

Press release

Contact Deloitte: Isabel Box
Press & Communications
Tel: + 32 2 302 25 51
Mobile: + 32 485 31 79 63
E-mail: ibox@deloitte.com

Contact Pro League: Viki de Cremer
Tel: +32 2 477 12 38
E-mail: viki.de.cremer@proleague.be

Belgian professional football has contributed €669 million to economy and generated 3,239 jobs during the 2016/17 season

Pro League and Belgian clubs also have considerable social impact on communities

Brussels – 4 June 2018

Deloitte and the Belgian Pro League today issued "The socio-economic impact of the Pro League on the Belgian economy", a report that quantitatively and qualitatively measures the socio-economic impact generated by Belgian professional football on the Belgian economy. First of its kind in Belgium, the report reveals that strong performance in European competitions and investments in youth translates into a high payback with turnover growing fast. For the season 2016/17, Belgian professional football contributed €669 million of added value to the Belgian economy. Belgian football clubs achieved operating revenues, such as gate receipts, TV rights, UEFA (Union of European Football Associations) prize money, merchandising, sponsoring, and advertising revenues of €316 million, and are estimated to generate 3,239 jobs, showing a significant contribution to job creation. Out of a total 1 million online registered fans at the clubs, 181,000 were female.

Sam Sluismans, Partner at Monitor Deloitte: *"With the average game in the Jupiler Pro League receiving more than 10,000 Belgian football fans on match days and many more opting to watch the games at home, online, in bars or through other means, it is no surprise that the Pro League has a significant impact on Belgian society and the country's economy. However, the impact of professional sports, like any other industry, is broader than what is directly visible. Industries such as hospitality, construction, consumer goods and media, in particular, are close partners of professional football, increasing the socio-economic impact of the sport."*

Belgian professional football is estimated to add €669 million to the Belgian economy in Gross Value Added

The total economic impact of the Pro League in terms of gross output is estimated at €935 million, with €527 million being generated directly by the football clubs. This means that €935 million have been spent in the economy thanks to Belgian professional football. The Pro League clubs are estimated to add €669 million to the Belgian economy in Gross Value Added, with €300 million (out of the aforementioned €669 million) being generated directly through wages, salaries and income for the clubs.

Approximately 3,239 jobs have been created by the Belgian professional football clubs, both directly and indirectly. In addition, 22 clubs indicated¹ that nearly 5,000 volunteers help out regularly on match days and with other operational matters.

Belgian professional football has directly contributed €63 million to the Belgian Exchequer in corporate tax, payroll tax, social contributions and VAT combined. Additionally, the Pro League clubs generated €95 million in VAT over their entire supply chain.

With operating revenues of €316 million, Belgian clubs outclass major European clubs

Operating revenues such as tickets, TV rights, UEFA prize money, merchandising, sponsoring, and advertising revenues of Belgian professional football clubs reached €316 million in 2016/17, a 65% increase compared to 2012/13. With a compounded annual growth rate of 13 percent, Belgium outclassed major European clubs which scored 4 percent lower on average. While gate receipts, season passes and broadcasting remain important revenue drivers, commercial and advertising revenues have grown more proportionally. UEFA prize money has also doubled compared to 5 years ago.

Pierre François, CEO of the Pro League: *"Transfers have played a particularly important role in Belgian football. Over the past 5 years, Belgian clubs have shown a positive net transfer result. In 2016/17, the income generated was €97 million, a fourfold increase compared to the 2012/13 season when the net transfer amounted to €25 million. A solid youth organization is necessary to facilitate future revenue streams from transfers. The report also reveals that Belgian professional football clubs are stepping up their efforts to enhance the social fabric of Belgian society by investing in social projects, their own facilities and amateur football."*

In 2017/18, a total of 3.4 million people attended the matches of the Belgian First Division A. Club Brugge received the most fans overall at the Jan Breydel Stadium. RSC Anderlecht's fans most often attended away games, while KAA Gent had the largest number of visiting fans in the Ghelamco Arena. Out of a total 1 million online registered fans at the clubs, 181,000 were female. KAA Gent had the highest percentage of female fans (35 percent). KV Oostende and KV Kortrijk have the largest number of registered fans aged 18 or younger (around 19 percent).

CSR activities focus on social integration, followed by education and health

In 2016, Belgian clubs spent €38 million on youth player and trainer salaries, €23 million more than they were legally required to spend for the reduction in payroll tax. In addition, 298 social projects were launched in the 2016/17 season to which about 55,000 people participated, and the continued investment in stadium facilities has resulted in a wave of incremental investment in the stadiums' neighbourhoods.

The clubs get help to establish their CSR programmes from the Pro League organization, which also invests in social projects, having added €75,000 to its budget in February 2017. One of the projects is the collaboration with "Stop Colon Cancer", leveraging football's unique proximity to its fans to spread awareness.

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¹ RSC Anderlecht and Lierse S.K. did not provide data on stadiums, volunteers and fans.

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About Pro League+

Pro League+ is the social pillar of the Pro League. Pro League+ and the 24 clubs of the Pro League aspire to a strong CSR policy in which football is a lever to bring a positive contribution to society. The football clubs are credible local social actors that put in place relevant campaigns in collaboration with social organizations.

Pro League+ works together in a structured way with the Belgian Homeless Cup, the VUB and other (inter)national, regional and local organizations to support clubs in the reinforcement of their CSR policy or their community functioning. Pro League+ is the contact point for authorities and social organizations in terms of social issues. In this capacity it organizes every year several awareness campaigns through which it offers a forum for social themes via its channels, and organizes/supports those events and organizations that facilitate the access to sports or use sports for social purposes. Pro League+ annually organizes a Christmas campaign during which all clubs/associations and fans join their efforts to raise money for a social organization.