

The migrations of African football players to Europe

Human trafficking and neo-colonialism in question

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African players in Europe

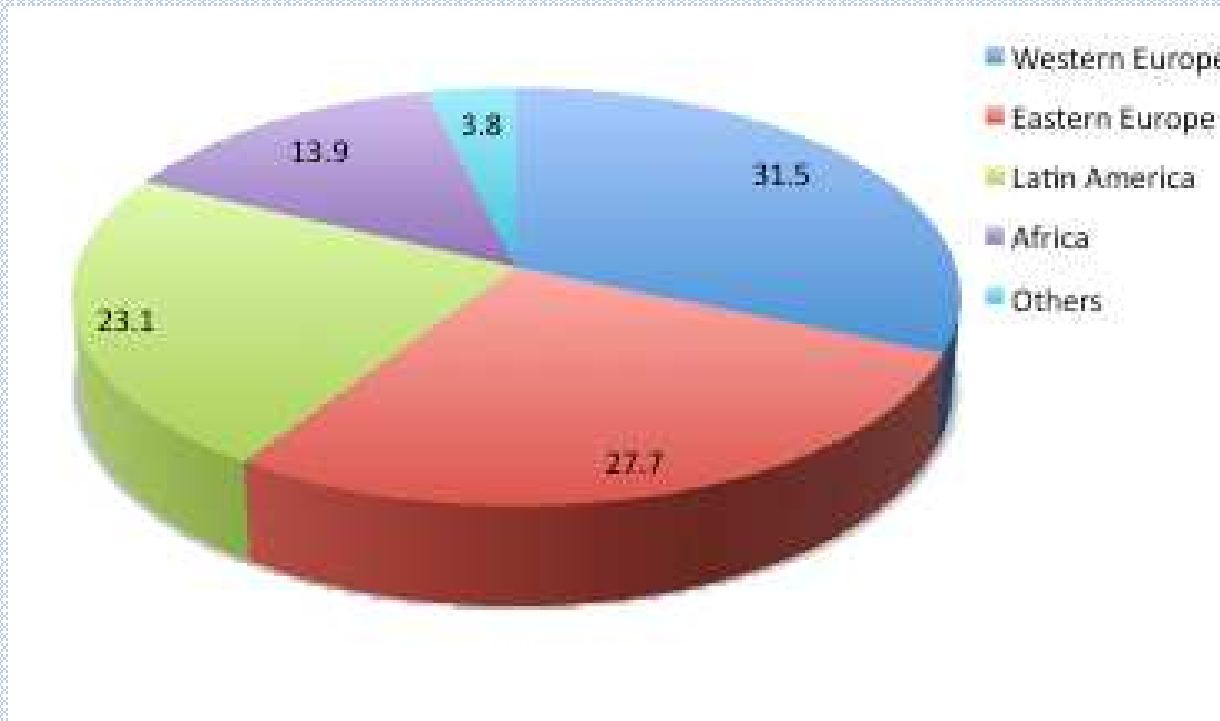
- Statistics presented concern only players who grew up in Africa and came to Europe for football related reasons (imported players)
- European born players with African origins are not considered as imported players, even if they play for African national A-teams

African players in Europe

- On the 1st of October 2009, 571 players imported from Africa were employed by 528 clubs of 36 top division leagues of UEFA member countries (1.08 per club).
- They were present in 33 out of the 36 leagues (no presence only in the three Baltic countries). They are over-represented in France (3.4 players per club) and Belgium (3.3).

African players in Europe

- African players represent 13.9% of the total number of expatriates



Source: Demographic Study of Footballers in Europe, PFPO, 2010

African players in Europe

- An earlier international migration compared to expatriates of other origins

	Age of departure abroad
Africa	19.4
Other origins	21.1
Latin America	22
Western Europe	22.4
Eastern Europe	22.7
Total expatriates	21.9

Source: Demographic Study of Footballers in Europe, PFPO, 2010

African players in Europe

- A concentration of departures from a restricted number of countries

Country	Number of expatriates	Cumulated %
Nigeria	113	19.8
Cameroon	84	34.5
Ivory Coast	61	45.2
Senegal	57	55.2
Ghana	46	63.2
Mali	20	66.7
South Africa	19	70.1
Guinea	15	72.7
Zambia	15	75.3
Tunisia	13	77.6

Source: Demographic Study of Footballers in Europe, PFPO, 2010

The issue of trafficking

- Article 3, Paragraph a) of the United Nations Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons «Trafficking in persons shall mean the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person »

The issue of trafficking

« Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs »

The issue of trafficking

- The term of trafficking cannot and must not be used as a synonym of migration or transfers, as it is often the case for African footballers
- It is useful to distinguish between human trafficking in football and human trafficking through football.

The issue of trafficking

- **Human trafficking in football** takes place when one or more of the following abuses are ascertained:
 - inconclusive trials abroad and withdrawal
 - joining of a club or a training centre abroad and unilateral breaking of contract
 - keeping the player in an illegal situation
 - exclusive control of a football player's professional mobility (i.e. unfair contracts binding a player to his agent)
 - work exploitation (i.e. non-respect of salary agreements)

The issue of trafficking

- Football is also increasingly implicated in human trafficking in a more indirect way. Indeed, traffickers and smugglers often use the false promise of trials in football clubs abroad to convince young players and their families to pay money for expatriation. We can in this case speak of **human trafficking through football**.

The issue of trafficking

- From the perspective of the number of persons concerned, empirical evidence shows that trafficking through football is more frequent than trafficking in football.
- Trafficking in football and through football are different phenomena for which it is necessary to find distinct solutions via a closer collaboration between political and sporting authorities.

The issue of neo-colonialism

- Neo-colonialism can be defined as the exploitation of poor countries by rich ones and transnational companies.
- It takes place when dominant collective actors (States, companies, etc.) take advantage of the vulnerability of dominated ones.

The issue of neo-colonialism

- Football economy is characterised by a strong level of financial discrepancies among countries and leagues.
- Polarisation in the football economy (and broadly speaking in the economy tout court) favours unequal power relationships and different forms of exploitation.

The issue of neo-colonialism

- Exploitation in African football takes various forms
 - Exploitation of African footballers vulnerability (especially at the beginning of their career) by clubs (not only Europeans) and intermediaries
 - Exploitation of African clubs by other clubs (not only Europeans) via the recruitment of players without fair compensation
 - Exploitation by African elites (politicians, national association officials, intermediaries) of players and national teams for economic and political purposes
 - Exploitation by African elites of funds provided among others by football governing bodies to the detriment of the local development of football (internal neo-colonialism)

The issue of neo-colonialism

- Neo-colonialism exists but is necessary to consider it from a plural perspective avoiding the traditional vision of « rich » countries active actors dominating « poor » countries passive ones.
- Mechanisms of domination and exploitation occur all along the chains of players' migrations and have to be taken into account to promote a correct vision of the phenomenon.

Conclusion

- Danger of finding easy scapegoats (agents, FIFA, European clubs, etc.)
- Necessity to analyse football migration in its wider context (unequal development between countries, legal constraints and opportunities, power relationships in networks, etc.)
- Recognize the ability of African actors (including players) to act strategically and take also advantage of international migrations/flows.

Thank you for your attention

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Professional Football Players Observatory website

www.eurofootplayers.org

Reference

Besson, R., Poli, R. and Ravenel, L. 2010: *Demographic Study of Footballers in Europe*. Neuchâtel: CIES: