# European Grassroots Football: Structural and Managerial Peculiarities

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## Chapter 2

# European grassroots football

## Structural and managerial peculiarities

*Christoph Breuer and Tobias Nowy*

### Introduction

The governance system of European football can be considered hierarchical and is often described as a pyramid in which international governing bodies such as the Union des Associations Européennes de Football (UEFA) sit at the top, national member associations beneath them, and then, below that, the grassroots represented by voluntary amateur football clubs (Breuer, Feiler, & Wicker, 2015; Gratton & Taylor, 2000; Peeters & Szymanski, 2014). Within that pyramid there is an internal (vertical) solidarity to protect the sustainability of the game (Brown, 2000). Grassroots football clubs, as the foundation of football (Vos et al., 2012), support professional football by developing and providing playing talent, coaches, and officials while the professional sector as the *"tip of the iceberg"* (UEFA, 2015) serves as the promotor of the entire sport. Arguably, the more solid the foundation of the pyramid is – i.e., the better the grassroots football clubs are in shape – the better are the chances for a sustainable development of the sport (Breuer & Nowy, 2015).

Football's importance as a social and economic phenomena within Europe is underlined by some 20 million men and women registered as players in more than 50 national football federations (Crolley & Hand, 2013) and the impact of grassroots football clubs goes beyond the sheer provision of the game (Hoye, Smith, Nicholson, & Stewart, 2015). The clubs' role as the *"key architectural structure"* (Adams, 2011, p. 85) for the creation of social capital to accrue and as the *"democratic infrastructure"* (Enjolras & Waldahl, 2010, p. 215) of democracy has been increasingly cited in public policies (Doherty & Misener, 2008; Nicholson, Hoye, & Houlihan, 2011; Tacon, 2014).

In order to deliver such benefits to society, European grassroots football clubs rely on their organizational capacity. Organizational capacity can be understood as a multi-dimensional concept which represents an organization's ability to draw upon different types of organizational capital, i.e., human, financial and structural resources (Hall et al., 2003). In a climate

of austerity across European countries (Collins & Haudenhuyse, 2015), a football club's capacity to solve organizational problems is more than ever critical, as the participation in and consumption of football is affected in new and often unclear ways (Breuer, Feiler et al., 2015; Breuer & Nowy, 2015; Brown, 2000). It is likely that external factors – such as the demographic development in a country – vary across Europe and that football clubs in different countries experience different organizational problems to a different extent.

Previous research on organizational problems has shown that European grassroots sports clubs particularly have problems with the recruitment and retention of members, volunteers, and coaches and their overall financial situation, moreover, they are increasingly challenged in their attempt to justify substantial public subsidies (Breuer, Feiler et al., 2015; Breuer & Nowy, 2015; Hoye et al., 2015; Wicker, Vos, Scheerder, & Breuer, 2013). Many originally volunteer-based grassroots clubs face increasing pressure for more professional management (Adriaanse & Schofield, 2014; Ferkins & Shilbury, 2015), which is leading towards business-like management, which is, in turn, characterized by the strengthening of institutional management (Nagel, Schlesinger, Bayle, & Giauque, 2015).

Managers and boards of grassroots football clubs need argumentative and action knowledge (Breuer, 2013) about the relationship between organizational capacity and problems. While Balduck, Lucidarme, Marlier, and Willem (2015) concluded that the relevance of the concept of organizational capacity in the grassroots clubs context has been proven, Doherty, Misener, and Cuskelly (2014) suggested that the relative strength and weakness of single capacities alone and in concert still needs more empirical validation with larger samples and in different contexts. The lack of comparative data on the organizational capacity levels at the bottom of the European football pyramid leads to the following two-folded research aim of this study: in a first step, differences in organizational capacity and problem levels of football clubs across Europe are assessed. Second, the influence of all dimensions of organizational capacity on various organizational problems is empirically tested. The statistical analysis is based on data from an online survey of $N = 5,100$ grassroots football clubs in Germany, Poland, Italy, Norway, and France.

## Organizational capacity

The concept of organizational capacity was originally conceptualized by Hall et al. (2003) for the Canadian non-profit sector following extensive focus groups. The three-dimensional framework – consisting of human resources, financial and structural capacity – has received increased attention in the non-profit sport context as a theoretical framework that allows a holistic analysis of the factors involved in an club's ability to achieve goals and meet stakeholders' expectations (e.g., Doherty et al., 2014; Millar &

Doherty, 2016; Misener & Doherty, 2009, 2013; Sharpe, 2006; Svensson & Hambrick, 2016; Wicker & Breuer, 2011, 2014). In the following paragraphs, the key components of the model are introduced (Figure 2.1).

*External factors* affect the organizational capacity and performance of a grassroots football club and include environmental constraints and facilitators, such as public policy frameworks, demographic development, and levels of competition among non- and for-profit organizations (Hall et al., 2003). *Human resource capacity* can be considered the key element that affects all other capacity dimensions and refers to *"the ability to deploy human capital (i.e., paid staff and volunteers) within the organization, and the competencies, knowledge, attitudes, motivation, and behaviors of these people"* (Hall et al., 2003, p. 37). This capacity dimension has been a primary research focus with the sports club context (Millar & Doherty, 2016), and different types of human resources have been found to be important determinants of various organizational problems (e.g., Koski, 1995; Nowy, Wicker, Feiler, & Breuer, 2015; Wicker & Breuer, 2013; Wicker, Breuer, & Hanau, 2012; Wicker et al., 2013).

The primary focus of grassroots football clubs might not be on making profit; however, they still need to break even as a first requirement for their
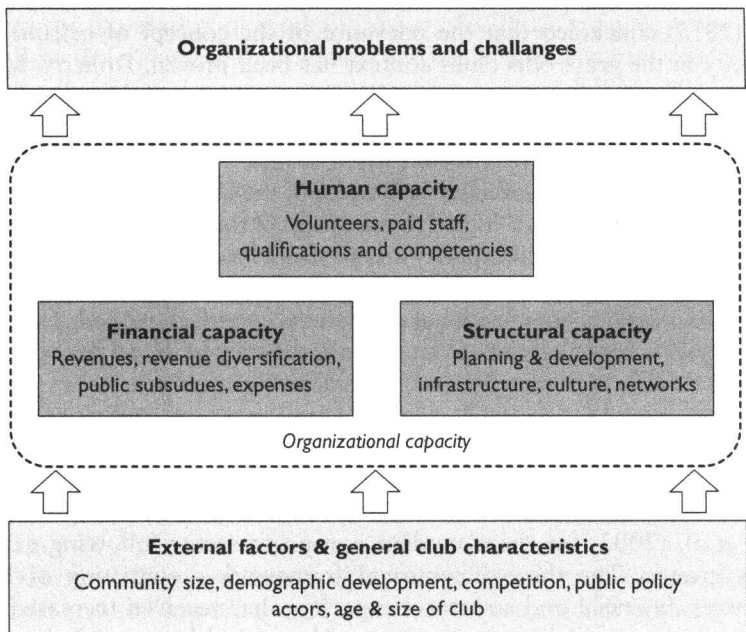


*Figure 2.1* Conceptual model of organizational capacity – modified after Hall et al. (2003) and Land (2001)

financial sustainability (Nowy et al., 2015; Winand, Zintz, & Scheerder, 2012). The second crucial dimension of organizational capacity is, therefore, *financial capacity*, which can be understood as the ability to develop and deploy financial capital (Hall et al., 2003). Previous research suggests that grassroots clubs across countries are likely to report notoriously low financial resources and financial problems (Breuer, Hoekman, Nagel, & van der Werff, 2015; Gumulka, Barr, Lasby, & Brownlee, 2005; Wicker & Breuer, 2014). Revenue diversification and resource acquisition were suggested to be critical, as they give grassroots clubs more flexibility to achieve their organizational goals (Doherty et al., 2014; Millar & Doherty, 2016; Wicker & Breuer, 2013)

*Structural capacity* includes three sub-dimensions and is referred to *"the ability to deploy non-financial capital that remains when the people from an organization have gone home"* (Hall et al., 2003, p. 5). The first sub-dimension, infrastructure and process capacity includes policies and organizational culture. Wicker and Breuer (2013) report that the use of own and/or shared facilities determines organizational problems in mixed ways. Organizational culture is manifested in cultural systems and socio-structural systems (Allaire & Firsirotu, 1984). Generally, sports clubs emphasize values such as fair play, tradition, and companionship (Breuer, Feiler et al., 2015). Maitland, Hills, and Rhind (2015) provide an extensive overview on organizational culture in the sports clubs context. A strong emphasis on tradition and companionship and conviviality was found to be beneficial for higher social cohesion within the clubs which in turn has the potential for lower organizational problem levels (Wicker & Breuer, 2013). The ability to develop and carry out strategic plans is part of the second sub-dimension, i.e., an organization's planning and development capacity. Planning was found to be a critical issue for grassroots clubs (Misener & Doherty, 2009), however, Wicker and Breuer (2013)reported that only a few clubs have strategic plans in place. Moreover, Doherty et al. (2014) showed that the implementation of such plans represents another challenge for the clubs. The third sub-dimension, *network and relationship capacity*, refers to an organization's ability to build and maintain relationships with external stakeholders and includes the engagement with partners (e.g., federations) and balanced relationships (Doherty et al., 2014; Hall et al., 2003; Svensson & Hambrick, 2016).

A grassroots football club's *outputs* and its intended *outcomes* depend upon its capacities and external environment (Hall et al., 2003). Typically, outputs can be defined as measures of the quantity of services delivered and outcome measures include client characteristics – or, in the case of grassroots football clubs, member characteristics such as age, income level, race, and gender (Land, 2001). Organizational problem levels are used as a proxy for organizational performance levels. In this context, it is assumed that organizations with less severe problems demonstrate higher performance levels (Breuer & Nowy, 2015).

## Method

### Data collection, sample size, and response rates

The empirical analysis of this study is based on a cross-sectional study that drew primary data from football clubs in Germany, Poland, Norway, Italy, and France through an online survey in 2014. The selection of participating associations was made in accordance with the project partner (UEFA) and was based on geographical and feasibility considerations. To ensure a qualified assessment of the current condition of the grassroots, the corresponding national federations were asked to provide contact information, i.e., e-mail addresses, of board members. E-mail addresses from more than 12,500 clubs were provided to the research team. For the survey of German clubs, Germany's federation invited board members via its internal mail-system. The sampled French clubs are part of the FondaCtion du Footbal, a project organization comprising of 282 clubs that are considered to be representative by and for the Fédération Française de Football (FFF). Potential respondents were assured the anonymity and confidentiality of the gathered data in an invitation e-mail in the respective language. This e-mail also included a personalized link to the questionnaire. To increase the completion rate of the survey, it was possible to suspend and complete it at a later point in time. Moreover, the link could be forwarded to other board members, for example, to the treasurer to fill out the financial questions. Incorrect e-mail addresses and strict spam-filter reduced the sample. As a result, 34,806 invitations to the survey were eventually delivered, and 5,100 clubs began the survey, with a total response rate of 15 % (Table 2.1).

*Table 2.1* Sample sizes, actual participants, and response rates

| Variable | Germany | Poland | Italy | Norway | France | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Population | 26,836 | 5,891 | 16,397 | 3,218 | 20,062 | 72,404 |
| Sub-population | 23,632 | 4,333 | 6,080 | 1,808 | 282 | 36,135 |
| Dropouts | 271 | 140 | 815 | 93 | 10 | 1,329 |
| Sample size | 23,361 | 4,193 | 5,265 | 1715 | 272 | 34,806 |
| Participants | 3,382 | 697 | 703 | 230 | 88 | 5,100 |
| Response rate | 14 % | 17 % | 13 % | 13 % | 32 % | 15 % |
| Share of respondents in statistical analysis | 67.9 % | 13.1 % | 13.3 % | 4.1 % | 1.7 % | 100 % |

Notes:
Population:        # of clubs registered in respective national association (Source: www.fifa.com/worldfootball/bigcount/clubs.html)
Sub-population:    # of e-mail addresses provided to research team (Germany: # of individual links provided to national football federation)
Dropouts:          # of clubs that could not be reached under the provided e-mail address
Sample Size:       # of invitations successfully delivered
Participants:      # of participation in responding to the online questionnaires

As the focus of this study lies on the grassroots of European football, clubs that compete in the four highest divisions were dropped from analysis. Comparing key characteristics of the resulting sample with the grassroots football club population in the respective countries is challenging, as appropriate data are scarce. It is not possible to claim that the drawn sample is completely representative even though there are some positive indications for representativeness.[1] Following the procedure suggested by Bartlett, Kotrlik, and Higgins (2001), the sample size can be considered big enough to infer the research findings back to the population.

## Operationalization of variables

### External factors

In order to control for country specific effects, dummy variables for the respective countries were formed. The size of the municipality / city the club is based in is assessed by the ordinal variable *communitysize* (1 < 20,000; 2 = 20,001–100,000; 3 = 100,001–500,000; 4 = more than 500,000 inhabitants) and respective dummy variables. The extent to which a club is challenged by the current demographic development is captured by the variable *demographic* (5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = no problem at all to 5 = a very big problem). To assess the power of public policy actors, clubs indicated on a 5-point Likert scale, whether the public subsidies they receive are subject to specific conditions (*conditional_subsidies*). Also, they reported their subjective perception of the power of local sports authorities to manifest their sports policy through strict regulations for the provided subsidies (*PLSA*). The perceived level of competition is assessed through an additive index ranging from 0 (no problem at all) to 100 (very high problem) which is based on the components competition with other football clubs, for-profit, and public sport institutions (*competition_index;* Cronbach's $\alpha$: 0.7).

### General club characteristics

Following the procedure of Vos, Wicker, Breuer, and Scheerder (2013), a set of background variables, i.e., general club characteristics, was included. Since previous research in the grassroots sports context has suggested that age of the club might be associated with the ability to generate income (Wicker et al., 2013), the variable *age_orga* was included. Wicker, Breuer, Lamprecht, and Fischer (2014) found evidence that organizational size is critical with respect to various organizational problems, therefore, board members were asked to report membership numbers in four age /gender categories leading to the variables *member*, *member²* (included to detect non-linear effects), and shares of female (*f_members*) and youth members (*y_members*). *Competitive* is the variable that captures a club's emphasis

on competitive football and not just on recreational aspects (5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = do not agree at all to 5 = totally agree). The number of active teams in the club is assessed with the variable *numberteams*. When a club has at least one team for kids and teenagers under the age of 18, *youthteam_dummy* takes on the value of 1, otherwise 0. A dummy variable for clubs with a senior team (i.e., only players above 30 years) was formed (*seniorteam_dummy*).

### Organizational capacities

To assess the human resource capacity, clubs provided information on the number of core volunteers (any volunteer in a formal position, such as president, treasurer, coach, physio, etc.) and whether those positions were financially rewarded or not. A club's core voluntary engagement (*cv*) was then obtained by dividing the number of core volunteers by the total membership number of the club. Since research of Adriaanse and Schofield (2014) and Nagel, Schlesinger, Bayle, and Giauque (2015) suggests that clubs more and more implement paid staff, *cv_paid* is included in the analysis. The competencies and knowledge of the deployed human capital is operationalized by the two variables *qual_staff* (the share of training staff with a formal qualification) and *com_skills*. The latter variable was assessed by the level of agreement of board members on the statement "*Our club has sufficient computer skills*" (5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = do not agree at all to 5 = totally agree). The final variable within this capacity dimension is *sv*, which represents the share of volunteers in the club which has no formal position, yet, occasionally volunteers for the club.

For the financial capacity dimension, clubs were asked to provide information on their total revenues and expenses in 2013 and the respective proportions of several revenues categories to total revenues. The revenue categories included revenue streams from membership fees (*rev_mem_share*), public subsidies (*rev_pub_share*), other forms of subsidies (*rev_ofs_share*), subsidies from federations (*rev_fed_share*), revenues from commercial activities (*rev_com_share*), donations (*rev_don_share*), restaurant operations (*rev_res_share*), social and sporting events (*rev_soc_share* and *rev_sev_share*), credit and loans (*rev_cal_share*), and other forms of revenues (*rev_ofr_share*). Revenue diversification (*rev_diversity*) is calculated by adding up the squared shares of a club's revenue categories and subtracted from 1 (Carroll & Stater, 2009; Wicker & Breuer, 2014). Respectively, clubs indicated their expenses in the categories players (*exp_ply_share*), coaches and training staff (*exp_cts_share*), facilities (*exp_fac_share*), administrative staff (*exp_adm_share*), equipment (*exp_equ_share*), insurances (*exp_ins_share*), taxes and fees (*exp_taf_share*), membership in federations (*exp_mif_share*), and other expenses (*exp_ofe_share*). Other financial indicators include per capita revenues (*rev_pc*), and the dummy

variable *BE*, which takes on the value of 1 when revenues were greater or equal to expenses in 2013.

Within the structural capacity, infrastructure is operationalized through four variables: *f_own*, *f_shared*, *f_both*, and *it_infra*. While the first three variables are objectively measured by a board member's indication whether the club uses own and/or shared facilities, the latter was assessed on a 5-point Likert scale on the statement "*Our club's IT-infrastructure is sufficient*" (1 = do not agree at all – 5 totally agree). Two variables capture cultural systems of a grassroots football club: *v_tradition* and *v_companionship*. A club's emphasis on those two values was again measured on a 5-point Likert scale. The sub-dimension planning and development is operationalized through *strategy* and *develop*. Board members reported their level of agreement on the statement "*Our club has a strategic policy*" (5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = do not agree at all to 5 = totally agree) and whether the club specifically had a person in charge for the development of training staff and volunteers. Clubs indicated whether they cooperated with another institution in 2013 (*coop*), and – if they did – also the type of institution they cooperated with. This led to the variables *coop_fpo* (cooperation with a for-profit institution), *coop_preschool* (cooperation with a kindergarten), *coop_school* (cooperation with a school), *coop_club* (cooperation with another sports club), *coop_public* (cooperation with a public institution), and *coop_other* (other institution). Additionally, clubs that cooperated with another institution also stated the nature of cooperation, i.e., common offers (*coop_offer*), shared use of facilities and/or equipment (*coop_usage*), shared employment/development of training staff (*coop_tstaff*), sharing experiences and knowledge (*coop_experience*), or other forms of cooperation (*coop_oform*). To assess whether the relationship with one key stakeholder is balanced, clubs were asked to indicate their level of agreement on the statement: "*Our club works hand in hand with football federations*" (5-point Likert scale; *federation*).

## Organizational problems

All considered organizational problems are assessed on 5-point Likert scales (ranging from 1 = no problem at all – 5 = a very big problem). They include attracting /retaining members (*p_member*), training staff (*p_trainingstaff*), young competitive athletes (*p_youngtalent*), volunteers (*p_volunteer*), referees (*p_referees*), the costs of running the sport (*p_opcostgame*), the condition and timely availability of facilities (*p_f_condition* and *p_f_time*), uncertainty of future public subsidies (*p_uncertain_subs*), and the general financial and overall situation of the club (*p_finance* and *p_outlook*). *Shadow of the game* problems cover discrimination (*p_discrimination*), racism (*p_racism*), and violence (*p_violence*) incidents on match day. When clubs indicated that a particular problem was very big, they were asked in a second step whether

that problem poses a threat to the sustainability of the club. The variable *1tts_dummy* takes on the value of 1 when a club reports at least one such threat to its sustainability.

### Data analyses

Statistical analysis was performed with STATA 11. After checking data for plausibility, content validity, and extreme outliners, implausible values were set to missing values. Factor analysis was used to identify patterns in the considered organizational problems and to reduce them into a structured handful of dimensions (Hair, Anderson, Tatham, & Black, 2009). This led to three problem dimensions (labeled *strategic, operative, shadow of game*), for which additive indexes ranging from 0–100 were constructed. Their internal consistency is acceptable with Cronbach's α levels above the suggested threshold of 0.7 (Andrews, 2010). Descriptive statistics include one-way ANOVAs for the external factors and general club characteristics, organizational capacities and problems and challenges to portray country-specific differences. To analyze the impact of organizational capacities in concert with each other while controlling for external factors and general club characteristics, 15 OLS-multivariate regression models within three problem dimensions were constructed. Within each problem dimension one model is carried out for the combined sample of German, Polish, Italian, Norwegian, and French clubs (Models 1, 2, and 3), where the German clubs serve as the reference group. Additionally, country-level regression models were constructed, e.g., for the *strategic* problem dimension Models 1 a-d. No country-specific regression models for France are reported as the number of observations was too small for the complex regression models. An α-level of 0.1 is used for the multivariate regression models. Multicollinearity was not a problem, as tolerance values for each independent variable in the five regression models were above 0.1, and the variance inflation factor for each independent variable was below 10 (Belsley, Kuh, & Welsch, 1980).

## Results

### Descriptive statistics

#### External factors

Roughly 72% of the sampled German and Polish grassroots football clubs are based in small municipalities/cities that have less than 20,000 inhabitants, while this number amounts to 60% of Italian and 58% of Norwegian clubs. The public subsidies that football clubs receive from local authorities are subject to relatively high conditions across all countries. Restrictions are highest for German ($M_G = 3.78$) and lowest for French clubs ($M_F = 3.18$).

The actual power of local authorities to implement their intended sports policy through their subsidies is lowest in Germany ($M_G$ = 2.52) and highest in Poland ($M_P$ = 3.19). For Polish clubs, the competitive environment is most pronounced ($M_P$ = 42.52); Norwegian ($M_N$ = 29.88) and German clubs ($M_G$ = 31.95) consider competition to be less of an issue (Table 2.2).

## General club characteristics

Italian clubs are particularly young compared to their European counterparts. French clubs are biggest in size (on average 387 members) – almost five times bigger than Polish clubs (79 members). The share of female members is astonishingly low for Italian ($M_I$ = 3.4 %) and Polish ($M_P$ = 5.7 %) clubs and extraordinary high for Norwegian clubs ($M_N$ = 29.8 %). The sampled Italian clubs appear to focus on young players as more than four out of five members are under the age of 18. German clubs demonstrate the lowest emphasis on the competitive aspect of football ($M_G$ = 2.26), while for Norwegian ($M_N$ = 3.16) and French clubs ($M_F$ = 3.54), this aspect is more important. The relative small size of football clubs in Poland is also reflected in the total number of active teams ($M_P$ = 5.36), which is only a fourth of the number of teams in Norwegian clubs ($M_N$ = 14.57). Nine out of ten sampled clubs have at least one youth team, and seven out of ten have a team particularly designed for players over the age of 30 years. As the

Table 2.2 ANOVA – external factors and general club characteristics

| Variable | Germany | Poland | Italy | Norway | France | Combined | F | Sig. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | External Factors | | | | | |
| sizeofcommunity1 | 73.37 | 71.54 | 59.87 | 57.26 | 64.71 | 69.90 | 7.67 | *** |
| demographic | 3.32 | 3.45 | 2.74 | 2.34 | 2.43 | 3.21 | 45.90 | |
| subs_conditional | 3.78 | 3.65 | 3.38 | 3.46 | 3.18 | 3.69 | 10.42 | *** |
| PLSA | 2.52 | 3.19 | 2.68 | 3.18 | 2.67 | 2.67 | 31.94 | *** |
| competition_ index | 31.95 | 42.52 | 38.10 | 29.88 | 33.18 | 34.09 | 23.35 | *** |
| | | | General Club Characteristics | | | | | |
| age_orga | 76.48 | 38.22 | 31.91 | 74.44 | 48.48 | 65.17 | 249.55 | *** |
| totalmembers | 272.33 | 78.99 | 164.28 | 276.51 | 386.50 | 230.74 | 123.71 | *** |
| share_f_members | 12.24 | 5.71 | 3.44 | 29.84 | 8.06 | 10.82 | 90.23 | *** |
| share_y_members | 41.59 | 48.03 | 81.82 | 69.83 | 59.89 | 49.56 | 213.70 | *** |
| competitive | 2.26 | 2.84 | 2.88 | 3.16 | 3.54 | 2.48 | 68.24 | *** |
| numberteams | 10.74 | 5.36 | 14.57 | 20.15 | 19.29 | 11.03 | 73.29 | *** |
| youthteam_ dummy | 89.25 | 83.76 | 99.39 | 91.13 | 98.04 | 89.94 | 13.62 | *** |
| seniorteam_ dummy | 78.22 | 75.00 | 41.59 | 46.77 | 62.75 | 71.55 | 61.27 | *** |

*** p < 0.001, ** p < 0.01, * p < 0.05.

ANOVAs indicate all external factors and club characteristics differ significantly across countries.

## Organizational capacities

Turning the focus on the organizational capacities of the sampled grassroots football clubs, Norwegian, German, and French clubs show similar figures regarding core volunteers (around 13%); this figure is almost twice as high for Polish ($M_p = 20.2\%$) and Italian ($M_I = 21.3\%$) clubs (Table 2.3). The

Table 2.3 ANOVA – human resource and structural capacity dimension

| Variable | Germany | Poland | Italy | Norway | France | Combined | F | Sig. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Human Resource Capacity | | | | | | | | |
| cv | 12.91 | 20.15 | 21.27 | 13.18 | 12.43 | 14.87 | 52.35 | *** |
| cv_paid | 15.09 | 10.30 | 30.48 | 5.70 | 18.32 | 15.73 | 42.39 | *** |
| qual_staff | 35.72 | 79.50 | 53.54 | 45.87 | 60.63 | 45.14 | 164.91 | *** |
| com_skills | 3.66 | 3.30 | 3.66 | 3.24 | 3.32 | 3.59 | 18.20 | *** |
| sv | 27.77 | 43.02 | 42.79 | 43.14 | 38.31 | 32.71 | 42.80 | *** |
| Planning & Development | | | | | | | | |
| strategy | 3.44 | 3.22 | 3.82 | 3.72 | 3.40 | 3.47 | 21.11 | *** |
| develop | 32.27 | 17.26 | 23.53 | 23.58 | 46.81 | 28.94 | 11.91 | *** |
| Infrastructure & Culture | | | | | | | | |
| f_own | 63.05 | 41.48 | 20.57 | 82.89 | 50.00 | 55.78 | 90.03 | *** |
| f_shared | 74.51 | 86.07 | 85.96 | 76.92 | 95.16 | 78.02 | 15.47 | *** |
| f_both | 39.26 | 32.75 | 12.50 | 61.18 | 45.16 | 36.36 | 38.61 | *** |
| it_infra | 3.03 | 2.41 | 3.29 | 2.87 | 3.06 | 2.97 | 38.58 | *** |
| v_tradition | 3.49 | 3.63 | 3.82 | 3.32 | 3.44 | 3.54 | 13.61 | *** |
| v_companionship | 4.17 | 4.01 | 4.51 | 4.42 | 4.28 | 4.20 | 24.85 | *** |
| Relationship & Networking | | | | | | | | |
| coop | 53.62 | 85.11 | 66.45 | 64.00 | 72.55 | 60.56 | 36.42 | *** |
| Club cooperates with ... | | | | | | | | |
| coop_fpo | 4.71 | 27.39 | 26.45 | 27.20 | 31.37 | 12.17 | 76.84 | *** |
| coop_preschool | 20.67 | 21.28 | 13.23 | 12.80 | 11.76 | 19.32 | 3.92 | ** |
| coop_school | 36.39 | 70.48 | 42.58 | 30.40 | 62.75 | 42.28 | 43.45 | *** |
| coop_club | 38.86 | 69.15 | 49.03 | 56.80 | 33.33 | 45.20 | 33.27 | *** |
| coop_public | 14.98 | 50.80 | 39.35 | 35.20 | 43.14 | 24.58 | 78.15 | *** |
| coop_other | 7.35 | 19.41 | 15.16 | 7.20 | 25.49 | 10.37 | 18.42 | *** |
| Club cooperates by ... | | | | | | | | |
| coop_offer | 37.66 | 66.22 | 44.19 | 12.80 | 39.22 | 41.40 | 39.38 | *** |
| coop_usage | 40.41 | 75.00 | 53.55 | 54.40 | 52.94 | 47.89 | 41.51 | *** |
| coop_tstaff | 25.20 | 40.96 | 29.68 | 31.20 | 43.14 | 28.65 | 11.11 | *** |
| coop_experience | 27.32 | 63.56 | 51.61 | 42.40 | 41.18 | 36.44 | 58.52 | *** |
| coop_oform | 26.87 | 30.32 | 20.97 | 32.80 | 25.49 | 26.92 | 2.52 | * |
| federations | 3.64 | 3.95 | 4.14 | 3.83 | 4.30 | 3.76 | 28.30 | *** |

*** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$.

share of paid core volunteers ranges from 6% in Norwegian to 30% in Italian football clubs. Formally qualified training staff is by far most likely to be found in Polish clubs ($M_p = 79.5\%$), followed by their counterparts in France, Italy, and Norway – German clubs display the lowest respective share ($M_G = 35.7\%$). German and Italian clubs are most likely to be convinced that their clubs can count on sufficient computer skills ($M_G = M_I = 3.66$); Norwegian clubs perceive such skills to be below average ($M_N = 3.24$). The share of secondary volunteers is lowest in German clubs ($M_G = 27.8\%$) and around 43% in Italian, Norwegian, and Polish grassroots football clubs.

Italian ($M_I = 3.82$) and Norwegian ($M_N = 3.72$) clubs are most likely to follow a strategic concept, French ($M_F = 46.8\%$) and German ($M_G = 32.3\%$) clubs are most likely to have a person in charge for the development of their training staff and volunteers. Substantial differences in the infrastructural resources from which the clubs can draw upon exist: while only one out of five Italian clubs uses its own facilities, four out of five Norwegian clubs practice football within own facilities. Furthermore, 78% of all investigated clubs – and almost all French clubs – use shared facilities. About 36% of the sampled clubs use their own facilities and shared facilities. The IT-infrastructure of European grassroots football clubs still has room for improvement, particularly in Polish clubs. Of all sampled federations, Italian clubs value tradition and companionship/conviviality the most – Norwegian clubs value tradition least, Polish clubs companionship/conviviality, respectively. About one-half of the German clubs cooperates with another institution; in other countries, the share is significantly higher: for example, 85% of the Polish clubs report at least one institution they work together with. While only less than 5% of all sampled German clubs cooperate with a for-profit institution, this share is at least four times higher in the other sampled countries. On average, four out of nine clubs cooperate with another sports club, four out of ten with schools, a fourth cooperates with public institutions, a fifth with kindergartens, and roughly a tenth with other institutions. More than half of the sampled clubs share their knowledge and experiences with another institution; for Polish clubs, this amounts to almost two-thirds. Additionally, many sampled clubs (48%) cooperate in the form of sharing equipment. French ($M_F = 4.30$) and Italian ($M_I = 3.95$) clubs perceive their relationship with their governing federations to be more balanced than German clubs ($M_G = 3.64$).

Turning the focus on the financial capacity and, in particular, the revenue structure of the grassroots football clubs, substantial differences can be observed (Table 2.4). With the exception of Polish clubs, revenues from membership fees are the most important revenue stream for the sampled clubs. Polish clubs heavily depended on public subsidies (almost 64% of total revenues) and also demonstrate the highest share of revenues from other forms of subsidies. Italian clubs report the highest share of revenues from commercial activities ($M_I = 25.0\%$) and credit and loans ($M_I = 1.2\%$). Norwegian clubs lead in revenues from sporting events ($M_N = 4.2\%$) and

*Table 2.4* ANOVAs – financial capacity dimension

| Variable | Germany | Poland | Italy | Norway | France | Combined | F | Sig. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Share of revenue category to total revenues (in %) ... | | | | | | | | |
| rev_mem_share | 39.30 | 11.90 | 45.26 | 31.21 | 28.05 | 35.14 | 98.64 | *** |
| rev_pub_share | 6.98 | 63.61 | 8.20 | 10.45 | 27.74 | 16.49 | 958.4 | *** |
| rev_ofs_share | 1.38 | 2.61 | 0.21 | 0.62 | 2.07 | 1.41 | 7.17 | *** |
| rev_fed_share | 3.49 | 0.54 | 0.71 | 2.17 | 2.63 | 2.63 | 13.74 | *** |
| rev_com_share | 14.73 | 7.56 | 24.98 | 19.85 | 12.51 | 15.02 | 48.27 | *** |
| rev_don_share | 8.50 | 7.99 | 4.78 | 3.47 | 4.91 | 7.67 | 11.89 | *** |
| rev_res_share | 8.05 | 0.36 | 2.93 | 6.06 | 0.23 | 6.01 | 42.01 | *** |
| rev_soc_share | 7.59 | 1.22 | 4.32 | 6.04 | 15.14 | 6.29 | 39.33 | *** |
| rev_sev_share | 7.04 | 1.45 | 4.20 | 9.12 | 3.42 | 5.87 | 39.50 | *** |
| rev_cal_share | 0.65 | 0.29 | 1.22 | 0.22 | 0.28 | 0.63 | 3.42 | ** |
| rev_ofr_share | 2.18 | 2.48 | 2.61 | 10.78 | 3.02 | 2.70 | 22.85 | *** |
| Share of expense category to total expenses ... | | | | | | | | |
| exp_ply_share | 4.84 | 2.70 | 6.19 | 0.32 | 3.33 | 4.42 | 8.50 | *** |
| exp_fac_share | 16.54 | 13.27 | 20.16 | 18.84 | 2.12 | 16.27 | 16.14 | *** |
| exp_adm_share | 1.13 | 2.30 | 2.04 | 4.00 | 12.05 | 1.77 | 35.63 | *** |
| exp_equ_share | 15.76 | 20.57 | 18.70 | 19.07 | 21.26 | 17.13 | 12.53 | *** |
| exp_ins_share | 6.61 | 5.19 | 7.09 | 6.14 | 4.47 | 6.38 | 5.54 | *** |
| exp_taf_share | 7.08 | 8.14 | 6.74 | 3.13 | 1.67 | 6.92 | 14.95 | *** |
| exp_mif_share | 9.83 | 11.34 | 3.90 | 2.48 | 14.33 | 9.12 | 34.76 | *** |
| exp_ofe_share | 10.07 | 12.90 | 4.89 | 23.78 | 17.37 | 10.70 | 30.47 | *** |
| Financial performance indicators | | | | | | | | |
| rev2013 pc | 116.01 | 181.02 | 550.13 | 538.82 | 294.39 | 200.46 | 12.02 | *** |
| rev_diversity | 0.65 | 0.36 | 0.51 | 0.67 | 0.70 | 0.58 | 139.94 | *** |
| breakingeven | 76.36 | 60.12 | 72.05 | 81.55 | 74.42 | 73.51 | 10.59 | *** |
| exp_cts_share | 22.68 | 21.55 | 23.52 | 14.99 | 22.56 | 22.23 | 4.14 | ** |

*** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$.

other forms of revenues ($M_N = 10.8\%$), German clubs in the revenues categories federations ($M_G = 3.5\%$), donations ($M_G = 8.5\%$), and restaurant activities ($M_G = 8.1\%$). French clubs have the highest shares of revenues from social events ($M_F = 15.1\%$) across the sampled countries. The financial capacity of a football club also includes the ability to deploy financial capital. Comparing the different expense categories reveals that Italian clubs have the highest share of expenses for players ($M_I = 6.2\%$), training staff ($M_I = 23.5\%$), facilities ($M_I = 20.2\%$), and insurances ($M_I = 7.1\%$). French clubs, on the other side, have the highest shares in the categories administrative staff ($M_F = 12.1\%$), equipment ($M_F = 21.3\%$), membership in federations ($M_F = 14.33\%$), and other expenses ($M_F = 17.4\%$). The expenses for training staff are the biggest expense category for all sampled clubs – except for Norwegian clubs. Per-member revenues are highest for Italian clubs ($M_N = €\ 550.13$) and lowest for German clubs ($M_G = €\ 116.01$). Revenue diversity is lowest in Polish clubs ($M_P = 0.36$) – as their high dependence on

public subsidies already suggests – and highest for French ($M_N = 0.70$) and Norwegian clubs ($M_F = 0.67$). Norwegian clubs demonstrate the best financial management since almost 82% of the sampled clubs were able to break even – compared to 60% of the sampled Polish clubs.

### Organizational problems

Within the first problem dimension (*strategic*), Polish clubs report the highest ($M_P = 68.51$) and Norwegian clubs the lowest ($M_N = 38.89$) index scores. Uncertain future subsides are perceived to be more problematic than any other problem in this dimension in all sampled countries (Table 2.5). Attracting/retaining volunteers is the most problematic challenge ($M = 3.98$) that the sampled clubs are facing within the *operative* problem dimension. German clubs show particularly high problem levels for all three problems and the respective index ($M_G = 75.07$), while Polish clubs perceive this dimension less problematic ($M_P = 51.16$). The sampled clubs do not perceive the

*Table 2.5* ANOVAs – problems and challenges

| Variable | Germany | Poland | Italy | Norway | France | Combined | F | Sig. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Problem Dimension 1 ($\alpha = 0.8$) – Strategic | | | | | | | | |
| p_finance | 3.05 | 4.01 | 3.49 | 2.34 | 3.11 | 3.21 | 79.30 | *** |
| p_outlook | 2.69 | 3.54 | 2.86 | 2.14 | 2.05 | 2.80 | 62.23 | *** |
| p_uncertain_subs | 3.31 | 4.03 | 3.93 | 2.92 | 3.98 | 3.48 | 53.74 | *** |
| p_member | 3.25 | 3.41 | 3.18 | 2.82 | 3.18 | 3.24 | 7.34 | *** |
| Index PD1 | 51.91 | 68.51 | 59.11 | 38.89 | 52.01 | 54.48 | 69.51 | *** |
| Problem Dimension 2 ($\alpha = 0.7$) – Operative | | | | | | | | |
| p_trainingstaff | 3.75 | 3.06 | 2.85 | 3.03 | 3.32 | 3.50 | 76.43 | *** |
| p_volunteer | 4.20 | 3.38 | 3.57 | 3.56 | 4.02 | 3.98 | 74.81 | *** |
| p_referees | 4.06 | 2.71 | 2.45 | 3.39 | 3.16 | 3.63 | 218.99 | *** |
| Index PD2 | 75.07 | 51.16 | 48.98 | 58.15 | 62.50 | 67.62 | 202.55 | *** |
| Problem Dimension 3 ($\alpha = 0.8$) – Shadow of the Game | | | | | | | | |
| p_discrimination | 1.50 | 1.61 | 1.90 | 1.45 | 1.93 | 1.57 | 20.54 | *** |
| p_violence | 1.35 | 1.52 | 1.91 | 1.22 | 2.07 | 1.45 | 54.53 | *** |
| p_racism | 1.23 | 1.13 | 1.71 | 1.25 | 1.73 | 1.28 | 52.66 | *** |
| Index PD3 | 9.05 | 10.56 | 21.06 | 7.67 | 22.73 | 10.87 | 49.90 | *** |
| Other Problems and Challenges | | | | | | | | |
| p_opcostgame | 3.45 | 3.86 | 3.65 | 2.84 | 3.82 | 3.51 | 27.55 | *** |
| p_f_condition | 2.59 | 3.39 | 3.59 | 2.50 | 3.05 | 2.82 | 63.18 | *** |
| p_f_time | 2.18 | 2.69 | 3.25 | 2.83 | 2.75 | 2.42 | 56.24 | *** |
| p_youngtalent | 3.26 | 3.53 | 3.07 | 2.22 | 2.89 | 3.22 | 34.25 | *** |
| Share of clubs with at least one threat to its sustainability (in %) | | | | | | | | |
| Itts_dummy | 57.13 | 67.93 | 62.18 | 26.43 | 64.29 | 57.95 | 20.10 | *** |

*** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$.

*shadow of the game* to be problematic; French ($M_F = 22.73$) and Italian ($M_I = 21.06$) clubs demonstrate index scores that are at least twice as high as the scores of German ($M_G = 9.05$), Polish ($M_P = 10.56$), and Norwegian ($M_N = 7.67$) clubs. The costs of running the game ($M = 3.51$), the condition of the used facilities ($M = 2.82$) and the attraction/retention of young talented ($M = 3.22$) are least problematic for Norwegian clubs. Italian clubs suffer the most from the condition ($M_I = 3.59$) and timely availability of facilities ($M_I = 3.25$), and Polish clubs from the operative costs ($M_P = 3.86$).

## Analytical results

### Strategic problem dimension

As can be seen in Table 2.6, Norwegian and younger clubs per se, clubs in smaller municipalities /cities, clubs that are less affected by the demographic development and the competitive situation as well as clubs facing powerful local sports authorities demonstrate lower problem index scores in the strategic problem dimension (Model 1). Moreover, more (male) members and a weaker focus on the competitive aspect of football can be associated with lower problem levels (Table 2.6).

Several of the 18 considered organizational capacities have the potential to contribute to lower problem index scores, including higher shares of secondary volunteers, breaking even, higher shares of expenses on training staff, following a strategic concept, a stronger emphasis on companionship and conviviality (and less on traditional values), a sufficient IT infrastructure, cooperating with other institutions, and a balanced relationship with federations. The normalized beta coefficients indicate that the most influential capacity is following a strategic concept.

Controlling for external factors and general club characteristics, a country-level analysis of the strategic problem dimension reveals for German clubs (Model 1a) that the two most beneficial organizational capacities are breaking even and following a strategic concept. For the Polish clubs (Model 1b), the respective capacities are cooperating with another institution and breaking even. Sufficient computer skills and IT infrastructure appear to be the most beneficial determinant for Italian clubs (Model 1c) with respect to this problem dimension. Norwegian clubs (Model 1d) report lower problem index scores when they have higher shares of core volunteers and more balanced relationships with federations.

### Operative problem dimension

The analysis of the second problem dimension shows that all country-dummies have negative coefficients – this means that problem levels in the reference country Germany are significantly higher than in any other considered

Table 2.6 Regression models: strategic problem dimension

| | (1) | (1a) | (1b) | (1c) | (1d) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Combined Sample | Germany | Poland | Italy | Norway |
| | | | External factors | | |
| dummy_poland | 14.576*** (0.225) | | | | |
| dummy_italy | 14.741*** (0.196) | | | | |
| dummy_norway | -4.858* (-0.049) | | | | |
| dummy_france | 7.404** (0.050) | | | | |
| sizeofcommunity2 | 3.597** (0.060) | 3.875** (0.063) | -0.237 (-0.004) | 2.310 (0.048) | 0.535 (0.013) |
| sizeofcommunity3 | 5.647*** (0.065) | 7.350*** (0.088) | -1.903 (-0.021) | -1.250 (-0.016) | -5.062 (-0.089) |
| sizeofcommunity4 | 3.633 (0.033) | 3.356 (0.034) | 10.374 (0.085) | -1.335 (-0.005) | -3.125 (-0.040) |
| demographic | 4.271*** (0.234) | 5.159*** (0.282) | 2.306 (0.118) | 0.870 (0.051) | 1.192 (0.077) |
| conditional_subsidies | 0.657 (0.036) | 0.651 (0.036) | 0.555 (0.037) | 2.156 (0.120) | -1.326 (-0.074) |
| PLSA | -1.929*** (-0.102) | -3.579*** (-0.182) | 2.428** (0.155) | -1.846 (-0.106) | -0.681 (-0.047) |
| competition_index | 0.274*** (0.268) | 0.271*** (0.260) | 0.247*** (0.252) | 0.337*** (0.431) | 0.375*** (0.378) |
| | | | General club characteristics | | |
| age_orga | 0.060*** (0.096) | 0.061*** (0.092) | 0.027 (0.037) | 0.088 (0.131) | 0.066 (0.113) |
| totalmembers | -0.019*** (-0.160) | -0.035*** (-0.298) | -0.011 (-0.034) | 0.028 (0.235) | -0.023 (-0.298) |
| member$^2$ | 0.000* (0.085) | 0.000*** (0.243) | 0.000(0.065) | 0.000 (-0.403) | 0.000 (0.264) |
| share_f_members | 0.065* (0.042) | 0.007 (0.004) | 0.136 (0.078) | 0.189 (0.139) | 0.247** (0.247) |
| share_y_members | -0.019 (-0.023) | -0.039 (-0.040) | -0.081 (-0.108) | -0.030 (-0.024) | -0.002 (-0.003) |
| competitive | 0.953* (0.047) | 1.160* (0.056) | -0.210 (-0.011) | 0.898 (0.042) | 1.272 (0.061) |
| | | | Organizational capacities | | |
| cv_engagement | -0.076 (-0.037) | -0.032 (-0.013) | -0.131 (-0.089) | -0.217 (-0.125) | -0.590** (-0.329) |
| paid_share | -0.044 (-0.039) | -0.015 (-0.013) | -0.108 (-0.077) | -0.186** (-0.211) | 0.658*** (0.263) |
| qual_staff | -0.015 (-0.022) | -0.005 (-0.007) | -0.001 (-0.002) | -0.054 (-0.077) | -0.137 (-0.244) |
| com_skills | 0.126 (0.006) | -0.098 (-0.004) | 1.589 (0.105) | -5.777** (-0.250) | 0.416 (0.024) |

(Continued)

Table 2.6 (Continued)

| | (1)<br>Combined Sample | (1a)<br>Germany | (1b)<br>Poland | (1c)<br>Italy | (1d)<br>Norway |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| sv | **-0.042** (-0.051)** | -0.042 (-0.044) | -0.030 (-0.048) | -0.002 (-0.004) | -0.105 (-0.188) |
| rev13_pc | 0.000 (-0.020) | 0.004 (0.032) | -0.003 (-0.036) | 0.000 (-0.030) | **0.005*** (0.403)** |
| revdiv | 1.305 (0.012) | -1.203 (-0.010) | 7.834 (0.080) | 6.131 (0.067) | 5.747 (0.039) |
| BE | **-5.750*** (-0.116)** | **-5.519*** (-0.115)** | **-10.062*** (-0.218)** | -4.317 (-0.091) | 1.750 (0.040) |
| exp_cts_share | **-0.051* (-0.043)** | -0.045 (-0.040) | -0.023 (-0.019) | -0.053 (-0.045) | -0.184 (-0.162) |
| strategy | **-2.674*** (-0.120)** | **-2.609*** (-0.119)** | -1.709 (-0.094) | -3.108 (-0.120) | -4.305 (-0.200) |
| develop | 0.056 (0.001) | 0.354 (0.007) | 2.655 (0.045) | 4.389 (0.081) | **10.559** (0.267)** |
| v_tradition | **1.475** (0.062)** | **1.850** (0.080)** | 1.158 (0.058) | -3.586 (-0.120) | **5.737** (0.273)** |
| v_companionship | **-1.820** (-0.064)** | **-3.149*** (-0.112)** | 0.575 (0.025) | 2.857 (0.071) | 1.876 (0.060) |
| f_own | -1.114 (-0.024) | 0.044 (0.001) | **-5.934* (-0.135)** | -3.241 (-0.052) | -12.837 (-0.247) |
| f_other | 1.33 (0.023) | 2.303 (0.043) | -7.603 (-0.099) | -5.038 (-0.056) | -2.941 (-0.076) |
| it_infra | **-1.169*** (-0.061)** | -0.572 (-0.030) | -1.617 (-0.097) | **4.641* (0.217)** | -2.524 (-0.149) |
| coop | **-2.368*** (-0.051)** | **-2.238* (-0.050)** | **-15.512*** (-0.258)** | **-7.708* (-0.173)** | 3.899 (0.101) |
| federations | **-1.371*** (-0.064)** | **-0.988* (-0.048)** | **-2.119* (-0.112)** | -2.747 (-0.101) | **-6.497*** (-0.367)** |
| R-squared | 0.40 | 0.40 | 0.41 | 0.45 | 0.69 |

Normalized beta coefficients in parentheses; *** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$.

country (Model 2). The demographic development and competitive environment are again significantly affecting problem index scores, while powerful local public authorities appear to be beneficial. Older clubs are specifically challenged by this problem dimension (Table 2.7).

Statistically significant and beneficial organizational capacities in this model include higher shares of core volunteers and qualified training staff, better computer skills and higher shares of secondary volunteers. Following a strategic concept and having a person in charge of the development of training staff and volunteers and a stronger emphasis on traditional values is beneficial, too. The two capacities with the strongest influence are shares of secondary volunteers and qualified training staff.

On a country-specific level, higher shares of core volunteers and having a person in charge for the development of training staff and volunteers is particularly beneficial for German clubs (Model 2a). The problem index score for Polish (Model 2b) clubs is significantly lower when the share of core volunteers is higher and when clubs can use their own facilities. Only one significant (and beneficial) capacity for Italian clubs was found, i.e., the share of qualified staff (Model 2c). For Norwegian clubs, balanced relationships with federations seem to be the key contributor to lower problem index scores (Model 2d).

### Shadow of the game problem dimension

The statistical analysis of the problem dimension *shadow of the game* shows that external factors are significantly determining problem levels (Model 3). The problem dimension's index scores are significantly higher in Italian and French clubs and more than 6% higher in clubs that are based in big cities compared to those clubs that are based in municipalities/cities that have less than 20,000 inhabitants. Again, the demographic development in the corresponding region and the level of competition contribute to higher problem index scores. General club characteristics do not significantly determine the index score of this problem dimension (Table 2.8). Two beneficial organizational capacities were found, i.e., higher shares of secondary volunteers and better computer skills. However, it has to be acknowledged that the explanatory power of this model is relatively low.

German clubs with higher shares of qualified training staff and secondary volunteers, as well as clubs with better computer skills and clubs that use their own facilities and emphasize traditional values perceive this problem dimension less challenging (Model 3a). Following a strategic concept is particularly beneficial for Polish (Model 3b) and Italian (Model 3c) clubs. Moreover, revenue diversification appears to be the capacity that managers of Italian football clubs should turn their attention to with respect to lowering problem levels in this dimension. Norwegian clubs may want to consider increasing the shares of paid staff and emphasizing companionship/conviviality as those capacities (next to using own facilities) are beneficial for lower problem index scores.

Table 2.7 Regression models: operative problem dimension

| | (2) Combined Sample | (2a) Germany | (2b) Poland | (2c) Italy | (2d) Norway |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | External factors | | |
| dummy_poland | **-20.375*** (-0.305)** | | | | |
| dummy_italy | **-18.880*** (-0.242)** | | | | |
| dummy_norway | **-8.626*** (-0.084)** | | | | |
| dummy_france | -4.202 (-0.027) | | | | |
| sizeofcommunity2 | -2.216 (-0.036) | -1.150 (-0.021) | -2.858 (-0.045) | -1.841 (-0.036) | 4.091 (0.086) |
| sizeofcommunity3 | -2.367 (-0.026) | 0.539 (0.007) | -8.124 (-0.082) | -7.318 (-0.087) | -10.127 (-0.151) |
| sizeofcommunity4 | 0.569 (0.005) | 4.844 (0.053) | -1.695 (-0.013) | -31.666 (-0.119) | -11.486 (-0.125) |
| p_demographic | **3.693*** (0.196)** | **3.936*** (0.236)** | **5.215*** (0.247)** | **3.811** (0.206)** | 1.714 (0.094) |
| conditional_ subsidies | 0.229 (0.012) | 0.305 (0.018) | -0.688 (-0.043) | **4.739*** (0.243)** | **-5.913** (-0.280)** |
| PLSA | **-0.954** (-0.049)** | **-1.074* (-0.060)** | -0.651 (-0.038) | **-3.451** (-0.183)** | -2.609 (-0.153) |
| competition_ index | **0.195*** (0.184)** | **0.186*** (0.196)** | **0.207*** (0.195)** | **0.285*** (0.336)** | 0.159 (0.136) |
| | | | General club characteristics | | |
| age_orga | 0.039** (0.061) | **0.038* (0.062)** | -0.020 (-0.025) | 0.090 (0.124) | 0.102 (0.149) |
| totalmembers | -0.002 (-0.019) | -0.014 (-0.129) | -0.087 (-0.255) | **0.080** (0.625)** | **-0.084** (-0.937)** |
| member$^2$ | 0.000 (0.012) | **0.000* (0.138)** | 0.000 (0.212) | **-0.000*** (-0.724)** | **0.000*** (0.821)** |
| share_f_members | -0.008 (-0.005) | 0.024 (0.016) | -0.222 (-0.117) | 0.124 (0.084) | 0.067 (0.058) |
| share_y_members | 0.016 (0.018) | **0.056* (0.063)** | -0.098 (-0.121) | -0.041 (-0.030) | **0.311** (0.402)** |
| competitive | -0.568 (-0.027) | **-1.338*** (-0.071)** | 0.972 (0.047) | -1.292 (-0.055) | -1.879 (-0.076) |
| | | | Organizational capacities | | |
| cv_engagement | **-0.160*** (-0.075)** | **-0.216** (-0.098)** | **-0.306** (-0.193)** | -0.217 (-0.115) | -0.332 (-0.158) |
| paid_share | 0.012 (0.010) | 0.027 (0.025) | -0.042 (-0.027) | -0.085 (-0.089) | 0.663 (0.226) |
| qual_staff | **-0.059*** (-0.086)** | **-0.052** (-0.075)** | -0.009 (-0.013) | **-0.125* (-0.165)** | -0.109 (-0.165) |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| com_skills | **-1.133* (-0.052)** | **-1.536** (-0.075)** | -0.385 (-0.024) | 0.216 (0.009) | 1.252 (0.061) |
| sv | **-0.087*** (-0.102)** | **-0.116*** (-0.132)** | -0.063 (-0.093) | -0.006 (-0.008) | -0.135 (-0.206) |
| rev13_pc | -0.000 (-0.024) | 0.003 (0.028) | -0.006 (-0.068) | -0.000 (-0.020) | **0.004* (0.285)** |
| revdiv | -2.008 (-0.018) | -3.604 (-0.031) | **15.182* (0.142)** | 0.065 (0.001) | 5.087 (0.030) |
| BE | -1.448 (-0.028) | -2.182 (-0.050) | 1.566 (0.031) | -6.453 (-0.125) | 4.626 (0.089) |
| exp_cts_share | 0.004 (0.004) | 0.002 (0.002) | -0.008 (-0.006) | 0.110 (0.088) | 0.267 (0.200) |
| strategy | **-1.331** (-0.058)** | -0.453 (-0.023) | -1.714 (-0.088) | -2.266 (-0.080) | 1.539 (0.061) |
| develop | **-2.390* (-0.046)** | **-4.175*** (-0.095)** | 6.459 (0.100) | 7.666 (0.132) | 1.742 (0.038) |
| v_tradition | **-1.812*** (-0.074)** | **-1.540** (-0.073)** | -2.011 (-0.093) | -4.358 (-0.135) | 1.417 (0.057) |
| v_companionship | -0.803 (-0.027) | -0.842 (-0.033) | -0.780 (-0.032) | -1.762 (-0.040) | 3.267 (0.089) |
| f_own | -0.533 (-0.011) | 1.303 (0.031) | **-7.857** (-0.165)** | 3.262 (0.050) | -4.474 (-0.073) |
| f_other | -0.451 (-0.008) | -0.080 (-0.002) | -8.044 (-0.097) | 7.941 (0.087) | 0.040 (0.001) |
| it_infra | -0.430 (-0.022) | 0.208 (0.012) | -0.272 (-0.015) | -3.034 (-0.132) | 2.056 (0.104) |
| coop | -0.475 (-0.010) | -0.186 (-0.005) | **-9.293* (-0.142)** | -1.267 (-0.026) | 6.142 (0.136) |
| federations | -0.207 (-0.009) | 0.043 (0.002) | -1.191 (-0.058) | -0.577 (-0.020) | **-8.831** (-0.424)** |
| R-squared | 0.38 | 0.24 | 0.37 | 0.44 | 0.59 |

Normalized beta coefficients in parentheses; *** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$.

Table 2.8 Regression models: shadow of the game dimension

| | (3) Combined Sample | (3a) Germany | (3b) Poland | (3c) Italy | (3d) Norway |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | External factors | | |
| dummy_poland | -1.066 (-0.024) | | | | |
| dummy_italy | **9.535*** (0.182)** | | | | |
| dummy_norway | 0.467 (0.007) | | | | |
| dummy_france | **16.935*** (0.163)** | | | | |
| sizeofcommunity2 | **3.555*** (0.086)** | **4.552*** (0.121)** | -0.680 (-0.019) | 7.794 (0.136) | -5.542 (-0.194) |
| sizeofcommunity3 | 2.182 (0.036) | **3.677** (0.072)** | 3.426 (0.060) | -0.765 (-0.008) | -8.458 (-0.211) |
| sizeofcommunity4 | **6.382*** (0.083)** | **7.762*** (0.127)** | 5.874 (0.077) | -22.655 (-0.076) | -6.322 (-0.115) |
| demographic | **0.895** (0.070)** | 0.432 (0.039) | 1.346 (0.111) | 2.451 (0.119) | -1.452 (-0.134) |
| conditional_ subsidies | -0.298 (-0.024) | -0.543 (-0.049) | 0.374 (0.041) | 0.972 (0.045) | -0.511 (-0.041) |
| PLSA | 0.374 (0.029) | 0.293 (0.024) | 0.659 (0.068) | 1.412 (0.067) | 1.271 (0.125) |
| competition_ index | **0.110*** (0.154)** | **0.103*** (0.162)** | -0.043 (-0.071) | **0.189** (0.201)** | **0.461*** (0.663)** |
| | | | General club characteristics | | |
| age_orga | -0.009 (-0.020) | 0.001 (0.001) | -0.007 (-0.017) | -0.016 (-0.020) | **0.150* (0.365)** |
| totalmembers | -0.001 (-0.014) | -0.007 (-0.093) | 0.081 (0.411) | -0.003 (-0.018) | 0.017 (0.319) |
| member$^2$ | 0.000 (0.021) | 0.000 (0.014) | -0.000 (-0.354) | -0.000 (-0.043) | 0.000 (0.125) |
| share_f_members | -0.042 (-0.039) | 0.001 (0.001) | -0.129 (-0.119) | -0.236 (-0.143) | 0.020 (0.028) |
| share_y_members | -0.018 (-0.030) | -0.007 (-0.011) | -0.005 (-0.012) | **-0.366** (-0.240)** | -0.012 (-0.027) |
| competitive | 0.128 (0.009) | 0.124 (0.010) | -0.279 (-0.024) | 3.321 (0.127) | 2.963 (0.201) |
| | | | Organizational capacities | | |
| cv_engagement | 0.035 (0.024) | -0.057 (-0.038) | 0.137 (0.151) | 0.341 (0.163) | 0.217 (0.172) |
| paid_share | **0.052** (0.066)** | **0.062** (0.089)** | -0.036 (-0.041) | 0.077 (0.072) | **-0.622** (-0.355)** |
| qual_staff | -0.014 (-0.030) | **-0.044*** (-0.095)** | -0.002 (-0.004) | 0.081 (0.096) | -0.002 (-0.006) |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| com_skills | **-0.935** (-0.063)** | **-1.206** (-0.088)** | 0.202 (0.022) | -5.458 (-0.196) | 1.595 (0.130) |
| sv | **-0.034** (-0.060)** | **-0.042** (-0.071)** | -0.047 (-0.121) | -0.010 (-0.012) | 0.051 (0.130) |
| rev13_pc | -0.000 (-0.024) | -0.004 (-0.047) | **0.007* (0.152)** | -0.000 (-0.026) | -0.000 (-0.010) |
| revdiv | -0.998 (-0.014) | **6.297** (0.082)** | -3.041 (-0.050) | **-21.759* (-0.196)** | 9.260 (0.091) |
| BE | -0.229 (-0.007) | -0.745 (-0.025) | 0.430 (0.015) | 0.059 (0.001) | -0.748 (-0.024) |
| exp_cts_share | -0.030 (-0.037) | -0.029 (-0.043) | 0.007 (0.009) | -0.103 (-0.073) | 0.045 (0.057) |
| strategy | -0.239 (-0.016) | **0.855* (0.064)** | **-2.505** (-0.225)** | **-5.143* (-0.164)** | 0.980 (0.065) |
| develop | 1.190 (0.034) | **2.363** (0.081)** | -3.791 (-0.102) | -4.305 (-0.067) | -2.735 (-0.099) |
| v_tradition | -0.794 (-0.048) | **-1.020* (-0.072)** | 0.116 (0.009) | -4.681 (-0.130) | 2.477 (0.168) |
| v_companionship | -0.580 (-0.029) | 0.264 (0.015) | 0.405 (0.029) | -6.649 (-0.137) | **-5.719* (-0.260)** |
| f_own | 0.251 (0.008) | **-1.778* (-0.063)** | 0.446 (0.016) | **16.621* (0.227)** | **-14.751* (-0.405)** |
| f_other | 0.147 (0.004) | 0.043 (0.001) | -4.184 (-0.087) | 4.272 (0.042) | -0.954 (-0.035) |
| it_infra | 0.389 (0.029) | 0.327 (0.028) | -0.129 (-0.013) | **5.681* (0.222)** | -2.246 (-0.190) |
| coop | 1.336 (0.041) | 0.745 (0.027) | 1.776 (0.047) | 3.533 (0.066) | 2.649 (0.098) |
| federations | 0.285 (0.019) | -0.131 (-0.010) | 0.872 (0.074) | 3.167 (0.096) | -1.486 (-0.120) |
| R-squared | 0.13 | 0.12 | 0.16 | 0.34 | 0.56 |

Normalized beta coefficients in parentheses; *** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$.

## Conclusion

The first aim of this study was to assess differences in organizational capacity and problem levels of football clubs across Europe. The descriptive results showed that clubs differ substantially across all considered organizational capacities. The second aim was to analyze the influence of all dimensions of organizational capacity on various organizational problems while controlling for external factors. The standardized beta coefficients in the regression models revealed that some capacities have a stronger influence than others and are, therefore, more important in predicting organizational problem levels. For example, while emphasizing companionship/conviviality is beneficial for reducing index scores in the strategic problem dimension, it appears to be less influential than other capacities such as breaking even or following a strategic concept. It can be argued that the effect of human and financial resources on organizational problems is relatively straight forward, i.e., *beneficial* – with the exception of more paid staff. The effect of structural capacities, however, provides mixed results, i.e., some capacities have a positive effect on one problem dimension and a negative effect on another. Capacities that never showed a harmful effect on problem levels are more core and secondary volunteers, better qualified training staff and better computer skills, breaking even, and higher shares of expenses on training staff, emphasizing the values companionship and conviviality, as well as the use of shared facilities and balanced relationships with federations.

This study has some limitations. Specifically, the relatively low response rate and a lack of appropriate comparative data make the claim of representativeness for the obtained results difficult. Surveys were generally completed by one board member of the football club, and her/his assessment on the current condition of the club might not reflect the opinion of other board members. Additionally, this study is based on cross-sectional data which does not allow analyzing dynamic cause-and-effect relationships.

## Note

1  For example, revenues from membership fees and expenses for training staff of the sampled German clubs are similar to what is reported in Breuer and Feiler (2013). Norwegian clubs report similar shares of female members as official statistics from the Norwegian Football Federation for 2011 (Haavik, 2012).

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