

Social Integration of People with Migration Background in European Sports Clubs

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Declarations of interest

None

Funding

This work was supported by the Erasmus+ Sport programme of the European Union [grant number 2014-3140/004]

Acknowledgements

The authors wish to acknowledge the valuable contribution to this article from research partners in the project ‘Social Inclusion and Volunteering in Sports Clubs in Europe’ (SIVSCE): Bjarne Ibsen, University of Southern Denmark; Jeroen Scheerder & Elien Claes, KU Leuven, Belgium; Geoff Nichols, University of Sheffield, England; Matthew James, University of Wales Trinity Saint David; Christoph Breuer & Svenja Feiler, German Sport University Cologne; Dirk Steinbach, Leadership Academy, Germany; Szilvia Perényi, University of Physical Education in Budapest/University of Debrecen, Hungary; Jan-Willem van der Roest & Harold van der Werff, Mulier Institute, the Netherlands; Ørnulf Seippel, Norwegian School of Sport Sciences, Oslo; Monika Piątkowska & Sylwia Gocłowska, Josef Pilsudski University of Physical Education in Warsaw, Poland; Ramon Llopis-Goig, University of Valencia, Spain.

Abstract

Policy makers often ascribe sports clubs an important societal role as they can encourage integration of people with migration background. Questions then arise as to the extent that members with migration background are integrated in sports clubs and what the factors are that play a role in this integration. The data for this research is drawn from a comparative study of ten European countries. The analyses take a multidimensional approach to social integration and differentiate between the dimensions of understanding/acceptance, interaction, and identification. The results show that members with migration background are relatively well integrated, but less so than other club members. There is a positive association between social integration and the affiliation as volunteer, participation in competitions, long-term membership and sports activities in teams.

Introduction

European societies face important challenges when it comes to social integration of people with migration background, particularly in times of refugee crisis (e.g. Morsut & Kruke, 2018). Voluntary sports clubs (VSCs) are often promoted as an important medium to meet these challenges as they can provide valuable social settings for integrating these specific population groups within an organisation as well as into broader society (Author, 2016). Membership in a VSC is the initial indication of being embedded in a club context, and therefore represents a necessary condition for further integrative processes. However, formal membership tells relatively little about how well a member is socially integrated into a club. Integration only becomes apparent through the type and depth of involvement of a member within the various and different communication patterns and action contexts of VSCs, for example, the extent a member is accepted, has intercultural friendships, or participates in club activities (Seiberth & Thiel, 2010). Thus, integration is not automatic and is strongly reliant on specific conditions of affiliation in the club.

Existing studies indicate an ambivalent picture of the social integration achieved by VSCs. On the one hand, several studies have revealed that VSCs enable the reduction of social differences and a sense of being foreign, as well as create social networks and friendships (e.g. Dagkas & Armour, 2012; Janssens & Verweel, 2014; Seippel, 2005; Theeboom, Schailée, & Nols, 2012). Additionally, members may participate in decision-making procedures, be involved in joint competitions and social club events, take on voluntary tasks, and make use of offers for qualification (e.g. Braun & Finke, 2010; Breuer & Feiler, 2015). Joint activities can strengthen the sense of belonging and the unity between members (e.g. Maxwell et al., 2014; Mutz, 2012). On the other hand, expectations concerning the potential social integration achieved by VSCs have been questioned, with indications of social closure practices such as discrimination, prejudices, and conflicts (e.g. Burdsey, 2011;

Elling & Claringbould, 2005; Krouwel et al., 2006; Zacheus, 2010). For example, the under-representation of immigrants in high-responsibility roles and positions in VSCs indicates that these positions are difficult to access (Elling & Claringbould, 2005). Several authors have reported that VSCs can be a place where ethnic boundaries and segregation practices may occur, particularly when members with 'inappropriate' behaviour and habits participate (e.g. Elling & Claringbould, 2005; Seiberth & Thiel, 2010; Spaaij, 2013; Zifonun, 2008).

Existing findings on social integration in VSCs appear to contain two research gaps: (1) The studies of social integration in VSCs are mostly based on undifferentiated concepts of social integration. A multidimensional measurement concept that corresponds with the complexity of social integration appears to be necessary (Author, 2018). (2) The fact that social integration processes in VSCs can be determined by certain factors such as socio-demographic or membership-related features should be taken into account. Some studies have confirmed such influences, but not in a comprehensive manner. In particular, the role of the specific affiliation with the club (e.g. volunteering, playing sport in a team) for social integration is rarely analysed, particularly for club members with a migration background.

To bridge these existing research gaps, this study addresses the following research questions: *(1) To what extent are members with migration background integrated in VSCs?* This will firstly require a definition of the meaning of social integration in a VSC, and subsequently, to compare the degree of social integration of members with migration background with other members, the development of an appropriate multidimensional concept. The research can then address a second question: *(2) Which individual factors (e.g. immigrant generation status, socio-economic background, affiliation and participation in the club) play a role for the different dimensions of social integration of members with migration background?*

Conceptual background

The concept of social integration and its dimensions

Current concepts of (social) integration of people with migration background usually differentiate between factors and mechanisms on a societal and an individual level and analyse the relationship of both (e.g. Nauck & Settles, 2001; Esser, 2004, 2006; Penn & Lambert, 2009). Our study focuses on the individual perspective and, following Esser (2004), conceptualises integration as the involvement and social ability to act in different contexts of a (receiving) society without having to completely surrender ethnic and cultural references. This follows a general understanding of multiculturalism (Penn & Lambert, 2009) or bicultural integration (Esser, 2006) that can be characterised as a process of reciprocal exchange and convergence, in contrast to purely assimilative or pluralist concepts. Esser (2006, 2009) differentiates the complexity of the phenomenon into four dimensions of social integration in society (for VSCs see also Author, 2018): (1) *Culturation* means the acquisition of knowledge and cultural techniques that are required for meaningful actions within the society. (2) *Placement* contains access to and acceptance of positions and rights within a social setting. (3) *Interaction* characterises the affiliation in functioning social networks, participation in public life, and the development of social acceptance. (4) *Identification* points to the subjectively perceived sense of belonging and emotional attachment to the receiving society.

Our study does not focus on the process of integration in society but on the specific setting of VSCs. Therefore, we follow the concept of integration in the context of sports (clubs) elaborated by Elling, De Knop, and Knoppers (2001), which has many similarities to the concept of Esser (2009). Elling, De Knop, and Knoppers (2001) in distinguishing three dimensions: structural, socio-cultural, and socio-affective integration. These three analytical dimensions can be used to comprehend the following aspects of social integration.

Structural integration means the formal membership and in an aggregated perspective, the unequal representation of certain population groups in VSCs. We will not focus on this issue in this article.

Socio-cultural integration means, “the existence and continuous confirmation and challenging of dominant and marginal norms and values” (Elling, De Knop, & Knoppers, 2001, 418). Here we are interested in both the competence of members to know and manage dominant values and norms in VSCs (‘understanding’) and the accepting of multiculturalism in clubs and among the club affiliates (‘acceptance’). This conceptualisation is inspired by the work of Esser (2009), who differentiates between ‘assimilation’ and ‘pluralism’.

Socio-affective integration characterises, “sport as an instrumental practice for meeting others” (Elling, De Knop, & Knoppers, 2001, 418). Following Esser (2009), we distinguish socio-affective integration on two sub-dimensions. The first is ‘interaction’, understood as the social interaction and creation of social networks among members in VSCs. The second dimension, ‘identification’, means the degree to which members identify with and feel emotionally connected to their VSC and the other club members.

Factors relevant for social integration of members with migration background

According to the theoretical concept of Esser (2009), the development of social integration of members with migration background in VSCs depends on how individuals with specific characteristics, resources, and competencies use their opportunities for actions. Here, it seems reasonable to particularly distinguish between *human capital* and *club-related social (consumption) capital*.

Human capital is an important resource for integration processes (Esser, 2009). It can be assumed that the human capital is distributed differently within various groups of migrants (May & Alisch, 2013). In particular, those migrants with their own migration experience more

often have a proportionally lower level of education (Tucci, 2013). In contrast to the labour market (Granato & Kalter, 2001), human capital is presumably less relevant for social integration in VSCs. Research conducted among members in VSCs indicates that once affiliated with a VSC, educational level (human capital) has no or only a limited influence on democratic and social participation (e.g. Author, 2013), due to comparatively low-threshold opportunities for participation. There are even studies that support the assumption that well-educated members of VSCs engage less in the social life (Seippel, 2005; Author, 2014; Author, 2013). Based on these studies of members in VSCs, we hypothesise that for the specific group of members with migration background we will not find effects of human capital on social integration in VSCs.

Club-related social (consumption) capital: Social integration in a VSC takes time and depends on personal affiliation and social networks that are probably promoted by long-term participation both in sports and the organisation of sports (e.g. by volunteering). In this context, the concept of consumption capital provides valuable insight. Consumption capital represents the accumulated knowledge and importance of goods, depending on the consumption intensity of the specific good (Stigler & Becker, 1977). The greater the club-related consumption capital, the greater the benefits resulting from club membership. It can be assumed that the consumption capital of club members is differently distributed among members and is closely connected to the duration and intensity of the club membership in particular. Previous research supports this assumption regarding length and type of affiliation as well as participation frequency and form (Elling & Claringbould, 2005; Author, 2013, 2015; Author, 2014; Author, 2013). In these studies, positive relations have been identified between different aspects of social integration (e.g. community structures, social participation, and member commitment) and various determinants related to the affiliation and participation of club members (e.g. duration of membership, being a volunteer, frequency of participation

in the sports activities, competition participation, and size of the team or group in which club affiliates do sports). Therefore, we hypothesise that social integration is positively correlated with intensity and length of club membership. In this context, it can be assumed that engagement as a volunteer is positively correlated with social integration. Furthermore, we assume that social integration is positively associated with the frequency of participation in the sports activities, competition participation, and the team/group size, because competitions in particular offer intensive opportunities for the promotion of social networks and identification with the club.

Furthermore, the question arises as to the role migration background plays with regard to club-related consumption capital. On the one hand, sports are often claimed to be positive arenas for the integration of minorities because both the practical and cultural threshold to participate is low. On the other hand, exclusionary norms and values could potentially make it difficult for members with migration background to integrate completely into their VSC (e.g. Author, 2018; Strandbu, Bakken, & Sletten, 2017). In this context, existing research shows differences between people with migration background of the first and second generations. People who were not born in the country where they live show generally more cultural distance and greater differences in general norms and values (Esser 2004; Koopmans 2016). Similar differences can be observed for sports participation and leisure time activities (e.g. Gerber, Barker, & Pühse, 2012; Mutz & Hans, 2015; Spaaij, 2013). Thus, we assume that members with migration background, particularly of the first generation, are less integrated in VSCs than the majority group. In this context, an additional question arises as to what extent migration-specific differences with regard to social integration in VSCs persist when other personal characteristics are controlled.

It should be noted that the expectations of the role of club-related consumption capital are based on studies that examined social integration among sports club members without a

specific focus on the migrant population. This has at least two implications. Firstly, although we might expect the impact of club-related consumption capital on the social integration of members with migration background to be relatively similar to the general impact on sports club members, we cannot be certain of this. Secondly, this uncertainty justifies the focus of this article on the role of club-related consumption capital specifically for members with migration background. Should the reader be interested in the role of club-related consumption capital for the social integration of sports club members more broadly, we refer to the analysis conducted in Author (2019).

For the socio-demographic determinants gender and age, similar assumptions seem plausible. Women in general and those with migration background even more, are under-represented in VSCs (e.g. European Commission, 2018) as well as in coaching and board positions in the club (e.g. Claringbould & Knoppers, 2013). Children and adolescents are the most represented age group in VSCs and play sports quite regularly in this setting. Furthermore, VSCs are important arenas for the creation and fostering of social contacts and friendships for young people. Based on these considerations, we assume that gender and age of members with migration background play a role in social integration in the club.

Method

The empirical analyses build on data from the project Social Inclusion and Volunteering in Sports Clubs in Europe, which was co-funded by the ERASMUS+ Sport programme of the European Union. Ten countries—Belgium (Flanders), Denmark, England, Germany, Hungary, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Spain, and Switzerland—participated in the project. These countries were selected to be a broad representation of various geographical regions, different sport policy systems, and varied levels of sport club participation in Europe. In each country, comparative data were collected on three different analytical levels: macro,

meso, and micro. Given the topic of this contribution, the data collected among members and volunteers (n = 13,082) were mainly applied to statistical analyses.

Sample of the member survey

At the micro level, an online survey was conducted in spring 2016 among adult (16+ years) members and volunteers in 642 European VSCs. The survey used national translations of an English questionnaire developed and cross-checked by the research group. It included questions about the affiliation with, participation in, and commitment to VSCs, as well as the main socio-demographic and socio-economic characteristics of the members and volunteers.

The 642 VSCs selected for data collection on the member level were taken from a sample of 35,790 clubs that replied to a sports club survey (in all ten countries) in autumn 2015. The VSCs for the member surveys were selected to represent a broad variation of VSC within each of the ten participating countries. Structural characteristics (club size, single-sport vs. multi-sport clubs, and sports practised in the club) and the context of the VSCs (degree of urbanisation in the area in which the club is located) were central selection criteria. However, the club sample is not representative of VSCs in the country or in Europe.

In each of the ten countries, a minimum of thirty VSCs, each with a total of at least 2,000 members and volunteers, were contacted for participant recruitment. As Table 1 shows, a total of 13,082 members and volunteers replied to the survey. The large differences in country subsamples are the result of different numbers of clubs selected in each country and differences in the size of the selected clubs (membership numbers). 1,023 members of the sample had a migration background. Apart from Poland, every country subsample contains at least thirty members with migration background. The subsamples of members with migration background for each of the 642 clubs were quite small (in most clubs fewer than five members). Thus, the requirement for a multi-level analysis with club as second level was not

fulfilled. As a consequence, we calculated multi-level models with country as second-level factor to control for country differences.

To recruit the members for the online survey, written invitations were sent directly to members and volunteers or through club representatives. As sports club representatives were usually responsible for distributing the main part of the survey invitations to members and volunteers, it was not possible to calculate response rates for the member and volunteer survey. It is, however, likely that the most socially integrated members and volunteers were more inclined to complete the survey than the less involved and engaged.

Table 1 here

Data analysis

The questionnaire contained fourteen items designed to measure the different dimensions of social integration. Following Author (2019), these items were reduced to three dimensions of social integration, and these dimensions matched the theoretical division into socio-cultural and socio-affective (interaction and identification) integration outlined above (see Table 2).

The statistical analyses were conducted using IBM SPSS Statistics 24. The factor analysis applied the principal components method of extraction (Field, 2013). Because the hypothesised dimensions of social integration are unlikely to be completely uncorrelated, oblique rotation (direct oblimin) was applied. Having conducted the factor analysis, reliability checks were conducted on the identified dimensions using the Cronbach's alpha test before constructing the indexes for each of the identified dimensions (for details see Author, 2019).

The hierarchical structure of the data set was taken into account by conducting multi-level regression analyses including two levels: country and members (with migration

background). No country-level variables were included in the regression model. However, the results revealed that intercept variances at the country level were non-significant in the statistical multi-level models for all three dependent variables. The country-level intra-class correlations (ICCs) were relatively low (between 0.01 and 0.05), indicating that a limited part of the variation in the dependent variables can be explained by differences at the country level. The number of units at the country level was smaller than generally recommended (Maas & Hox 2005), but recent simulation studies (Stegmueller, 2013) show that if the models are relatively simple (in our case, random intercept models only), the standard errors (and the estimation of confidence intervals) are within acceptable limits.

Dependent and independent variables

Of the fourteen items designed to measure social integration (see Table 2), three were measures of socio-cultural integration (connected to the aspect of *understanding/acceptance* Dim. 1), and two of these focused on the ability of members and volunteers to know and master dominant values and norms in VSCs (connected to the aspect of understanding), while one was concerned with their feeling of acceptance and mutual respect from other club affiliates (connected to the aspect of acceptance). The concept of acceptance was reduced to one item by asking members and volunteers if they felt respected for who they are by other people from the club. This is also a simplification, but it provides an indication as to whether there is a climate of acceptance in VSCs.

The remaining eleven items measured socio-affective integration. Six items focused on the social participation and formation of networks (connected to the aspect of *interaction*; Dim. 2), while the remaining five items described the degree to which members and volunteers are committed to their VSC and affiliates (connected to the aspect of *identification*; Dim. 3). Items designed to measure social participation patterns and the concrete formation of

social networks were labelled ‘interaction’, while attitudinal statements towards the club and other members were labelled ‘identification’.

Table 2 here

The dimensions identified in the exploratory factor analysis follow the theoretical expectations, except for socio-cultural integration, where all three indicators make up one dimension that does not differentiate items according to the theoretical distinctions between understanding and acceptance. Hence there is a strong correlation between understanding how a club functions and the feeling of being accepted by other people from the club. This is a plausible correlation, as in reality, diverse dimensions of integration rarely follow a linear sequence over time (as described in established theoretical approaches, e.g. Esser, 1980), rather they reciprocally influence each other (Esser, 2009; Heckmann, 2015). Together, the three dimensions explain around 60% of the total common variation in the dependent variables. The reliability tests revealed acceptable values for all three dimensions, ranging from 0.750 to 0.832. After establishing the three dimensions, indexes were constructed in two steps. First, the original variables were recoded to a common scale (ranging from 0 to 100), and then the mean value across the items included in each scale was calculated.

For human capital and socio-demographic background, we included gender, age, and educational level alongside indicators of migration background (Table 3). For operationalising club-related consumption capital, indicators for the different forms of affiliation with the club (as regular or occasional volunteer) and duration of participation (number of years connected to the club) were included. Furthermore, variables informing the frequency of sports participation, participation in competitive sport, and the size of the team or group within club sports practised most frequently were integrated in the analysis.

Table 3 here

Results

Bivariate analysis

Members with migration background are relatively well integrated in VSCs with regard to interaction and identification as well as understanding/acceptance. The indexes for the different dimensions show mean values between 58 (SD=24) for the dimension 'interaction' and 72 (SD=22) for the dimension 'understanding/acceptance' for members of the first generation of migrants. For second generation migrants, the mean index values are generally higher and vary between 66 (SD=24) for the dimension 'interaction' and 76 (SD=21) for the dimension 'understanding/acceptance'. For non-migrants, the mean values vary between 65 (SD=24) for the dimension 'interaction' and 78 (SD=21) for the dimension 'understanding/acceptance' (Table 4). Thus, the social integration of those members who were not born in the respective country seem to be somewhat lower in comparison with club members without migration background or second-generation migrants. ANOVA tests showed that first-generation migrants score significantly lower than people without a migration background and second-generation migrants on social integration with regard to all three dimensions of social integration, i.e. interaction, identification, and understanding/acceptance. In general, there are no significant differences between people without migration background and second-generation migrants.

Table 4 here

Multiple regression analyses

In a second step, the group comparisons were expanded by multi-level regression analyses for the subsample of members with migration background, to test which individual factors were relevant for the three different dimensions of social integration. For each dimension of social integration (dependent variables), a model using migration background, socio-demographic variables and educational level, and a full model containing all independent variables, including club-related affiliation and participation was conducted (Table 5 contains an empty model). As there are barely any differences across the three forms of social integration among the ten countries in the analysis (see the low ICC), the following description of the results focuses on the individual factors.

Table 5 here

The full model (model 2) shows that the factors measuring the affiliation and participation of members with migration background within the club are far more relevant than the socio-economic background variables. The r^2 -values for the full model are much higher than those for model 1. In particular, for the sub-dimension interaction the r^2 -value is relatively high (.429).

The findings for the independent variable migration status—comparing members with migration background of first and second generation—are mainly in line with the results of the ANOVA test. However, the effects are only statistically significant for interaction and understanding/acceptance, no significant effects were determined for identification. Yet, the effect of migration generation occurs only in model 1 and disappears when integrating affiliation and participation factors into the statistical model (model 2). The effect of migration status remains statistically significant for understanding/acceptance only.

There are similar results for the independent variable gender. Model 1 reveals for all three dimensions that male members with migration background are more socially integrated than are female members. However, the gender effect disappears when affiliation and participation variables are integrated in the models.

The results for the different age groups show that age only plays a role in the context of understanding/acceptance. Members (with migration background) who are 60 years of age or older display significantly higher values of social integration regarding understanding/acceptance. This effect can also be observed in model 2.

Finally, there are only minor effects for the variable educational level. Members with higher education have smaller values for the dimensions understanding/acceptance and identification, whereas there are no differences for interaction.

With regard to affiliation and participation in the club, the results show that for the sub-dimension interaction all determinants in model 2 are relevant. For the sub-dimension integration nearly all factors except for the period of membership (years connected to the club) play a significant role. In contrast, for understanding/acceptance, only volunteering and participation in competitive sport show significant effects.

Both regular volunteering and occasional volunteering are positively associated with the three dimensions of social integration. For the dimension interaction, the effects are quite similar for the different forms of volunteering, whereas for identification and for understanding/acceptance, regular volunteering seems considerably more relevant than occasional volunteering.

We also learn from Table 5 that the duration of membership in the club and the frequency of sports participation reveal relatively small effects for the sub-dimension interaction. The frequency of sport activities in the club shows a significant effect for the

interaction and identification dimensions with the greatest coefficient regarding the interaction dimension.

Participation in competitive sport is significantly correlated with all three dimensions of social integration in sport clubs. Here the effects are greater for interaction than for identification, and the values are the lowest for understanding/acceptance.

Finally, the findings show that interaction as well as identification are positively related with the size of the sports team or group. The effects are quite similar for both sub-dimensions, while team or group size does not play a role for understanding/acceptance. It has to be pointed out that the coefficients are quite similar for the two subgroups with 3-10 and more than 10 other club members. The results also show that non-sports active members display higher values of social integration than those practising sports, whether in a team/group or not.

Discussion and conclusion

This article analyses the degree of social integration of members with a migration background in VSCs and identifies the relevant socio-economic and club-related factors. We followed a bicultural understanding of integration (Esser, 2006) and used a multidimensional concept for measuring social integration within the club context (Elling, De Knop, & Knoppers 2001). The operationalisation of socio-cultural and socio-affective integration within the quantitative member survey resulted in three sub-dimensions: interaction, identification and understanding/acceptance.

The results show that members with a migration background are less socially integrated compared to club members without migration background. However, the values of social integration are only lower for members who were not born in the host society (first generation migrants), whereas the social integration of second-generation migrants is

quite similar to members without migration background. These results are in line with existing studies (e.g. Theeboom, Schaillée, & Nols, 2012; Walseth, 2008) and also confirm inter-generational effects of integrative processes in club-organised sport. These intergenerational differences cannot merely be explained by changes in the lives of individuals. It is clear that second generation club-members have more positive club-related and human capital and show less cultural distance to people without migration background compared to first generation members, probably because they are born in the host society and socialized in the education system and sport leisure activities over a longer time (Heckmann, 2015). However, the differences are relatively small, and absolute scores of social integration are notably high for all member groups.

In sum, the results reveal that VSCs have a high potential for integrating people with migration background, as other studies have already showed. VSCs offer opportunities for creating social networks and friendships (e.g. Dagkas & Armour, 2012; Janssens & Verweel, 2014; Theeboom, Schaillée, & Nols, 2012), sport activities in teams and groups can strengthen identification (e.g. Maxwell et al., 2014; Mutz, 2012), and members with migration background feel accepted in the club and can participate not only in social club events but also in decision-making processes (e.g. Braun & Finke 2010; Breuer & Feiler, 2015).

In line with our assumptions, the affiliation and participation patterns of members and volunteers were found to be crucial for social integration. Members with migration background who engage as regular or occasional volunteers or participate in competitive sport were found to be more integrated across all three dimensions of social integration: interaction, identification and understanding/acceptance. Furthermore, the duration of membership, the frequency of sport participation in the club, and the team/group size were also found to be positively associated with social integration, but only with respect to integration and identification. Long-standing members can use their membership through accumulated

consumption capital (club-related knowledge) in an integrative manner, as they are more intensively involved in social networks of the club and feel socially and emotionally connected. Competitive sport is associated with regular attendance of training, a variety of contact opportunities, and returns of social recognition through sporting success, which promotes integrative processes. Furthermore, teams and sport groups with more members offer the opportunity to gain more regular social contact. The somewhat surprising result that not being sport active corresponds with higher levels of social integration is likely to be explained by the assumption that this group contains a large proportion of volunteers who have a strong commitment to the club, yet may no longer be sport active in the club. Overall, our findings that are specifically for migrants are largely in line with previous more general research on the social integration of VSCs members (e.g. Elling & Claringbould, 2005; Author, 2019; Author, 2015; Author, 2014; Author, 2013).

When the different aspects of affiliation and participation (club-related consumption capital) are integrated in the regression models, the effects of socio-demographic and socio-economic variables, especially regarding migration background and educational level, diminish or even disappear. As there is a clear reduction of the effects of migration status when controlling club-related consumption capital variables, specific forms of affiliation and participation in the club have the most relevance to differences in social integration between members with migration background of first and second generation. Thus, in accordance with our assumption, the relevance of human capital for social integration in VSCs is relatively small. The results indicate significant effects only for well-educated members with migration background who are less socially integrated according to the dimensions identification and understanding/acceptance. This finding might appear somewhat surprising given that people with higher education typically have more resources. However, the result is in line with Author (2013), and although it is difficult to provide a clear explanation, it is likely that

highly educated members are active in more social arenas and therefore are less likely to devote time and energy to integration in their sports club. The gender effects—for all three dimensions of social integration—disappear when the specific determinants of affiliation and participation in VSC are integrated in the regression model. Thus, the gender differences are probably the result of differences in club-related consumption capital of male and female members with migration background. Finally, the age effect for members who are 60 years of age or older—relevant only for the dimension understanding/acceptance—is stable in both regression models. In general, the socio-economic background variables exert a stronger influence on socio-cultural than on socio-affective integration. Instead, socio-affective integration is more strongly associated with different forms of affiliation and participation, for example being a volunteer and participating regularly in the sports activities and competitions.

Limitations and further research

The data applied in this research were collected in ten European countries, and as we find only limited variation at the country level, our findings can cautiously be generalised to VSCs in various other European countries. The multiple regression analysis reveals non-significant effects at the country level, which means the relevance of different sport policies at the national level to social integration of members with migration background in a VSC can be questioned. Instead this effect is mainly dependant on the specific forms of affiliation and participation of the members in the club (in a sports team/group or as volunteer). However, specific policies might be relevant to structural integration of people with migration background, as there are clear differences between the ten countries with regard to relative numbers of members with migration background (Author, 2017). This assumption could be tested in future research that focuses in more detail on different policies for promoting social

integration in VSCs in various European countries. Additionally, the design of future studies should also consider structural factors and specific measures at the club level (e.g. club goals, special integrative initiatives for migrants as a target group) as well as group characteristics (e.g. diversity of group composition, group atmosphere) that might be relevant social conditions for social integration of members with migration background. In addition, it would be interesting to differentiate the sample of members with migration background by their countries of origin, which was not possible in this study.

For socio-affective integration we could differentiate—given the conceptual framework—interaction and identification with acceptable reliability. However, we could not distinguish between understanding and acceptance as sub-dimensions of socio-cultural integration, most likely because the number of the items was too low. Furthermore, the theoretical classifications of items according to the dimensions of social integration and the consistency with empirical classifications may be debatable. In our analysis, we argue that the factor analysis confirms our theoretical classification of the items, except for the merge of the dimensions understanding and acceptance. However, we realise that other researchers may potentially classify the items differently. As a result, the measurement of social integration in VSCs could be further refined in future studies by considering more items and by further validating the items used to examine the different dimensions of social integration (see also Author, 2019).

It was not possible to calculate response rates—and probably the members who are more socially integrated were more willing to complete the survey than the less involved—it is therefore likely that the level of social integration of members without and with migration background is overestimated in our study. However, the aim of this study was, firstly, to compare migrant members to members without a migration background, and, secondly, to analyse the role of specific affiliation and participation of members with migration

background and their socio-economic background for the social integration in VSCs rather than to generalise absolute levels of social integration. Therefore, the potential selection bias seems to be less influential. The observed effects are presumably consistent regardless of an over-representation of more engaged club members.

Our data was collected in ten countries, and concepts originally worded in English were translated into each country's language. Although the same experts who designed the survey then conducted and checked the translation, this procedure may have potentially affected the understanding of central concepts, particularly for members with migration background. This is more likely to be an issue with attitudinal rather than factual questions. To mitigate this, the most ambiguous words were elaborated with an explanation or an example.

Our findings are based on cross-sectional data, it therefore needs to be pointed out that different causal directions should be considered. Particular forms of affiliation and participation of members with migration background in VSCs can promote social integration, while a certain degree of social integration probably fosters engagement as volunteers, and for competitive sport as well as long-term sport, participation and membership. To address this limitation, we suggest that future studies collect longitudinal data to establish a more accurate cause-effect relationship between the variables examined in this study.

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Table 1: Sample: member survey (based on the sample of 642 clubs).

Country	N _{clubs}	N _{members}	N _{members with migration}
Belgium (Flanders)	47	762	60
Denmark	36	3,163	167
England	40	717	86
Germany	141	2,455	227
Hungary	47	716	38
The Netherlands	144	1,965	124
Norway	30	1,330	131
Poland	61	570	4
Spain	55	445	31
Switzerland	41	959	155
Total	642	13,082	1,023

Table 2: Rotated factor loadings from the factor analysis involving the 14 items describing social integration using oblique (direct oblmin) rotation (according to Author 2018).

<i>Items</i>	Dim. 1	Dim. 2	Dim. 3
I understand how the club functions (1-5)	0,804	0,182	-0,084
I know when and how to give my opinion when decisions are made in the club (1-5)	0,838	0,146	-0,065
Other people from the club respect me for who I am (1-5)	0,509	-0,014	-0,436
I participate in the club's social gatherings (e.g. parties, family days, Christmas dinners, etc.) (1-7)	0,043	0,647	-0,109
I stay in the club sometime after training, matches, tournaments or the like to talk to other people from the club (1-7)	0,094	0,784	0,055
When I am in the club, I talk to other people from the club than those who belong to my team/group (1-7)	0,205	0,747	0,164
I have made new friends through participation in the club (0-1)	-0,138	0,530	-0,276
I socialise with people from the club, which I did not know before joining, outside of the club (0-1)	-0,177	0,567	-0,241
How many people from the club would you estimate that you know by name? (1-7)	0,118	0,738	0,043
There is a good atmosphere in the club (1-5)	0,264	-0,282	-0,726
I am proud to say that I belong to the club (1-5)	0,205	-0,105	-0,777
It is important for me to socialise with other people from the club (1-5)	-0,059	0,280	-0,683
The club is one of the most important social groups I belong to (1-5)	-0,095	0,362	-0,648
In the club we help and support each other in private matters if necessary (1-5)	-0,005	0,196	-0,701
Eigenvalues	1,210	5,280	2,000
% of variance	8.642	37.71	14.28
Cronbach's alpha value	0.799	0.750	0.832

Table 3: Descriptive statistics for the independent variables included in the analyses.

<i>Independent variables</i>	Percentage (%)	Total number of replies (N)
Human capital and socio-demographic background		
<i>Migration background</i>		1,019
1: First generation	42	
2: Second generation	58	
<i>Gender</i>		1,015
1: Woman	42	
2: Man	58	
<i>Age (categorised)</i>		1,019
1: 16–39 years (ref.)	41	
2: 40–59 years	41	
3: 60 years or more	18	
<i>Educational level</i>		1,019
1: Low (ref.)	8	
2: Medium	38	
3: High	54	
Club-related consumption capital: affiliation and participation		
<i>Regular volunteer (yes)</i>	38	1,019
<i>Occasional volunteer (yes)</i>	52	1,019
<i>Number of years connected to the club</i>		1,018
1: Less than 1 year	10	
2: 1 to 2 years	16	
3: 3 to 4 years	16	
4: 5 to 10 years	24	
5: 11 to 20 years	16	
6: More than 20 years	19	
<i>Frequency of sports participation in the club</i>		1,019
0: Never/not sports active in the club	19	
1: Less than once a month	3	
2: 1–3 times a month	10	
3: 1 time a week	19	
4: 2 times a week	27	
5: 3 times a week or more	22	
<i>Participation in competitive sport in the club</i>		1,019
0: No	53	

1: Yes	47	
<i>Size of team/group in which the person most often does sport in the club</i>		1,019
0: Not sports active in the club	19	
1: 0–2 others (ref.)	9	
2: 3–10 others	31	
3: More than 10 others	41	

Table 4: Social integration and migration background (ANOVA).

		N	M	SD	F-statistics
Socio-affective integration: Interaction	No migrant background	9,611	64.89	23.87	F(2, 10, 630) = 16.40, p < .0005, $\eta^2 = .003$
	1st generation migrant	430	58.23	26.57	
	2nd generation	592	65.67	24.09	
Socio-affective integration: Identification	No migrant background	9,475	72.71	21.75	F(2, 10,474) = 3.42, p = .033, $\eta^2 = .001$
	1st generation migrant	418	69.90	22.96	
	2nd generation	584	72.26	20.50	
Socio-cultural integration Understanding and acceptance	No migrant background	9,218	77.72	20.80	F(2, 10,190) = 15.08, p < .0005, $\eta^2 = .003$
	1st generation migrant	404	72.17	21.73	
	2nd generation	571	76.01	20.73	

Table 5. Multilevel model for members with migration background (*random intercept; non-standardized coefficients*)

Independent variables	Socio-affective integration			Socio-affective integration			Socio-cultural integration		
	<i>Interaction</i>			<i>Identification</i>			<i>Understanding and acceptance</i>		
	Empty model	Model 1	Model 2	Empty model	Model 1	Model 2	Empty model	Model 1	Model 2
Migration background and socio-demographic background									
First or second generation migrant (second)		7.056**	3.247		2.015	0.677		4.431**	2.505*
Gender (man)		7.615***	0.888		5.299***	2.167		4.486**	1.169
Age									
- 16-39 years (ref.)									
- 40-59 years		-2.366	-1.719		-4.540	-3.835*		1.832	0.657
- 60 years or more		2.855	2.222		-1.619	0.660		6.960***	5.604**
Educational level									
- Low (ref.)									
- Medium		-2.214	-3.150		-3.921	-3.387		-2.434	-2.330
- High		-5.397	-4.881		-7.846**	-6.578*		-3.515**	-3.009*
Affiliation and participation									

Regular volunteer (yes)	10.059***	9.373***	10.874***
Occasional volunteer (yes)	9.746***	3.620***	4.145***
Years connected to the club (1-6)	3.599***	0.579	1.220
Frequency of sports participation (0-5)	3.141***	1.510*	-0.280
Participation in competitive sport (yes)	10.456***	7.209***	4.291***
Team/group size			
- Not sports active	15.995***	13.943***	-5.267
- 0-2 others (ref.)			
- 3-10 others	11.525***	11.784***	-1.165
- More than 10 others	11.539***	12.044***	-1.747

Model characteristics

Intercept	63.725***	45.042***	14.587**	72.652***	69.073***	47.197***	74.803***	62.007***	60.757***
Intercept variance (country)	33.55	33.88	22.69	13.06	16.85	10.79	3.41	4.79	5.13
Intercept variance (individual)	619.75***	575.33***	353.78***	452.13***	442.01***	361.39***	447.93***	424.12***	376.62***
ICC	0.051			0.028			0.008		

R ² (individual)		0.072	0.429		0.022	0.201		0.053	0.159
N	1,018	936	844	998	920	831	971	899	816
