



Final Technical Report
VS/2008/0271

Study on the working conditions of
Professional basketball players
In the European Union



Supported by a grant from the European Commission

Prepared by:

U.B.E.

EUROPEAN BASKETBALL PLAYERS UNION

Via Mezzafanti 79,
40137 Bologna, Italy
Tel: +39 (0) 51 6231086
Fax +39 (0) 51 6238042
Email: info@ubeplayers.com
Website: www.ubeplayers.com

Contents

Forward

Implementation

Results

Introduction	
Response rate	
Analysis of respondents	9
Response – Country	10
Response – Age	10
Response - Gender	10-11
Response – National Team/ Non-national team	12
Personal Information	
Marriage rate	13
Players with children	13
Income and contracts	
Income distribution	14
Salary level by country	15
Salary distribution by gender	16
Salary distribution by age	16
Salary distribution comparison U.S./European	17
Salary levels National team / non-national team	17
Late salary payments	18
Non-salary compensation	18
Work contracts	18
Second contracts	18
Second jobs	19
Agents	19
Payment of taxes	20
Education	
Education levels – overall	21
Education levels – country	21
Student status	22
Education levels – Men and women	22
Education level – U.S./European	23
Education levels – National team vs. Non-national team	23
Training programs	24

Health and safety

Basketball is hard physical work	25
Does your work affect your health?	25
Perceived health risk by country	26
Perceived health risk by age	27
Stress	27
Fatigue and muscle pain	28
Sleeping problems	28
Hearing loss	28
Injury	28
Level of severe injury by country	29
Presence of a physical therapist	29
Gender as a factor	30

Anti-doping

Is doping a problem in basketball?	31
Number of tests in the last 12 months	32
Whereabouts reporting	32
Invasion of privacy?	32
Testing outside the workplace	33
Data protection	34

Violence, harassment and discrimination in the workplace

Violence at work – comparison with EUROFOUND	34
Violence at work – Country	35
Violence at work – Gender	35
Violence at work – Age	35
Additional issues	36
Ethnic discrimination	36

Working time

Work after 8:00pm	37
Work on Sunday	38
Comparison to EUROFOUND	38
Time off	38
Length of the season	39
Working schedule changes	39

Workplace Discipline 40

Final Statement 41

Foreword

Many children dream about becoming a professional athlete. Millions of Europeans cheer for their favorite club, their favorite player and many participate in sport at an amateur level. However, it is often forgotten that the athletes seen on television or under the bright lights at the stadium are only those who have reached the very top of their profession. The massive public attention bathed on these select few distorts the public's view of sport. Beneath, lies a massive pyramid of athletes with the aspiration to someday reach the top.

Sport, across Europe, is becoming more and more professional. As this transition occurs, many more athletes have labor contracts and/or receive compensation for practicing their sport. Although the EUROFOUND – European Working Conditions Surveys provide much important information about working conditions across Europe, the conditions under which professional athletes work have not yet been systematically studied. This study was intended to begin this process with a focus on professional basketball players. Clearly, this study could provide a foundation for further studies on athletes in other sports.

The opening paragraph of the Introduction to Eurofound's Fourth European Working Conditions Survey also provides the foundation for this study of the working conditions of professional basketball players. It states, as follows:

“Promoting employment, and improving living and working conditions, are amongst the primary objectives of the European Union and its Member States, as stipulated in Article 136 of the Treaty of Rome; in order to achieve this aim, it is necessary to be able to monitor and assess progress in this field. To measure working conditions, it is important to consider a range of different aspects related to job characteristics and employment conditions, health and safety, work organization, learning and development opportunities and the balance between working and non- working life.”

It does not take a great leap of thought to relate this paragraph to European sport. With the publication of the White Paper on Sport, the implementation of the Coubertin Action Plan, the passage of the Lisbon Treaty, the European Union is now poised to define and implement a series of sport policy measures over the next few years. Clearly, information is necessary in order to assure properly formulated and effective policies. The member associations of UBE, as employee social partners, believe that information on the actual conditions under which athletes perform will make an important contribution to the development of European sports policy. This project will hopefully begin to fill an important gap in the general knowledge base regarding athletes, arguably the most significant stakeholders in European sport.

The organization that carried out this study, UBE, the European Basketball Players Association, is a federation of trade unions founded in 1991. It is a federation of basketball players unions with offices in Bologna, Italy. Its members include players

associations from Greece, Italy, Spain, France, Germany, Cyprus, the Netherlands, Belgium, and Portugal. The players associations from the non-E.U. countries of Russia and Israel are also members. Contacts have also recently been made with associations in Denmark, Finland and Lithuania.

UBE has the right to represent its members at the European level and has taken a lead role in the formation of the European Elite Athletes Association (EUAthletes), a federation of approximately 30 associations from many different sports from across Europe. The results of this study will provide critical information for the members of UBE as they engage in national social dialogue and will provide a foundation for initiatives taken at the European level. As will be seen, the results of this survey shine a light on the often-misunderstood world of professional sport. There is a common perception that the working life of a professional athlete is one of fame, high pay, and an easy working environment. The results of this survey demonstrate otherwise.

It was my distinct pleasure to have worked with many staff and team representatives from our member associations. This study could not have been completed without their participation and assistance.

I would especially like to thank Anne Marie Litt and Jonas Hoffman who carried out several of the most important aspects of this project.

Walter Palmer
UBE General Secretary

Introduction

UBE is a federation of trade unions, not an academic research institute. Though this project was a challenge for our members, the high rate of response from the UBE member countries and the fact that the results will immediately influence our positions in national and European social dialogue, made it worth all the considerable effort. This survey confirmed many hypotheses that we had about our sport. We also learned many new things about the conditions under which players work across Europe. Most important being the comparisons between countries and the overall results with the results from EUROFOUND's *European Working Conditions Survey*, a wide survey of working conditions across Europe undertaken every five years.

Implementation

The goal of this project was to develop and distribute a survey on the working conditions for professional basketball players (men and women) in the European Union. The results would then be collected, analyzed and distributed to relevant stakeholders. This report will describe the successful accomplishment of the stated goals.

This survey has met the objectives of the budget heading by providing important information regarding the quality of work, employment of youth in professional sport, information about health and safety, the reconciliation of work and family life in sport, gender issues, discrimination, and much more.

The project group met periodically and worked well together. The members of the project team included: Walter Palmer, UBE General Secretary (SP.IN); Anne Marie Litt, UBE Deputy General Secretary (GIBA); Alice Tedeschi (GIBA); Jonas Hoffmann (SP.IN); Jacqueline Creutz (SP.IN).

A survey of 80 questions was developed using previous working conditions surveys implemented by the German basketball players union (SP.IN) and the EUROFOUND European Working Conditions survey as templates.

The survey (and an introductory letter (ANNEX)) were then translated into 25 languages, formatted and printed for distribution (Annex - .pdf surveys and letter). The hard copies were then distributed by post from the UBE office in Bologna and the SP.IN office in Heidelberg.

A web version of the survey in all languages was created on the UBE website and the .pdf versions were made available for download (www.ubepayers.com). Additionally, the link to the survey and the electronic version were distributed by email in countries where a response was slow in coming.

Hard copies were distributed as described in the project application – 100 surveys in

each country (50 men - 20 surveys for the national team and 30 surveys for 2 selected club teams), 50 women - 20 surveys for the national team and 30 surveys for 2 selected club teams). In all, surveys were distributed to 3000 athletes.

FIBA Europe (the regional section of basketball's governing body, FIBA) cooperated with the project by providing contact information for all of the federations (responsible for national teams) within the scope of the study (ANNEX – FIBA Europe letter).

Surveys were also sent to selected club teams of all 27 E.U. Member States and the 3 E.U. Candidate Countries (Croatia, Turkey and F.Y.R.M.) as described in the application (Annex – mailing list in yellow folder). Additionally, surveys and an introductory letter were sent by email to many other clubs.

One of the stated goals of this project was to perhaps broaden the study to other sports at a future date. Visits and interviews were carried out in Denmark, Sweden, and Finland with this end in mind. These countries have a strong tradition of unionism, in general, and have associations in other sports that are members of EU Athletes; SICO – the Swedish Ice Hockey Players Association; the FHPA – Finnish Hockey Players Association; and the Danish Handball Players Association. The visits increased the level of participation in the survey in these countries and laid the base for a potential future survey.

The added value, lasting impact and multiplier effect of the result of the survey can be seen in the following areas.

The results of this survey will provide valuable information for national social dialogue efforts of the UBE member associations.

Also, UBE and the basketball players unions make up the largest block of the membership and, thus, are a driving force in EU Athletes. The results of this study will provide an important foundation for further study and initiatives at the European level. EU Athletes is also a partner (with UNI europa) in a project under the social dialogue budget heading (VS/2008/0456 – “Promoting the Social Dialogue for Elite Athletes within the European Union”) and the results of this survey will help in the formulation of position papers relating to important social dialogue issues.

Additionally, the visits to Denmark, Finland and Sweden allowed personal contact to be made with players, federations and other stakeholders in the sport of basketball. These contacts have already proved valuable in the planning of projects under the (01) social dialogue heading. A dormant players association (that is, one that legally exists but is not active) was discovered in Finland and a representative from this association attended the working group meeting for the EU Athletes social dialogue project in Berlin in May of 2009. Contacts made through the survey visit in Sweden were communicated to the Swedish ice hockey players association (SICO) and the Danish handball players association (Spillerforenigen) and both indicated a willingness to assist in the formation of new associations in Sweden. The Danish handball players association has distributed

copies of the “Social Dialogue Guide for professional athletes” to athletes in Sweden. Contacts made through the survey project in Sweden will also receive copies of this guide. A basketball players association was also discovered in Denmark operating under the auspices of a national federation of players unions.

This project had a very definite and wide transnational dimension. The survey was distributed across all 27 E.U. countries and the 3 candidate countries. Staff or representatives of the different UBE member associations in France, Greece, Italy, Spain, Netherlands, Germany, and Finland assisted the implementation of the project. The regional section of the basketball governing body, FIBA Europe, sent a notice to all of the basketball federations who fell under the umbrella of the project (FIBA Europe has 54 member federations in “basketball Europe”(including i.e. Russia, Israel, Ukraine, etc.) so only sent to 30 of its members) asking them to cooperate with the distribution and collection of the surveys with the national teams which they organize. Visits were made to Denmark, Finland and Sweden. These visits were instrumental in increasing the amount of participation in those countries and also for making contacts that will be helpful in other projects under social dialogue budget heading. The preliminary results of the study were presented at the annual meeting of the EU Athletes in September 2009.

The social partners were involved deeply in this project. UBE is a federation of basketball players unions and is the employee social partner at the European level for basketball players. Employer organizations were involved in the survey as recipients of the survey. Employer organizations (clubs) and the governing bodies were sent introductory letters and asked to participate in the study. The level of cooperation was mixed, at best. The best levels of response, as expected came from countries where there was an active players association. 71% of respondents reported that there was a players association in their country.

There were several problems and challenges faced by the project team:

1. There was a much lower response rate among women than men. Many of the best women players who play in Europe participate during the summer in the WNBA. Therefore, the WNBA Players Association – based in New York, was also contacted and assistance with the survey was requested. Unfortunately, the expected results were not forthcoming. Problems arose with the method of implementation (i.e. sending of hard copies) and UBE was not able to provide the survey in a format that was accessible by PDA as requested.
2. As expected, there were low response rates in countries where no players union exists and, therefore, only the employer organizations could be contacted. Countries like Romania, Bulgaria, and Poland are examples of this. A positive example was Turkey where the response rate was adequate. However, the federation (governing body) runs the league and was replying to a request from FIBA Europe to participate.
3. Timing and the underestimation of the time and effort needed to complete the project were also a problem. The project was scheduled to end on 30/6/2009 but there was a

very low level of women respondents at that point. Efforts were made over the summer of 2009 and into the fall of 2010 to expand this pool of results with moderate success. Also, due to a lack of experience the estimated time needs to tabulate and analyze the results was too little. The tabulation of the results was not finished until December 2009 and the analysis of the results and writing of the final report took another six weeks. Selected results of this survey will be published in part on the UBE website and the websites of the UBE members. A copy of this report will also be available for download on the UBE website. It will also be distributed among national federations (governing bodies) and other important stakeholders.

Valuable experience was gained from this project and future actions are being planned. The members of UBE were responsible for implementing the survey in their own countries and staff gained valuable experience.

Preliminary results of the survey were communicated to member associations of the European Elite Athletes Association at the annual meeting in Krakow, Poland in September 2009. There was intense interest and discussion of these results. At that time, the members of EU Athletes approved an initiative to broaden this study to other sports. This project has revealed many areas that require further study.

Introduction

UBE is not an academic research institution but, rather, a trade union federation. The staff that implemented and analyzed these results are not trained researchers or statisticians. The best effort has been given to present the results of this survey in a simple and clear manner.

Where appropriate, the results have been compared with the results of the EUROFOUND European Working Conditions Study made every five years.

This report will begin by giving a breakdown of the response rate according to nationality, gender and age and then highlight some of the more significant results, from the author's perspective.

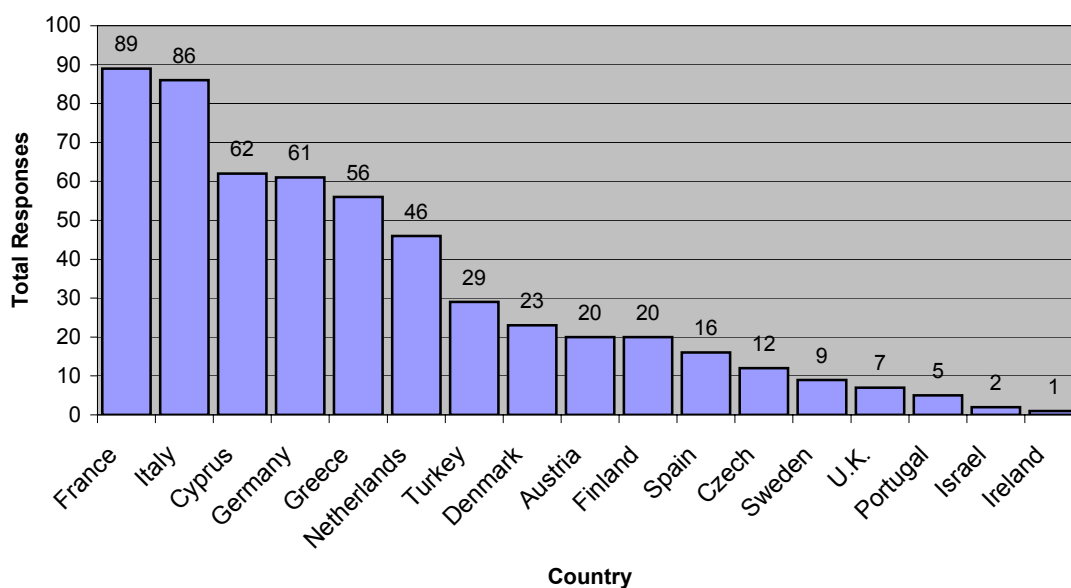
An overview of the results and the general breakdowns of the results for gender, age, nationality, and national team participation are found in the Annex.

Response Rate

A total of 576 replies to the survey were received out of the 3000 that were distributed for a 19.2% response rate. The 3000 surveys were distributed to the men's and women's national teams and two clubs in each the men's and women's competitions in each of the 30 target countries (180 teams). Players from 106 different club teams replied to the survey.

Analysis of respondents

Number of responses by Country



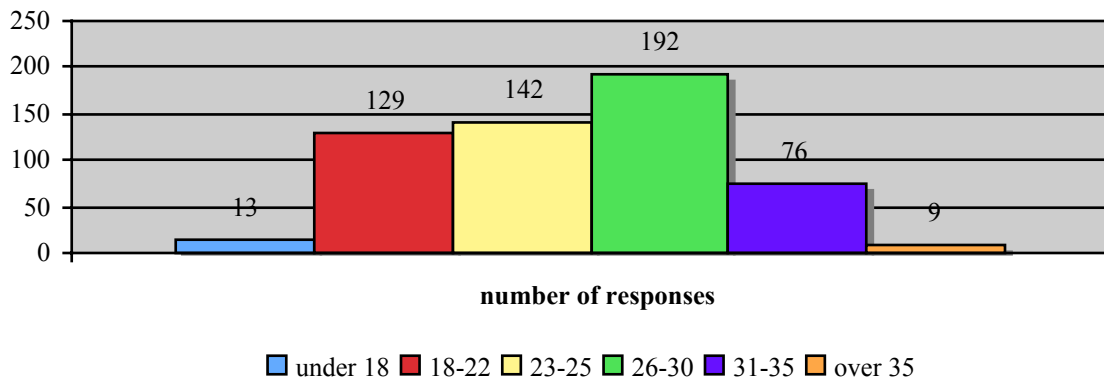
Surveys were sent to all of 27 E.U. countries and the 3 candidate countries. Responses were received from 16 countries. As expected, the level of participation was much higher in countries where there was an UBE member association.

The cooperation of FIBA Europe with the survey was also helpful in making contacts in countries without an association but, in the end, this did not particularly help in the implementation of the survey as the number of respondents in countries where surveys were sent to the local governing body but where there is no local players association remained low or there was no reply.

Response- Age

The graph below shows the distribution of the responses received according to age. It is an extremely important graph as it empirically demonstrates the short span of a basketball player's career. Very few players are able to play after the age of 35. In our study only 1.6% of the respondents were still playing after the age of 35.

Responses by age

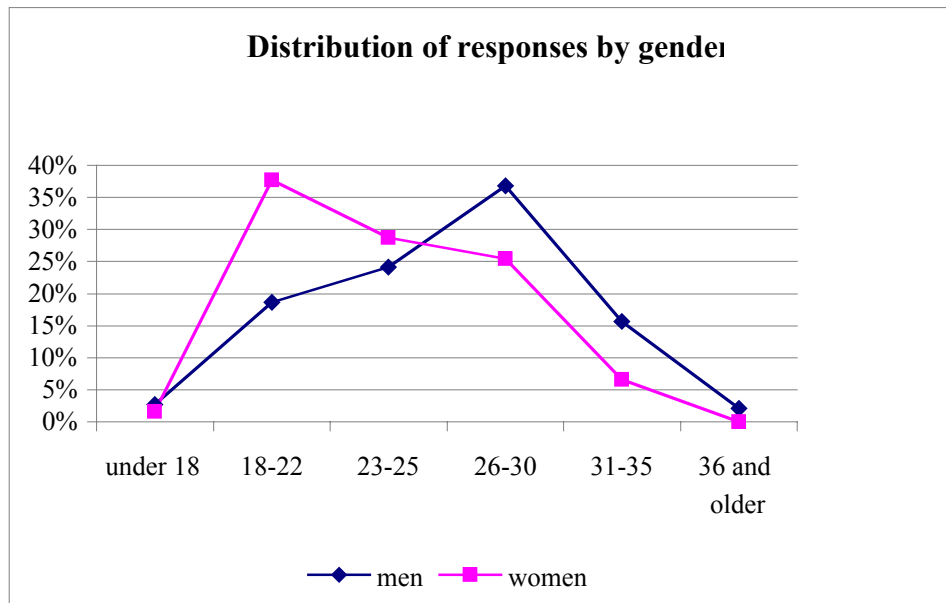


Response- Gender

Of 444 respondents that gave their gender, (78%) were male. 123 respondents (22%) were female.

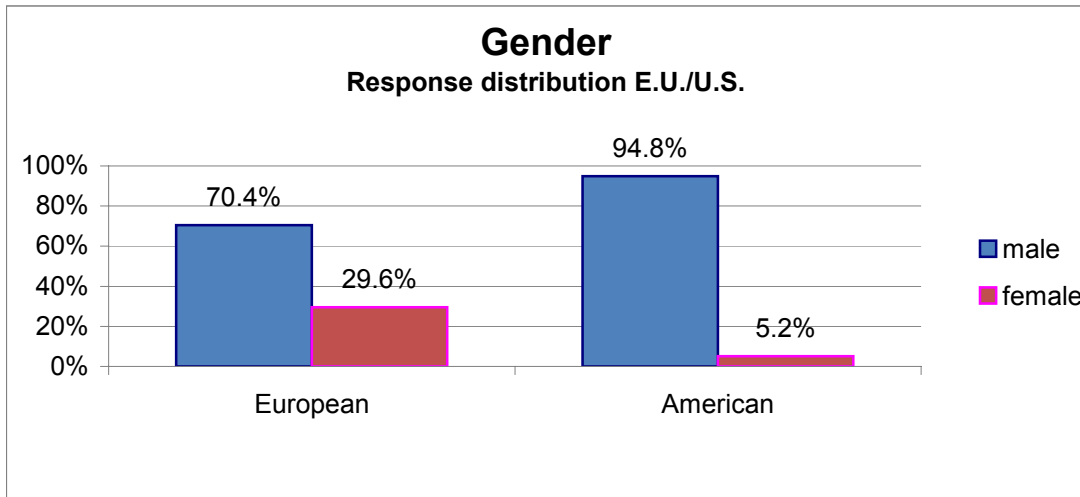
Comparison of the distribution of ages by gender

The following chart shows that the proportion of women playing peaks between the ages of 18 and 22, while the proportion of men playing peaks between the ages of 26-30. Further study would be needed to determine if, indeed, women's careers are generally shorter. The results of this survey show that there is a lower proportion of older players among women than men. When asked to give the age they expected to stop playing, men expected to end their career at the age or 31.9 years and women at the age of 25.7 years.



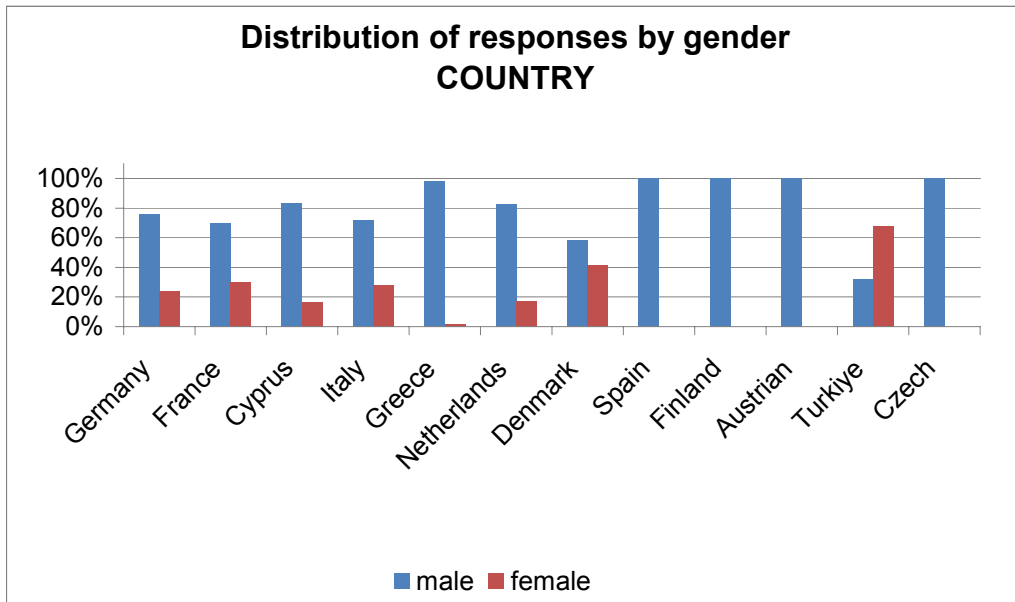
Comparison of the distribution by gender of responses from U.S. players in Europe and European players

The chart below, displays the difference in numbers of replies on a percentage basis from American and European players. As expected (due to quotas for non-E.U. nationals in many leagues), a larger percentage of replies from players with European nationality were women. 95% of the respondents from the United States were male.



Comparison of the distribution of responses by gender from the different countries

The distribution of the responses by gender from the different countries was also varied. Denmark and Turkey had the highest proportion of women answering the survey. No women answered the survey from Spain, Finland, Austria or the Czech Republic.



Response – National team players and non- national team players

An important aspect of an athletes' status is whether they participate in national team competitions or not. The selection of this category was intended to help with the analysis of certain results that may be specific to national team participation. 33% of the respondents (178 out of 536 who answered the question) said that they participated on their country's national team.

Personal Information

Marriage rate

Players were also asked to give their marital status. There was a remarkable difference between men and women. 29% of men reported that they were married while only 7% of women basketball players reported that they were married.

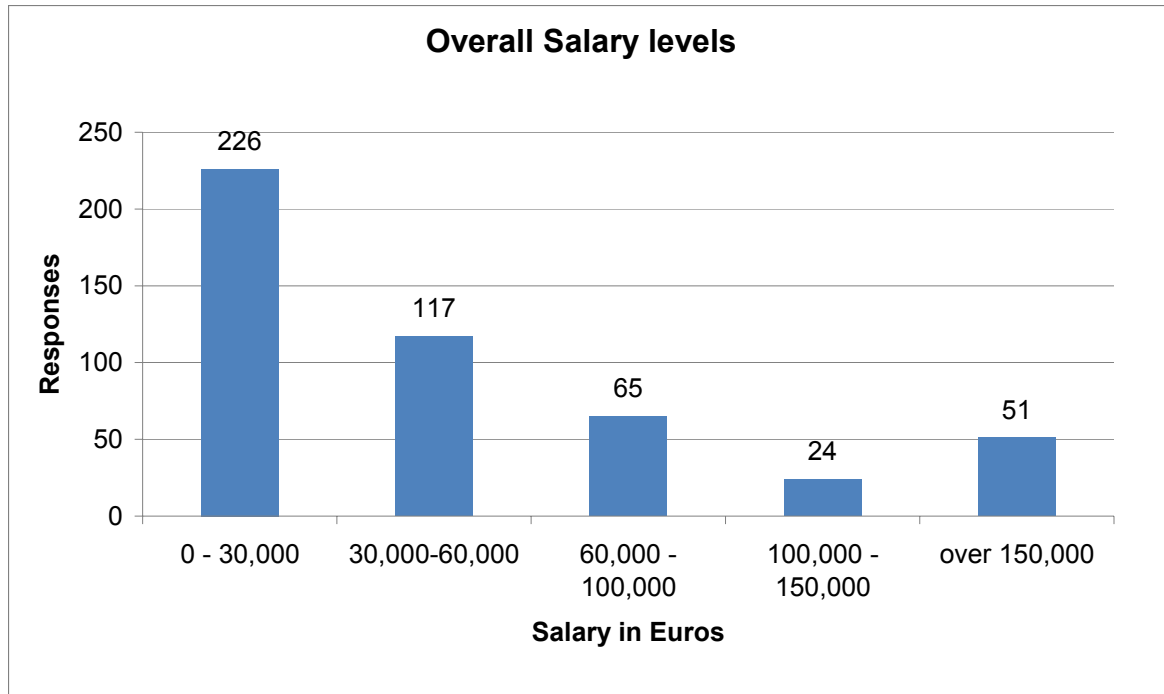
Players with Children

There was a large difference between men and women when it came to the presence of children in the home. Only 2% of women responding to the survey have children, whereas 25% of the responding men have children.

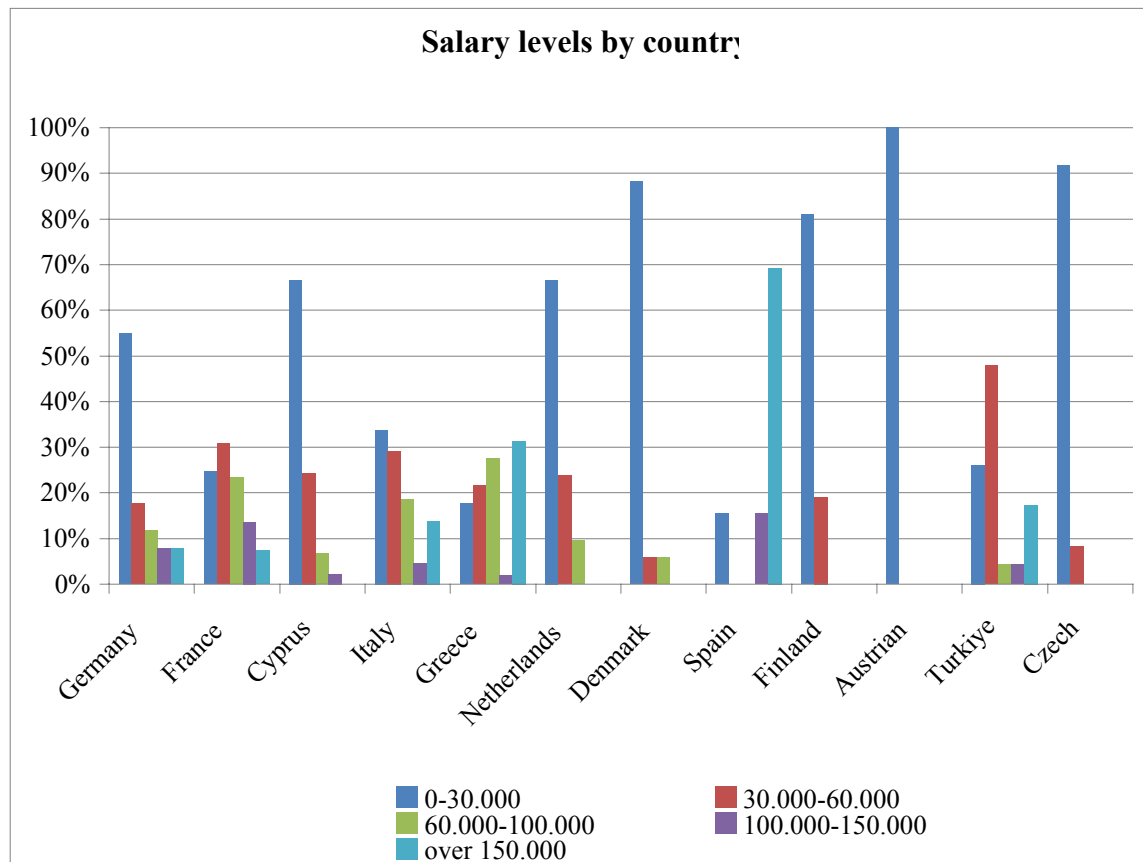
Income and contracts

Income distribution

Contrary to popular perception, the results of the survey demonstrate that the vast majority of respondents do not earn excessively high salaries. Indeed only 13% of male players and none of the female players earned over 150,000 Euros. The chart below describes the number of respondents from each salary category. Significantly, 47% of all respondents earned between 0 and 30,000 Euros.



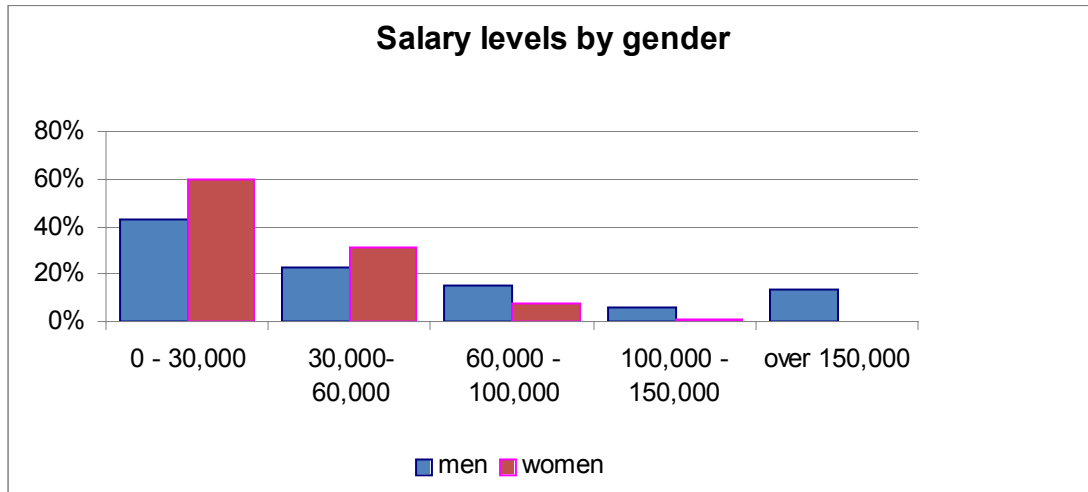
Salary level by country



The chart above describes the distribution of the salary levels in the countries where there were deemed to be enough respondents to have a representative sample. The reader should refer to the response rates for the different countries to assess the level of representativeness. For example, with 89 responses from France and 12 from the Czech Republic the results from France are certainly more representative.

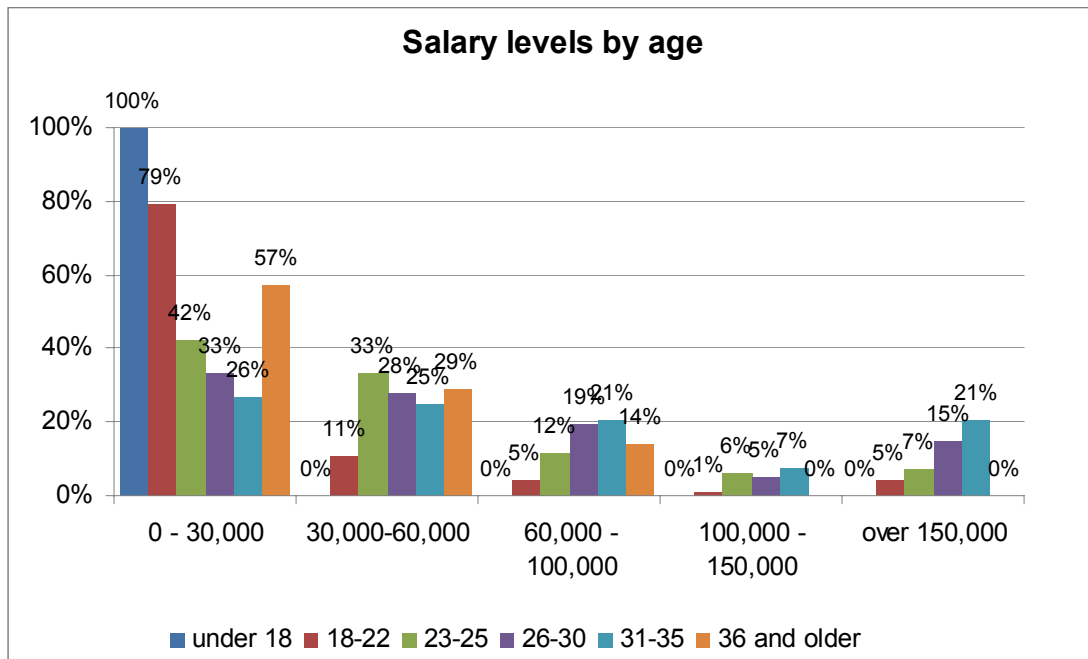
An interesting comparison can be made between Germany and France, two leagues considered to be of similar level of play. In Germany, a much higher proportion of players make below 30,000 Euros. In France, the highest proportion of players make between 30-60,000 Euros.

Salary distribution by Gender



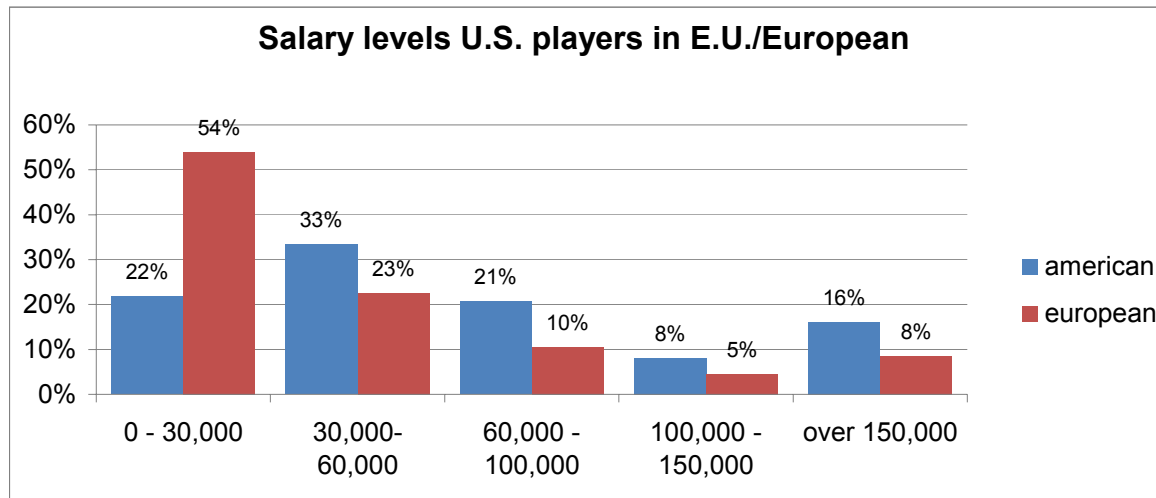
There was a clear difference in compensation between men and women. 60% of women earned from 0 – 30,000 Euros, while only 43% of men earned that little. None of the women respondents earned over 150,000 Euros while 13% of the men reported that they earned above that level of compensation.

Salary distribution by Age



The greatest proportion of respondents in every age group earn less than 30,000 Euros a year.

Salary distribution by European/U.S. players in Europe



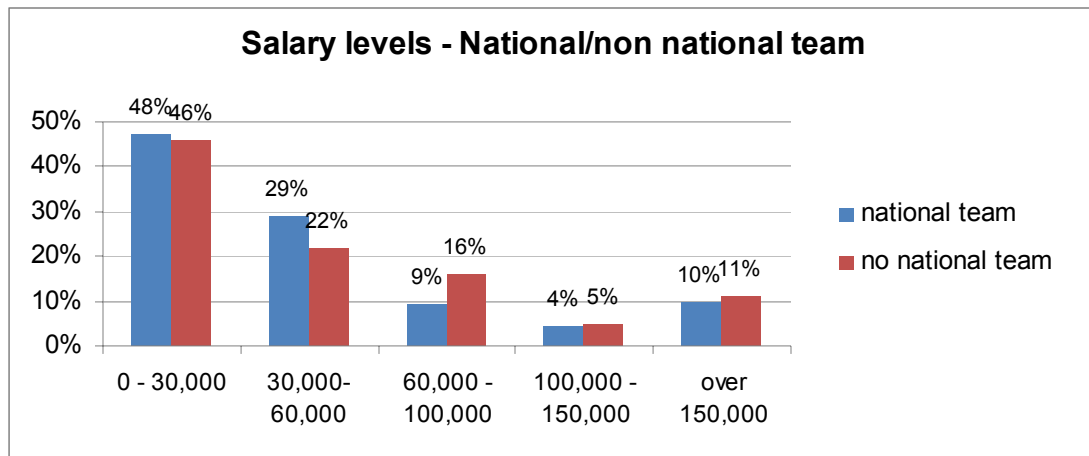
The results show that 8.5% of European respondents make more than 150,000 Euros while 16% of the responding U.S. players in Europe do.

Also, 35% of European players were paid before they reached the age of 17 while only 5% of the U.S. players were paid before the age of 17. This can be explained by the restrictive amateur policies of the National Collegiate Athletic Association in the U.S..

This result also demonstrates that U.S. players in Europe are, in general, better paid than European players.

Salary levels - National Team/non National Team

The chart below shows the distribution of salaries between national team and non-national team players. Generally, it could be expected that national team players, being selected from the larger pool of players to represent their country, would be better compensated. The overall results of this study do not seem to support this hypothesis.



Late salary payments

The issue of late payments is a large one for professional basketball players. 52% of respondents reported late payments. In Greece, the total was 88%. In France and Germany the totals were 32% and 25% respectively.

As the overall salary levels reveal that most player earn below 60,000 Euros per season, late payments can cause a high level of stress and frustration.

Non salary compensation

Many players receive additional benefits on top of their salaries. These sometimes included apartments and cars. There were significant differences between U.S. and European players in this category. 96% of U.S. players received apartments, only 59% of European respondents. 90% of respondents from the U.S. received cars, only 38% of Europeans (8% of respondents from Turkey).

Work contracts

The EUROFOUND Working Conditions survey found that, overall, 7% of male and female employees in Europe did not have any employment contract. According to our survey, 11% of male respondents and 30% of female respondents did not have labor contracts. Especially among women, this is a striking difference from the overall average in Europe.

The country with the highest level of players with labor contracts was Turkey where 96% of the respondents had labor contracts (6 teams – 28 respondents). 60% of the respondents from Turkey were female.

An area for further study is the issue of the temporary contract in professional sports. Unfortunately, a question was not included directly on this topic as the author's experience showed that most if not all players work under a temporary contract. As there are no direct results from this survey on this topic, this assertion must remain a hypothesis that would merit further study.

Second contracts

The issue of "second" contracts is a real one in professional basketball. That is to say that players sign more than one contract determining compensation for their work. Overall, 11% of respondents have second contracts for their image rights. Only 2% of the women have image contracts. Interestingly, 23% of the players between the ages of 31-35 responded that they had a second contract and 30% of the players in Italy. In Italy there is a collective bargaining agreement in force between the Italian basketball players association, GIBA and the Italian professional league that includes a standard labor contract.

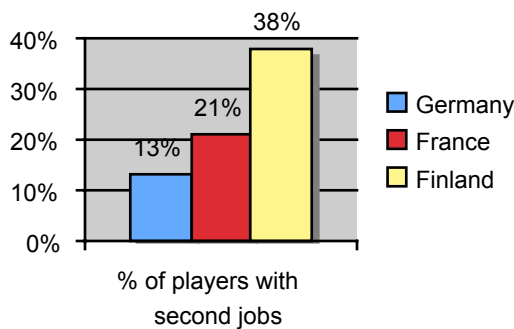
The prevalence of second contracts is a source of instability for the player market. The implications for the players are that less money is included in the labor contract that would be enforceable in the case of illegal termination. Also, less money is contributed to social insurance programs (pension, unemployment) for players with second contracts. Important to note that agents would receive their commissions based on the total amount of both the labor and the second contract.

Second jobs

In the section on second jobs in the EUROFOUND Working Conditions Survey it states:

“There are similarities in the employment status of men and women: for example, a similar proportion (6%) of men and women hold second jobs”

This is in striking contrast to the results of the UBE survey where 12% of male basketball players have second job and 17% of the women. The difference between men and women might be explained by the difference in salary levels – 91% of women earn less than 60,000 Euros while only 65% of men.



In France, 21% of the players have a second job while in Germany 13%. 38% of the Finnish players have a second job.

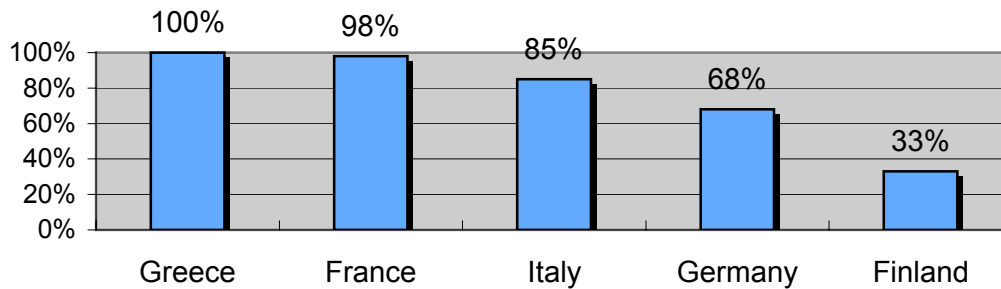
Agents

There was a significant difference between the proportion of male and female respondents with agents. 78% of male respondents and 54% of women respondents have agents.

There was also a significant difference between the proportion of respondents from the U.S. and Europe with agents. 97% of respondents from the U.S. had agents while only 68% of the respondents from Europe.

The chart below shows the variation in the rate of respondents with agents by country. Interestingly, all the respondents from Greece reported that they had an agent.

Agents by country



Payment of taxes

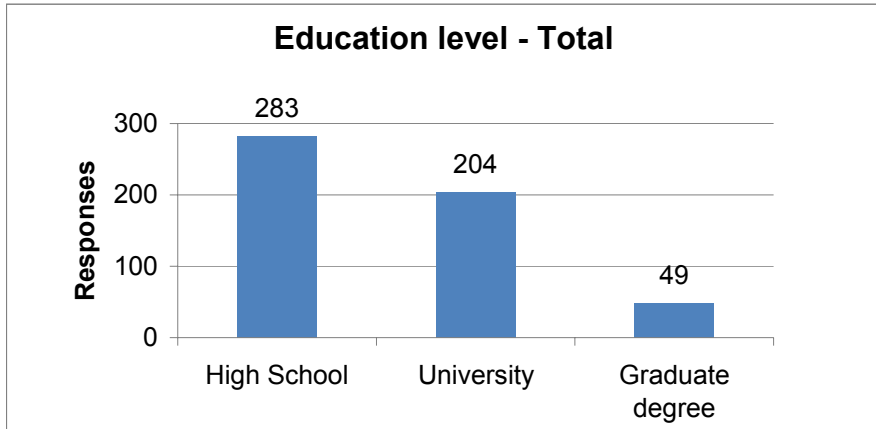
As it is common practice for basketball players to negotiate “net” contracts (that is an amount after tax), the survey asked whether the players were responsible for paying their own taxes or whether their employer paid the tax. Only 33% of the overall respondents reported that they paid their own taxes. There was a significant difference between U.S. and European players as only 17% U.S. players pay their own taxes with 38% of the European players paying theirs.

Breaking down this question by country also revealed some interesting differences. 81% of the players in France reported that they paid their own taxes while only 25% of players in Greece, 16% of the players in Germany, and 10% of the players in Italy pay their own taxes.

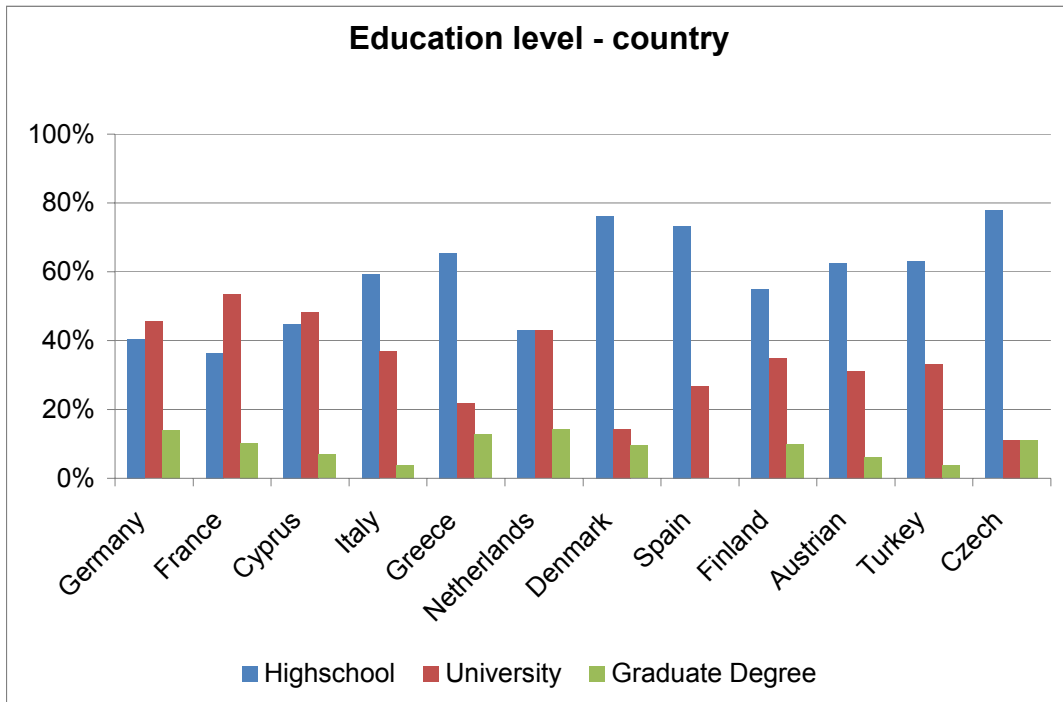
Education

Professional sport, especially a sport like basketball, is a young persons game. As can be seen from the age results of this study, the peak number of active players was between the ages of 26-30 for males and 22-26 for females. Short sport careers mean that, at some point, the player will enter the wider job market. Access to education during the athletic career is key, therefore, to prepare players for their post sport career.

Education level – Total



Education level by country



Student status

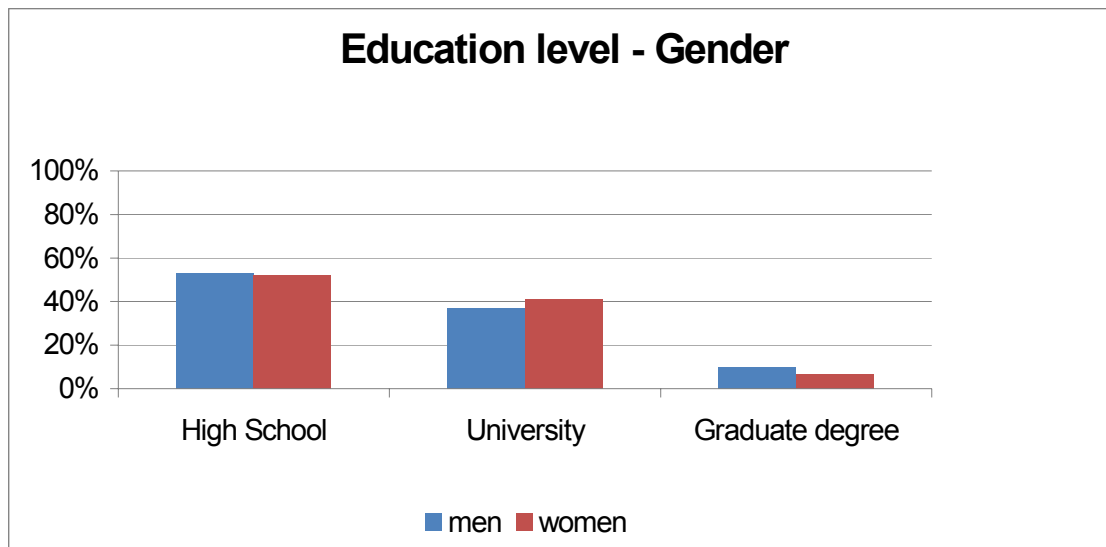
4% of U.S. players in Europe responding to the survey reported that they had been students during their professional careers. 66% percent of European players responding to the survey reported the same.

There was a dramatic difference between men and women respondents regarding student status. 45% of men reported student status during their careers with 72% of women players reporting the same.

Turkey had the highest level of players reporting student status during their careers with 82%.

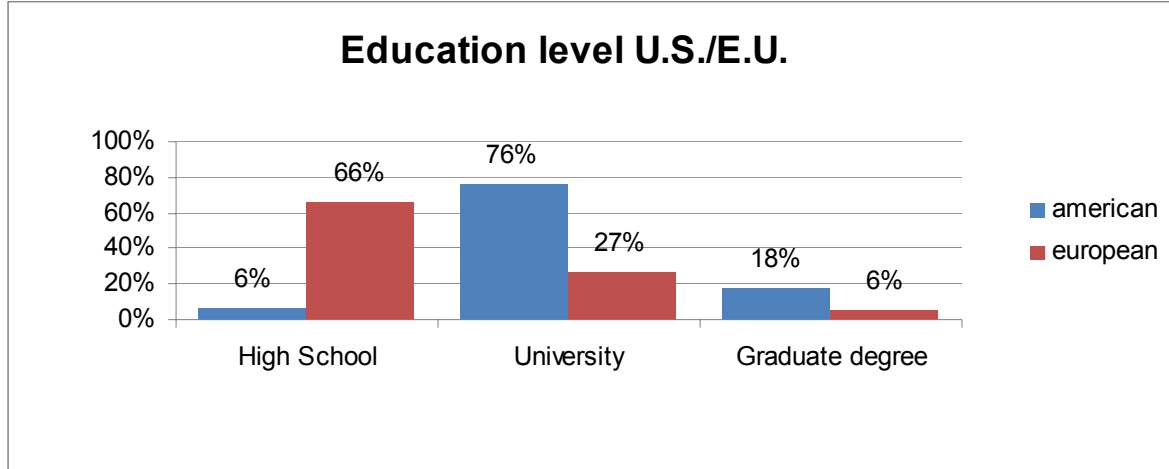
Education level - Men, Women

The chart below describes the difference in education level between men and women. As can be seen, overall the level of education was very similar.



Education level – U.S. players in Europe/ E.U.

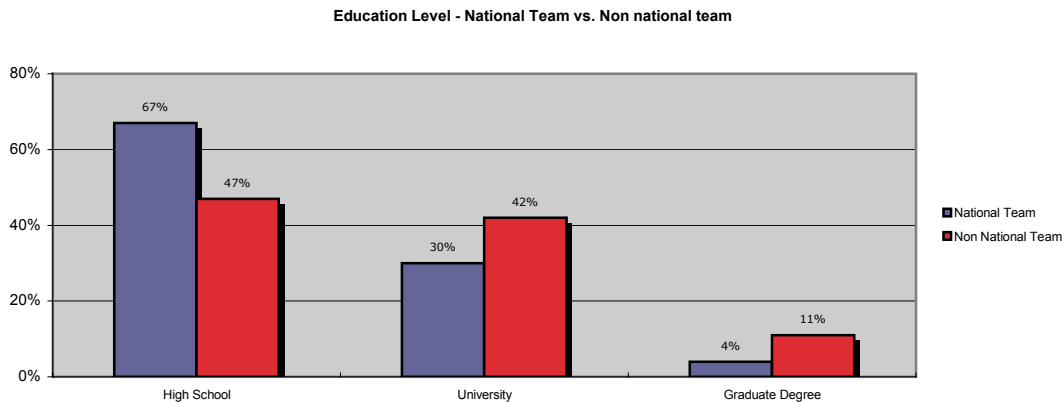
The chart below compares the education of the respondents from the U.S. playing in Europe and European players.



As can be seen, American players in Europe have a much higher level of education than European players, with only 6% not having completed a university or graduate degree. This could be explained by several factors. Most importantly, the player development system in the United States is dominated almost exclusively by the NCAA or National Collegiate Athletic Association. With rare exceptions, American players wishing to become a professional must go through this system where athletics and education are combined. This is not the case in Europe, which relies on the club and federation system for the development of players. European clubs mostly hire American players who have had success in the NCAA's, thus the higher graduation rate for American players.

Education level – National Team vs. Non national team

There was a clear difference between the levels of education between national team and non-national team players. While only 34% of national team players had completed either a university or graduate degree.



Training programs

Employability – a key concept in the current Lisbon strategy – depends on a worker continually updating skills, both to progress in the current job, and to retain the flexibility to find another job, hence ensuring greater employment security.

Overall, 34% of players said that their employers allowed training programs outside of basketball.

There was a marked difference between E.U. and U.S. players in Europe. 39% of E.U. players say their employers allow training programs outside of basketball while only 16% of U.S. players were allowed to participate in training programs.

Significantly, only 52% from the 18-22 age group are allowed to participate in training programs. Lack of access to training at this critical age may hinder players from being prepared to work after their careers forcing them to rely more heavily on social insurance.

Interestingly, only 50% of European players reported being aware of training programs compared to 71% of U.S. players in Europe.

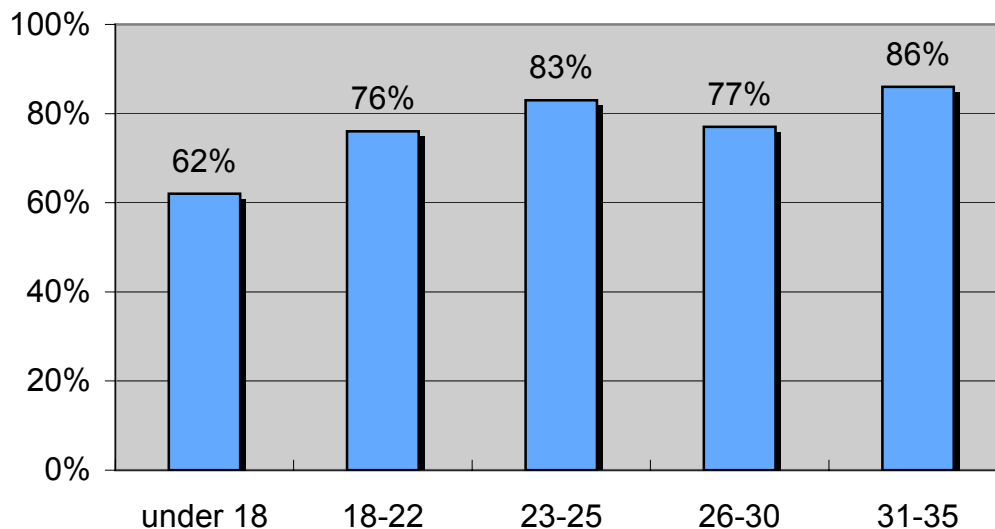
Health and Safety

Health and safety is a key area of concern for professional basketball players as the results from this section of the survey demonstrate.

Basketball is “hard, physical work”

Indeed, the very nature of the work may require a reassessment. Many people have the impression that players are “playing a game”, that their work is somehow easy or light. In this study, a very high proportion of respondents reported that professional basketball is hard physical work. As the chart below describes, the level increases from 62% if players under the age of 18 to 86% of players between the ages of 31 and 35.

Basketball is hard physical work (%)

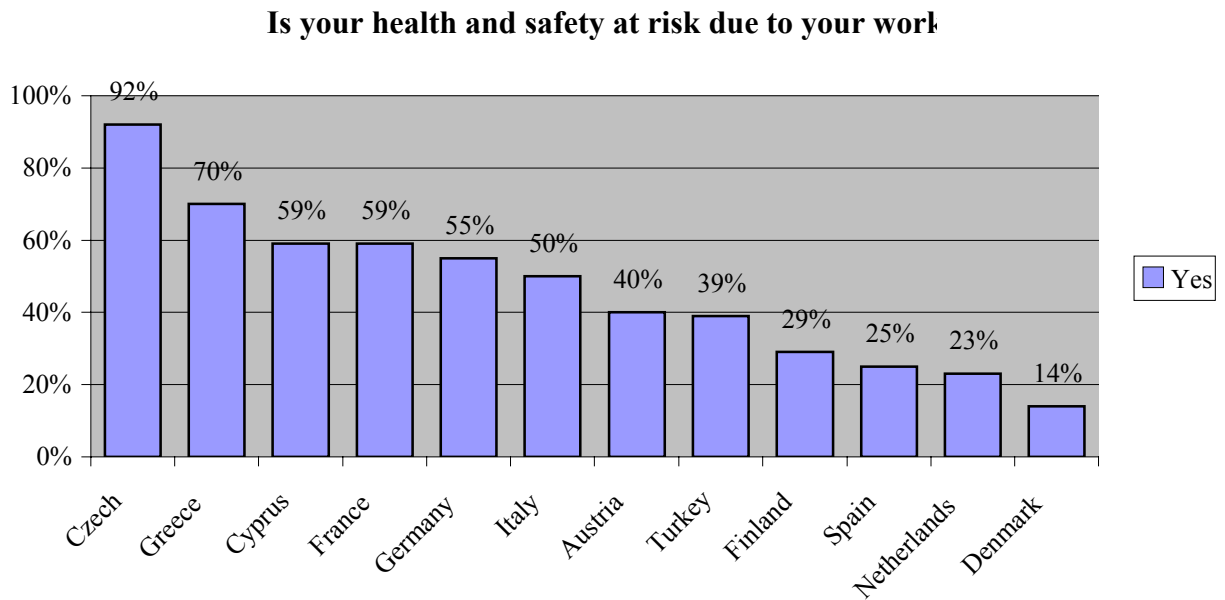


Does your work affect your health?

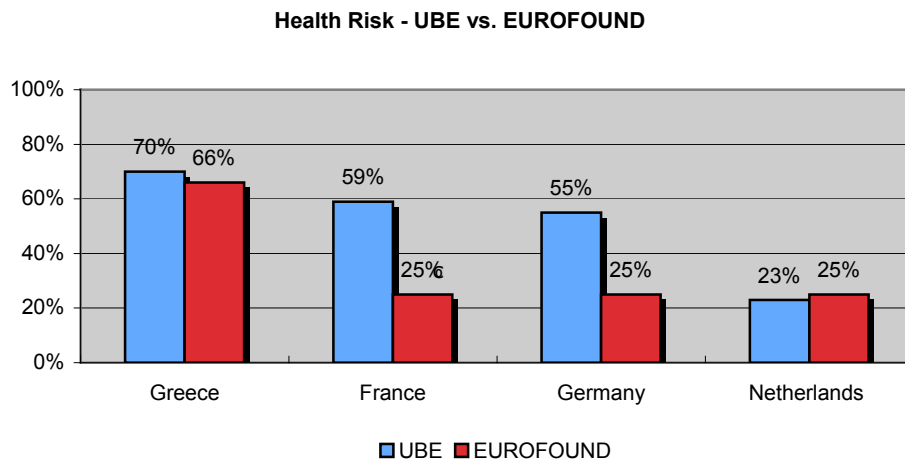
Players were asked if they felt that their health was put at risk due to their work. Overall, 49% of players responded that they felt that playing basketball was a health risk – including 48% of men and 52% of women. These are quite high levels when compared to the 35% of respondents overall that replied positively to the same question in the EUROFOUND survey.

Perceived health risk by country

There was a wide range of responses by country to the question of whether playing basketball professionally affected the health of the respondent. The chart below describes the levels of perceived health risk by country

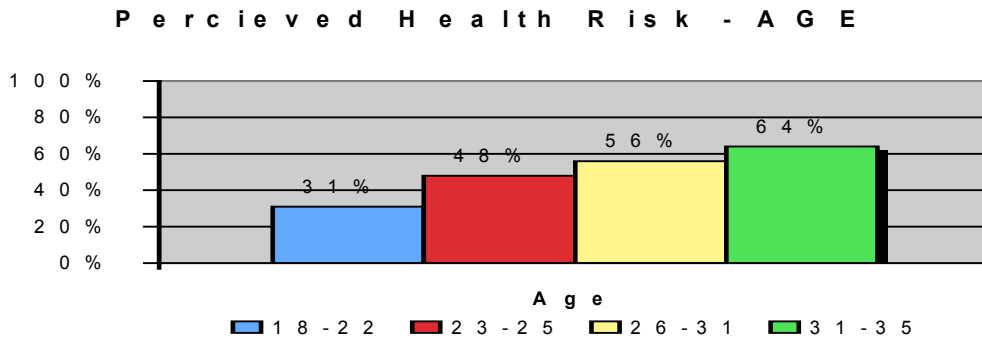


The EUROFOUND study also made comparisons by country. Below are some relevant comparisons to that study. As can be seen, the level in Greece is generally high while in France and Germany there is a wide disparity between basketball players and the general working population. Interestingly, in the Netherlands, basketball players mirror the results of the general population. More study would need to be done to determine the reasons behind these results.



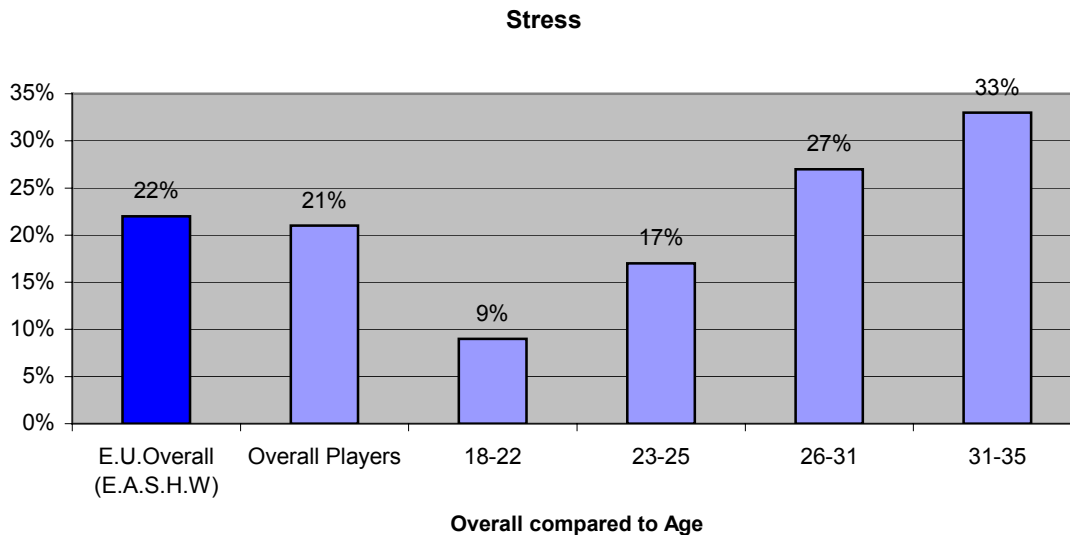
Perceived Health Risk by age

Dramatic differences are seen when the question “Is your health and safety at risk due to your work?” is analyzed according to age. Twice as many players (64%) between the ages of 31 and 35 answered that their health was at risk while only 31% of players between the ages of 18 and 22 did so.



Stress

The European Agency for Safety and Health at Work in their 2009 report – “OSH in figures – Stress at work - - facts and figures” reported that 22% of European described being stressed at work. In our survey, players were asked if they suffered from stress at work. Significantly, our study revealed that there was a dramatic increase in stress as players aged with only 9% of 18-22 year olds reporting stress while 33% of the 31-35 year old players reported stress. Stress is a well-known factor in many health related problems including heart disease and stroke.



When analyzed by country, the lowest levels of stress were reported in Austria and Finland with 10% of players reporting stress and the highest was in Greece with 34% of players reporting stress.

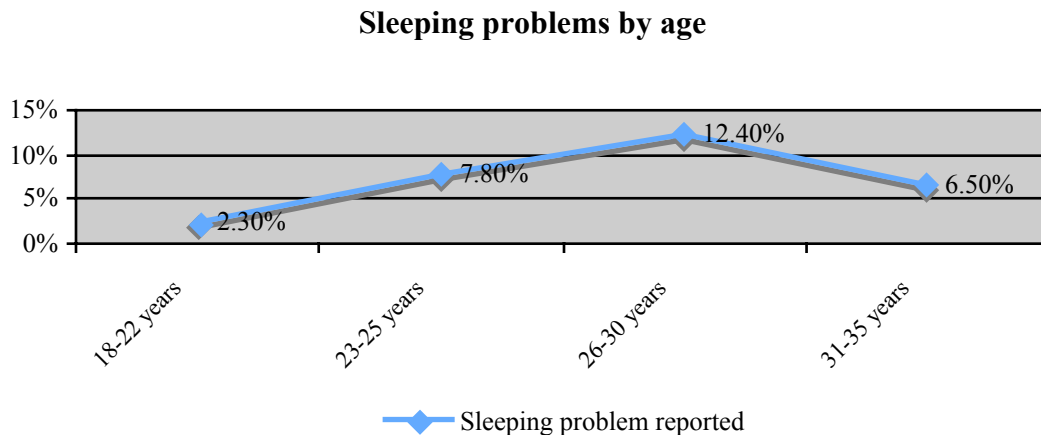
Fatigue and muscle pain

Like stress, fatigue and muscle pain also increased with age. 18% of 18-22 year olds reported overall fatigue compared to 44% of over 36 year olds.

With muscle pain the comparison was 7% of 18-22 year olds compared to 44% of over 36 year olds.

Sleeping problems

Sleeping problems, according to the EUROFOUND background material can be an indication of psychological stress at work. The average percentage of players reporting sleeping problems was 8%. Germany was the highest with 15% of players reporting sleeping problems.

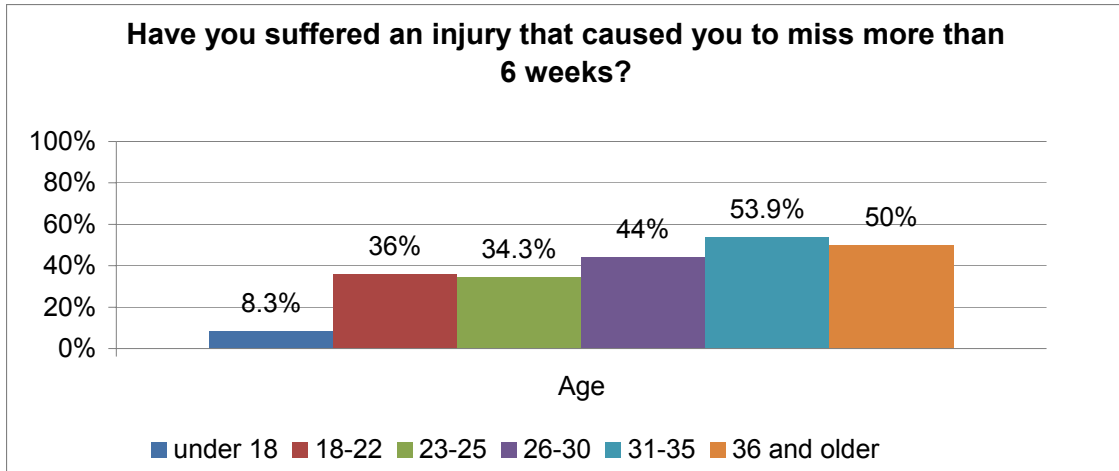


Hearing loss

Only in the countries of Greece and Cyprus did it appear that there might be a significant problem with hearing loss due to conditions while playing basketball. 11% of the players in both Greece and Cyprus reported that their work affected their hearing.

Injury

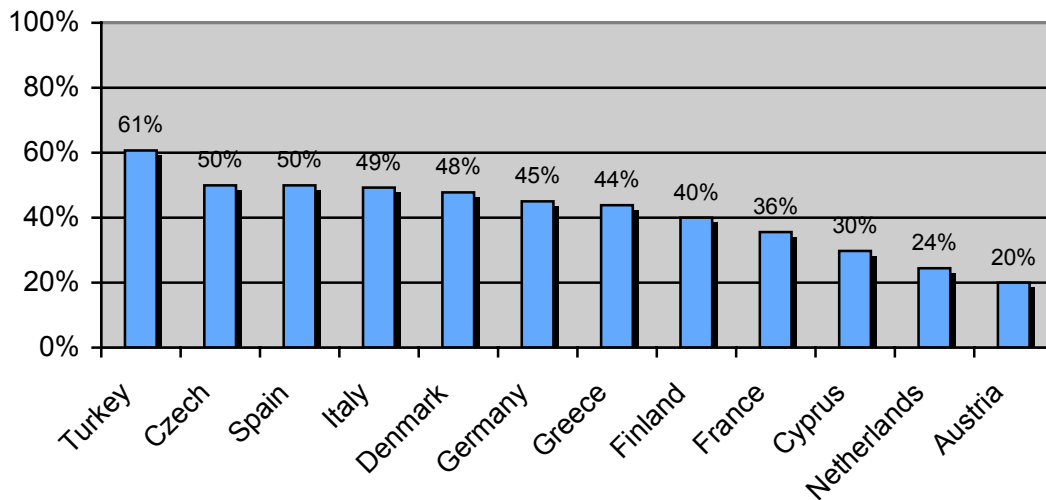
Suffering an injury that keeps one away from work for longer than six weeks is a major event. As the chart below describes, there is a dramatic jump after the age of 18. 36% of players between the ages of 18 and 22 have already suffered such a major injury. 53.9% of players between the ages of 31 and 35 have done so.



Level of severe injury by country

There were also dramatic differences in the rate of reported severe injury by country. In Turkey, 61% of respondents reported missing work for longer than 6 weeks at some point during their career – in Austria only 20%

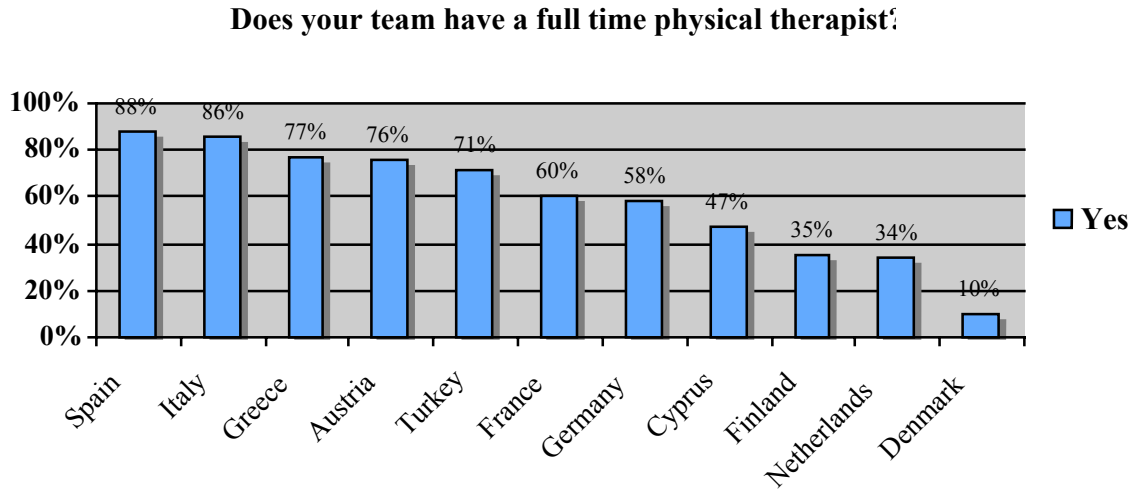
Injured longer than 6 weeks - Country



Presence of a physical therapist

With such a high rate of serious injury it is critical that care be available for players in the workplace. Of the 106 teams with players responding to the survey, players from 46 of them replied that their team did not have this medical support. The results were not always unanimous. Often several players from one team would answer in the affirmative and one or two would answer in the negative – or vice versa. When this occurred the majority determined the result.

The chart below describes the rate of respondents from each country answering affirmatively that their team had a full-time physical therapist. 38% of all respondents said that their team did not have this type of medical support.



Gender as a factor

Significantly, gender was also a major factor as to whether a physical therapist was present. 68% of male respondents reported that their team had full time therapists while only 39% of women reported the same.

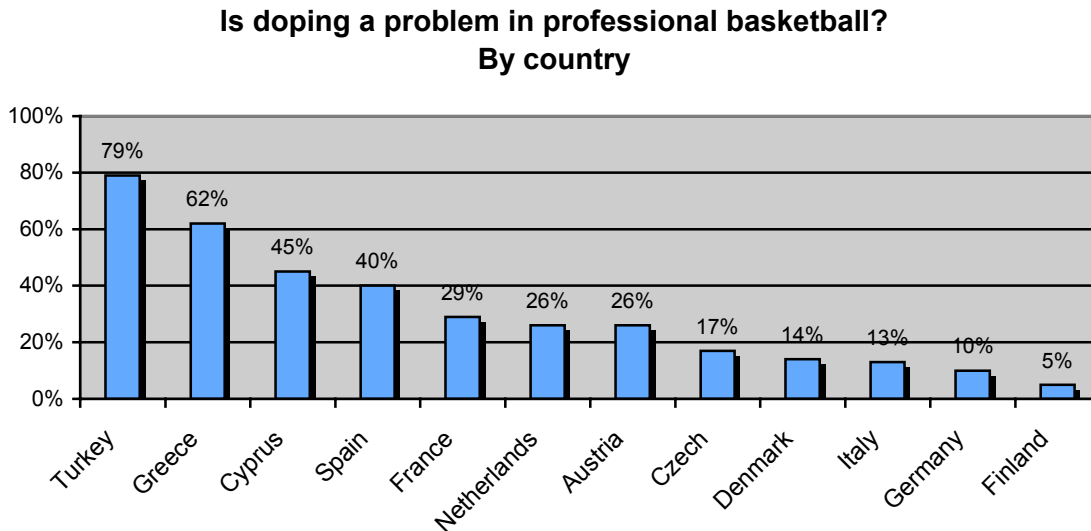
Anti doping

Is doping a problem in basketball?

Players were asked to give their opinion as to whether doping is a problem in professional basketball. Overall, 30% of respondents replied in the affirmative.

Interestingly, this number decreased with age. 45% of players between the ages of 18 and 22 feel doping is a problem and only 25% of players between the ages of 31-35 (13% of over 36).

Significantly, 79% of players in Turkey think that it is a problem while only 10% of players in Germany, where there is a very strict doping control program, think that doping is problem.



Of the 8 positive replies to the question, “Are you aware of someone on your team doping?” three came from players outside of the scope of this survey (that is, outside the E.U.). Of the five positive responses from players playing within the E.U. or the three candidate countries, four came from Cyprus and one came from Italy.

These results may highlight a difference between a perceived and an actual problem.

Upon analysis of the 2008 Annual report from the German anti doping organization reveals the following information:

232 tests were carried out on 180 athletes.

There were 6 positive tests, 1 refusal to be tested and one TUE (therapeutic use exemption).

Four of the positive tests were for “recreational” drugs; two were for cocaine and two were for marijuana. The other two positive tests were for the use of sibutramin (an appetite suppressant used to fight obesity) and a glucocorticoide (i.e. cortisone) that resulted in sanctions of 3 and 2 months respectively.

Further research should be done to examine the actual number of tests made compared to the number of positives across Europe in order to see if the real problem of doping in the sport of basketball matches the problem as perceived by the players. Unfortunately, this information is not readily available on the WADA (World Anti Doping Agency) website.

Number of tests in the last 12 months

The average number of doping controls reported by all respondents in the last 12 months was 1.41. The highest number of tests was reported in Germany with 2.63 tests in the last 12 months. The lowest number was reported in Austria with only .19 tests in the last 12 months. The difference between men and women was significant. Men were tested 1.6 times and women only .78 in the last 12 months.

Whereabouts reporting

476 players answered the question about whether they were required to report their whereabouts using the WADA – ADAMS whereabouts reporting system. This system is an internet based reporting system where players in the registered testing pools of international federations or the national anti doping organization must fill out their whereabouts three months ahead of time in order that anti doping testing officers may find them in order to administer anti doping tests. Athletes must fill in a time slot of one hour a day, 365 days during the year, where they will be for the entire hour.

119 of the 476 respondents (25%) to this question answered that they were required to use the WADA- ADAMS system.

Invasion of privacy?

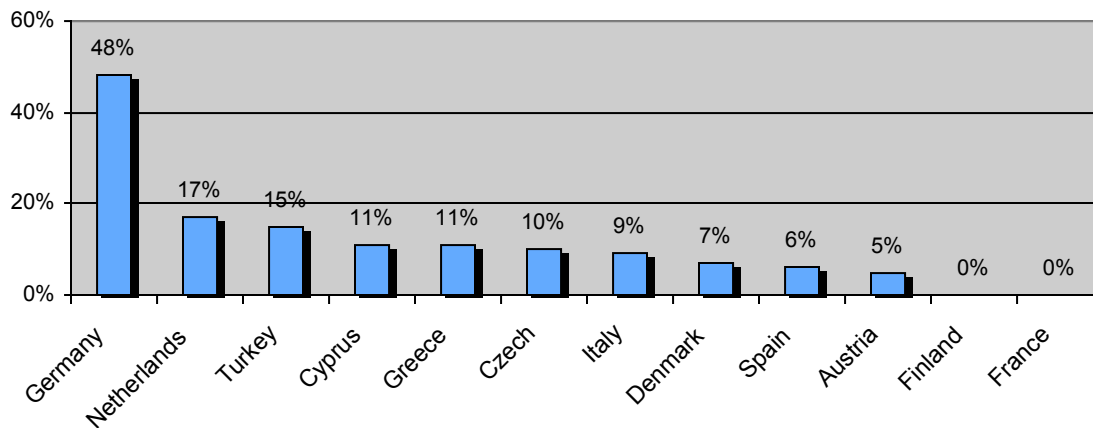
49% of respondents felt that whereabouts reporting was not an invasion of their privacy rights while 51% felt either that they were a violation or were not sure, perhaps because they were not sure of their legal rights regarding privacy.

Of players who were not required to fill out their whereabouts, 48% did not feel that whereabouts reporting was an invasion of privacy rights.

Testing outside of the workplace

Overall, 13% of respondents reported that they had undergone doping testing outside of the workplace. The results revealed, however, that the respondents in Germany had undergone a very large proportion of these tests. 48% of respondents from Germany reported that they had been tested outside of the workplace. When these results from Germany were excluded from the sample, only 7% of respondents overall had undergone this type of test. The chart below describes the percentage of respondents from each country to undergo tests outside of the workplace.

Doping testing outside of the workplace



Data protection

Data protection has developed into a critical issue for players as anti doping controls require that their most personal data is held and transferred by anti doping agencies and international federations. One of the keystones of data protection law is that the free consent of the individual who gives his data be acquired. This study revealed that only 14% of the respondents reported that they were aware of E.U. data protection law calling into question how free consent could be obtained from persons who were not even aware of laws on the subject of data protection.

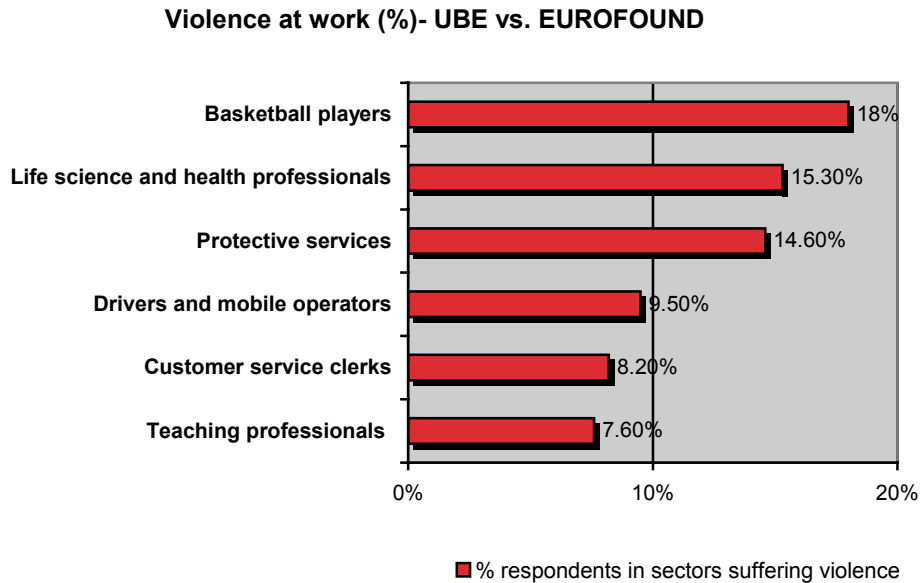
Violence, harassment and discrimination in the workplace

The corresponding section of the EUROFOUND survey results states that bullying, violence or the threat of physical violence, and various forms of discrimination can increase stress and have damaging effects on the individual worker but also on the collective psychosocial work environment and overall organizational performance.

If this is the case, then this study reveals that the practice gym in basketball is one of the unhealthiest psychosocial workplaces in Europe. Rates for stress (health and safety section), violence and discrimination compare with or are the highest level compared to all other sectors as surveyed by EUROFOUND. The impact of this work environment on a young workforce merits further study.

Violence at work – comparison with EUROFOUND

In comparison to other industries, professional basketball players suffer from the highest level of violence in the workplace as described by the chart below comparing results from the EUROFOUND survey. 18% of the responding basketball players reported that they had suffered violence in the course of their work while the next closest were life science and health professionals at 15.3%.



Violence at work – Country

There was a wide range of responses with 46% of the respondents from Cyprus reporting violence at work and none of the respondents from Finland.

The following table describes the overall results.

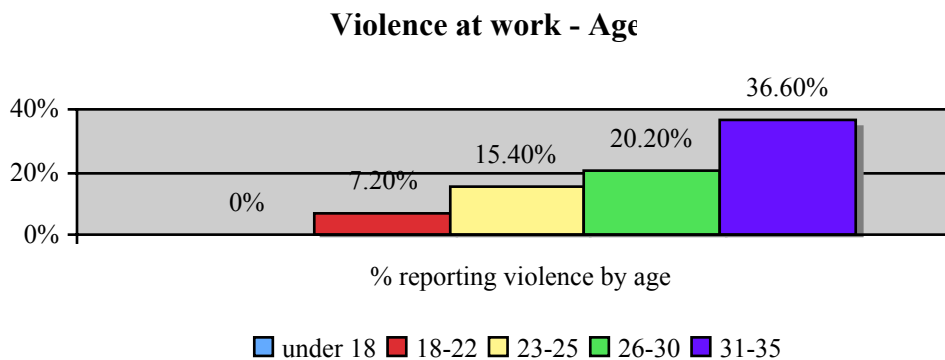
VIOLENCE AT WORK – COUNTRY	
Cyprus	46.5%
Greece	41%
Netherlands	24.4%
Austria	15.0%
Italy	12.1%
Turkey	11.1%
Denmark	9.0%
France	8.1%
Germany	6.9%
Spain	6.25%
Finland	0%

Violence at work - Gender

There was also a clear difference between the levels of violence in men’s and women’s basketball. 20% of men respondents reported violence at work while only 10% of female players.

Violence at work - Age

Significantly, 37% of players between 31-35 have suffered violence in the workplace. This number increases steadily of the career and it is remarkable that 37% of players by the end of their career will have suffered violence.



Additional issues

The survey asked if players had suffered from one of the following in their workplace: threats of physical violence, physical violence, bullying or harassment, sexual discrimination, unwanted sexual attention, age discrimination, or discrimination due to ethnic background. The chart below compares the players' answers to this question with the results to the EUROFOUND survey.

VIOLENCE, HARASSMENT AND DISCRIMINATION IN THE WORKPLACE		
	UBE	EUROFOUND
Threats of physical violence	12.9%	4-6%
Physical violence	5.6%	5%
Bullying or harassment	5.1%	5%
Sexual discrimination	1.0% (2.4%, women)	1%
Unwanted sexual attention	1.8%	2%
Age discrimination	7.7%	3%
Discrimination due to ethnic background	8.6% (18% U.S. players)	1%

29% of respondents reported that they are aware of one of the above occurring in their workplace. This number demonstrates the breadth of the problem and merits further study and attention from policy makers.

Ethnic discrimination

A special note should be made of the fact that 18% of U.S. players playing in Europe report discrimination due to their ethnic background. 20% of players in Cyprus report discrimination due to ethnic background. As the overall level of discrimination due to ethnic background reported by the EUROFOUND study is only 1% there is a clear cause for concern.

Working time

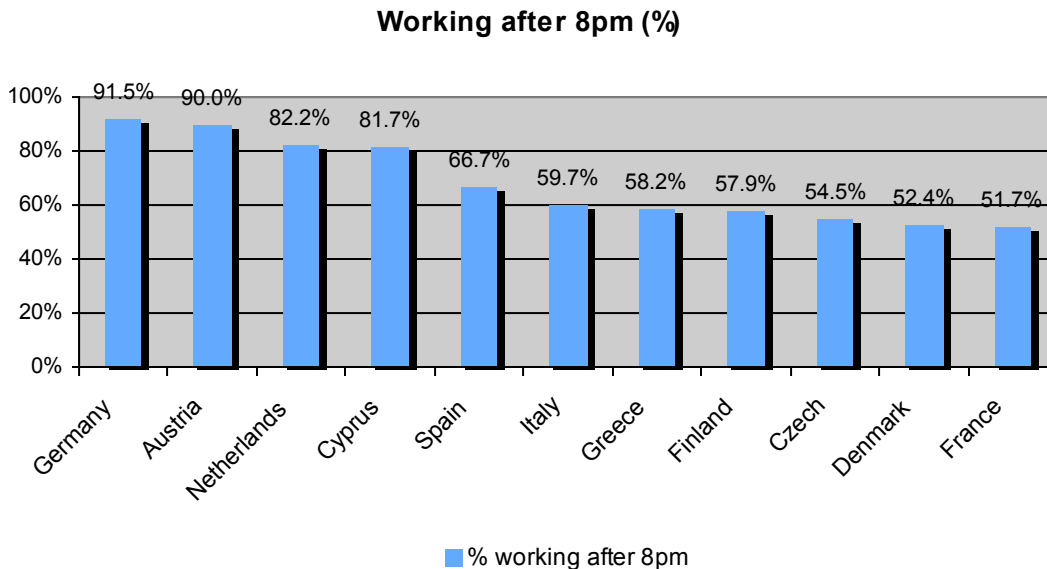
According to the EUROFOUND 4th European Working Conditions survey, working time is one of the key dimensions of working conditions, “it lies at the heart of the employment relationship and has an impact well beyond work”. The organization of time at work has a huge impact on the organization of time outside of work.

Therefore, the impact of working time on a young working population like professional basketball players will be felt in all aspects of life including educational opportunities, family life, and quality of work. It is a critical issue.

The results of the survey show that professional basketball players have the highest rates of evening and weekend work in Europe (only hotel and restaurant workers work more in the evening by a small margin). Also, frequent and common changes in schedule affect a player’s ability to plan his or her time outside of work.

Work after 8:00pm

Working after 8:00pm in the evening is common for professional basketball players. 66% of the respondents reported that they worked after 8:00pm. 91.5% of the players in Germany work after 8:00pm and 67% of the respondents under the age or 18. It is understood that games might be held on weekend evenings to accommodate working fans; it is unclear why practices would be held during the week after 8:00pm. Further study on the employers’ side is called for on this topic.



Work on Sunday

The vast majority of respondents also work on Sundays (89%), with 82% of the respondents under the age of 18 working on Sunday as well (a small sample of 13 from the six countries of Cyprus, Finland, Austria, Czech, Netherlands, Greece).

WORKING TIME		
Comparison- WORK after 8pm and WORK on Sunday		
	Work after 8pm	Work on Sunday
Germany	91.5%	96.6%
Austria	90%	90%
Netherlands	82.2%	88.9%
Cyprus	81.7%	88.4%
Spain	66.7%	100%
Italy	59.7%	93.1%
Greece	58.2%	97.3%
Finland	57.9%	63.2%
Czech	54.5%	90.9%
Denmark	52.4%	52.4%
France	51.7%	96.6%

Comparison with the EUROFOUND working conditions survey

When compared to the other sectors surveyed in the EUROFOUND working conditions survey, basketball players have the second highest rate of evening work and the highest rate of work on Sunday.

WORKING TIME		
Comparison- UBE and EUROFOUND		
<i>Sector</i>	Work after 8pm	Work on Sunday
Basketball players	66%	89%
Hotels and restaurants	72%	66%
Agricultural workers	57%	54%
Health	54%	57%
Transport and Communication	54%	36%
Real estate	48%	23%

Time off

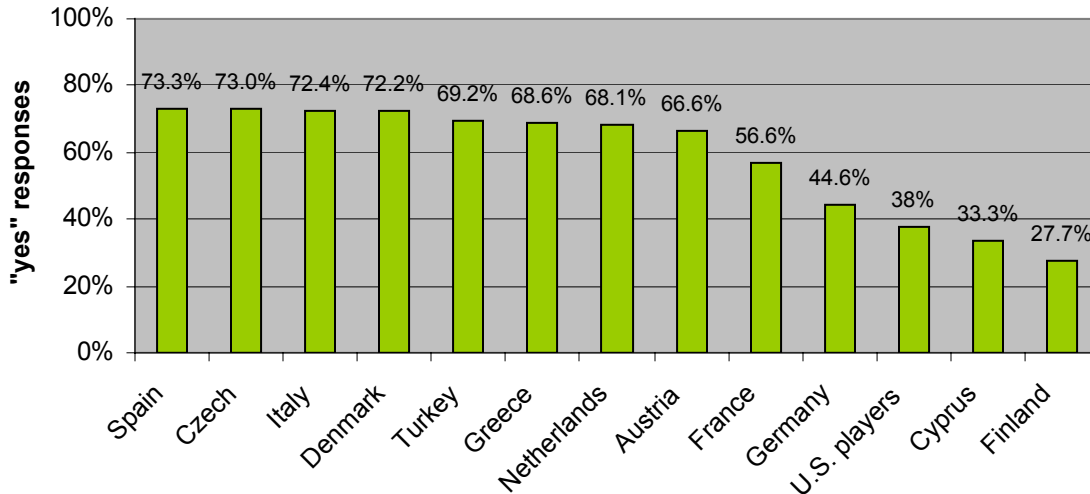
Only 20% of players responding reported getting paid vacation.

63% of the respondents overall have time off over Christmas, while 98% of the players in France have time off over Christmas.

Length of the season

Most respondents reported being satisfied with the length of the playing season. Only the countries Germany, Cyprus and Finland appeared to be trouble spots with less than half of the players satisfied with the situation (44.6%, 33.3% and 27.7% being satisfied, respectively). Only 38% of U.S. players were satisfied with the length of the season.

Are you satisfied with the length of the season?

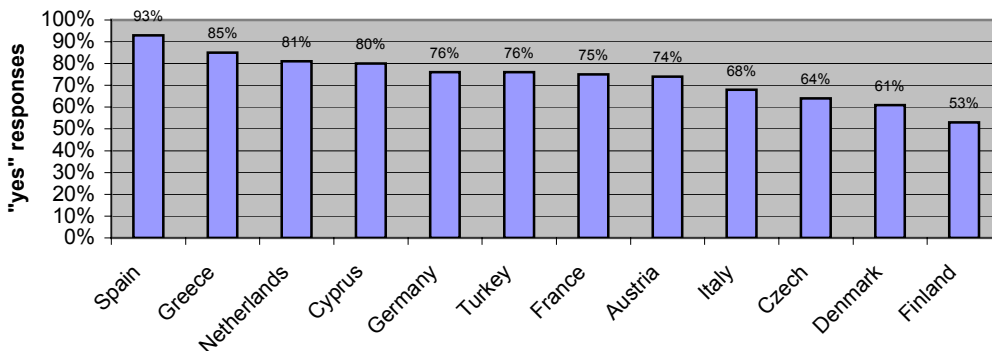


Working schedule changes

40% of workers, overall, in the EUROFOUND study reported that they had irregular starting and finishing times. In this study, 75% of players reported that changes in the work schedule occur regularly.

Changes in practice schedules are practically a way of life for many players. Coaches and managers often change practice based on results and form of the team on any current day.

Do changes in your work schedule occur regularly?



Workplace Discipline

Although most players are subject to their team or league's disciplinary rules, a large number of them are not aware of them or have not received copies of them. 30% of respondents reported that they were not aware of their leagues disciplinary rules. 60% of players reported that they receive copies of their league's disciplinary rules.

Troublesome is that 51% of players overall reported that they are not informed about FIBA disciplinary rules. 62% of women and 82% of the players responding from Finland reported that they were not informed.

Overall, 38% of players reported that their team fines them if they get a technical foul. The highest level of 68% of respondents was in Germany, the lowest, in France where the level was 15%.

U.S. players are fined more often than Europeans – 50% for the U.S. players and 35% for E.U. players.

There was a very large discrepancy in the amount of the fine between men and women. On average, men were fined 40,50 Euros and women only 5,19 Euros.

Germany and Italy have the highest fine rates for technical fouls with 41,40 Euros and 42 Euros respectively.

Often, the players and the teams came to an agreement as to the level of the fine. 50% of players responding, overall, reported that the team made an agreement with them regarding the level of the fine. In Turkey only 22% of the players reported making an agreement.

For the first time, this study opens the door a crack on the conditions of professional basketball players. As can be seen in this report, there are many areas of concern that, at a minimum, deserve further study.

The surprisingly low income averages demonstrate that young sports people may often be compensated more with status or small fame, which matters little if one suffers a serious injury without adequate support or violence in the workplace or is denied the opportunity to earn a living wage or the opportunity to pursue an education or career training. Europe can do better for these young people.

For the authors, these results demonstrate that there is a need for a more intensive and comprehensive application of labor standards in professional sport. Further, sports people need strong and independent unions to advocate on their behalf for better conditions and to assert their rights as workers.