

“MUSCLE DRAIN” IN SPORT AND HOW REGULATE IT?

A plea for a “Coubertoin tax”

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In December 2009, a French newspaper, *Le Monde*² was reporting the very sad story of Yannick Abega, a teenage (below 18) football player originating from Cameroon who was just sacked by Almeria football club (Spain) where he was playing without having signed any labour contract. In fact, Abega had never signed a contract since his first transfer from Cameroon to Real Majorque in 2006, at the age of 13. Thus, the *Foot Solidaire* association has lodged a complaint to FIFA contending “child trafficking, child ill-treatment, exploitation, and swindling Abega’s parents”. This story draws attention on to a typical phenomenon in today’s high level sport which is an overall athlete (player) international mobility on the one hand and, on the other hand, a specific segment of the global market for sporting talent, that is teenage and child international transfers. The problem is that in various sports transferring children and teenagers from outside Europe (basically from developing countries - DCs) is not allowed, like in football since the 2001 FIFA rules. Then a next issue comes up: how regulate international teenage player transfers in a way that could be more efficient than FIFA rules. Such issue is tackled in this paper.

First, we describe the overall picture of the global market for international player transfers (1). Then we differentiate North-North international player mobility across developed countries (2) and South North international mobility of player transfers from developing to developed countries (3). After pointing at major economic determinants of international player mobility (4), we focus on outlaw and infamous conditions prevailing in international teenage and child transfers (5). A last part of the paper suggests to introduce in all sports, not only in football, a

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² Mustapha Kessous, Le parcours d’un jeune Camerounais perdu dans la jungle du foot, *Le Monde*, 22 décembre 2009.

specific taxation of international player transfers, coined a Coubertobin tax whose merits are compared with FIFA rules (6).

1. A global market for player transfers: the “muscle drain”

International athlete migration is not a new economic fact. English football spread to France in the late nineteenth century and British players moved to Paris and created a football club there, the so-called Racing Club. The first significant international player transfers in football can be traced back to the 1950s. In the 1950s, the Argentine football player Di Stefano, the Hungarian Puskas and the French Kopa were playing together in the Real Madrid squad. In the same decade, an outflow of baseball players from the Dominican Republic towards North American baseball leagues started to become more significant. The growth of international athlete migration has increased significantly in the past 15 years due to economic globalisation and a change in regulation of European professional sports (Andreff, 2006a).

Globalisation has affected the sports economy in its various dimensions (Andreff, 2008a). The global market for all sporting goods and services, in 2004, was assessed to be in the range of €550–600 billion. The global market for football is valued at €250 billion. The market for all sporting goods is valued at about €150 billion. The value of broadcasting rights related to sport events is estimated at €60 billion while the global market for sports sponsorship is nearly €18 billion. In 2006, the global market for doping was assessed at €6 billion. Even if these figures are not absolutely reliable, the trend towards globalisation of sport business is crystal clear. By the same token, the market for high-level sporting talents has also globalised. On this labour market, professional players and other highly talented athletes are internationally transferred from a club in one country to a club located abroad. However, it is globalisation of the labour market for talents that has really boosted athlete international migration, sometimes coined a “muscle drain” (Andreff, 2001) by analogy with the long lasting brain drain in the global economy.

International transfers of football players skyrocketed in this global labour market since it was entirely deregulated in 1995. Such globalisation was triggered by the Bosman case (1995) in football. A similar jurisprudence was extended to different sports and citizens of Central Eastern Europe and CIS countries by Malaja, Kolpak and Simutenkov cases (Andreff, 2006b). Then, in 2000, a Cotonou agreement signed by the European Union with 77 African, Caribbean and Pacific countries allowed athlete transfers from the latter area under the qualification of “assimilated Europeans”, which means under the same conditions as those

players who could claim benefiting from Bosman, Malaja, Kolpak and Simutenkov jurisprudences. Since then, deregulation has affected the international labour market in nearly all professional and high-level sports. Recently football has become the most investigated global market in the sports economy, giving rise to serious concerns with regards to transfer of teenage players below the age of 18.

Table 1: Share of foreign players in professional football, pre- and post-Bosman (%)

1st league	1995	1996	1999	2005	2006	2007
England	34	34	37	56	55	62
France	18	18	22	36	36	34
Germany	19	27	39	50	41	46
Italy	14	17	33	31	31	38
Spain	20	29	40	28	32	34

Source: CIES data.

The outcome is a global labour market for player talents. After 1995, international mobility of football players grew; in 1996, the first year after Bosman case, 894 foreign players moved into European professional football leagues and their number was twice bigger in 2005 with 1,803 international transfers to European leagues. The percentage of foreign players in the five most significant European football leagues was on average more than twice higher in 2007 compared with 1996 (Table 1) where 42.4% of all players involved were foreign.

Table 2: International flow of migrant football players to the French *Ligue 1* in 2008

Home country in the North	Number of players	Home country in the South	Number of players
Sweden	8	Brazil	34
Switzerland	5	Senegal	21
Belgium	2	Côte d'Ivoire	10
Italy	2	Cameroon	9
Luxembourg	2	Argentina	8
Netherlands	2	Colombia	7
Denmark	1	Mali	6
Greece	1	Nigeria	6
Japan	1	Guinea	5
Portugal	1	Morocco	4
<i>Europe</i>	25	Uruguay	4
Croatia	3	Ghana	3

Serbia	3	Algeria	2
Slovenia	3	Burkina Faso	2
Czech Republic	2	Peru	2
Poland	2	Angola	1
Romania	2	Benin	1
Albania	1	Egypt	1
Bulgaria	1	Gabon	1
Hungary	1	Kenya	1
Slovakia	1	Sierra Leone	1
<i>Central Europe</i>	19	Tunisia	1
Source: CIES data.		Zambia	1
		<i>Developing countries</i>	131

The magnitude of the global market for international player transfers can be measured in terms of flow, *i.e.* annual “import” or “export” of players, or in terms of stock, *i.e.* the overall presence in a given year of players enrolled in foreign clubs abroad. For instance, in terms of flow, the French professional football *Ligue 1* had imported 175 foreign players from 43 different countries in 2008. Among them 25 (14.3%) were transferred from other European developed countries, materialising a North-North international mobility of talents while 131 (74.9%) were flowing from DCs, making for a South-North international mobility. In French professional football (1st league), three quarters of the “muscle drain” comes from the Third World, roughly one half from Africa and one quarter from Latin America. The remaining 19 players (10.8%) were from Central Eastern European post-communist countries in transition.

Table 3: Stock of migrant football players in 2008: thirty major leagues

Home country league	Number of migrant football players	Host country league	Average number of foreign players per club
Brazil	551	England	15,6
France	233	Greece	13,3
Argentina	222	Portugal	13,2
Serbia	192	Russia	12,9
Portugal	121	Germany	12,8
Czech Republic	113	Switzerland	11,5
Croatia	109	Belgium	11,5
Nigeria	94	Italy	10,4
Sweden	94	Scotland	10,2
Germany	92	Turkey	9,5
Bosnia Herzegovina	91	Spain	9,2

Cameroon	87	Romania	9
Slovakia	76	Ukraine	8,8
Uruguay	71	Norway	8,7
England	70	Austria	8,5
Netherlands	66	Netherlands	8,4
Belgium	64	France	8,3
Spain	62	Denmark	7,8
Denmark	60	Slovakia	6,5
Côte d'Ivoire	59	Bulgaria	6,4
Poland	59	Sweden	6,4
Switzerland	49	Hungary	5,9
Finland	46	Ireland	5,5
Austria	45	Poland	4,9
Senegal	45	Slovenia	4,9
Ghana	44	Finland	4,6
Romania	44	Croatia	3,9
Ireland	41	Island	3,8
Macedonia	41	Czech Republic	3,6
USA	38	Serbia	2,7

Source: CIES data.

Table 3 provides a snapshot of the global market for football players in terms of stock with regards to the 30 major exporting (home) and 30 major importing (host) countries. It is to be noticed that major European leagues are both exporting and importing, which means that two-way trans-border flows are a characteristics of international athlete migration across major developed market economies. Out of the 2,979 players who had migrated from the first 30 exporting countries until 2008, 1,081 (36.3%) were from developed countries (North-North), 1,173 (39.4%) from DCs and 24.3% from Central Eastern Europe. Those most importing countries are located in Western Europe, then in Central Eastern Europe, and there is no developing country among the first 30 major importers.

2. North-North international player mobility

Since the economic determinants of player migration are not identical when a player leaves his developed home country and when he migrates from a DC (see 4 below), we have to distinguish North-North from South-North international movements.

With regards to North-North muscle drain in European football, the only dividing line among European countries is that some are net importers of foreign players (England, Spain,

Germany) whereas some others are net exporters (France, Belgium, Portugal, Denmark). In 2006, 50.2% of players who had moved to European leagues had migrated from other European countries (an annual flow of 82 players moving out from France, 41 from the Netherlands, 38 from Portugal, 34 from Denmark, etc.). As a result the number of players operating outside their home country's league is rising since the late 1990s. For example, the number of French players (stock) enrolled in foreign clubs playing other leagues' championships dramatically skyrocketed after the Bosman case (Table 4), from 9 in 1993 up to 233 in 2003, a level that was roughly maintained throughout the 2000s. Nearly all of them play in other European football leagues.

Table 4: Stock of French football players operating in foreign first leagues

Year	Overall	England	Germany	Italy	Spain	Other *
1993	9	2	1	1		5
1994	10	1		3		6
1995	39	1	1	5	1	31
1996	58	4	1	6	1	44
1997	88	9	2	14	13	50
1998	137	19	4	20	12	82
1999	138	30	1	24	11	72
2000	172	30	3	20	9	110
2001	198	37	6	25	8	122
2002	231	45	9	29	11	137
2003	233	54	6	24	11	138

Source: Stéphane Biton.

On the import side, the English Premier League is the most internationalised labour market in European football, a fact that triggered the writing of the *Meltdown Report* in December 2007 after the English national squad had not been able to qualify for the Euro 2008 final stage (Professional Footballers Association, 2007). During the 2007-08 football season, only 196 players in the Premier League were *not* foreign while foreigners originated from 66 different countries. This is to be compared with only 23 foreigners playing in the Premier League when it was created (1992).

More generally, in European football, the average number of foreign players per team has increased from 4.8 to 9.8 between 1995 and 2006. For instance, Arsenal played the Champions League final 2005 with only two British players on the pitch and today there are few English players in the team. The internationalisation of European professional football teams appears to be widespread across the best Champions League participants (Chelsea,

Manchester United, Barcelona, Real Madrid, etc.) that can now be depicted as multinational companies (Andreff, 2009a & 2010a).

The other side of the coin is the selection of players enrolled abroad in an increasing number of national squads. During the football World Cup in 2006 the overall number of players selected in national squads was 736 out of which 392 (53%) were playing abroad. Even national squads of developed countries are affected by labour market globalisation. The 2006 French football squad encompassed 13 players registered in clubs abroad.

3. South-North international player mobility

Outside Western Europe, not only some countries appear to be net exporters, first of all Brazil, Argentina and Serbia, but also the Czech Republic, Croatia, Nigeria, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Cameroon, Slovakia, Uruguay, Ivory Coast, Senegal, Ghana and Macedonia, that is, in a nutshell Latin American, Central Eastern European³ and African countries. Thus, South–North (from developing to more developed countries) player mobility is a crucial facet of international athlete migration. Nearly half of foreign players operating in the five major European football leagues originate from DCs. The percentage is even higher if we look at second rank leagues like Belgium or Portugal and second and third division clubs of the big five European football countries. Southern (and Eastern European) countries usually are net exporters and Northern countries are net importers in player trade with the South (and Eastern Europe). From 1989 to 1997, over 2,000 Brazilian players migrated to European football clubs, and they were still 654 to move in 2002 up to 857 in 2004 (Table 5). Their major host country is Portugal, then other European countries.

Table 5: Transfers of Brazilian players abroad

	2002		2003		2004	
Total	654		787		857	
Moving to:	Nb	%	Nb	%	Nb	%
Europe	365	55.8	454	57.7	435	50.8
Portugal (1st destination)	141	21.6	141	17.9	132	15.4
Asia	94	14.4	128	16.3	169	19.7

³ Those economic determinants that trigger international mobility of Central Eastern European players are about the same as for players from DCs, thus we can include them in the South-North flows (although it is an East-West move in geographical terms).

South America	80	12.2	71	9.0	95	11.1
Africa	53	8.1	65	8.3	79	9.2
North-Central America	60	9.2	67	8.5	68	7.9
Oceania	2	0.3	2	0.3	11	1.3

Source: Andreff (2008b).

Hundreds of African and Latin American football players are transferred to European clubs every year. The same sort of South–North international athlete migration is observed from DCs to North America. A total of 1,300 players in the Major and Minor Leagues Baseball are citizens from the Dominican Republic, a number of African and Latin American players operate in the National Basketball Association and Czech and Russian superstar players are often hired by National Hockey League teams.

Since the late 1980s, post-communist transition economies from Central Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union became significant net exporters of athletes so that they could compare – and indeed compete – with DCs on the global labour market for sporting talents. For example, from 1990 to 1997, over 600 professional football players, 520 ice hockey players, 300 handball and volley ball players, 100 ice skaters and 20 coaches moved abroad from the former USSR (Poupaux & Andreff, 2007). With economic recovery in Russia, nowadays a reverse flow has emerged of importing foreign players in the most performing Russian clubs, like the 2008 UEFA Cup winner, that is, Zenith St. Petersburg.

Table 6: Geographic distribution of domestic team affiliation, African 2002 World Cup players

Domestic team affiliation	Cameroon	Nigeria	Senegal	S. Africa	Tunisia	Total
Home country	-	2	1	7	14	24
Africa	-	-	1	-	-	1
England	4	4	-	3	-	11
France	7	3	20	-	2	32
Germany	1	-	-	2	1	4
Italy	3	-	-	1	3	7
Spain	4	1	-	-	-	5
Other European	3	11	1	10	3	28
Rest of World	1	2	-	-	-	3

Total	23	23	23	23	23	115
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Source: Gerrard (2002).

The other side of the coin is the selection of players enrolled abroad in an increasing number of national squads. National squads of developing (and transition) countries now comprise of many players whose club affiliations are outside their home domestic league. This is even more clearly exhibited with African national squads participating in the football World Cup final tournament (Table 6). For the five African squads that qualified in 2002, only 21% of players were affiliated to their home domestic league. The extreme case was the Ivory Coast team in which all the players were registered in foreign leagues and clubs. In a sense, the African Cup of Nations (*CAN – Coupe d’Afrique des Nations*) is becoming an appendix of European professional football leagues since a majority of players involved in this sport contest are used to play with their clubs in European championships. They already were 200 out of 352 in 2004 (Table 7). Since then this proportion has so much increased that, in the past recent years, the CAN has become able to attract a number of significant Western European sponsors and European TV channels to cover the whole sport event.

Table 7 : Foreign club affiliations of African football players involved in the 2004 CAN

Clubs in	Players Nb	Clubs in	Players Nb	Clubs in	Players Nb	Clubs in	Players Nb
France	79	Spain	6	Denmark	2	Sweden	2
Belgium	28	Russia	5	Norway	2	Bulgaria	1
England	23	Netherlands	4	Poland	2	Cyprus	1
Germany	13	Switzerland	4	Portugal	2	Israel	1
Italy	8	Greece	3	Romania	2	Ukraine	1
Turkey	7	Austria	2	Scotland	2	Total	200

Source: France Football.

4. Economic determinants of players’ migration

Contrary to brain drain, muscle drain is a topic in which there is little coverage within economics literature. One reason for such a position is that some determinants of muscle drain are not economic: some athletes simply have a double citizenship by birth or otherwise, other athletes follow their parents’ international relocation for non sport motives, while some look for the opportunity of being selected in a (weaker) national squad of a foreign country and so

on. As an economist, I would not stick to these drivers of muscle drain which are athlete-specific. However, in the past decades, economic determinants have increasingly prevailed.

4.1. The determinants of North-North muscle drain

When it comes to North-North muscle drain, a major determinant is wage differentials across different sports and different developed market economies. If one compares average monthly wages in different sports in a same country, money distribution appears to be very much uneven. In 2007, the average individual wage was €44,000 per month in *Ligue 1* of French football, €11,000 in *Ligue 2*, €12,500 in the cycling Pro Tour, €7,000 in basketball A (1st division), €6,500 in rugby Top 14, and €1,500 in athletics *Ligue Pro* (about 30 times less than in *Ligue 1* football). It is clear that the French labour market for sporting talent is unevenly attractive to muscle drain depending on the sporting discipline and compared with other potential importing countries where wage distribution by sport discipline is probably different (though we do not know any study comparing relative wages between sports on an international scale). Available data provides an insight of the wage differentials that exist within the football industry across developed market economies. For instance, the average monthly wage in the English Premier League was €145,000 in 2007 (three times higher than in French *Ligue 1*) and €45,500 in the Championship – the English 2nd to 4th divisions (four times higher than in the French second division). This obviously explains why so many French football players move to English clubs and so few (if any) English players are hired by French clubs.

A comprehensive explanation of wage differentials between English and French football leagues would lead us into economic theory of professional sports leagues (Andreff, 2009b) and variants of league regulation in European football (Andreff & Bourg, 2006), which is beyond the limits of this paper. In a nutshell, wage differentials result from differences in club revenues that are dependent upon a number of factors including club attractiveness and access to gate receipts, sponsorship money, TV rights revenues, merchandising, stadium naming rights and club ownership. In this respect, English football clubs' attractiveness is stronger than French clubs'. Chelsea could afford a €190 million payroll in 2007-08, which equates to 70% of the overall payroll for the whole French *Ligue 1* (€268 million) the same year. Seen from transferred player revenues, wage differentials trigger the decision to move from French to English clubs. Moving from Olympique Lyonnais to Chelsea, Malouda increased his annual wage by 52%; Faubert by 97% from Bordeaux to West Ham; Kaboul by 214% from

Auxerre to Tottenham; Abidal by 54% from Olympique Lyonnais to Barcelona; Mavuba by 122% from Bordeaux to Villarreal; and Ribéry by 94% from Olympique de Marseille to Bayern Munich.

A secondary determinant is league regulation and its impact on a more or less balanced contest; the so-called issue of competitive balance in a league. The more unbalanced a championship, the more a player move to a top club of this unbalanced league will translate into a substantial wage increase. French players often migrate from the more balanced French *Ligue 1* to the less balanced Italian *Lega Calcio*, Spanish *Liga de Futbol* and English Premier League in view of significant wage gains. A more unbalanced domestic championship increases the probability that its top clubs will qualify for (or even win) the Champions League and results in increased revenue expectations for players (including bonuses, sponsorship contracts, etc.). Playing in a successful club such as a Champions League winner, finalist or semi-finalist will increase the value of a player human capital (*i.e.* observed talent) which could materialize in a more profitable future international transfer.

A third determinant may be the overall level of economic regulation in a player's home country as compared to the level of regulation in a potential host country. For example, a heavier French taxation on high individual revenues is assumed to be a push factor to move abroad which may affect a number of professions, namely professional sportsmen and women. Of course, such a nation-wide determinant would be affected by the current financial crisis and recession in different ways in North American and European countries but probably in deepening the gap between countries that would suffer more and those suffering less from the crisis.

4.2 The determinants of South-North muscle drain

The wage gap is obviously the most effective determinant. In the first division of the Brazilian football in 2007, the average wage was €12,000 while in African leagues it was below €2,000 in different countries, seldom over €5,000 anywhere in Africa. English and French football wages are extremely appealing, even if paid below average, to any Latin American or African player.

A second determinant is economic underdevelopment of DCs, and to some extent transition countries (Andreff, 2001). DCs usually are plagued by a shortage of sport teachers and coaches, low domestic sports financing, limited sport facilities and equipment, and fewer world-class sport performances than developed countries, illustrated through fewer Olympic

medals. For example, the number of medals is markedly determined by GDP per capita and population of participating countries (Andreff *et al.*, 2008). These countries do not have the capability to host more than a few mega sport events if any, and they often suffer from widespread corruption in sport, embezzlements and wage arrears in professional clubs. Therefore, for an athlete, moving to the North means that he/she will find better training conditions, better technologies in sport equipment and medical care, better expectations to win at world level and more competitive athletes to compete with. In addition, he/she will often have access to a better standard of living and purchasing power in developed market economies. The same determinants obviously apply to teenage muscle drain. An additional one is the “dream of a personal achievement as a future superstar player” in the North with all associated benefits, a dream continuously fuelled by fallacious prospects of unscrupulous players’ agents.

A small, though rapidly increasing, aspect in the international migration of sporting talent is where an athlete or player demands changing his/her citizenship (naturalisation), which is the most visible and tricky part of muscle drain. The number of naturalized citizens in national squads competing at Athens Olympics 2004 was far from negligible.

Table 8: Naturalized athletes at Athens Olympics

National squads of:	Number of naturalized athletes
Germany	12
France	29*
Greece	28
Italy	9
European Union overall	99
Australia	13
Canada	9
United States	13
Israel	16

* including by marriage and collective naturalization.

Source: Andreff (2006b).

Table 8 illustrates that there were 29 naturalized athletes in the French national squad for the Athens Olympics in 2004. 22 of the athletes originated from DCs and 6 from transition economies. Poli and Gillon (2006) provide a more comprehensive picture: they found 270 naturalized athletes at the Athens Olympics out of which 41 originated from Africa, 43 from

Asia, 57 from America, and 120 from Europe. Those 270 athletes were respectively selected in national squads of European (187), American (35), Asian (25) and African (5) countries, and in Oceania's squads (17). The balance again shows a net outflow of naturalized athletes from DCs and a net inflow in developed countries. The French Olympic squad confirms (Table 9): out of 29 naturalised athletes, just one is originating from a developed economy (Germany), 5 are from Central Eastern Europe, all the others from DCs (including one from China).

Table 9 : Naturalized athletes in the French national squad, Athens Olympics

Name	Discipline	Home country	Relative GDP per capita*
Aka Akesse V.	wrestling	Ivory Coast	37 times
Barber E.	long jump	Sierra Leone	16.9
Dehiba H.	1500 m	Morocco	20
Djones L.	400 m, 4x400 m	Ivory Coast	37
Douhou A.	4x400 m	Ivory Coast	37
El Hassan Lassini	marathon	Morocco	20
El Himer D.	marathon	Morocco	20
Esarok L.	1500 m	Morocco	20
Helaouzy A.	4x400 m	Morocco	20
Honyang P.	badminton	China	26
Karabatic N.	handball	Serbia Montenegro	11.4
Karbanenko D.	gymnastics	Russia	8.2
Kiraly H.	fencing (sword)	Hungary	3.4
Mang V.	100 m, 4x100 m	Cameroon	37
Martins M.	5000 m	Cap Verde	17
Matam D.	weight lifting	Cameroon	37
Maury M.	5000 m	Kenya	69
N'Dicka S.	weight lifting	Cameroon	37
N'Thépé A.I.	4x400 m	Cameroon	37
Okori R.F.	100 m hurdle	Equatorial Guinea	5.2
Quieter Maraoui	marathon	Morocco	20
Ramalanirina N.	100 m hurdle	Madagascar	133
Sghyr S.	10000 m	Morocco	20
Stoyanov S.	badminton	Bulgaria	10.8

Szabo M.	handball	Hungary	3.4
Thebar K.	horse riding	Germany	1.02
Wade H.	4x400 m	Senegal	46
Wright V.	badminton	Bulgaria	10,8
Yemouni M.	1500 m	Morocco	20

* France GDP per capita divided by home country's GDP per capita.

Source: Andreff (2006b).

A forthcoming issue resulting from increasingly numerous naturalisations, which has urgently to be dealt with, is what will be the meaning, status and recognition of national squads in the future. The Qatari strategy of naturalising African and Latin American athletes practically overnight (more exactly within a fortnight deadline) is of particular concern. All the more so since such a strategy spreads throughout the Gulf countries. What will be the impact on national squads if this strategy is adopted by countries throughout the world?

5. International transfers of teenage and child players

International teenage player transfers is the most controversial aspect of the muscle drain business (Andreff, 2004), and has been outlawed by FIFA rules adopted in 2001 that forbid transferring from abroad football players below the age of 18. Indeed, such transfers emerged in the late 1980s, but importing teenage players from developing countries was boosted by liberalisation and the resulting globalisation of the football labour market after 1995.

5.1. Unheeded teenage player transfers in the 1990s

The worst tendency that accompanies the muscle drain had emerged in October 1991, when Torino football club had recruited three young players, under the age of 17, who had been junior world champions with the national team of Ghana. With the emergence of 15-17 year old player championships in Africa, international transfers had increasingly affected players under 16. In the late nineties, an increasing number of African players under 16 had been transferred to European clubs. Such a tendency has been fuelled in the wake of the Bosman case after which many clubs increasingly looked for a substitute to more mobile European superstar players by recruiting younger and cheaper talents from the Third World. It has created a world unregulated labour market for young and very young talented players.

The issue of international transfers of talented teenage players from developing countries is not a marginal or negligible one. During the 1990s, 4,809 foreign players, aged from six to sixteen, originating from Latin American and African countries were found in Italian football clubs. In Italian football, 2,273 foreign affiliated players over 16 had been imported through illicit channels. A report to the Italian Senate stated that 5,282 non-European players under 16 were employed by amateur football clubs, often subsidiaries of major clubs playing in *Calcio* (Division 1). In the Netherlands, 33 football clubs had been sued by the immigration office for illicit importation of Latin American and African players. Belgian football clubs were – and still are – utilised as “nursery hubs” for training African players before their transfer to major European leagues.

Talented young players imported from developing countries can offer an interesting substitute in the face of rising prices in the European market. For example, in 1996, Georges Mouandjo from Cameroon was transferred to RAEC Mons with a contract stipulating a 6,000 Belgian franc (BF) salary – 150 euro monthly wage while the labour regulation at the moment in Belgium was fixing the minimum wage for football players at 43,000 BF – 1,075 euros per month. The Italian football player union contended that a contract for an Italian talented junior player could amount up to 4.5 million euros whereas the average for an African junior player was roughly 4,500 euros. In particular, young Third World players yielded a better return to the club when they were able to improve (or to contribute to improving) its sport performances in the professional championship and attract more spectators in the stadium. From scattered data, it seems that European professional football clubs that enrolled Latin American and African players in their squads were well-off in terms of both their gate receipts and their rankings in the various European professional championships.

On the other hand, once hired, a talented young player from Africa or Latin America can be sold again, after a while⁴, at a higher price on the European labour market by the importing club to another one. For instance, the Guinean teenage player Oularé was recruited by the Belgian club of Genk for 100,000 euros and transferred two years later to a Turkish club for 5.75 million euros. Manchester United apparently had a partnership agreement with the

⁴ Or even immediately, when a young player has been imported from a developing country – in particular through the underground market, at a dumping price, quite lower than the actual player’s value. Thus, investing in a talented young player from the Third World is often an opportunity for a European club to gain some surplus value after a resale. About player trade as a source of finance for European professional clubs, see Andreff & Staudohar (2000). The dumping price most likely appears when it does not even cover the cost invested by the nursery club in the player’s education and training, which is quite usual for African and Latin American players transferred to Europe.

Belgian club of Antwerp according to which the latter was to recruit and train non-European young players, to obtain their Belgian citizenship⁵, and then to transfer them to Manchester. A similar agreement linked the Belgian football club Germinal Ekeren to the Dutch club Ajax Amsterdam.

Most young players transferred to European professional clubs eventually did not sign a labour contract and, then, were left aside, cut from their family, their friends, and their home country, with no source of income and no assistance. Often spotted by players agents at the African Cup of Nations teenage players are invited for a trial in European clubs, and recruited when the trial is successful. When a trial is unsuccessful, they are often abandoned by both clubs and players' agents without a labour contract and a return airplane ticket to their home country. Thus they are left *de facto* in a position as illegal migrant workers and, sometimes, are targeted by the police.

Some individual stories had surfaced in the sports news in the 1990s. Sonny Nwachukwu from Nigeria was tested in 1992 by the Belgian football club of Genk and started playing in the professional squad without having signed a contract. Afterwards he was transferred to Germinal Ekeren, and then to Tielen, still without signing any contract, playing there for the minimum wage. Khalilou Fadiga from Senegal (then naturalized Belgian), became a star player in France (FC Auxerre) but he reported to the press that he had been conned once by one players' agent when he was transferred from a club in Liège to a club in Lommel. Serge Nijki Bodo from Cameroon was approached by the Belgian football club La Gantoise (Division 1) when he was 17; he started training with the professional squad even though he had not signed a contract. After a while, the coach asked him to contact Racing de Gand (Division 3) where he signed a sheet of paper (not an official contract) in Flemish - which he could not understand – covering only his accommodation, with no wage. Then he signed an exclusive contract with a players' agent who charged 50% of his forthcoming income. The agent introduced Bodo to FC Malines and to the Denderleeuw club; in both cases, the negotiation did not come out with a signed contract due to an excessively high transfer fee requested by the agent. Finally, in November 2000, 15 young African players lodged a complaint in the Belgian court against professional clubs and players' agents, complaining of “trade and trafficking of human beings” - a case that they eventually won (Tshimanga Bakadiababu, 2001). They have been abandoned by both clubs and players' agents; being

⁵ Naturalisation – change of citizenship – has also become a big concern, more in Olympic sports than in soccer (Andreff, 2006b).

minors without a labour contract and without a pre-paid return ticket to their home country, they *de facto* became illegal migrant workers in Belgium.

Unsuccessfully tested by the French club FC Nantes, at the age of 14, Serge Lebri from Ivory Coast was also left without money and return ticket. Then he played for five years, as an amateur player, for some French football clubs until August 1999 when he was controlled without a French ID. He was immediately expelled from France back to Ivory Coast, soon after his 18th birthday. A Guinean player Issiaga Conde was invited to join the Nîmes Olympique squad (French Division 2) in 1998 at the age of 16. Right after his arrival in the club, the team managers confiscated his passport. Nevertheless, he started negotiating with Toulouse FC (Division 1); without success. After an ID control in October 2000, he was put in jail and sentenced to be expelled back home. Then, for the first time in France, an African football player has sued a football club for illegal work and incitement to an irregular stay in France. He was not expelled eventually, due to a personal intervention of Mrs. Buffet, the French Minister for Youth and Sports. She had already been deeply shocked with the previous Lebri story and would not like to face a second one. An official report (Donzel, 1999) has screened that Africa is the first sourcing location abroad for French clubs as regards foreign teenage football players. An update shows that, for the season 1998-1999, 58 non-European young players were under a contract with French clubs, including 50 African citizens; in 1999-2000, they were 108 of which 96 African players.

In Italy, Arezzo football club had been sanctioned for having recruited one player from Ivory Coast and four Argentine players, all below 14, without paying a penny out of the 150 dollars promised to their families. This is only one example of “baby-*calciatore*” or “football children”, between 12 and 18, torn by Italian professional clubs from their families in Latin America and Africa. In 1998, only 23 out of 5,282 non-European teenage players benefited from a labour contract signed in due terms.

Until 2001, the (sometimes irregular) international mobility of Third World teenage football players remained unregulated. No money was accruing to either the national football federation or the nursery association with international transfers of teenagers playing in non-affiliated associations in the home developing country. As to transfers of players from affiliated clubs, a dumping price on the European labour market meant a low transfer fee which often did not even cover the education and training cost of the teenage transferred player. On the other hand, the players’ agents were usually taking a lion’s share in the

transaction with a high percentage (in any case higher than 10%) charged on the transfer fee and/or on the first wage bills.

5.2. The outcome of prohibition: an international black market for teenage soccer players

In the 2000s, teenage muscle drain has not been eliminated even though it is less publicised now that it is clearly illegal. One can still find some cases reported by the press. Let us mention one of them: by end of 2002, Isa Mohammed (Nigeria) was transferred to a first division Polish nursery club, and his transfer was supposed to be the rocket pad toward his international career in a major European football league. Unfortunately, he was injured, then skipped away from the team and eventually abandoned by the club. Abega story with which we started our introduction is another case in point.

After a decade of controversial teenage transfers, FIFA reacted in 2001 with new regulations, article 19 of which came up with the statement that “international transfer is allowed only if the player is at least eighteen”. However, three exceptions (unwillingly) left the door open to regulation being circumvented: teenage transfers were allowed when their parents move abroad for reasons that are not linked to football (how do you demonstrate it?); when it is a transfer across EU countries; and when a teenage player is living close to the border of a foreign country. Thus, international transfers of teenage players now develop partly as a (outlaw or illegal) black market and partly on the (legal) basis of the three exceptions to FIFA article 19. Given the huge amount of money promised by big European clubs to young players, their families and their agents, and the home country’s clubs have no means for hindering these international transfers, even if they are hardly compensated, or not compensated at all.

The muscle drain is not without its problems. First, it undermines the sporting substance of developing countries. Second, it diverts the most talented sportsmen and women, those few who have had the opportunity to benefit from the rare domestic coaches and sport facilities. Third, in some cases, it erodes the capacity of the home country to use its most talented athletes in international competition, a fact which partly explains the poor performances of developing countries in world sport events (Andreff *et al.*, 2008). For instance, football players from Africa (namely Cameroon, Nigeria, Ivory Coast) were not released by their (European) professional clubs for selection to their domestic national teams to play in matches

of the 22nd African Cup 2000 (177 out of the 352 registered players were playing in European clubs at the moment). The African Cup is nicknamed the "cattle fair" because a number of well known European clubs' managers, coaches and players' agents attend it with the objective of recruiting talented players. At the Sydney Olympics, Cameroon, Nigeria and Morocco have had to compete without some of their star football players, in spite of FIFA rules that are supposed to compel clubs to release players selected for national teams.

Talented teenage players in developing countries are either enrolled in clubs affiliated to the national football federation or can be playing for non-affiliated sporting associations that recruit non-affiliated players in their squads. Affiliated clubs are used to proceed by themselves to the sale of young players after a price bargain with foreign clubs or to rely on a go between who has a good knowledge about foreign (European) labour markets, which is a players' agent. However, affiliated clubs are under the supervision and regulation of the national federation as regards the international transfer of players, whether minor or not. Albeit the club affiliation to a national federation does not secure once and for all - namely in the Third World context - that the transfer will come across through perfectly legal channels, it will diminish the probability of resorting to clandestine or illicit recruiting agents.

On the other hand, when it comes to non-affiliated associations, the only way-out for an international transfer of a talented young player is the underground labour market activated by clandestine networks of players' agents. The great bulk of players transferred from developing countries below 18 come by this illicit market where no legal or administrative rule does protect the players from the possible predatory behaviour of outlaw agents, since neither the non-affiliated sporting associations nor the clandestine players' agents are under the monitoring of a national football federation or a Ministry for Sports. Namely, an exit letter from the football federation is not required any longer, and a teenage player can leave the country simply with a tourist visa. The worst situation emerges when a player, with his family, enters himself in the market as the seller of his talents and is eventually trapped in the network of illegal players' agents connected with some European professional clubs.

6. Regulating the international mobility of teenage players: a "Coubertobin" tax

In 1978, James Tobin, a winner of the Nobel Prize in Economics, recommended a tax on foreign exchange transactions that "will throw sand in the wheels of international finance" and put a brake on too much swift short-term capital movements on the world financial markets

(Tobin, 1978). On the other hand, Pierre de Coubertin wished all the countries of the world to participate on equal footing to the Olympic Games. How is it possible to reconcile this Coubertinian idea with the harshness of budget constraints in developing countries? Outlined below is a solution (not a panacea) which is likely to alleviate, along with some of the financial problems of developing countries, the aforementioned problem of the muscle drain. This is the aim of a so-called "Coubertobin" tax. Since the Tobin tax, as noted by Schulze (2000), is targeted at restricting short-term speculation, it must be redesigned to adapt to our purpose.

Tobin was thinking, in 1978, of a multilateral and uniform tax levied on all short-term foreign exchange transactions. In reducing the return on any foreign investment, the Tobin tax isolates the domestic interest rate from variations of the foreign interest rate. Thus, it enables a country to implement an autonomous monetary policy and slows short-term capital transfers. In more recent presentations (Eichengreen *et al.*, 1995), the Tobin tax is supposed to achieve three tasks: increase the autonomy of monetary policy, diminish the exchange rate volatility, and provide a source of revenues. It has been suggested that these revenues may help Third World countries to redeem their foreign debt. Another purpose could be to use tax income for a sort of Marshall Plan in favour of developing countries. In 1998, Tobin even mentioned that the tax might be a useful protection for still fragile banking systems in emerging (developing) countries. When it comes to protecting the banking system as well as raising income, the tax may well not be uniform. It may be levied with different rates depending on how long the term of the transaction is, including a possible surcharge on the shortest term transactions considered as speculative attacks (Spahn, 1996).

6.1. Designing a "Coubertobin" tax

As early as 1999, in a "Play the Game" Conference held in Copenhagen we have suggested to create a so-called Coubertobin tax in order to cure sports underdevelopment in the least developed countries and put a brake on international teenage player transfers from the Third World. This was eventually published (Andreff, 2001), then the tax concept had been elaborated further on (Andreff, 2004), discussed in the context of the English squad not qualifying for the FIFA World Cup final tournament seemingly due to too many imported players in English Premier League (Andreff, 2008b) then more specifically in the African context (Andreff, 2010b), and finally it is going to be published in a Handbook on sport and migration (Andreff, 2011).

The suggested Coubertobin tax has four purposes of: 1/ slightly covering the education and training cost, for his/her home developing country, of any athlete or player transferred abroad; 2/ providing a stronger disincentive to transfer an athlete or a player from a developing country, the younger he/she is when the transfer takes place; 3/ thus, slowing down the muscle drain from developing countries and toward professional player markets in developed countries; and 4/ accruing revenues to a fund for sports development in the home developing country from the tax levied on every athlete or player transfer abroad. The fund would firstly finance sport facility building and maintenance (thus facilitating a sport for all practice), and secondly physical education programs in schools (in some way, a reimbursement of the sporting education received in their home country by migrant athletes).

The idea is to levy the tax at a 1% rate on all transfer fees and initial wages agreed on in each labour contract signed by players from developing countries with foreign partners (usually foreign professional clubs and/or players' agents). By its very existence, the Coubertobin tax should slowdown the muscle drain, but a windfall benefit may be to slightly reduce the labour cost differential (including the tax) between home developing country's and host developed country's labour markets, thus lowering the (surely still strong) incentive for players to leave their home country. A specifically crucial issue is the one of international transfers of teen age athletes (mainly footballers) from Africa and Latin America, albeit it is not the only one. One can get to grips with such an issue through a differentiated taxation including a surcharge on the transfer fee and initial wage of teen age and very young players. A more detailed proposal may be as follows. Let:

FR stand for the revenues rose through the taxation that are to be placed in a fund for sports development in the home developing country;

P_i stand for the international transfer price (fee) augmented with the first annual wage of the transferred player or athlete (in order to prevent a switch from the fee to the wage offered, or the other way round);

V_l stand for the player's value on the local market in his/her home country;

r stand for the exchange rate between the domestic currency in the home country and the hard currency of the importing host country;

T stand for a Coubertobin tax at a uniform rate of 1% for all transferred players, including those over 18 years old;

s stand for a tax surcharge for players below 18;

a is the player's age at the date of transfer;

a_1 is a first age threshold below which a tax surcharge is to be paid;

a_2 is a second age threshold below which the tax surcharge should be as much deterrent as possible;

a_3 is a third age threshold below which the tax is so heavy that it must have a prohibitive effect on transfers of extremely young players.

For instance, if $a_1 = 18$ years, $a_2 = 14$ years, and $a_3 = 10$ years, we can envisage a tax surcharge such as:

if $a_1 < a < a_2$, the tax surcharge s_1 will be 2% more for each month under the age of 18 at the date of transfer (thus transferring a player of 16 will cost a 48% surcharge),

if $a_2 < a < a_3$, the surcharge s_2 will be 10% more for each month below the age of 14 at the date of transfer (thus transferring a player of 12 will cost a 240% surcharge),

if $a < a_3$, the surcharge s_3 will be a 1000% lump sum tax (for instance $a_3 = 10$).

Thus the full formula of the Coubertin tax will be, under previous assumptions:

$$FR = (Pi - r.Vl) . T, \text{ if } a > a_1 \quad (1)$$

$$FR = (Pi - r.Vl) . [T + s_1 (a - a_1)], \text{ if } a_1 < a < a_2 \quad (2)$$

$$FR = (Pi - r.Vl) . [T + s_2 (a - a_2)], \text{ if } a_2 < a < a_3 \quad (3)$$

$$FR = (Pi - r.Vl) . (T + s_3), \text{ if } a < a_3 \quad (4)$$

Needless to say that the tax and surcharge rates as well as the age thresholds are only suggested here as examples and can be adjusted and revised at will. When it comes to the issue of who will pay the Coubertobin tax and possible surcharge, it must be the individual or legal body which pays the bill for the transfer fee and the first year wage, whether it is an affiliated professional club or a players' agent. If two bodies are involved, both will help pay. Of course, no one should be taxed twice, once in the developing home country and a second time in the host country; the tax should only be collected in the former country in order to avoid double taxation. Furthermore, there is a risk of bargaining and corruption surrounding the tax collection in developing countries. This is the reason why we suggest that the collection of the Coubertobin tax should be monitored and supervised by an international organization, either an existing one (UNDP or the World Bank) or an *ad hoc* one to be created (a sort of world agency for the Coubertobin tax, for instance, under the joint auspices of UN and IOC). This international organization would govern the whole process of tax calculation,

collection and allocation, and would have to solve any emerging conflict between a player's home country or nursery club and his/her recruiting professional club or players' agent.

6.2. How much feasible is the tax and possible hindrances

We could expect the new tax would meet with both hindrance and resistance like those that would be met if the Tobin tax were introduced. First, the Coubertobin tax will not be easy to implement and enforce insofar as it has to be accepted on a worldwide basis. Otherwise, some free riding developed countries (professional clubs) will still transfer teen age players without paying the tax and will concentrate the most talented Third World migrant athletes, while some developing countries will be deprived of the money supposed to reside in their sports development fund. Just like the Tobin tax (Bourguinat, 1987), the Coubertobin tax must be generalized if one wants it to be efficient. There will be some (transaction) cost in levying the tax - a cost that must be borne by the home country - and a cost of supervision - borne by the above mentioned international organization which will receive some determined percentage of the tax revenues. In any case, a co-operation is required between host and home countries, between their Ministries for Sports and their national Olympic committees and sports federations. Since tax evasion would probably be higher than zero, as for the Tobin tax (Baker, 2001), a specific fine should apply if tax evasion were discovered.

It is clear that the Coubertobin tax cannot be introduced without some sort of general agreement joined by all countries involved in athlete transfers (a sort of general agreement on tax and trade of athletes - GATTA). Athlete transfers from countries that had not joined the agreement should be forbidden and fined or nullified when undertaken in a sort of international underground black market for sporting talents from developing countries. Of course, all the professional leagues and clubs all over the world would attempt to resist the new taxation, and the joint efforts of UN, IOC and international associations or federations (like FIFA in football), as well as political will in home and host countries, would be necessary to break through. The international organization in charge of the tax administration should supervise that tax revenues were really spent on sport development in home countries, including for training the most talented players until 18 in order to raise their international market value. Nevertheless, the suggested Coubertobin tax seems no less desirable and feasible than the Tobin tax (Palley, 2001) insofar as transfers of teen age or child players is assessed as a harmful practice, specifically for developing countries.

6.3. Comparing the tax with existing FIFA rules

The Bosman case has removed the former restrictions on the free mobility of foreign players within the European Union (EU) and the European Economic Area (EEA), first of all in football. However, in 1998, the European Commission issued a statement objecting to the rules of the *Fédération Internationale de Football Association* (FIFA) governing international transfers as regards the payment of transfer fees and players being prohibited from terminating their contracts early. A new FIFA transfer regulation (FIFA 2001) came into force on the 1st of September 2001; it namely contains a number of clauses relating to the protection of minors, training compensation and a solidarity mechanism.

FIFA transfer rules limit the international transfer of minors (under 18). Transfers of minors are prohibited unless the player's family moves for non-football-related reasons. Within the EU-EEA, players under 18 can only move if teams undertake to provide both sporting and academic training. The rules also establish that compensation for training costs incurred between the age of 12 and 21 is payable when the player signs his first professional contract and on each subsequent move to another team up to the age of 23⁶. The first payment of training compensation is distributed on a pro rata basis between the teams contributing to the player's training. The calculation of the training compensation is based on a four-tier categorization of teams to be determined by individual national football associations (federations). Finally, FIFA rules include a solidarity mechanism whereby 5% of all compensation payments for transfers involving players over the age of 23 will be distributed to those teams involved in the training of the player between the age of 12 and 23. FIFA has introduced these rules basically for securing a training compensation to nursery clubs, and for preventing player movement under 18 except unless it is for sporting or academic training, but without any sport development objective for home countries.

However, FIFA regulation is a step forward in the same direction as the suggested Coubertobin tax (Gerrard, 2002). In first analysis, its major advantage is that, being already adopted, it should be more enforceable than the tax, which is no more than a suggestion until now. Although the FIFA rules, when actually enforced, might well be circumvented by host professional clubs, players' agents and teenage players (or their parents). We could imagine

⁶ The idea that backs this rule may be expressed as follows: the surplus value appearing in each player's transfer from a European club to another one must be redistributed, including to the nursery club located in a developing country. It should help football clubs of the Third World to muddle through their deep financial problems (Tshimanga Bakadiababu, 2001).

naturalizing the player on purpose, football-related moves of the player's family hidden behind apparently non-football-related reasons, false declarations about the player's age (a quite common practice in developing countries), and so on. By its very nature, FIFA regulation is restricted to football only, while the suggested Coubertobin tax is widespread to all professional – team as well as individual – sports. If only for this reason, the tax would have a higher return and a stronger impact on financing sport development in home developing countries. Take the example of the Dominican Republic which exports exactly no one football (soccer) player whereas over 1,300 Dominican citizens are operating in various North American baseball leagues: with FIFA rules, Dominican associations or clubs do not even receive a cent; with the Coubertobin tax, a quite significant inflow of dollars would have helped sport development in the Dominican Republic (Andreff 2002).

A few last remarks open the door to a further and deeper comparative analysis of FIFA regulation and the Coubertobin tax. Levying such a tax would certainly incur a bureaucratic process. Implementing FIFA rules is probably no less bureaucratic but, in addition, it is obviously more cumbersome to calculate the amount of the training compensation than to apply the tax rate on to a declared value P_i of the international transfer fee and initial wage. The return of FIFA rules will surely be higher for the transfer of players over 23 (5% for the solidarity mechanism against 1% for the Coubertobin tax) and even for all players over 18, since FIFA regulation applies to all cross-border transfers of a player whereas the Coubertobin tax is suggested to be levied only on the first transfer from the home developing country. In this respect, the Coubertobin tax mechanism may be improved or adjusted in increasing the basic tax rate T up to 5%. On the other hand, the amount of money accruing to the home developing country will not be higher with FIFA regulation than with the Coubertobin tax since all the subsequent transfers (after the first one) of an African or Latin American player usually occur within European and/or North American labour markets, and not back to any Third World country.

When it comes to teenage players below 18, the Coubertobin tax is definitely better performing than FIFA rules. With FIFA regulation, all transfers below 18 are prohibited from non-EU-EEA areas, thus generating not even a cent for the home developing country. On the other hand, FIFA rules absolutely block off any sort of market mechanism and reduce teenage player mobility to exactly nothing. Then, these rules negate the usual economic and social right to labour free mobility and, maybe, the basic human right of human being mobility (as for where a teenage player would like to be educated and trained and his family would live with him, once national migration laws had been taken into account). Therefore, FIFA

regulation is neither economically, nor ethically desirable, at least when compared with the Coubertobin tax. Only throwing sand into the wheels of the market, the latter let the market mechanism work up to the moment when it reaches a prohibitive rate of taxation (s3) but, even at this point, a club which is very much eager to transfer a player under 10 can accept to pay 1000% of his value. No economic right (to trade) and no human right (to move) are affected there. Moreover, the return of Coubertobin tax is widely higher than with FIFA rules for players below 18 and, in this respect, the former is more likely to favour sport development in home developing countries than the latter. The younger the transferred player, the larger is the gap between the taxation and what FIFA regulation yields (zero below 18).

6.4. A prerequisite: tightly supervising the players' agent business

Players' agents are obviously at the core of international transfer business. A number of them have obtained a FIFA permit in order to enter the business. They do consider outlaw agents, entering the business without a FIFA permit, as an unfair competition based on non-transparent transactions. Though FIFA has established an approval procedure for players' agents, reinforced by law in some European countries, illicit transfers develop because European clubs keep on dealing with FIFA unapproved agents, and because some approved agents start up companies that hire and work with unapproved agents. Outlaw agents are more inclined to deal with African and Latin American non-affiliated associations and straight with teenage players themselves (and their parents) insofar as they are crowded out by approved agents from the more profitable market of transactions transferring the most famous European and non-European professional players. We can expect outlaw agents to keep on circumventing the FIFA regulation, namely in falsifying the age of players below 18. The lack of a tight FIFA supervision over all players' agents is detrimental to the whole business. In France, for example, over 200 agents are in the business whereas only 46 hold a FIFA permit; in Belgium, 26 of them are holding a permit out of 200.

FIFA has not yet recognized the right for national associations (federations) and nation states to sue outlaw players' agents involved in dubious transactions. FIFA has launched and made official the profession of players' agents without associating nation states so that no uniform regulation is enforced to avoid confidence tricks in such an unverifiable international business. The fact that FIFA has favored the development of the players' agents business without fixing any sort of juridical penalty and economic sanction in case of illicit transactions is the crux of the matter. Anyone who intends to act as a players' agents must exhibit a clean police record,

must not be an attorney in his/her home country and has to submit himself/herself to an interview with his/her domestic national football federation (an interview which is in no way an examination). Players' agents are a source of revenue for FIFA since each of them is required to lay down a guarantee of 200,000 Swiss francs (roughly \$ 125,000) in order to obtain the FIFA permit. And that is it: anyone can start up his/her business with no further supervision.

A Conference of the Ministers for Youth and Sports from all French speaking countries was held in December 2000, in Bamako (Mali), and had raised the issue of FIFA *de facto* protecting the players' agents business in spite of many misdeeds. It had suggested giving up the FIFA permit and transferring its allocation to national football federations⁷, after a simple FIFA approval. With FIFA rules of September 2001 (article 6, FIFA 2001), a football player who wants to move abroad must obtain an international transfer certificate from the national football federation he intends to leave. National federations are forbidden to raise any emolument or to levy a tax in relation with their delivery of international transfer certificates (article 8). This certificate would not hinder illicit transfers and bribes unless FIFA would incite national and continental federations to adopt restrictive rules forbidding their affiliated clubs to deal with outlaw players' agents and to sanction them otherwise. On the other hand, Tshimanga Bakadiababu (2001) suggests creating an international professional association of players' agents on the model of the Bar – the association of barristers (attorneys) - which will be likely to sanction those guilty of misdeeds in the business. Such players' agents association should define and supervise fees and honorariums earned on international transfers of football players. All legal, administrative and sport authorities together should converge toward the enforcement of clear contracts linking players to a players' agent. This should be binding to stay in the business.

Conclusion

The reader must be aware of the limited scope of the policy recommendations sketched here. By no way a long run solution to the muscle drain of talented teenage players could avoid a policy for sport development – and the issue of the required finance - in developing countries, and could be found without a progress toward self-sustained economic development reducing the wage gap, including the revenue gap of professional sportsmen and women.

⁷ As a consequence a reform of the players agents status is underway in different EU countries, namely in France (Brocard, 2010).

Unfortunately, the regulation of the international mobility of teenage players can only alleviate the most undesirable consequences of the muscle drain. The suggested Coubertobin tax can put a brake on international transfers of very young players whereas FIFA regulation pretends to abolish them simply by forbidding them. None of these two regulations is likely to be 100% efficient. None is capable to entirely phase out illicit transfers undertaken by outlaw players' agents. We reach here the point at which economic tools must be completed by administrative and legal measures aiming at a control over the players' agent business.

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