve this goal, in terms of broadcasting, it is important that they use a balanced model that combines free-to-air and pay TV (either on digital or traditional platforms) in order to avoid sacrificing long-term value for short-term commercial gain. (UEFA: A Business Case for Women's Football, 2022)

The role of visibility and investment are two components that go hand-in-hand as, without one, the other cannot happen. However, clubs need to understand that with the short-term sacrifices in terms of streaming costs, the commercial value of their club will increase and draw in more sponsors to recoup those costs in the long-term.

An easy solution for women's football clubs is to livestream matches to free-to-use platforms such as YouTube or pay-to-watch platforms such as Recast. The success of the UEFA Women's Champions League partnering with DAZN for the streaming of group stage matches is an example of the interest in women's football and how, if easily accessible and low cost fans will tune in to watch. The partnership was signed as a "test drive" of sorts, to see how the partnership

would play out and the results were unprecedented for a women's football club competition. The contract elapsed at the end of the 2022/23 UEFA Women's Champions League Campaign, and was renewed for the following season by DAZN. The following statistics are from the in the UEFA report regarding the streaming of the UEFA Women's Champions League matches on DAZN's YouTube platform: 14 million views across the group stages and more than 11.6 for the quarter-final matches (1st season), viewers from over 230 countries, and over 360,000 channel subscribers for DAZN's YouTube channel (UEFA: A Business Case for Women's Football, 2022).

UEFA also states in their Business Report that 70% of leagues broadcast at least one game per season, with 50% of those being aired on digital streaming platforms or OTT platforms.

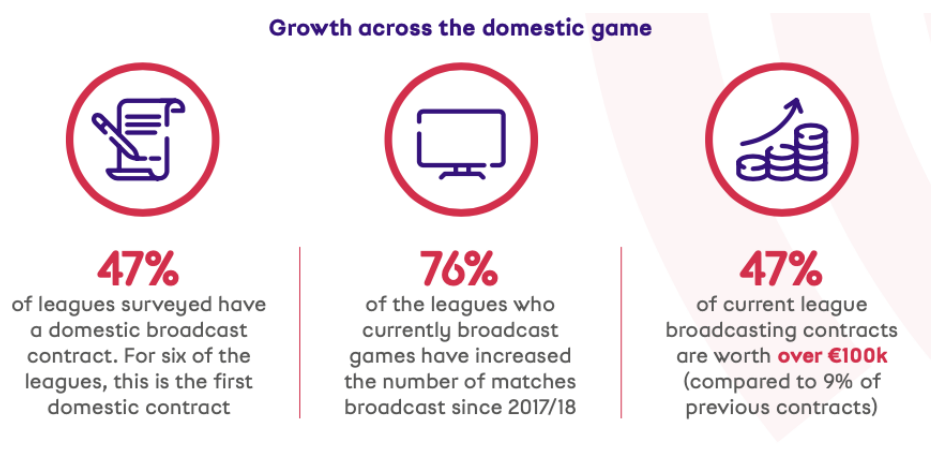


Figure 1 – Broadcasting Growth of Leagues. Source: UEFA Business Report

Along with live streaming, matchday attendance is another indicator of interest in women's football. The UEFA Business report shows the following statistics collected from their study:

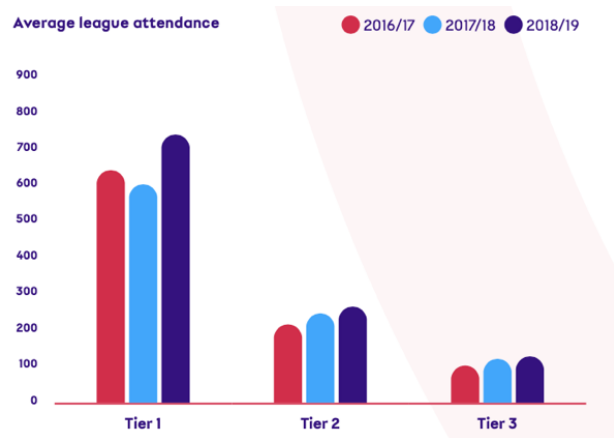


Chart 4 – Matchday Attendance Figures. Source: UEFA Business Report

As expected, the countries in Tier 1 (Denmark, England, France, Germany, Italy, Norway, Spain, and Sweden) have the highest amount of matchday attendance figures, far outmatching the likes of Tier 2 and Tier 3. However, the difference in the numbers from Tier 2 to Tier 3 are also quite drastic, with Tier 2 having more than double matchday attendance figures each of the three years assessed.

It can be said that there is clearly a system within women’s football regarding interest, investment, and performance. These three factors work in tandem with each other and one not being able to improve without the others needing to follow suit.

Havik, Elardt and Hasselgren (2015) created a 6-Step model for increasing commercial value of clubs, with the following stages:

- Step 1) Financial Stability, Sports Achievements, Organizational Structure
- Step 2) CSR Sponsorship
- Step 3) Recognizing the values, branding, activation, and forming relationships with sponsors
- Step 4) Increased Attendance, Awareness, and Interest
- Step 5) Increased Media Coverage
- Step 6) Increased Commercial Value

Their model has merit, but it does not consider countries with a small population and community and the interest in women's football only has a certain potential to grow. In a country like Cyprus, you can promote values and create a proper brand, but it doesn't guarantee that people will come out to their field every Sunday to see the team they support play. The current system set up in Cyprus is that only one game per week is shown on the TV and it is dispersed 'evenly' throughout the league to give all team an opportunity to gain some financial gain, however this is also a counter step for women's football in Cyprus, as the quality of some teams is so low that by broadcasting them on a mainstream television provider has a negative effect and people see the games and believe that women's football in Cyprus is a joke or that there are no good female football players in Cyprus. Most clubs will never be able achieve even the first or second level of this model.

3.2 Professionalism of Clubs

Facility access is a main factor that plays a role in club professionalism and success. Many women's clubs rely on their male counterpart for facilities as most women's clubs cannot afford to construct their own facilities. Access to facilities is limited generally for female football players, however in a country such as Cyprus where women's clubs might share a name with a men's club, the relationship end there. Facility availability and quality are crucial in improving sporting performance, quality of recovery, and overall professionalism of clubs.

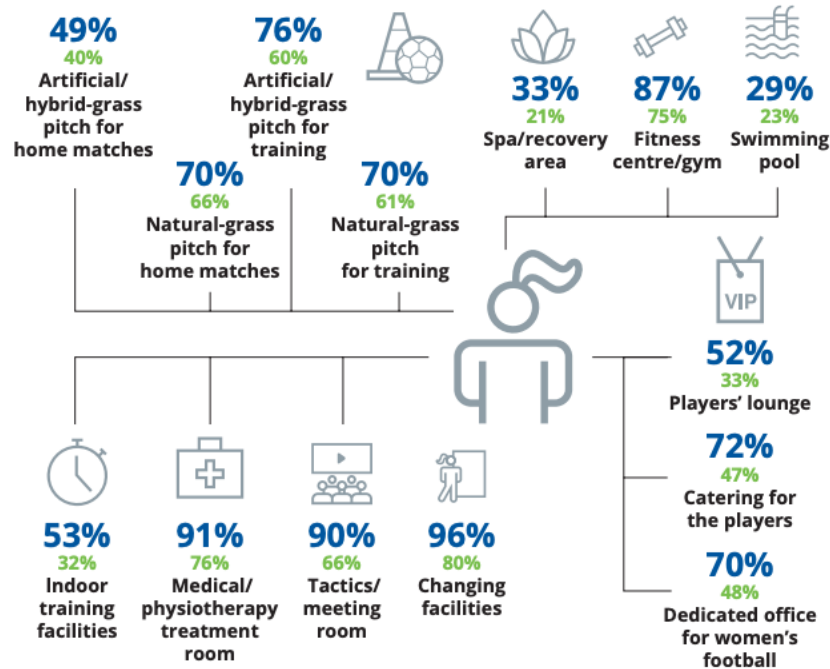


Figure 2 - Source: FIFA/Deliotte Analysis

*Note: Blue numbers are current year data. Green numbers are last year's data.

With facility access being a direct inclinor of club and league success, the lack of facilities available to women's football teams in Cyprus is a clear signal of lack of professionalism league-wide, with even top teams such as Apollon Ladies not having their own field and having to share with lower division men's teams and academies. They also do not have a dedicated office space, catering area, players' lounge, swimming pool, spa/recovery area, or tactics/meeting room. For meetings and recovery sessions, they use general spaces at their training facilities and make use of whatever materials they can find. An ability to improve and increase facility availability to players and clubs would automatically create a higher environment of professionalism in Cyprus and increase league competitiveness with the ability to draw in better players throughout the league.

In terms of football, the most important thing to consider is the players as, without them, it is impossible to play the game at all. Levels of professionalism differ between countries, with some leagues being more professional in some aspects, such as facilities and equipment, and other leagues that might provide better quality of football training and competition. One of the biggest

factors to consider if one is researching into the professionalism of a league is to note how many amateur players versus professional players the league has.

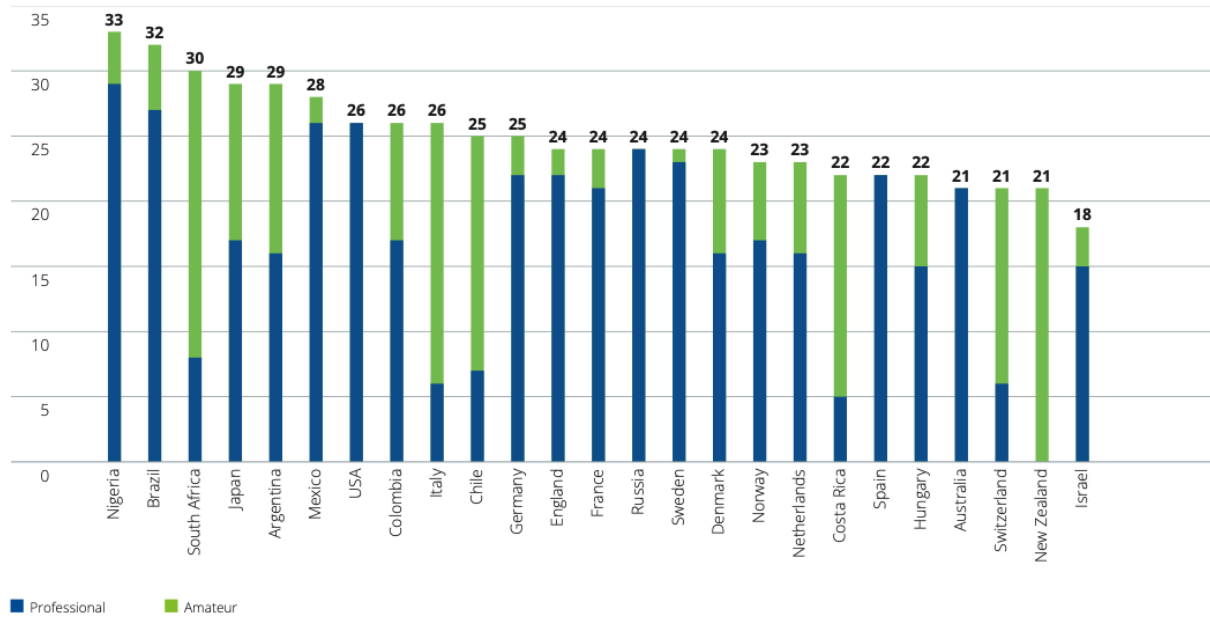


Chart 5 – Number of Professional vs. Amateur Registered Players Across Leagues. Source: FIFA/Deloitte Analysis

In a country such as Cyprus, the average number of players per team is 21 (2022/23 season average), with the number of professional players registered being two or less per team. Most players sign amateur contracts, as clubs are only allowed a certain number of non-EU players, as well as how many professional contracts they are allowed to register at each transfer window. Now, this is not saying that just because a league is made up of mostly amateur players that it cannot be a competitive league. This is quite the opposite if you look at a country like Italy, which reported that out of an average of 26 players per squad that only six are signed as professionals (FIFA, 2022). Italy is one of the top leagues in Europe. The UEFA Association Club Ranking (2023) has them listed at fifth. So the question is, what is the big difference between fifth ranked Italy and 20th ranked Cyprus? The difference is the investment, following, streaming, commercial value, and fan engagement of Italian clubs compared to the Cypriot clubs. If the following graph is considered, the difference between the researched clubs in the FIFA report are not so far from each other:



Figure 3 – Comparison of Characteristics Between Mostly Amateur vs. Mostly Professional Teams. Source: FIFA/Deloitte Analysis

These listed characteristics might not seem like they have a big difference however, ten hours of on-pitch training per week versus nine hours over the course of a ten-month season is an extra forty-four hours of training for mostly professional squads, as well as eighty-eight hours of gym exercise, all together for a total of 132 hours of physical activity throughout the course of the season. This is even more variant in Cyprus, where you have a team like Apollon Ladies that have a total of about ten hours of team physical activity (including on-pitch and gym sessions outside of game day) with only one off-day in the week competing against other teams that train only 3-4 times per week, many of which do not have team gym sessions.

In the 2020 FIFPro: Raising Our Game Report, FIFPro highlights the five key problems currently being faced in women’s football around the globe and recommendations for helping to eliminate these problems in time. One point they make is, “The lack of competitive leagues, too few matches, short seasons, discrepancies between elite teams and the rest, and gaps in many markets limit opportunities for both player development and commercial investment” (FIFPro, 2020). This is something that clearly relates to a country like Cyprus, where the top team is established from the beginning of the season each year, the next three teams fighting it out for second and third place, and the other teams just trying not to finish at the bottom of the table.

This alone is one of the big reasons why women’s football in Cyprus is so lacking, as there is no motivation to show up each year and try to win the league because you know the second that you sign your contract for a specific team what your general positioning will be at the end of the season. In regard to this problem, FIFPro recommends that leagues, “implement new, innovative and attractive competition designs with a balance between club and national teams so that players are not left patching together leagues, clubs and tournaments to fill their year (2020).” However, this is not as easy as it sounds, as little attention is given to the women’s football league in Cyprus as the money that is generated from the competition is relative compared to the amount of money that the men’s first and second divisions make, and even U-19 men’s leagues.

The following tables are the finishing positions the last three seasons in the Cyprus Women’s Championship (CFA, 2023). The 2019-20 season is not included in this data due to the early stoppage of the championship due to Covid-19:

#	Team	MP	W	D	L	F	A	D	P
1	Apollon Limassol	16	16	0	0	91	3	+88	48
2	Nea Salamis	16	13	1	2	65	11	+54	40
3	Omonia Nicosia	16	12	1	3	45	20	+25	37
4	Lefkothea	16	10	0	6	53	14	+39	30
5	↘ Geroskipou	16	5	0	11	13	58	-45	15
6	↘ AEL Champions	16	4	2	10	30	49	-19	14
7	↘ Karmiótissa Ch...	16	4	2	10	19	45	-26	14
8	↘ Ermis Apollon	16	3	2	11	18	71	-53	11
9	Ethnikos Achna	16	1	0	15	3	66	-63	3

Table 1: 2020-21 Season Results

#	Team	MP	W	D	L	F	A	D	P
1	Apollon Limassol	16	15	1	0	105	8	+97	46
2	Nea Salamis	16	12	2	2	80	14	+66	38
3	Omonia Nicosia	16	11	1	4	59	15	+44	34
4	Aris Limassol	16	9	4	3	51	16	+35	31
5	Lefkothea	16	8	2	6	51	32	+19	26
6	Lakatamia	16	4	2	10	31	41	-10	14
7	AMOK Chrysomilia	16	3	2	11	17	75	-58	11
8	Geroskipou	16	1	2	13	14	74	-60	5
9	Apollon Lym pion	16	1	0	15	6	139	-133	-1

Table 2: 2021-22 Season Results

#	Team	MP	W	D	L	F	A	D	P
1	Apollon Limassol	22	22	0	0	127	9	+118	66
2	Lefkothea	22	15	3	4	64	36	+28	48
3	Omonia Nicosia	22	12	3	7	51	31	+20	39
4	Lakatamia	22	7	3	12	28	51	-23	24
5	Aris Limassol	22	6	4	12	35	55	-20	22
6	Karmiótissa Ch...	22	3	1	18	16	92	-76	10

Table 3: 2022-23 Season Results

Tables 1, 2, 3 – League finishes 2020-21, 2021-22, and 2022-23. Source: CFA

Key factors that lead to the success of a football club are the players’ ability to focus on playing football as their main job, therefore meaning it needs to be their main source of income. The following chart from the FIFA report shows the average of women’s players whose main source of income is from playing football. *Low salary and job security* are a main reason why a lot of female football players stop playing football at an early age. Another factor is that they want to start a family and don’t have any type of *maternity leave program* from their clubs. The financial

aspect for players is a key decision on whether to continue playing football, as well as to what extent they can focus on football if they do decide to continue playing.

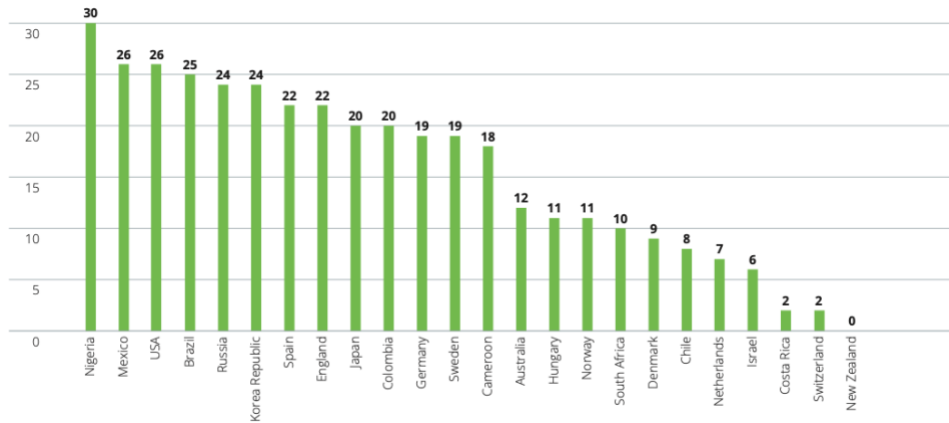


Chart 6 – Number of average players per team with football as a main source of income. Source: FIFA/Deliotte Analysis

Staff is another key indicating factor for the differences between top leagues and leagues who struggle to operate. Most teams can operate with few staff members, however the difference in professionalism between different Tiers according to the UEFA Business Report (2022) is clearly indicated through their research on staff investments.

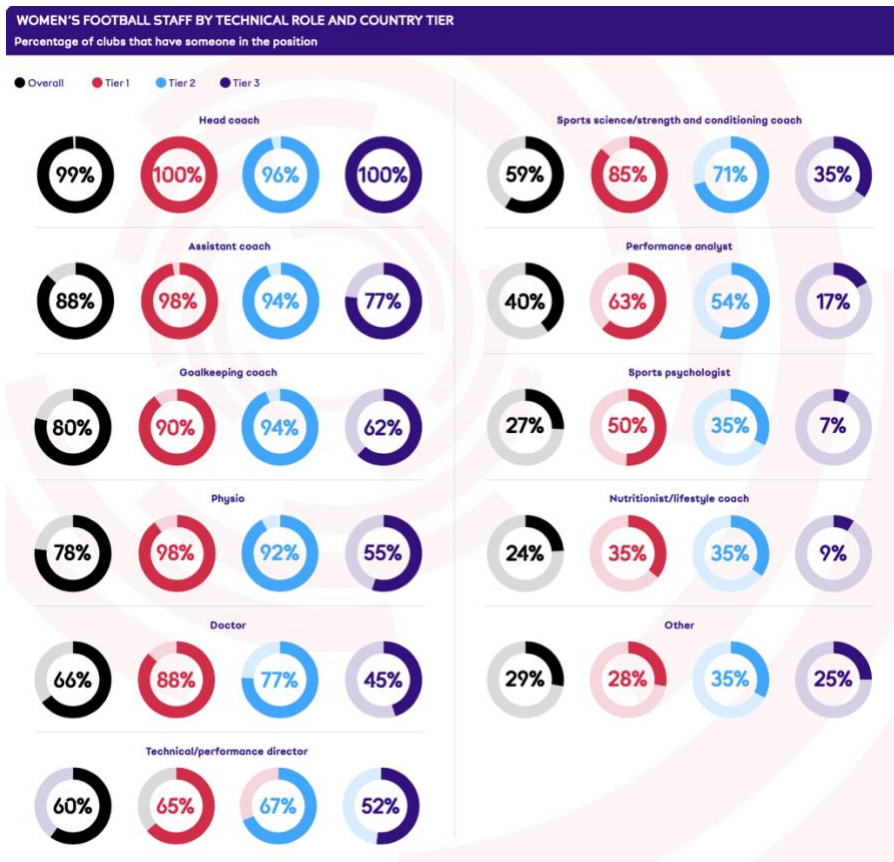


Figure 4 – Staff by Tier Level. Source: UEFA Business Report

It is up to individual clubs to decide how to staff their teams, and it can either be done by hiring many staff members with a lower level of quality, or fewer members of staff with higher quality. In terms of staff, FIFA reports that leagues that had a single winner in the last three years reported an average of 4.6 staff members league-wide, whereas leagues that had two winners in the last three years reported an average of 10.7 staff members, and teams that had three different winners an average of 12.8 staff members (FIFA, 2022).

However, many clubs who want to become “professional” tend to take the wrong approach and invest their money in ways that are more focused on immediate results instead of creating sustainable economic environments to have continued, long-term growth of their club. The recommendation from Havik, Elardt and Hasselgren (2015) is that “...clubs have to rethink their strategies and focus more on a sustainable economic future with long-term goals rather than to succumb to the will of professionalizing in a too early stage.”

3.3 Sustainability and Investment

In terms of sustainability, the most important thing that clubs need to focus on is strategic planning, budgeting, and sponsorship. The FIFA report states that out of the clubs that won their domestic league in the last three years, 78% had a written strategic plan, whereas 65% of clubs that did not win their leagues had a written strategic plan (FIFA, 2022). The importance of having a written strategic plan cannot be overstated, as it creates a guide and plan for the growth and development of clubs. This also leads to more commercial opportunities and, as stated in the FIFA report (2022), 56% of all club revenue from the clubs analyzed in the report came from commercial revenue. When discussing revenue generation and investment, it should be noted that according to FIFA, leagues with different champions each year averaged 2.9 million USD in commercial revenue, following with 1 million USD for leagues with two champions in the past three seasons, and teams with the same winner the last three years averaged 400,000 USD of commercial revenue.

When speaking about a country like Cyprus, this number is much higher than anything that is attainable for a Cypriot women's club, with there being a big discrepancy between a club like Apollon Ladies who has competed in the UEFA Women's Champions League regularly for the last 10 years versus clubs who are made up of amateur players and typically finish in the bottom of the league table each season. In Sweden, this problem occurred after the 2003-04 season when Umeå was at the pinnacle of European women's football and in Sweden there was an environment created where Umeå was the leader statistically in attendance figures, etc., and did not promote the situation overall for women's football in Sweden. (Wijkström via Havik, Elardt and Hasselgren 2015). They also point out that the best way to attract sponsors and increase commercial value is to highlight and define team values and market to those values to attract sponsors that believe in the same values.

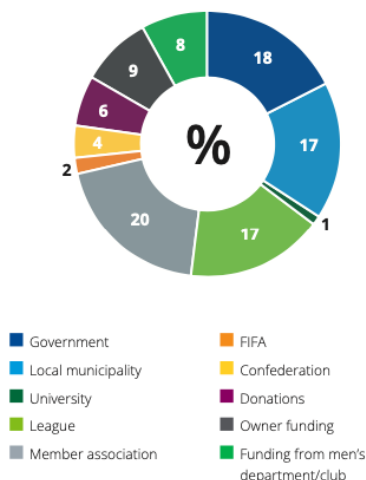


Chart 7 – Sources of Club Subsidiaries. Source: FIFA/Deliotte Analysis

Subsidiaries play a huge financial factor in Cyprus, with majority of funding coming from the Cyprus Football Federation through associations such as UEFA. Without subsidiary help, clubs in Cyprus would be unable to operate. Even though the amounts are quite low, they generate majority of the amount that clubs use to pay their wage costs. Along with player wages, coaching staff wages, other staff wages, facilities, and other expenses, there are many costs when running a football team. With low investment from federations and commercial sources, it is the funding from UEFA and FIFA that end up being that majority of what helps keep these teams running year after year. Without a substantial investment from an outside source, or a bit of luck, it is nearly impossible to change the hierarchy of teams in the Cyprus Women’s Championship, with teams finishing in almost the same position in the league table each season. This is clearly an indicator of the relationship with investment and results derived from those investments.

UEFA reports in their Business Report (2022) that for the 2019-20 season, the average annual budget from clubs that finished top three in their domestic leagues for the Tier 1 classification was \$1,000,000, \$700,000 for Tier 2, and \$200,000 for Tier 3. In the design of the UEFA Women’s Champions League, clubs from all different countries compete and try to pass as far as they can in the competition. The tournament is played with a new format that started in the 2021-22 season, which includes a Round 1 (a four-team mini tournament), Round 2 (home and away 2-leg tie against one opponent), and the teams that have the best aggregate score at the end of Round 2 qualify for the UEFA Women’s Champions League Group Stage. With this

qualification comes a lot more visibility, prestige, and money for clubs who reach this stage. Many of the top teams from top leagues are given a bye into the Round 2 stage, with some entering directly into the Group Stage. Keeping that in mind, there are 44 teams that compete in Round 1 from mostly Tier 3 and Tier 2 countries. Eleven of these teams pass into Round 2 where they could possibly get drawn against a Tier 1 team. If they are lucky enough to pass into the Group Stage, they are guaranteed to be placed against at least two Tier 1 teams, if not three. Looking at the 2019-20 average annual budget of top teams, that puts a team with an approximate annual budget of \$200,000 against teams with an approximate annual budget of \$1,000,000.

When speaking about investment and sponsorship of teams and leagues, the FIFA report states in their study that the average number of sponsors for leagues that generate more than \$2,000,000 of revenue have an average of seven sponsors, whereas teams that generate less than two million USD of revenue have an average of three sponsors. The data shows that, in simple terms, the more sponsors teams have the more likely the number of league sponsors is to increase, as teams seem desirable, therefore the league seems more desirable. The following infographics show the main sponsor negotiations by club, as well as kit sponsor negotiations:

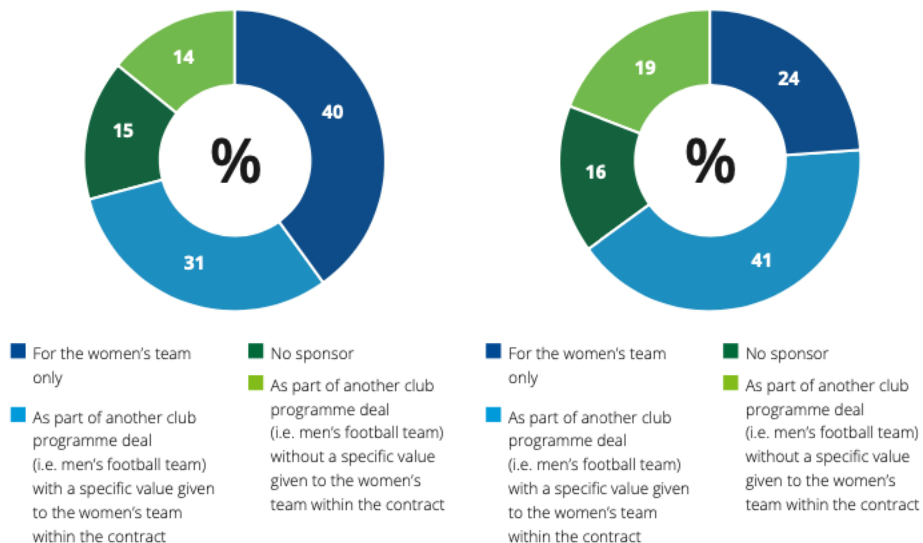


Chart 8 – Negotiations of Main Club Sponsor (%). Chart 9 – Negotiations of Kit Sponsor (%). Source: FIFA/Deliotte Analysis

As we can see from the graphs above, 15% of women’s teams in the survey had no main sponsor, while 16% had no main kit sponsor. 45% of women’s main sponsorship comes from being a part of another club, such as a men’s team (with or without specific value amount), and 40% of teams have a women’s only main sponsor. To have 15% of teams without a main sponsor is a shock, considering what has been previously stated about the financial aspect of teams boosting their ability to compete at top levels, this is a significant amount of teams who will not be able to improve or add quality to their league of any substantial value unless given investment by private sources.

The UEFA Business Report (2022) also points out that specifically to Europe:



Figure 5 – Source: UEFA Business Report

When writing the report, UEFA grouped countries into three tiers using their methodology based on current and future commercial value, with Cyprus falling into the third tier along with 35 other countries including Belarus, Czech Republic, Greece, and San Marino. Although these countries may be low in terms of current and future commercial value, they have a surprising number of teams who have been involved in the UEFA Women’s Champions League and have proved that they can compete with some of the best. From Czech Republic, Slavia Praha and Sparta Praha are consistently reaching the (previous) Round of 32 year after year, as well as

Apollon Ladies from Cyprus and PAOK from Greece who have also made themselves known in the competition for competing for many consecutive years.

Even FIFA recognizes that women's football has still not fully achieved the success that it needs to become a profit-making industry, stating in their report (2022) that, "The women's game remains in a loss-making state and requires sustained investment both on and off the pitch to facilitate further development." However, the question remains the same: How can clubs and leagues from countries who are underdeveloped when it comes to women's football keep up and try to compete with clubs with much higher investment?

4. Research Methodology

4.1 Design and Methodology

The research for this study was conducted in three parts and is broken down into sub segments for a better understanding of the different types of methodology used.

4.1.1 Survey of Players

For this study, a survey was be conducted of all players that currently participate in the Cyprus Women's Championship. This Survey included qualitative and quantitative data that will be analyzed to assess the current scope of women's football in Cyprus from the position of active participants and their overall feelings toward the development and direction of women's football in Cyprus. Data was collected through electronic surveys and then analyzed through a statistical calculating system for quantitative answers, and qualitative answers will be grouped into categories for further analysis.

This information is critical, as the players are the backbone of women's football in Cyprus and their overall feelings towards the establishment are the highest priority that needs to be assessed to be able to develop further the professionalism of the Cyprus Women's Championship and Cyprus Women's National Team.

4.1.2 Interviews with Team Management

Interviews were to be conducted with at least one member of management from each of the six women's football teams competing in the Cyprus Women's Championship to establish the current state of development, where clubs have improved over the last years, the direction the clubs see themselves going, and barriers to success along with other information. This data was supposed be collected in the form of interviews to be recorded and transcribed for analysis. However, due to limitations, anonymous questionnaires were sent to team management and coaches instead.

4.1.3 Analysis of Financial Data

Financial reports from the last season of women's football (2021-2022), as well as the current season that just finished (2022-23) were collected and analyzed, contributing to the ability to assess and make conclusions in the development of the women's football league, give a better understanding of the current state of development by being able to compare the different clubs and relate their financial abilities with the amount of success the teams achieve, and also to assess if a self-sustainable women's football league is possible and, if so, how can that be achieved.

4.2 Participants

The Survey was designed to protect the anonymity of players, as the answers given were personal and could have repercussions if personal data is exposed. The Survey was conducted to the highest standard of professionalism to assure players that they could answer freely and without bias towards their club or the Cyprus Football Association, as it was made clear to participants that the Survey is to better the overall climate of women's football by helping to assess and create solutions to the problems currently faced, and not to point out certain teams' flaws or lack of professionalism.

Interviews were also to be recorded anonymously to protect the participants so that they could openly discuss the problems being faced in their position of management, what resources are required, and general issues that they face when trying to promote and develop their teams.*

Financial data was to be collected from each of the six women's football clubs in Cyprus and will be charted accordingly, as this information is open to the public and freely assessable.*

**See Limitations*

4.3 Process of Data Collection

Surveys and Interviews were collected over Zoom meetings through electronic surveys and through personal communication methods that will be recorded. Each women's football team had a dedicated day that the researcher intended to meet and collect data from the players.

Financial data was collected through the Cyprus Football Association freely.

Surveys were conducted through Google Forms, a free to use application. The Survey was sent through a digital like, and players filled in their information on their own, with a supervisor available to answer any questions they may have had. No player names or team names were recorded to give anonymity to participants. The following is a list of the women’s football teams analyzed:

Team Name	Number of Players
Apollon Ladies	17
Aris Limassol WFC	22
Omonoia WFC	21
Lefkothea Latsion	22
Lakatamia WFC	21
Karmiotissa Chrysomilla FC	21

Table 4: List of Researched Teams

4.3.1 Data Collection Tool

Data was collected on Google Forms, a free-to-use platform with a user-friendly interface. Instructions, questions, and answers were all written in English and Greek so that all players could easily understand what they were being asked to do. The direct link for the survey is the following:

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSddj-M2CHV8j_3jw5-rNk_TlHrCjfbHP3eB0jjN2vzhx5aaw/viewform?usp=sf_link

Interviews were originally intended to be conducted through personal communication, with answers recorded through the Voice Memo App on an iPhone. However, due to time constraints and location difficulties, as well as other limitations, interviews were done through a questionnaire that was sent electronically. The direct link for the questionnaire is the following:

<https://forms.gle/7fRQUWbyXTPWMU1w8>

4.3.2 Data Analysis Tool

The survey data was analyzed by Google Sheets, which directly connects to Google Forms and provides anonymous statistical data used for this research. This data will be analyzed further on in this research.

5. Results and Discussion

The Player Survey was sent out to all players competing in the Cyprus Women's Championship, which includes 124 registered players. From that number, 64 completed the survey. The survey did not ask for identifying information, except for age.

The Management survey was sent to ten members of team management, and 6 responses were recorded. There was no personal identifying information asked in the Team Management & Coaches Questionnaire.

5.1 Demographic Characteristics of Players

5.1.1 Age Groups

The age groups for the Player Survey for this research varied, with some participants being under 18 years old, to other being over 30. The survey was taken by 64 current players in the Cyprus Women's Championship, with many of them participating for years in the league. The largest age group is the 23-25 age group, followed closely by the 20-22 age group.

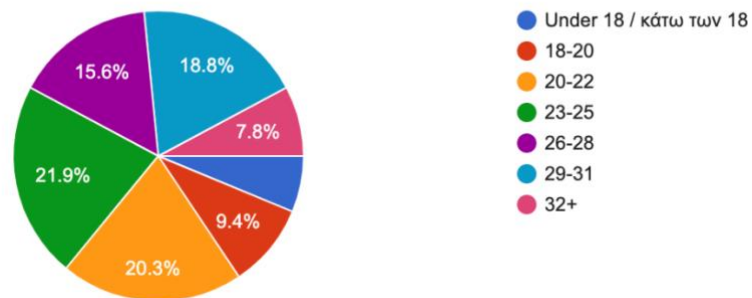


Figure 6 – Player's Age. Source: Player Survey

5.1.2 Gender

The players that participated in this survey all currently play in the Cyprus Women’s Championship. Therefore they can all be classified legally as female. Personal acknowledgements of self-classification were not asked, as they are not relevant to the topic of this study.

5.1.3 Nationality

To ensure anonymity and to make participants feel more secure to answer openly, nationality was not asked. However, participating in the Cyprus Women’s Championship there are the following nationalities registered with each team (Cyprus Football Association, 2023):

Team Name	Cyprus	Europe	Africa	Other	Total
Apollon Ladies	5	5 Netherlands, Romania, Spain, Sweden, UK	4 Ghana (3), Uganda (1)	3 Canada, India, USA	17
Aris Limassol	19	3 Greece (2), UK			22
Omonoia	18	1 Germany	2 Ghana, Uganda		21
Lefkothea Latsion	20	2 Austria, Greece			22
Lakatamia	17	3 Greece (2), Lebanon	1 South Africa		21
Karmiotissa Chrysomilla FC	19	2 Denmark, Finland			21

Table 5: Breakdown of Team by Nationality. Source: CFA

The total number of players is 124 with 79% being Cypriot players (98 natural born Cypriots). The second highest single nationality is from Greece with 5 registered players (4%). There are 7

players from Africa who are registered in the Cyprus Women’s Championship (5.6%), 11 from UEFA association countries (8.9%), and 3 from other countries (2.4%).

5.2 Player Survey Results – Personal Experiences

5.2.1 Football Experience of Players

When asked how many years the participants have been playing football, almost 40% have been playing football for more than 15 years, with only 4 (6.3%) playing only 1-3 years.

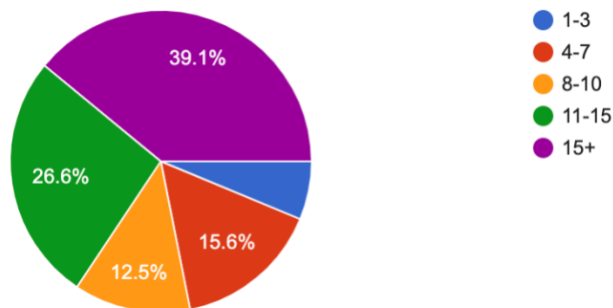


Figure 7 – How many years participants have been playing football. Source: Player Survey

Out of the years that the participants of this survey have been playing football, it was also asked how many years the players have been playing in a women’s team, to which the answers were higher than anticipated. Close to half of the players have been playing in a women’s team for more than eleven years. Only 4 (6.3%) have been playing in a women’s team for 1-2 years, indicating that these players started playing football and entered directly into a women’s team, skipping the academy level phase of their football careers.

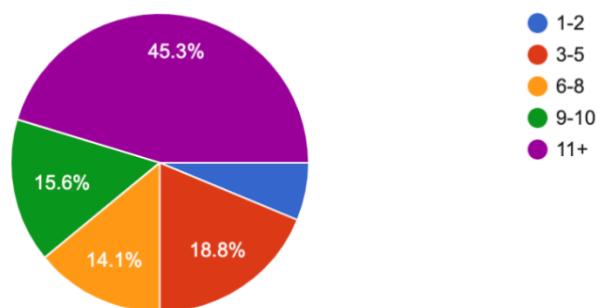


Figure 8 – How many years participants have been playing in a women’s team. Source: Player Survey

5.2.2 Player Professionalism

When players were asked if they considered themselves a professional football player, the results were shocking. More than 70% of players who were asked if they considered themselves professional answered “No.”

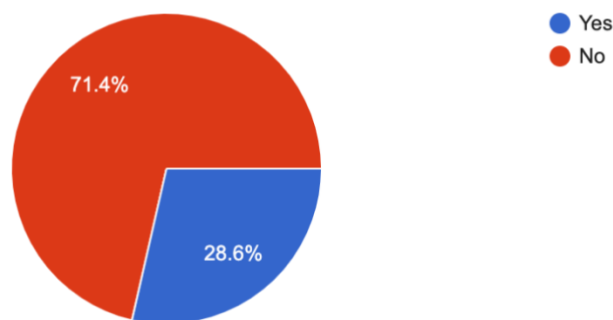


Figure 9 – Do players consider themselves professional. Source: Player Survey

When asked if players have played in teams outside of Cyprus, 41 responded “No” (64%), 1 responded “Not yet” (1.56%) and 6 did not give a clear response (9.4%). 16 responded that they have (25%), and when asked to compare their experience abroad to their experience in Cyprus, some examples are the following:

- *“There is better culture abroad and healthy competition. the players try in every practice and don't hold a grudge if they don't start a match against us here. they also try to lift up their teammates.”*
- *“In (the) UK everything is equal with men’s football and people love to see women’s playing football and that’s something that we lack a lot in Cyprus.”*
- *“In Iceland first division. The main difference is the league there is only 6-7 months so they can give higher salaries. Overall, the facilities were much better, they usually shared with the men’s teams. The standard of football was better also.”*
- *“Played in Greece and the Netherlands not professionally but the huge difference is that is more competitive more teams more divisions so there is the motivation to stay fall a division or even go higher! And there are better equipped the teams with fields as in Greece we had our own fields and were able to train in a closed field if the weather was really bad.”*

5.2.3 Motivations of Players

When asked what motivating factors the players had to continue playing football, the results were the following:

1. Love of football – 24 responses
2. Reach goals/go abroad/highest level possible – 15 responses
3. Because I like/love it – 7 responses
4. National Team – 7 responses
5. Enjoyment of playing/winning – 6 responses
6. Money – 4 response
7. Being with teammates/part of a team – 2 response
8. Traveling/experiences – 2 response
9. Fitness – 2 responses

**(it should be noted that some participants responded with more than one motivating factor, which have been recorded above)*

When asked to explain, the following were reasons given by some participants:

- I continue playing football because I love football. It is the only thing I have known how to do my entire life and it is something that I will continue to do as long as I can.
- I want to play the highest level possible, as well as for my national team. That's what motivates me to continue, football is my life and I will always want to play it.

When asked what age players believed they will stop playing football, the results were higher than expected.

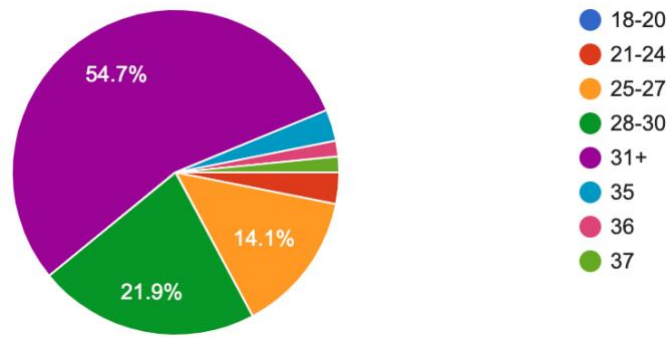


Figure 10 – Believed Age of Retirement. Source: Player Survey

When asked what the reason they believe that they will stop playing football, the following responses were given:

1. Age – 16 responses
2. Tiredness/Exhaustion – 15 responses
3. Wanting to start a “real” career / be more focused in other job / change of priorities – 13 responses
4. Start a family – 11 responses
5. Injury – 8 responses
6. No/lack of motivation/enjoyment – 7 response
7. Economic reasons – 4 response
8. Not good anymore – 1 response

**(it should be noted that some participants responded with more than one motivating factor, which have been recorded above)*

When asked to explain, players answered with the following responses:

- *“It’s difficult to be away from family and friends and always travelling country to country. I think in the future eventually I will want to spend quality time with my family or significant other instead of only seeing them 1-3 times a year. And for the body too, I will know when my body can’t handle it anymore.”*

- *“I would like to dedicate myself to other areas of my life that I left behind for so many years because of football.”*

5.2.4 Economic situation of players

When asked if playing football is their main source of income, 25 out of the 64 participants answered “Yes” which amounts to only 39% of players surveyed. Those who responded that football is not their main source of income work jobs such as nurses, physical trainers, coaches, and a wide variety of other positions. Five participants responded that they are students (7.8%).

A voluntary question was asked if they players would disclose their salary range, to which 55 out of the 64 participants responded (85.9%).

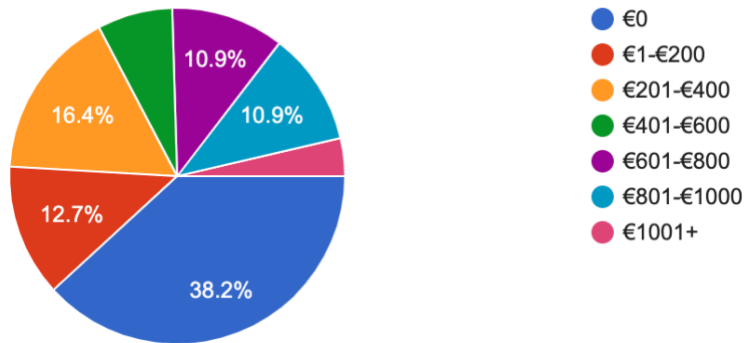


Figure 11 – Salary Range of Players. Source: Player Survey

38.2% of players responded that they play football without monetary incentives, whereas only 3.6% of players who answered this question receive a salary of over 1000 Euros per month.

5.3 Player Survey Results – Football Analysis

5.3.1 Team Breakdown

5.3.1.1 Players

The participants were asked how many players their teams normally roster each season. 21.9% of participants responded that their teams normally roster 13-16 players each season, while both choices of 17-19 players per season and 13-16 players per season tied with 39.1% each.

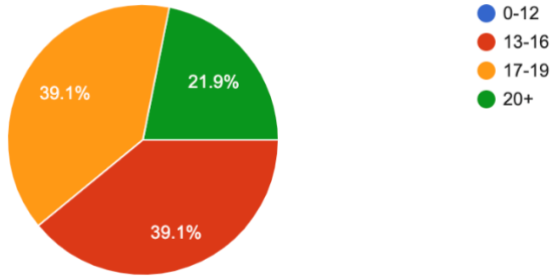


Figure 12 – Players Rostered Each Season. Source: Player Survey

When asked how many fully professional players are rostered in the teams each year, the following responses were given by the players:

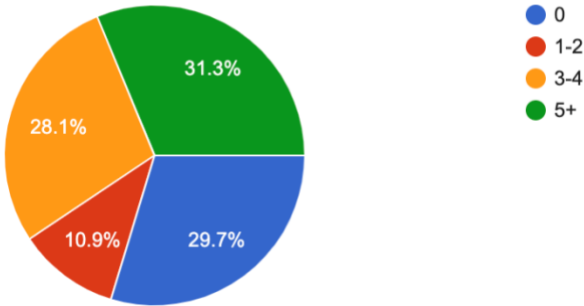


Figure 13 – Professional Players Each Season. Source: Player Survey

Out of those players, it was then asked how many foreign players are in their teams each year, the following answers were recorded:

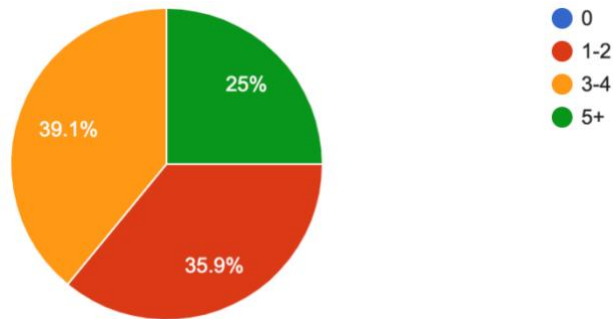
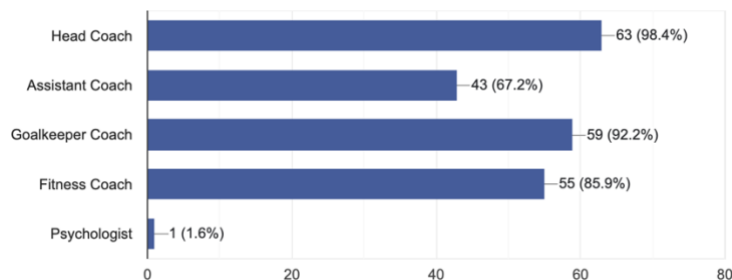


Figure 14 – Foreign Players Each Season. Source: Player Survey

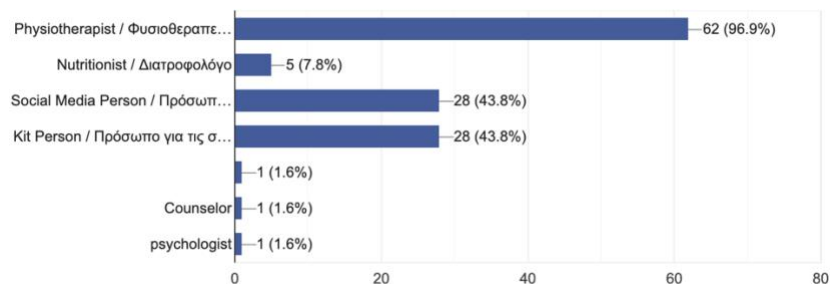
5.3.1.2 Team Staff

Players were also asked to record the different coaching positions filled in their teams, to which 63 (98.4%) of the players responded that they have a head coach, 43 (67.2%) said that they have an assistant coach, 59 (92.2%) stated that they have a goalkeeper coach, and 55 (85.9%) responded that they have a fitness coach.



Graph 1 – Team Main Staff. Source: Player Survey

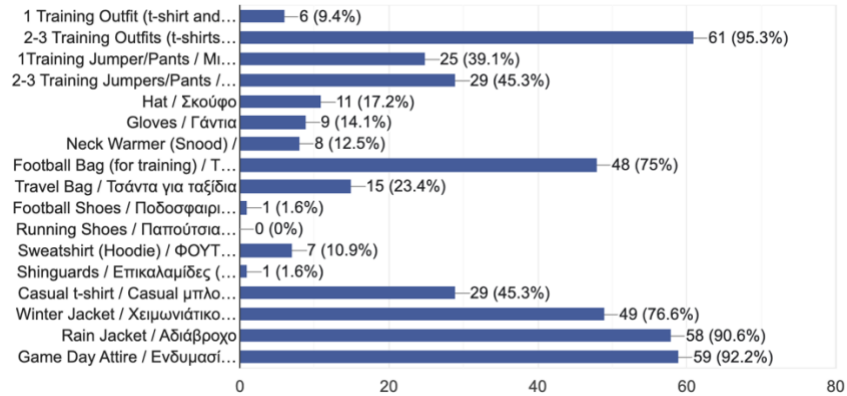
It was also asked what other members of staff worked with the teams, to which the players responded the following:



Graph 2 – Other Team Staff. Source: Player Survey

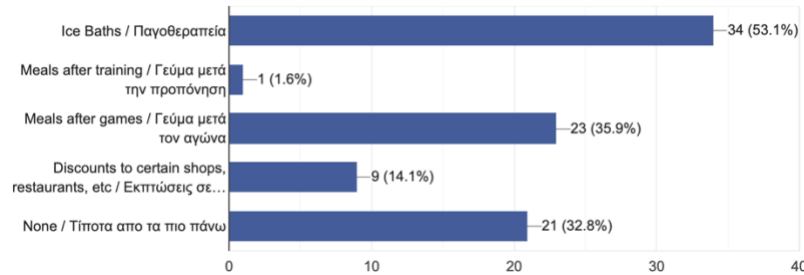
5.3.1.3 Resources and Facilities

Players were asked what kind of clothing is provided for them each year by their teams, to which the answers are the following:



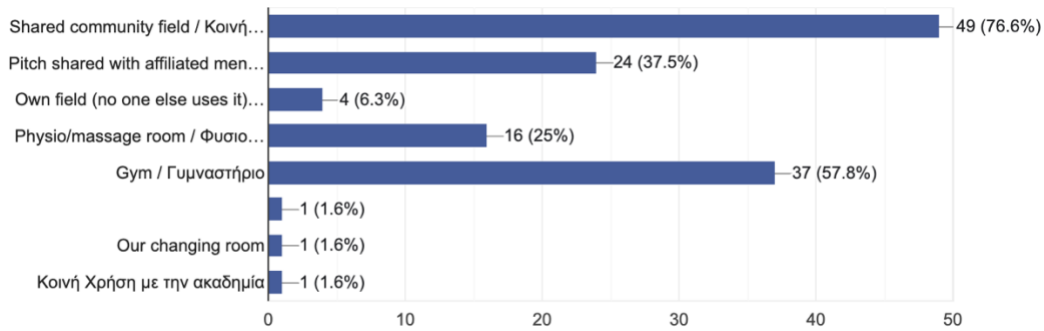
Graph 3 – Clothes Given to Players. Source: Player Survey

Players were also asked what other amenities their clubs offer to them, to which they responded the following:



Graph 4 – Other Amenities. Source: Player Survey

It was also asked what type of facilities teams use for their trainings and games, as well as what other facilities are available to them. More than 75% of teams use a shared field or community stadium for trainings and matches, and more than half (57.8%) of participants answered that they have a gym available for them to use (note: it was not asked what type of gym, if it is sole use or a gym owned by the team trainer).



Graph 5 – Facilities. Source: Player Survey

5.3.1.4 Team professionalism

Players were asked how many hours per week their team trains, including gym sessions, to which almost half of the players responded that their team has organized trainings and gym sessions only 4-7 hours per week. More than a third of players answered that their team has organized trainings 8-11 hours per week, and only 10.9% of players answered that they have 12-15 hours of organized training and gym sessions per week.

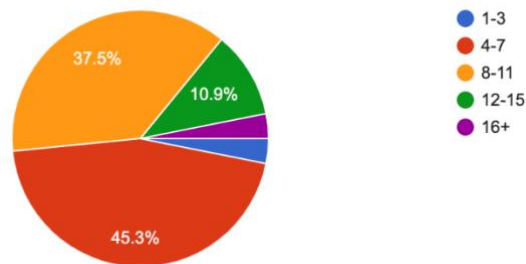


Figure 15 – Organized Trainings per Week. Source: Player Survey

The question was also asked if players considered their club to be professional. To this, 14 (21.88%) responded that they believe their team to be professional, 10 (15.63%) answered that it professional to an extent, and 39 (60.94%) responded that they do not consider their team to be professional. When asked why, one player answered:

“No, because despite the fact that I work a lot on the field with the training team, the performance of the player is not the same from the moment they works in the morning and has training in the evening. Efforts have been made to work as professionally as possible, but in order to be considered a professional team, you have to do what a professional does, i.e. double training at normal times, not finishing training at 9 o'clock in the evening, time

to rest, for sure you have the necessary attention from nutritionists and physiotherapists this is considered very important for the player's physical condition. After all, there is no remuneration, so this alone makes the group unprofessional.”

This seemed to be an opinion shared by many players, with another answering:

“The work done on the field and the hours spent by the coaching team and players every day can be considered to be at a very good level. However, in no case can it be considered a professional team as the criteria that define a professional team are not met. E.g. Training camps, facilities, professional footballers, medical staff, etc. The performance of the player is not the same from the moment they work in the morning and have training in the evening. Efforts have been made to work as professionally as possible, but it is impossible to reach the highest level.”

Even those that considered their teams to be more professional had concerns about the quality of the professionalism held by their team. One participant responded:

“I believe that our team is professional to a certain extent. We have many professional factors, such as a decent management structure and staff, however we don't have our own field, physiotherapist office, or locker rooms at most trainings.”

It may be asked then, if most players feel that their club is not professional and that they don't get paid a high salary, then what makes them enjoy playing for their club? To this, the participants in the Player Survey answered the following:

1. The love for the team/team atmosphere/spirit/teammates – 41 responses
2. The love for the sport – 7 responses
3. Winning – 5 responses
4. Professionalism – 4 responses
5. Cyprus/location – 4 response
6. To move to a better club/reach goals/improvement – 3 responses

**(it should be noted that some participants responded with more than one motivating factor, which have been recorded above)*

One participant stated that the reason she enjoys playing for her club is:

“The passion that each player brings out individually, the story that exists behind this team, the fact that none of them are paid but give 100% both in training and in the match because they simply like football, the family atmosphere and the fact that it is a team that likes to take care of its people.”

Another answered:

“The love of all among us as well as the encouragement of one another. The passion and the desire to win as best as we can, and the beautiful climate also helps with teamwork and from there comes the passion to give everything for this team.”

5.3.2 League Breakdown

Players were asked what they believe is the reason for the success or lack of success in Cyprus when it comes to the development of women’s football. The responses were all negative, with all the participants stating reasons for lack of success, and none stating reasons of success. The responses were divided into categories, and the results were the following:

1. No support from CFA – 21 responses
2. Unwillingness to spend money/invest – 9 responses
3. Lack of promotion – 7 responses
4. Wrong culture/mentality/no interest – 7 responses
5. Not enough professional teams/competitive league – 6 responses
6. Lack of development/infrastructure – 5 responses
7. No incentives for players (money or motivationally) – 5 responses
8. Not enough foreign/professional players – 3 responses
9. Lack of resources/facilities – 3 responses
10. Lack of information – 2 responses
11. Lack of sponsorships – 2 responses
12. Not enough professionals working in women’s football (coaches, management) – 2 responses
13. Not enough players/small country – 2 responses

**(it should be noted that some participants responded with more than one limiting factor, which have been recorded above)*

Out of the different categories, the top response was that the players feel like the Cyprus Football Association (CFA) doesn’t support the development of women’s football in Cyprus as much as they should. Many of the different categories could technically be classified under “No support from CFA,” however it is not only the CFA that the players believe don’t push enough for the success of women’s football. One participant stated, “The lack of investment from men’s teams into their women’s team, not even the bare minimum of clothes, or support is given. The success comes from Andreas Marangos the president of Apollon Ladies, he has a vision that other clubs don’t have.”

When asked what the players would change about the Cyprus Women's Championship if they could, the answers were more diverse.

1. More competitive league (more teams/better quality/more games) – 28 responses
2. More support from CFA/promotion – 17 response
3. More investment (sponsorship and salaries) – 10 response
4. Better mentality/motivation – 9 response
5. Better facilities – 9 response
6. More professionalism/foreign players – 6 response
7. More professionals/educated people who understand about women's football – 5 response
8. More promotion/better treatment of Cypriot players/fewer foreign players – 4 response
9. "Everything" – 4 responses
10. More equality between men's and women's football – 3 responses
11. Academy investment/development – 2 response
12. Financial Fair Play – 2 responses

While the players believe that the CFA might be the reason for the lack of success of women's football in Cyprus, they perceive that the main problem with the Cyprus Women's Championship is the competitiveness of the league, stating that having more team of better quality, and therefore more games, would be the priority to create a better women's football league. This comes from the CFA, but the teams themselves play an important factor, with players believing that more investment, better salaries, better facilities, and more professionalism, amongst other things would help improve the situation in Cyprus, and these factors come down the management of the individual clubs and the amount of sponsorship, investment, and professionalism that the clubs have.

The players were asked if all the men's football clubs either create or absorb women's clubs if they believe that it would help or hurt the development and success of women's football. Most respondents (47, 73.44%) believe that the men's clubs taking a bigger role in women's football would help the situation. Six participants (9.38%) believe that it would hurt women's football if men's teams got more involved, while two (3.13%) were unsure, and one believed that there would be no change (1.53%). Eight participants (12.5%) believe that it would depend on how they become involved and to what extent they would support their women's team. One of the players who answered on this subject stated that, "I believe it would be a good thing as long as the clubs invested money into their women's teams and the teams used this money to properly structure and

recruit better players from abroad to make an overall more competitive environment.” Another believes, “If the management of the men’s team want to support the women’s part and provide equal things as they provide to the men’s team, yes it could help a lot to grow the women section! But if not and they want only to use the label that they have a women’s team then is useless.”

5.3.3 Cyprus Women’s National Team

From the Player Survey, those who have been called up the Cyprus Women’s National Team or Cyprus Youth National Teams were asked to answer questions about the current state of the women’s national team and what they believe could help improve the quality of the national team.

Thirteen responses stated that they believe having more trainings and games would help with the continued development of the women’s national team, while ten believe that having a more competitive league and players would help improve the quality of the players who get called to play for the national team. Other responses included more support from the CFA (7), more motivation and equality between the men’s and women’s national teams earned three responses, while one participant believed that a better youth system would help with the continued development of the team stating that their solution would be, “A better youth system and a more structured and competitive women's league.”

The players also believed that the accommodations for the women’s national team camps were generally good, and when asked if they enjoy playing for their national team the results were overwhelmingly positive. Some answers included:

- “Yes, because representing my country is something that makes me happy and brings out all my passion.”
- “Of course, it is an honor to fight for my country and wear the coat of arms on my chest.”
- “Definitely the national team for me is a motivation. It is a great honor for every soccer player to compete and represent her country in international games.”
- “Yes, it is a nice experience to play and see another level and the mentality that other countries have.”

At the end of the survey, participants were invited to share their overall thoughts about the development and promotion of women’s football in Cyprus, to which the following opinions were shared:

- “Overall I am shocked of the quality of football here. I didn’t expect much, but for being on a team that wins the league every year and goes to champions league qualifiers every year, I expected a lot more. At least a few more training uniforms, a fitness trainer who comes to training and who gives us individual programs when needed, winter uniforms since we never got pants or sweatshirts for training, basic things like this. It is really sad. And each year teams are dropping from the league because they don’t have the money or players to continue, and this league can’t just have 6 teams and we play everyone at least 5 times.”
- “I think because is an island they don’t have that incomes information or influence from the outside. I think one of the problems is that they really think they are professionals and all the things they do are correct, but they need to watch outside and change some small things to grow up as a country.”
- “Women’s football in Cyprus could be a lot better if only the federation and men’s teams took the sport seriously and gave consistent support. Or even just equality with the men’s teams even with facilities, clothes, organization.”
- “The championship ended from the first round, and this made us lose the interest we had initially! There should be more competition.”
- “We need more teams, better support and people that believe in this in key positions to push through things.”
- “Lack of support, lack of equality, lack of money (with money you can have professional players so the league could be in a higher level)”
- “More support and finally motivated People with Know-how for a better Future in women’s football in Cyprus.”
- “Showing women's football in Cyprus could improve the current situation as well as providing better facilities and more financial resources for the development of women's football in Cyprus.”
- “When I started football 2006 there were 6 teams.. 2023 6 teams league.. Some progress has been made.. But the non-granting of funds by KOP to the teams to cope financially is not helping women's football.. Since FIFA And UEFA is giving millions to invest in Women's Football.. just in Cyprus, I don't know if anything will change.. I think not..”
- “I don't think there are any, but the goal is to build more women's teams, to help all the teams more financially so that they can make good choices for their roster and be able to support the players well financially, and I hope that women's football will slowly have more prospects more support from the world so that it will be even more pleasant for the women who fight and do what they love to see the stadiums full of people supporting them...”
- “To create more girls' academies. There should be more advertising. To be able to train the girls from a young age like professionals, to be checked by fitness doctors and other experts so that they are more ready when they are in the first team or in the National Team.”

5.4 Demographic Characteristics of Coaches and Management

Age was not a determining factor for this study, however all the persons asked to participate are over 25 years of age. Gender was not asked, however out of the ten who were asked to participate, two are female (20%) and eight (80%) are male.

5.5 Management and Coaches Questionnaire

5.5.1 Development of Women's Football in Cyprus

When it comes to the development of women's football in Cyprus, coaches and management had the following opinions:

- “I believe the biggest problem is that there is not a sufficient number of teams and especially the big clubs that in this way will. it certainly aroused interest and the talent that exists in women's football would not be hidden. My own thought is to impose by the competent bodies that all A-class clubs must participate in the new season in order to make it more competitive and more interesting. This at the moment we speak, a horse is running alone without underestimating any team and it definitely always comes first.”
- “The structure of the championship. The way it is there is development but it is much slower than it must be.”
- “Lack of long term development plan from the teams to provide continuity and sustainability for their teams and the constant belief that it's the federation responsibility to keep giving funds instead of outsourcing themselves. Higher skilled coaches which will in turn advance the level of players.”
- “CYPRUS FOOTBALL FEDERATION. When he decides to give the required interest and implement the UEFA guidelines then we will have growth.”
- “Firstly, Cypriots consider football as a men's sport. Secondly, people have the wrong impression that girls who play football have ugly bodies. Thirdly, they believe that girls who play football become lesbians.”
- “There are many problems but the biggest one is that there's not enough involvement from the men's professional teams.”

From the federation, to the number of teams, all the way down to the mentality of Cypriot culture, the coaches and management who answered this question believe that there is not one singular problem that is hindering the development of women's football in Cyprus, but a whole system of problems that need to be changed to allow women's football to develop and prosper.

Participants were asked if their club has a written strategic plan, to which four responded that their club does not have a written strategic plan, one responded that they are not aware if their

club has one, and another stated that they have a mid-to-long term strategic plan which helps their team be more successful. However, all participants believe that with a written strategic plan their club would be more successful.

5.5.2 Media

The overall opinion of the management and coaches is that the media do not support women's football enough, and don't give it the respect that it deserved. One participant stated, "The media is one of the important ways to promote the sport, but the people should pay more attention, support and respect more." Another believes, "I think they are doing what they can and that they certainly have in front of them. There would be a better picture if they helped in their way to get closer to those responsible so that there would be greater incentives to completely change the picture. I am sure that if there is a daily update, they can change too much."

5.5.3 Investment

Participants were asked if their club relies on private investors to be able to compete in the Cyprus Women's Championship, to which three responded, "Yes," one responded, "Team is mostly relied on funding by the club with the help of private sponsors," another responded, "Mostly yes," and the last responded, "No but after 3 years now as a women's coach if you want to be a competitive team you have to rely on this union of investor and association."

5.5.4 Single-Team Dominance

It is known throughout Cyprus that in women's football one team has been almost untouchable since its inception 15 years ago, and that is Apollon Ladies. As seen throughout the analysis of the Player Survey and the responses from coaches and management, a more competitive league is the consensus for the improved development of women's football in Cyprus. With that being said, it was asked of the coaches and management if they believe that it is possible for another team to compete with and possibly win the Cyprus Women's Championship in the next years. One participant believes, "An increase in the popularity of women's football will draw in bigger marketing sponsors and therefore higher budget which in turn will bring better quality players and stronger teams to be able to compete for the league." Another stated, "To reach the top level in women's first division, one team will need to invest money, but also to have a mid-term plan

for at least 3 years in order to match the level of Apollon Ladies. Structure, facilities, and formation are the main factors to develop.” Some others were not so positive, “...if not enough money is put into the teams in general to bring Cypriot and foreign players, the differences are very big and definitely unequal,” and “As it is now only with a big budget and foreign players can you compete.” One participant also stated the only way to have a balance in women’s football in Cyprus is for, “CFA to make it compulsory for other teams that play in Cyprus first league for men to have a women's team.”

5.5.5 Professionalism and Future Development

When asked what changes need to be made to develop women’s football in Cyprus, one participant believes, “The teams mentality that all must be done through federation funding and help rather than finding their own resources and the use of young players as main players rather than focusing on their development to become whole therefore creating better quality players and same time make the teams more competitive.” Other believe that more attention from CFA and the appointment of more professional and caring officials in women’s football in key, while the mentality towards women’s football was also mentioned along with the investment of men’s teams into a women’s division was the final response.

Professionalism of women’s football in Cyprus seems a long way off, and it was asked of management and coaches if they believe that Cyprus will ever have a fully professional women’s football league. Their opinions are as follows:

- “I think that would be optimal but no in the next few years.”
- “If the popularity increases tenfold then there is a chance it will become fully professional assuming there is an elite first division where only professionals can participate.”
- “Why not if something like this is passed I think everyone will embrace it and open up horizons for a fully professional women's football.”
- “NO because the right people do not enter where they should and because party poetry is everywhere in Cyprus.”
- “Yes of course in the near future.”
- “I'd like to think so but I doubt it.”

One participant gave their opinion as to the general situation of women’s football in Cyprus:

“Ideally I'd like to see a big change for the development of women's football. We can see that abroad, in Europe most specifically, they emphasise and invest in this direction. The

federation should create a long term plan (10 years) with collaboration of men's football clubs in order to motivate young girls to join the sport."

5.6 Women's Team Financial Statements

The plan for this research was to analyze the financial statements from all of the women's football clubs in Cyprus to assess the difference in sponsorship amongst the teams and assess the impact that financial support has on finishing position in the Cyprus Women's Championship. However, in Cyprus women's football club financial records are not publicly available. Therefore, it was asked of Apollon Ladies FC to provide their statements for this research, which they did willingly. The financial statements from Omonoia Football Limited, the company which encompasses all Omonoia FC's different departments, including their men's team, academy, futsal, as well as their women's football department which allowed for the acquiring of that information for this research. Therefore, for this study the financial statements from Apollon Ladies FC and Omonoia Women will be compared and analyzed.

5.6.1 Omonoia Women

For the year of 2020, Omonoia Football Limited reported that their women's football team income was 42,729 Euros. In 2021, the club reported an increase in income of their women's team to 89,694 Euros. The difference between the two years is €46,925 which is more than double from the 2020 season until the 2021 season. The reason for the increase in budget allowance for the women's team is not clear, however Omonoia's men's first team qualified for European competition the same season as the increase, which could be the mean that the increased budget is a one-time event. This can be examined the next year when the budget for the team is released.

Their expenses for women's football for the year of 2020 were a staggering €70,044 deficit. This was reduced in 2021 to a negative €48,491. In total, Omonoia Football Limited reportedly spent €112,813 on their women's football team in 2020 and €138,185 in 2021. In both seasons, the team finished third in the Cyprus Women's Championship. The newest published financial statement from Omonoia Football LTD for the year of 2022 states that their club's women's

football income for the calendar year was €48,995 and their women's football expenses were €126,445, in total equaling €175,440, the most that the club spent in the past three years on their women's team. However, in the 2022-23 Cyprus Women's Championship the team finished third and was beat in the Cypriot Women's Cup Final by Apollon Ladies.

5.6.2 Apollon Ladies FC

Apollon Ladies FC reported in the year 2021 that the revenue for the team for the year of 2021 was €473,005, however this number dropped dramatically in 2022 to €290,582 in total revenue before expenses. When examining the financial documents, the number that stands out to explain the dramatic difference in revenue from the amount from UEFA Solidarity which for the year 2021 was €290,000 when the team qualified for the Round 2 of the UEFA Women's Champions League, compared to 2022 when the team lost in the second match of the Round 1 mini-tournament and only received €150,150 from UEFA.

The funding for Apollon Ladies fluctuates regularly, depending on how the team performs the previous season in the UEFA Women's Champions League, but also how the team is performing in the Championship. If the team qualifies for a higher round, their budget the for the season is increased dramatically. Occasionally, Apollon Ladies will inject cash into the team's budget in the January transfer window if they fear there may be difficulty winning the league. Previous records could not be attained for the purpose of this research, however due to Covid-19 the season was disrupted and the financial statements not completely accurate.

5.7 Analysis of Key Factors Leading to Success

After analyzing the data from the Player Survey, Coach and Management Questionnaire, and the Financial Statements of Apollon Ladies and Omonoia Women, the following conclusions can be made about key factors that lead to the success of women's football clubs in Cyprus, and those factors can be compared with the standards of women's football across other teams in Europe.

5.7.1 Financial Impact & Sustainability

In any sport money is an important factor, and women's football is no different. There is a clear trend in Cyprus amongst the women's football teams that shows that Apollon Ladies has significantly higher financial freedom than other teams, and therefore is a key factor leading to their success. However, it is also clear that without proper management and knowledge of how to invest finances the amount of money a team has is not relevant. When Omonoia Football LTD invested more money into their women's team in 2022 the team still only managed a third-place finish in the Cyprus Women's Championship. Adversely, when Apollon Ladies had less financial freedom in 2022 after failing to qualify for Round 2 in the UEFA Women's Champions League, the team still managed a first-place finish, securing another championship and a run in the 2023-24 UEFA Women's Champions League.

As predicted, self-sustainability of clubs is not currently achievable in Cyprus. The only team that has the possibility to be self-sustainable is Apollon Ladies FC, and this is due to their UEFA solidarity for competing in the UEFA Women's Champions League. The amount that Apollon Ladies FC received from UEFA in 2022 amounted to €150,150, which is more than the cost that Omonoia Football LTD spent on their women's department in 2020 and 2021. The UEFA Business Report (2022) states that the average budget of teams in the Tier 3 category is €200,000. Apollon Ladies falls into this category, however the other Cypriot teams are all below this amount.

5.7.2 Football as a Profession

Following the financial factors of teams, the monetary amount received by players for playing football in Cyprus is low, if not non-existent, with 38.2% of players who took part in this survey stating that they do not get paid to play football. Most of the female football players in Cyprus work other jobs, and therefore when asked if they feel as though they are professional players 71.4% of players said they do not consider themselves as a professional football player. If we compare this to other countries mentioned in the FIFA/Deloitte Analysis (2022), other more established women's football countries such as Spain and England have more than a 90% average of professionals per team, and even compared to a country such as Hungary, who are ranked lower than Cyprus in the UEFA Women's Club Association Ranking (2023) average

around 70% professional players per team. This number is staggering compared to the 29.6% in Cyprus that consider themselves professional.

39% of players in Cyprus stated that their main source of income is from playing football. In other European countries who have more successful European championship campaigns such as England, Sweden, and Germany, they average 22 (England) and 19 (Sweden and Germany) players per team whose main source of income is from playing football according to the FIFA/Deliotte Analysis (2022). It can be noted again that according to the current FIFA Women’s World Rankings (23 Mar 2023) Germany is ranked 2nd, Sweden 3rd, and England 4th while Cyprus has a ranking of 124th, and in the UEFA Association Club Coefficient Ranking (2023) Germany are ranked 2nd, Sweden 6th, England 4th, and Cyprus 20th.

	Germany	Sweden	England	Cyprus
Number of players per team whose main source of income is from playing football	19	19	22	8 (39% of players who participated in this research; avg/team = 21)
FIFA Women's World Ranking (March 2023)	2 nd	3 rd	4 th	124 th
UEFA Association Club Coefficient Ranking (2023)	2 nd	6 th	4 th	20 th

Table 6 – Source of Income vs Ranking. Sources: Player Survey, UEFA

5.7.3 Team Functionality

5.7.3.1 Trainings

According to the data collected in the FIFA/Deliotte Analysis (2022), the teams that took part in the analysis averaged 10 hours of on-pitch training per week, without including gym and other team sessions. The data analyzed from the Player Survey for this research showed that 45.3% of players participate in 4-7 hours of on-pitch training and gym sessions combined while 37.5% have 8-11 hours of combined training and gym sessions per week, and only 10.9% having 12-15 hours per week. These numbers are not surprising, given that majority of players in Cyprus cannot rely on playing football as a main source of income. With 82.8% of all participants taking

part in 4-11 hours per week of on-pitch training and gym sessions combined, this number is much lower than the average stated in the FIFA/Deliotte Analysis.

5.7.3.2 Facilities and Staff

In the data gathered in the FIFA/Deliotte Analysis (2022) the average number of training facilities provided to a player are 10 in the year of 2022, which increased from eight in 2021. The results from the Player Survey showed that, in total from all teams in Cyprus, seven total types of facilities are available. This includes community field usage (76.6%), shared men’s field (37.5%), massage/physio room (25%), and a gym (57.8%). It is believed that individual teams only have available to them 2-3 facilities for their use.

The UEFA Business Report (2022) states that for leagues in Tier 3 (includes Cyprus) the average numbers of staff are the following compared to the number of team staff in the Cyprus Women’s Championship.

Type of Staff	UEFA Business Report (Tier 3)	Player Survey	UEFA Business Report (Tier 1)
Head Coach	100%	98%	99%
Assistant Coach	77%	67%	88%
Goalkeeping Coach	62%	92%	80%
Physio	55%	97%	78%
Technical/Performance Director	52%	0%	60%
Sports Scientist/S&C Coach	35%	85.9%	59%
Nutritionist/Lifestyle Coach	9%	8%	24%

Table 7: Breakdown of Team Staff by Tier vs Cyprus. Source: Player Survey & UEFA Business Report.

The results from the staff sector of the professional of women’s football in Cyprus is impressive for a country in Tier 3, with some categories even surpassing the number of average staff from the Tier 1 average. This data was surprising and conclude that the number of staff is not a key indicator for lack of success of Cypriot teams compared to other European countries. Quality of staff is not measured in this research; however, it should be noted that quality of staff is extremely important and is something that should be considered when reading this research.

5.7.4 Social Media and Visibility

Social media and visibility are a key factor when assessing success of a team, with the statistics from the Cyprus Women's Championship having a clear indicator of Apollon Ladies success with the team having almost triple the social media following than all the other teams. However, compare to other European powerhouse clubs such as FC Barcelona Femení who have 4.8 million followers on Instagram alone, the number of followers seems moot. Other teams that have continuous success in the UEFA Women's Champions League are VfL Wolfsburg Frauen (238K Instagram followers), PSG Féminines (1.2 million Instagram followers), and Juventus Women (289K Instagram followers). Through higher social media reach, teams are given more visibility, and therefore have a higher ability to attract fans and receive better sponsorships leading to a greater budget, and in turn this creates a cycle that can only help increase the ability for a team to perform and achieve higher levels in international competitions.

6. Conclusion and Recommendations

The driving factor for this research was the limited amount of information available about the current situation on women's football in Cyprus to try to identify key factors that lead to success and see in which areas teams in Cyprus lack compared to other European countries, but also to assess the difference within the different team in Cyprus, where one team has achieved dominance in the last ten years.

It can be concluded from this research that there are extreme difficulties in terms of financial ability of teams in Cyprus, without the inclusion of Apollon Ladies FC. However, even compared to top European clubs Apollon Ladies FC does not reach the same standard for funding. This in turn leads to a lack of professionalism of teams, but also players and therefore is a direct factor in the lack of success and development of Cypriot clubs, players, and furthermore, the Cyprus Women's National Team.

It is believed by most participants in this research, players and coaches and management combined, that the **investment of men's football clubs** into a women's team would be a driving factor to create a more competitive environment, however an injection of cash *without proper management* would ultimately be futile.

It is the opinion after the conducting of this research that the only clear action that would kickstart a change in the culture of women's football in Cyprus would be *if Apollon Ladies FC qualify for the Group Stage of the UEFA Women's Champions League*. This being that if Apollon Ladies FC reach the Group Stage, then a second team from Cyprus would be eligible for qualification to the UEFA Women's Champions League and therefore there would be more incentive for teams to properly invest in their women's clubs. As it stands now, there is no incentive for teams to invest, financially or otherwise, as there is no return on investment.

Key factors that lead to the success of women's teams in Cyprus are **financial investment**, and various aspects such as **media engagement, fanbase, staff, and resources** leading to *overall professionalism of the teams*. While some teams might have a few of these professional aspects, they are not enough to produce positive results and create a change in the landscape that is

currently women's football in Cyprus. The same factors that differentiate Apollon Ladies from other teams in Cyprus also are factors that differentiate Apollon Ladies from other more successful European women's teams, creating a hierarchy that is difficult to challenge. Until the time when more investment will take place into women's football in Cyprus this gap will continue to increase, as every year that other countries are investing into their women's programs and upgrading their resources, it will become more difficult for smaller teams to keep up.

7. Ideas for Future Research

This research opens the door for many possibilities for research in the future on women's football, where there is limited research apart from the studies done by international associations such as FIFA and UEFA. It specifically shows that there is a gap in the research field when it comes to female football players in Cyprus, where it would be of interest to do so due to the fact that the Cyprus Women's National Team will take part in the UEFA Nations League starting in September 2023 where the team will be able to compete against teams of the same level and have a good chance of attaining positive results.

It is also an option to further research into the youth development system of female football players to analyze the differentiating factors from youth female players in Cyprus and the ability to compete with youth male players and until what age we see development tactics change that lead to the discrepancy between men and women Cypriot professional players and motivating factors on why there are more professional male football players than female in Cyprus.

Further, the assessment and research of Cyprus compared to other small European countries such as Malta and Israel is also a possibility to compare the different situations in these countries to help provide guidance and ideas for future development and then to compare these with more successful European countries to create a greater baseline of data for analysis and development purposes on a larger scale.

8. Limitations of Research

Due to the limited number of female footballers in Cyprus, the target group for this research is extremely small, and out of the possible 124 participants in this research only 64 participated, making the target group even smaller. Management and coaches were also unwilling to participate in the study, so the original intention of interviews had to be changed to anonymous questionnaires to allow for feedback from this target group. Also, due to the lack of public information about financial information from the Cyprus Football Association and the teams that participate in the Cyprus Women's Champions, little financial data could be found to support this research.

Language barrier is another limitation to this research, as in some questions in the Player Survey there were outliers, indicating an incomprehension of the question asked or misinformation given to the players. Another barrier to this research was the unwillingness of players, coaches, and team management to participate.

There is no way to verify the information in this study, as there has not been any previous research done in this specific field. Covid-19 was also a factor of limitation, as financial information on teams cannot be obtained from the season of 2019-20, and information in the 2020-21 season might be disturbed due to the global economic disruption that Covid-19 incurred.

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Appendices

Appendix A – Player Survey

Section 1: Team

1. How many fully professional players were in your team in any given year? (Multiple Choice)
2. How many foreign players do your team usually have each year? (Multiple Choice)
3. What coaching staff does your team have? (Select all that apply)
4. What other staff members does your team have? (Select all that apply)
5. How many players does your team normally roster each season? (Multiple Choice)
6. What amenities did your club offer you? (Select all that apply)
7. What kind of facilities did you have available to you? (Select all that apply)
8. What kind of kit does your club give you for training, casual wear, games, etc. (Select all that apply)
9. Do you consider your team to be professional? Why or why not? (Short Answer)
10. What makes you enjoy playing for your club? (Short Answer)
11. What would you change about the Cyprus Women's Championship if you could change something? (Short Answer)
12. What do you believe is the reason for success or lack of success of your country when it comes to development of women's football? (Short Answer)
13. Do you believe that your team does a good job at marketing and promoting themselves on social media and other media outlets? If no, please explain. (Short Answer)

Section 2: Personal

14. How old are you? (Multiple Choice)
15. How many years have you been playing football? (Multiple Choice)
16. How many years have you been playing on a women's team? (Multiple Choice)
17. Have you played football professionally outside of Cyprus? If yes, please state where and for how long. Please also tell us how you would compare that country's women's football climate compared to Cyprus. (Short Answer)

18. What is a motivating factor for you to continue playing football? (Short Answer)
19. What age do you believe you will stop playing football? (Multiple Choice)
20. When you stop playing football, what do you believe the reason will be? (Short Answer)
21. Is football your main source of income? If no, please tell your main profession in the "other" section.
22. *Optional Question*: YOU DO NOT NEED TO ANSWER THIS QUESTION IF YOU DO NOT WISH TO. Please remember, this survey is completely anonymous, and all the data collected is strictly to help with the overall analysis of the development of women's football in Cyprus.

What is your currently salary range from your team? (Multiple Choice)

23. Do you believe that if all men's teams in Cyprus create or absorb a women's team it would help or hurt the current situation of women's football in Cyprus? Please explain your answer.

Section 3: National Team (If Applicable)

24. How many coaching staff did you have? (Select all that apply)
25. What are the accommodations like that you stayed at when you go for national team camp? (Short Answer)
26. Do you enjoy playing for your national team? (Short Answer.)
27. What do you think is the reason that the Cyprus Women's National Team is underdeveloped compared to other European countries? (Short Answer)
28. What do you think would help the continued development and help to increase success of the CYWNT? (Short Answer)

Section 4: Other thoughts on the development and promotion of women's football in Cyprus

29. Please feel free to write any other things that you will believe help explain your feelings about the current state of women's football in Cyprus and anything else you think would be beneficial for this report to analyze. If you do not wish to write anything, thank you very much for your time and your participation in this survey!

Appendix B – Questionnaire for Team Management & Coaches

1. What do you believe is the biggest problem in the development of women's football in Cyprus?
2. Do you think that the media help or hurt the image of women's football in Cyprus?
3. Do you believe that the CFA invests enough in women's football?
4. Does your team rely on private investors to be able to participate in the Cyprus Women's Championship?
5. What kind of development plan do you have for your club to continue to grow in the next 5 years?
6. Do you think that any other teams will be able to compete and possibly take the championship away from Apollon Ladies in the next years? If so, what would need to happen to spark that change?
7. Does your club have a written strategic plan?
8. Do you believe that your club have a satisfactory club structure in terms of management all the way down to the players?
9. What would be your wish if you could change one thing about women's football in Cyprus?
10. Do you believe Cyprus will ever have a fully professional women's football league? Why or why not?

Appendix C – Financial Statements of Teams

C1: Omonia Football LTD Financial Statement 2021

OMONIA FOOTBALL LTD

COMBINED STATEMENT OF PROFIT OR LOSS AND OTHER COMPREHENSIVE INCOME 31 December 2021

	Note	2021 €	2020 €
Revenue	8	11.854.973	16.253.500
Football operating expenses	9	<u>(11.233.937)</u>	<u>(10.323.290)</u>
(Loss)/profit from activities		621.036	5.930.210
Futsal income		76.869	58.610
Women's football income		89.694	42.769
Depreciation expense		(90.767)	(86.841)
Amortisation of intangible assets - non-players		(127.394)	(127.394)
Amortisation of intangible assets - players		(93.315)	(75.582)
Futsal expenses		(46.486)	(98.668)
Women's football expenses		(48.491)	(70.044)
Academy department expenses		(548.777)	(548.861)
Administration expenses		(2.433.581)	(2.925.626)
Players' representative cost	10	<u>(62.553)</u>	<u>(34.004)</u>
Operating (loss)/profit		<u>(2.663.765)</u>	2.064.569
Finance income		9.397	9.598
Finance costs		(591.921)	(31.820)
Net finance costs	11	<u>(582.524)</u>	<u>(22.222)</u>
Net (loss)/profit for the year		(3.246.289)	2.042.347
Other comprehensive income		-	-
Total comprehensive (loss)/income for the year		<u>(3.246.289)</u>	2.042.347

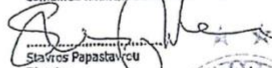
The notes on pages 9 to 29 form an integral part of these combined financial statements.


OMONIA FOOTBALL LTD

COMBINED STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION 31 December 2021

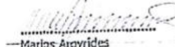
	Note	2021 €	2020 €
ASSETS			
Non-current assets			
Property, plant and equipment	12	978,920	1,036,038
Intangible assets	13	<u>2,308,309</u>	<u>2,355,966</u>
		<u>3,287,229</u>	<u>3,392,004</u>
Current assets			
Inventories	14	212,330	198,669
Trade and other receivables	15	4,189,626	3,302,264
Cash at bank and in hand	16	<u>634,633</u>	<u>1,573,440</u>
		<u>5,036,589</u>	<u>5,074,373</u>
Total assets		<u>8,323,818</u>	<u>8,466,377</u>
EQUITY AND LIABILITIES			
Equity			
Share capital	17	6,500,000	6,500,000
Accumulated losses		<u>(20,658,061)</u>	<u>(20,017,212)</u>
Total equity		<u>(14,158,061)</u>	<u>(13,517,212)</u>
Non-current liabilities			
Borrowings	18	698,168	445,903
Trade and other payables	20	15,664,437	16,080,690
Provisions for other liabilities and charges		<u>619,034</u>	<u>618,144</u>
		<u>16,981,639</u>	<u>17,144,737</u>
Current liabilities			
Trade and other payables	20	5,441,467	4,838,852
Borrowings	18	<u>58,773</u>	<u>-</u>
		<u>5,500,240</u>	<u>4,838,852</u>
Total liabilities		<u>22,481,879</u>	<u>21,983,589</u>
Total equity and liabilities		<u>8,323,818</u>	<u>8,466,377</u>


On 11 March 2022 the Board of Directors of Omonia Football Ltd and Athletic Club Omonia Nicosia authorised these combined financial statements for issue.


Stavros Papastavrou
Director
Omonia Football Limited


Dimitrios Gligori
Director
Omonia Football Limited




Marias Argyrides
President
Athletic Club Omonia Nicosia


Pavlos Nicolaidis
General Secretary
Athletic Club Omonia Nicosia



The notes on pages 9 to 29 form an integral part of these combined financial statements.

C2: Omonoia Football LTD Financial Statement 2022

OMONIA FOOTBALL LTD

COMBINED STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION

31 December 2022

	Note	2022 €	2021 €
ASSETS			
Non-current assets			
Property, plant and equipment	12	954,928	978,920
Intangible assets	13	<u>2,842,361</u>	<u>2,308,309</u>
		<u>3,797,289</u>	<u>3,287,229</u>
Current assets			
Inventories	14	264,640	212,330
Trade and other receivables	15	2,231,299	4,189,626
Cash at bank and in hand	16	<u>399,668</u>	<u>634,633</u>
		<u>2,895,607</u>	<u>5,036,589</u>
Total assets		<u>6,692,896</u>	<u>8,323,818</u>
EQUITY AND LIABILITIES			
Equity			
Share capital	17	6,500,000	6,500,000
Accumulated losses		<u>(22,009,139)</u>	<u>(20,658,061)</u>
Total equity		<u>(15,509,139)</u>	<u>(14,158,061)</u>
Non-current liabilities			
Borrowings	18	587,573	698,168
Trade and other payables	20	16,310,913	15,664,437
Provisions for other liabilities and charges		<u>619,034</u>	<u>619,034</u>
		<u>17,517,520</u>	<u>16,981,639</u>
Current liabilities			
Trade and other payables	20	4,625,742	5,441,467
Borrowings	18	<u>58,773</u>	<u>58,773</u>
		<u>4,684,515</u>	<u>5,500,240</u>
Total liabilities		<u>22,202,035</u>	<u>22,481,879</u>
Total equity and liabilities		<u>6,692,896</u>	<u>8,323,818</u>

On 10 March 2023 the Board of Directors of Omonoia Football Ltd and Athletic Club Omonia Nicosia authorised these combined financial statements for issue.


 Stavros Papastavrou
 Director
 Omonoia Football Limited


 Dimitrios Sigori
 Director
 Omonoia Football Limited




 Marios Argyrides
 Chairman
 Athletic Club Omonia Nicosia


 Pavlos Nicolaidis
 General Secretary
 Athletic Club Omonia Nicosia



The notes on pages 9 to 28 form an integral part of these combined financial statements.

OMONIOIA FOOTBALL LTD

COMBINED STATEMENT OF PROFIT OR LOSS AND OTHER COMPREHENSIVE INCOME 31 December 2022

	Note	2022 €	2021 €
Revenue	8	16,772,685	11,854,973
Football operating expenses	9	(13,255,806)	(11,233,937)
(Loss)/profit from activities		3,516,879	621,036
Futsal income		51,772	76,869
Women's football income		48,559	89,694
Depreciation expense		(84,645)	(90,767)
Amortisation of intangible assets - non-players		(127,394)	(127,394)
Amortisation of intangible assets - players		(188,554)	(93,315)
Futsal expenses		(118,195)	(46,486)
Women's football expenses		(126,445)	(48,491)
Academy department expenses		(746,548)	(548,777)
Administration expenses		(2,988,952)	(2,433,581)
Players' representative cost	10	(161,800)	(62,553)
Operating loss		(925,323)	(2,663,765)
Finance income		30,884	9,397
Finance costs		(329,659)	(591,921)
Net finance costs	11	(298,775)	(582,524)
Net loss for the year		(1,224,098)	(3,246,289)
Other comprehensive income		-	-
Total comprehensive (loss)/income for the year		(1,224,098)	(3,246,289)

The notes on pages 9 to 28 form an integral part of these combined financial statements.

OMONIOIA FOOTBALL LTD

COMBINED CASH FLOW STATEMENT 31 December 2022

	Note	2022 €	2021 €
CASH FLOWS FROM OPERATING ACTIVITIES			
Loss before tax		(1,224,098)	(3,246,289)
Adjustments for:			
Depreciation of property, plant and equipment	12	84,645	90,767
Amortisation of intangible assets - players	13	188,554	93,315
Amortisation of intangible assets - non-players	13	127,395	127,394
Loss from the sale of intangible assets		-	16,948
Bad debts written off		20,411	10,593
Interest income	11	(559)	(9,397)
Interest expense	11	279,371	540,594
		(524,281)	(2,376,075)
Changes in working capital:			
Increase in inventories		(52,310)	(13,661)
Decrease/(increase) in trade and other receivables		1,456,614	(897,955)
Decrease in trade and other payables		(169,249)	(280,583)
Cash generated from/(used in) operations		710,774	(3,568,274)
CASH FLOWS FROM INVESTING ACTIVITIES			
Payment for purchase of intangible assets	13	(850,000)	(190,000)
Payment for purchase of property, plant and equipment	12	(60,654)	(33,649)
Interest received		559	9,397
Net cash used in investing activities		(910,095)	(214,252)
CASH FLOWS FROM FINANCING ACTIVITIES			
Repayments of borrowings		(58,773)	-
Proceeds from borrowings		-	352,113
Interest paid		(279,371)	(540,594)
Proceeds from shareholder		3,886,869	3,029,369
Repayments to shareholder		(3,485,790)	-
Loans granted		(100,000)	-
Net cash (used in)/generated from financing activities		(37,065)	2,840,888
Net decrease in cash and cash equivalents		(236,386)	(941,638)
Cash and cash equivalents at beginning of the year		631,275	1,572,913
Cash and cash equivalents at end of the year	16	394,889	631,275

The notes on pages 9 to 28 form an integral part of these combined financial statements.

C3: Apollon Ladies F.C. LTD

APOLLON LADIES F.C. LTD

STATEMENT OF PROFIT OR LOSS AND OTHER COMPREHENSIVE INCOME 31 December 2022

	Note	2022 €	2021 €
Revenue	8	290.852	473.005
Depreciation		(6.750)	(5.933)
Total Employee benefit expenses	9	(128.399)	(124.797)
Other Operating Expenses	10	(136.039)	(201.679)
Operating profit		19.664	140.596
Finance costs	11	(1.484)	(1.752)
Net profit for the year		18.180	138.844
Other comprehensive income		-	-
Total comprehensive income for the year		18.180	138.844

The notes on pages 9 to 15 form an integral part of these financial statements.

APOLLON LADIES F.C. LTD

STATEMENT OF CASH FLOWS 31 December 2022

	Note	2022 €	2021 €
CASH FLOWS FROM OPERATING ACTIVITIES			
Profit before tax		18.180	138.844
Adjustments for:			
Depreciation of property, plant and equipment	12	<u>6.750</u>	<u>5.933</u>
		24.930	144.777
Changes in working capital:			
(Increase)/decrease in receivables		(2.390)	10.332
Decrease in trade and other payables		<u>(24.971)</u>	<u>(22.171)</u>
Cash (used in)/generated from operations		(2.431)	132.938
Tax refunded		<u>555</u>	<u>41</u>
Net cash (used in)/generated from operating activities		<u>(1.876)</u>	<u>132.979</u>
CASH FLOWS FROM INVESTING ACTIVITIES			
Payment for purchase of property, plant and equipment	12	<u>(15.367)</u>	<u>(19.963)</u>
Net cash used in investing activities		<u>(15.367)</u>	<u>(19.963)</u>
CASH FLOWS FROM FINANCING ACTIVITIES			
		-	-
Net (decrease)/increase in cash and cash equivalents		(17.243)	113.016
Cash and cash equivalents at beginning of the year		<u>158.563</u>	<u>45.547</u>
Cash and cash equivalents at end of the year	14	<u>141.320</u>	<u>158.563</u>

The notes on pages 9 to 15 form an integral part of these financial statements.

APOLLON LADIES F.C. LTD

DETAILED INCOME STATEMENT

31 December 2022

	Page	2022 €	2021 €
Revenue			
Sponsorship & Advertising		70.202	71.250
UEFA Solidarity		150.150	290.000
Broadcasting rights		23.000	33.500
Subsidies & Donations		47.500	78.255
Total revenue		290.852	473.005
Depreciation		(6.750)	(5.933)
		284.102	467.072
Operating expenses			
Total Employee benefit expenses		(128.399)	(124.797)
		155.703	342.275
Other operating expenses			
Exceptional expenses		(57.295)	(111.876)
Other operating expenses		(28.690)	(35.784)
Matchday expenses		(43.967)	(52.831)
Sponsorship and advertising expenses		(6.087)	(1.188)
Operating profit		19.664	140.596
Finance costs	2	(1.484)	(1.752)
Net profit for the year before tax		18.180	138.844

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