

**THE**

**12**

**QUALITY  
AREAS**

**ESSENTIAL GUIDANCE  
FOR THE DEVELOPMENT  
OF YOUTH ACADEMIES**



**ECA** **YOUTH** **FOOTBALL** **2021-23**



# FOREWORD

“The exchange of knowledge helps us in our aim to bring talent development at all clubs to the highest level”



**T**hese are challenging times for youth academies across Europe. The pandemic has affected the football world heavily and many academies have had to be flexible to deal with ever-changing circumstances. This only strengthens our belief about the important role the ECA Youth Working Group has to play. We firmly believe that youth academies can strengthen both themselves and each other through constant cooperation and the sharing of knowledge. Over the last year, the Youth Working Group has come together to translate current needs and industry developments into an ambitious three-year strategic plan.

The ECA Youth Football Strategy, which runs from 2021 to 2023, comprises of four strategic pillars that aim to provide ECA member clubs with valuable guidance and services to further support the development of their youth academies both now and in the future.

The first pillar is dedicated to the “regulatory protection of training clubs”. The rapidly evolving transfer market and increasing value of players require a robust and unambiguous framework to protect the development of youth players and their education.

The strategy’s second pillar is centred around the “development of the youth competition landscape.” This includes optimising international club competitions, with the inclusion of the UEFA Youth League.

The third pillar which aims to “facilitate knowledge exchange,” provides platforms for the sharing of insight and expertise between youth programmes through a wide range of formats; webinars, online workshops, and in-person visits to affiliated youth programmes.

The fourth and final pillar commits to “delivering essential research,” including the release of this report. Projects such as this help ECA members to navigate global developments, gain further industry knowledge, and learn from best practice plans. This plays a crucial role in our aim to bring talent development at all clubs to the highest level, and inspire youth around the world with the game we love to play.

**Edwin van der Sar**

Chairman of the ECA Youth Working Group, ECA Vice-Chairman & CEO AFC Ajax

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Those working in football academies are well-versed when it comes to developing talented young players on the pitch and well-rounded human beings off it. But how do they deliver this in practice?

“Everything is in this publication! It is up to the clubs to use it, as providers to and producers of players!”  
Liam Brady, former Arsenal FC Academy Director



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Which working processes are academies using, and which ones in particular are being used by Europe's leading clubs? And which practices, if any, are the most

intercorrelated? These are among the many questions football clubs across all levels of the professional game are asking as they strive to improve their daily routines.

**This is where our research comes in.**

**Enabling those in the game to have a better understanding of the overall academy ecosystem is a major motivating factor in producing this publication.**

The starting point was to follow-up the original ECA publication from 2017. It was here that the 12 Quality Areas concept was first introduced, and it provided a detailed explanation of the different pillars and their impact on the youth development process. Now, this brand new report includes an enhanced overview of the 12 QA and each of their sub-components, demonstrating how they interrelate with academy working processes, and evaluating their relative

Desk research, overview of existing literature and statistical analysis

Semi-structured interviews with Youth Task Force members

Survey focused on processes in youth academies

Semi-structured interviews with youth development experts from other clubs

significance via quantitative statistical methods.

For the qualitative part, the youth report team carried out semi-structured interviews with 18 academy representatives around Europe to capture snapshots and best practices. On the quantitative side, all surveys that had been conducted previously in relation to development were analysed using descriptive statistics. These are not designed for analysis by inferential statistics. Although interesting data was generated,

creating a new survey designed for analysis by inferential statistics delivers much more value.

This new survey was specifically focused on various academy-level working processes and centred around a number of process groups, spanning the entire youth development pathway.

Recognising indicators of development of successful youth academies is a step ahead of the current approach and unearths new content for experts.

**This will lead to a greater understanding of the factors that have a significant impact on the quality of individual youth academies. ✕**

# EXECUTIVE

# SUMMARY

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: KEY FINDINGS

Here are what we think are the most significant findings from our surveys...

**86%**

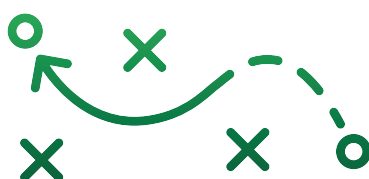
of clubs have a scouting department or scouting service dedicated to their youth academy

**91%**

of clubs have defined selection criteria for youth players

**2/3**

use bio-banding principles in age-group composition



**44%**

of clubs have a Technical-Tactical (te-ta) Coach, with half of academies having a coaching methodology department in the organisational structure

**78%**

of clubs have a fundamental goal of strongly relying on the academy for sourcing its first-team players



**71%**

of clubs have a technical committee or similar in place

**Only 45%**



of clubs estimate market value of academy players



**8%**

of academies measure IQ

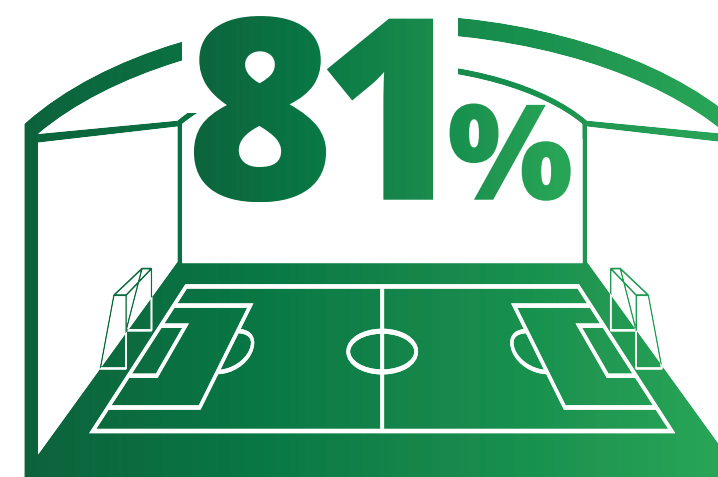
of players after signing

**55%**

of clubs have defined regular goals or KPIs for academy staff... apart from sport results

**In 8 out 10**

(80%) cases, the Academy Director decides the style of play



**81%**  
of clubs have a dedicated training facility for their youth academy (may be shared with first team)

**2/3**

of clubs provide a hall of residence for young players

Just over  
**40%**

of clubs plan ahead for more than four years for their youth academy



Here, we reveal how we used surveys and interviews to help us identify working processes used within youth academies, and measure the strength of their influence on daily operations

“We must teach our children to dream with their eyes open”

Harry Edwards, US  
sociologist/sports thinker

# METHODOLOGY

**W**hen it comes to understanding the football academy ecosystem and being able to share knowledge, and help clubs improve their daily routines, there are some overarching questions that needed to be answered as a starting point:

**What are academies in Europe doing to deliver for their clubs?**

**To whom are they delivering to?**

**What are football experts doing in their daily work to ensure they're bringing up happy kids, satisfied human beings, and football players capable of succeeding at a professional level?**

**Which working practices are used most frequently? Which ones are used by the best academies? And which ones are the most intercorrelated?**

Principally, we know that academies deliver for their clubs and the children within their youth pathways, but they also exist to serve parents, the local community, club fans, even agents and the wider football community in general.

**Our goal in asking the above questions is to arm you, the football experts within your clubs and academies, with insight that will help you deliver more efficiently and effectively the aims of your youth pathway to the children, parents and communities you serve.**

This publication follows existing youth research relating to what we have termed the '12 Quality Areas' in youth academies. ►



**These 12 QAs help us to assess the quality of the youth academy ecosystem and each academy within it.**

What are these 12 QAs? Which ones are most frequently used and intercorrelated? These questions are answered in the next few pages, but we found this approach acted as a learning point for us to understand the relation and hierarchy between the QAs, and therefore the effectiveness of academies across Europe.

To reach our goal, we needed to identify a criterium for assessment.

That criterium was threefold: working processes, logistics, and strategic documents which may occur in daily routines in youth academies.

The working processes consist of questions that relate to the development path of a football player, the development of coaches, other employees, playing style and entire teams of players, interaction with other

departments, community, schools, academic community, and how decisions are made. They start with Talent Identification (TID). An example of a question in this working process is: 'do you have a partner club?' The questions then follow the journey of youth academy development, and finishes with the transition to first team or leaving the club. These questions relate more to organisation and strategy than technical, so the 'what' rather than the 'how' or 'why'.

## THE ORDER OF WORKING PROCESSES

### Talent identification

- › Environment perspective
- › Club perspective

### Youth academy

- › Playing style
- › Players
- › Coaches
- › Teams
- › Scouting
- › Sale of players
- › Infrastructure
- › Staff
- › Parents
- › Player agents
- › School and academy community

### Transition from youth academy to first team

- › Selling/leaving the club
- › Other departments
- › Decision making

All working processes were allocated to one or more QAs. Although each working process is linked to all QAs to a degree, we have segmented them on the basis of primary connection. Finally, we have identified how many working processes fell into each QA, and identified that some QAs are covered more densely than others.

We used two research methods, survey and interview, to collect our data.

**Our main interest when conducting the surveys was to determine which of the working processes were used by each youth academy, as well as what their logistics looked like, and how formally they were used.**

You can read more about our surveys from page 44.

To analyse these surveys, we used descriptive and inferential statistics. For the descriptive analysis, we identified which working processes are most used across academies in Europe, before looking at which QA they fell into, and identifying which QAs were most represented. For the inferential statistical analysis, we again assessed which QA these working processes fell into, classified them using inferential statistics and statistical correlations to see which processes had the most correlation (significance level 5%; those marked with \*\* have significance level 1%) with others.

Interviews enabled us to go into more detail, and we were fortunate enough to be able to talk with some of the best and most interesting academies across Europe. We found that every academy regardless of its size has some

valuable learning points for others.

This valuable insight also enabled us to understand more about the quality of these working processes, and what they mean for youth academy directors.

**The interviews also allowed us to delve more into the 'why' you do 'what' you do, and 'how' you conduct your daily activities.**

We used some general topics like sport policy, scouting, development of players and coaches, to name just a few. You can read more about these interviews from page 70, while the interviews themselves start on page 76.

As an additional step, we also met with Liam Brady, an expert within the youth academy landscape and long-time former Director of the Arsenal FC academy, to discuss our results. His opinion is precious for understanding how youth academy experts perceive this overall project. You will find Liam Brady's influence at various points throughout the publication.

Finally, we have interpreted data and triangulated them into final conclusions, which you can read on page 148-149.

We sincerely hope that the results and conclusions using this methodology will be helpful in your daily work as youth development practitioners and experts. Ultimately, we hope you will be able to develop or enhance your operations. Perhaps this methodology will be also useful for club management to look at their academies from a new perspective, and better understand what youth academy experts are dealing with. ✕

<sup>1</sup>Correlation is a statistical measure that expresses the extent to which two variables are linearly related (meaning they change together at a constant rate). It is a common tool for describing simple relationships without making a statement about cause and effect.







The 12 Quality Areas framework enables us to recognise patterns with professional youth academies and display them in a simple manner

### WHAT IS A WORKING PROCESS?

A working process is any method that employees use to create value for the organisation. They can vary from minor tasks to major processes that require specific skills or knowledge. Understanding what working processes are, what types of working processes you might encounter and how to optimise them can help academies become more efficient and productive.

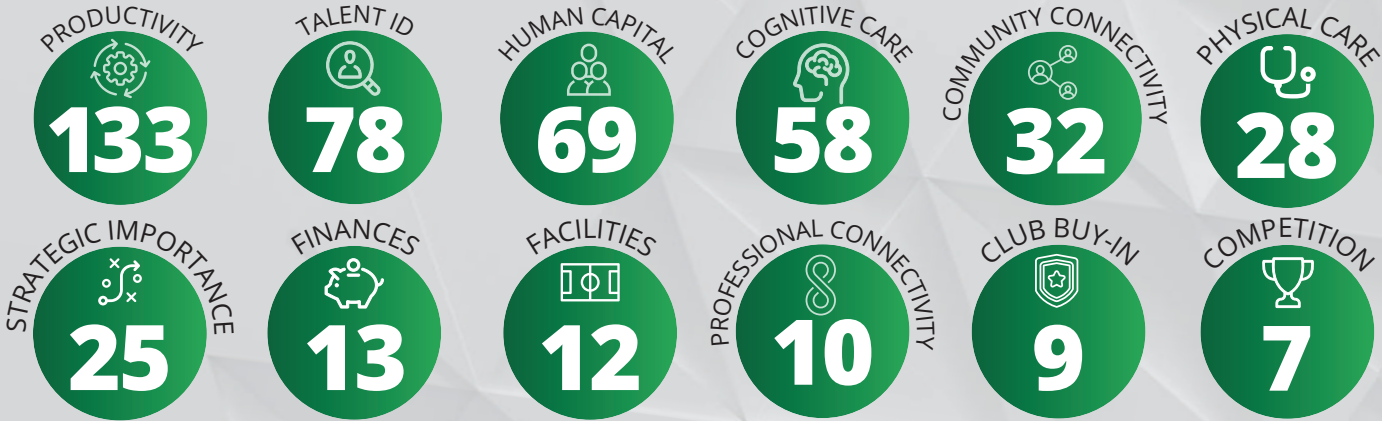
The creation of the 12 Quality Areas framework was similar to how scientific laws and theories emerge from scientific observations and facts: laws describe what happens, whereas theories explain the reasons, but to arrive at them it is first necessary to identify the relevant phenomena and understand the patterns of their interaction. This creates the platform on which to build a predictable, repeatable and sustainable model.

This 12QA framework was a significant step towards recognising the patterns, or ‘scientific law’ of youth development in professional football.

The 12 QAs are identified above, and the number beside each one is the number of working processes it connects to. As you can see, the most connected is ►

# QUALITY AREAS FRAMEWORK

## NUMBER OF WORKING PROCESSES WITHIN QA



\*a working process can be in several QAs at the same

## MOST COMMON WORKING PROCESSES, CARRIED OUT BY 90%+ OF CLUBS IN SURVEY

### TID - environment

- 97% Scout for talented players
- 94% Enter into communication with parents of potential players
- 92% Operate training camps or talent days for children not signed with the club
- 91% Hold parent meetings for potential players

### TID - club

- 100% Bring children to the club for trial trainings

### Youth academy - playing style

- 97% Have a formalised football philosophy in place
- 94% Have a formally defined coaching methodology
- 91% Monitor coaching methods within methodology
- 91% Transmit coaching methods within methodology to new coaches joining the academy

### Youth academy - players

- 100% Make some kind of assessment of players
- 98% Make an assessment of the physical capacity of players
- 91% Operate a code of conduct or set official behaviour standards for players

### Youth academy - coaches

- 97% Film youth matches for subsequent analysis
- 94% Assess coaches by various criteria

### Youth academy - staff

- 100% Have full-time employees at youth academy
- 94% Have a formal organogram of youth academy

### Youth academy - parents

- 94% Hold regular meetings with parents of youth academy players
- 94% Hold individual meetings with parents?
- 91% Hold group meetings with parents

### Youth academy - school and academy community

- 91% Align their training timetable to the academic timetables of the academy players

### Transition from youth academy to first team

- 98% Explain to academy players the rationale behind different stages of the transition process, such as when they move between age groups, go out on loan or to a partner club





Productivity, containing 133 instances. This is almost double the number of Talent Identification, the second on the list, with 78. **This is clear evidence that for clubs the results of the academy's work and the mechanisms by which**

**they bring talents into their system are the most crucial items on the agenda.**

Other important Quality Areas are Human Capital and Cognitive Care, which

seems logical when you consider that coaches and other backroom staff are the individuals tasked with delivering the various educational and development programmes to the players. This then forms the basis of the transformation work an academy carries out.

### Most interrelated working processes in academies

Understanding which working process are most interlinked gives us an insight into the relations and their position within the process hierarchy, and we searched for these using what is called Pearson correlation analysis (see glossary p148).

In this way, we can arrange the working process by their level of influence on all other processes within an academy. It's important to understand that we don't talk about causality (i.e. where one working process is the reason why another working process appears), but correlation (when one working process is fulfilled within the academy environment, other process or processes from some



statistically unknown reason appear in the academy as well).

The list of the top-10 most interrelated working processes, logistics or strategic subjects appear on the right. **This list suggests that education, including non-football content, plus facilities, presence of specific positions such as sport psychologists, educators and welfare support, and keeping track of scouted players for better recruitment, are some of the nodal processes within youth development.** This is also supported by our empirical experience of youth development.

### The interview process

We targeted academies based on several factors, such as their level of development, recognised success in the field of youth development, and geographical representation of various regions around Europe. This process saw us collect more than 40 hours of information, and we selected what we felt was the most relevant, and which bits represented examples of best practice. We also used this process to get clarity on data collected from the surveys and statistical analysis.

### Future outlook

The 12 Quality Areas assessment methodology offers a concise yet

sophisticated and comprehensive structure for viewing football academies and their key focus areas. Further developing this as a practical tool for academies wishing to improve their standing could be an interesting undertaking, especially if it's combined with a focus on knowledge exchange and sharing of know-how

Furthermore, once we master the different Quality Areas and the working processes they contain, the next stage of development is to establish success markers and key success factors. Working processes that are more aligned to successful academies can be recognised and analysed, and may offer us a unique shortcut to understanding the unique triggers that lead to very successful outcomes depending on club/academy's strategic goals.

Finally, we should also underline that this is a dynamic process, which depends greatly on the environmental conditions. So, to remain relevant, we should constantly re-evaluate the professional football youth development environment and keep checking the validity of the 12 Quality Areas framework, and the continued significance of the various youth development processes, on a regular basis. ✕

## THE 12 QUALITY AREAS FRAMEWORK

### TOP 10 MOST INTERRELATED WORKING PROCESSES

- 32** Do players receive learning support from the club, e.g. access to teachers or help in understanding the study materials they receive from school?
- 31** Are any non-coaching staff (e.g. psychologist, HR, pedagogue...) involved in delivering any team-level activities for players within their normal weekly schedule?
- 31** How many separate training fields do you have?
- 29** Do you have a full-time sport psychologist at youth academy?
- 28** Do you maintain a database with information about potential youth players (technical, tactical, physical, psychological, sociological, pedagogical)?
- 27** Do you have full-time individual for education at your club's youth academy?
- 23** Do you have full-time individual for welfare at your club's youth academy?
- 23** Do you have defined regular goals or KPIs for academy staff apart from sport results?
- 22** How many of those are full-sized? (i.e. official pitch size)
- 22** Do you have a full time match analyst at the academy?





Our online  
survey had  
352 individual  
hits from  
72 countries  
around Europe  
and the rest of  
the world

# THE GLOBAL GAME



Countries	Hits	Countries	Hits
Germany	27	Georgia	4
Spain	20	Sweden	4
France	19	Austria	4
Switzerland	18	Czech Republic	4
United States	17	Belgium	4
Netherlands	17	Republic of Moldova	3
Russian Federation	16	North Macedonia	3
Kazakhstan	14	Senegal	3
United Kingdom	14	Norway	3
Italy	12	Serbia	2
Slovenia	12	Slovakia	2
Poland	12	Latvia	2
Croatia	11	Azerbaijan	2
Turkey	10	Estonia	2
Finland	10	Israel	2
Bulgaria	9	Faroe Islands	2
Ukraine	7	Hungary	1
Ireland	7	Lithuania	1
Portugal	7	Romania	1
Philippines	6	Albania	1
Cyprus	6	Belarus	1
Greece	6	Montenegro	1
Denmark	6	Other countries	25



## We have added new research methods to the existing concept of the 12 Quality Areas

The concept of the 12 Quality Areas in professional football academies and youth development was created by a task force of the ECA Youth Working Group in 2016-17, and presented at the Youth Conference in Munich in 2017. This task force, which comprised a selected group of football youth development and club management experts, used a scientific process to come up with a shared position and an extensive list of factors that determined the success of an academy setting. This list was based on an analysis of existing academy licensing systems, plus the results of a specially prepared survey of youth academies. It was then aligned with the professional experience of members of the task force to provide a complete overview of the various factors comprising professional youth development in football.

Once completed, the full list was analysed further in order to create a coherent group of Quality Areas that cover the entire scope of professional football youth

Quality  
markers

Analysis

Systemic  
overview of  
professional  
football youth  
development  
environment

# 12 QUALITY AREAS

# METHODOLOGY













development. These QAs serve as a useful framework for self-reflection and analysis in an area recognised for its complexity and randomness.

**The 12 QA framework was an early step towards attempting to recognise the patterns – or ‘scientific law’ – of youth development in professional football.** And, as with any such framework, it needs to be representative of the real facts, easily understandable, and represented in a simple way.

However, one of the limitations of the Quality Areas framework is that each of the QAs merely represent a grouping of markers, which directly impact on the quality outcome (or success) of an individual youth academy. These groupings by themselves can be interpreted as objectives for each academy, such as delivering the best possible standards of physical or cognitive care. So, if we are to imagine a classic scatter plot with an X and Y axis, the 12 QAs would be only one of the axis, let’s say Y, and not informative on its own.

This is where our new research comes in. Our findings for 2022 stem from the recognition that the way each club or academy delivers these Quality Areas is by implementing certain processes within the organisation, which are tasked with reaching objectives, whether they are in cognitive care or productivity. So, by adding the X axis to our existing Y, we’re better able to recognise the relationship between QAs and processes. X

## The 12 Quality Areas

-  **Physical care** 20-21
-  **Cognitive care** 22-23
-  **Finances** 24-25
-  **Facilities** 26-27
-  **Talent identification** 28-29
-  **Productivity** 30-31
-  **Strategic importance** 32-33
-  **Competition** 34-35
-  **Human capital** 36-37
-  **Club buy-in** 38-39
-  **Community connectivity** 40-41
-  **Professional connectivity** 42-43

“To do the best things in an academy normally costs money. By looking at this publication and its findings, academy leaders can get information on which key aspects they should focus on, and allocate their resources accordingly”

Liam Brady, former Arsenal FC Academy Director



# 1

## PHYSICAL CARE

The standard of medical care, pitch-side and rehabilitation treatment

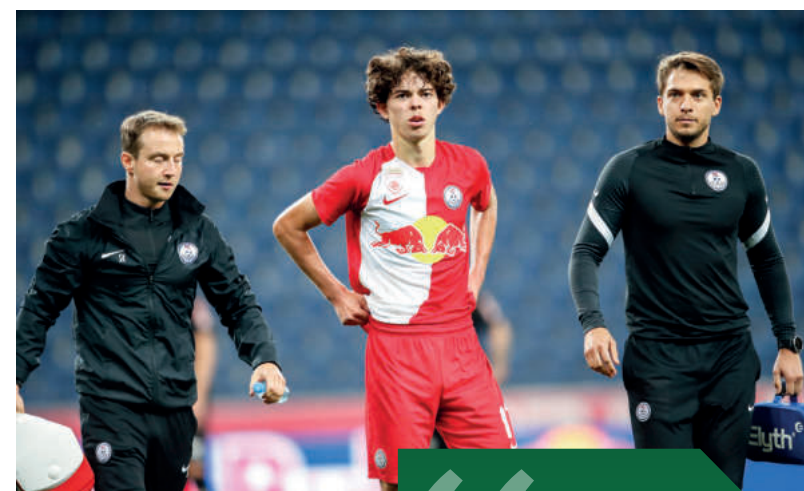
**A**nalysing Physical Care within the academy system enables us to cast an eye on all aspects of a player's physical growth well-being, which includes preparation for exercise, sport science, nutrition or medicine among others.

Ultimately, when it comes to a player's Physical Care, an academy will ensure its players are strong, fast and resistant to injury or, if an injury does

happen, players are treated to ensure they can recover as quickly as possible without suffering long-term effects.

The need for academies to consistently develop healthy, strong, fast and resilient individuals with positive lifestyle habits is growing. **Modern football is placing increased physical demands on athletes, especially at the highest level, not least through growing speeds, intensities and fixture quantity.**

For many clubs, this is one of the areas with the most obvious focus on recent technological advances. It requires investment in hardware, software and



“The PlayStation has had an impact on kids' physical development”  
Jani Meriläinen,  
FC Inter Turku

staff, as well as new methodologies of physical training, medical care and sport science support at younger age groups.

Since many of the elements connected with Physical Care include the delivery of specialised services to players in regulated areas, it's possible to verify quality levels through objective assessment of staffing (for example, the presence of certain positions within the organisational structure; and the quality of employees and their memberships to professional bodies). Other possible quality markers include such measurement of variables as the number of injuries by type, or training days missed within an academy setting, though this kind of individual health, and performance data, is a major challenge from a privacy point of view. ✕

### 12 QUALITY AREAS

**The working processes** connected with the Physical Care Quality Area include:

Do you have a formally defined coaching methodology?

Do you have Te-Ta coach for all age groups?

Do you have a dedicated coach to provide individual coaching to players in the academy?

Do you have athletics coach for all age groups?

Do you have strength and conditioning coach for all age groups?

Do you implement biobanding principles in age-group composition?

Is there an assessment of the physical capacity of the players?

Do you film youth matches for subsequent analysis?

Do you have full-time doctor at youth academy?

Do you have a full-time nutritionist at youth academy?

Do you have a full-time physiotherapist at youth academy?

Is a player assessment done for each parent?



# 2

## COGNITIVE CARE

Integration of football and academic studies; optimisation of logistics; educational support, multi-sport training, individual development; emotional and psychological support; holistic personal development

Cognitive Care within an academy system relates to both a player's football-specific development and more general aspects of their education. Effectively, it deals with everything related to the 'how', 'what' and 'when' academy players learn and improve.

**Professional academy settings are increasingly realising that successful player development requires a holistic approach with a**

**wrap-around focus. This ensures that both the football and non-football parts of the education programme are aligned.**

Cognitive science is constantly evolving, and our understanding of human learning and how to improve it is also becoming more complex, leading to new tools and methodologies being used in football academies looking to achieve better results in caring for their players. Traditionally, it was coaches that predominantly tasked with 'teaching' players within a football academy.

**Now, and increasingly, the organisational**



“The starting points for learning are values!”  
Roberto Samaden,  
FC Internazionale Milano

**structure will include experts in various fields, as well as more formal academic teachers and tutors whose task it is to connect the football education to academic learning and ensure the player does not miss out, especially if they do not make it.**

We can objectively measure certain levels of Cognitive Care by analysing the numbers and types of staff employed, their qualifications and/or membership of respective professional groups. Academies can also measure the level of their players' achievement compared to the level of sporting development. However, a proportion of efforts will be intangible, as it concerns individual development. Here, the focus could be on ensuring demonstrable commitment to sustained improvement in processes and methods. ✕

### 12 QUALITY AREAS

**The working processes** connected with the Cognitive Care Quality Area include:

Do you have any communication with local schools about potential academy recruits?

Do you have a formally defined coaching methodology?

Do you evaluate biological age of your academy players?

Do you implement biobanding principles in age-group composition?

Do you conduct IQ test of coaches?

Do you film youth matches for subsequent analysis?

Do team or players have non-football goals in such activities?

Are there any activities related to non-verbal communication?

Do you have a room specifically set-up for player education?

Do you have full-time individuals for education at your club's youth academy?

Do you have full time individual for welfare at your club's youth academy?

Do you have a full-time sport psychologist at youth academy?



# 3

## FINANCES

Percentage of club budget spent on youth development; revenue generation mechanisms; academy budget structure, financial planning horizon

**F**inance within the academy system relates to the dual aim of ensuring the correct amount of investment to sustain the delivery of all the other Quality Areas through academy operations, alongside the economic benefits or relevant revenue streams brought about by those operations.

The quality of financial planning within academies is relatively new. As stated in a previous ECA study on youth

academies, they are mainly seen as a cost centre rather than a revenue driver.

**The activity cycle in youth development is so long, and the returns often delayed, that it is sometimes easier not to set economic targets, and instead focus on productivity (another of the Quality Areas). Leading clubs are investing significant resources into their youth development programmes, so it is only natural that returns are increasingly required and monitored, including financial.**

However, the level of sophistication of



“To sell a player, first we need to bring him into the team”

Per Agren, Malmö FF

financial planning and management in academies remains inconsistent, whether due to a lack of knowledge, personnel, tools or vision. It is an area clubs can improve, especially when so few academies plan further than one or two years. A full talent development process for an individual player can take anything up to 10 years or longer, which means that players graduating at the age of 18 or 19 are doing so on the back of decisions taken a decade or more ago.

The level of the Finances Quality Area can be objectively measured by certain financial markers and ratios, such as the percentage of club budget spent on youth development, as well as the demonstrable quality, longevity and robustness of planning processes used by academy and club management. ✕

### 12 QUALITY AREAS

**The working processes** connected with the Finances Quality Area include:

Are training camps or talent days free or cost a fee?

Do you have a selection process or is any child of any ability free to attend?

Are transfer fees from graduates sales put back into the academy?

Do you estimate market value of academy players?

Do you invest in infrastructure in your partner clubs?

Does the coach ask the academy about players in position(s) he wants to strengthen in the transfer window?"

Do you have your own budget for the youth academy?

Does the club define the budget of the youth academy before season?

Do you have rules in place related to selling players from the youth academy before they play in first team?

Are there rules related to the calculation of value delivered by the academy if a player is promoted to the first team?

Do you have a youth academy?

Which percent of total budget is academy budget?



# 4

## FACILITIES

Pitch quality – grass, artificial, earth or other; weather dependent or not; correlation with playing requirements – e.g. 11-a-side full-size pitch, quality and suitability of players accommodation facilities – boarding house, families etc

**H**aving the right Facilities within an academy system ensures that the operation is underpinned by the correct infrastructure as required by the management, staff and players based on their methodological, environmental and individual needs. It also means that the future development of the academy is supported by adequate infrastructure plans responsive to future needs.

“VAR will influence in youth development in 5 years and will have to be included in training”

Jean Kindermans,  
RSC Anderlecht

**Of course, even though Facilities by themselves do not develop players, the quality and functionality of working and living quarters is a significant marker of the ambition and professionalism of academy environments.**

Suitable fields, changing rooms, treatment areas, offices or teaching rooms all serve a direct purpose of enabling the development process to take place, and for many academies they are a primary tool to attracting young talent in the first place.

UEFA recently published an important overview of academy infrastructure.



According to UEFA: “Training facilities and youth academies represent the very core of the European football ecosystem – even more so in the light of the global COVID-19 pandemic and the impact it is having on football institutions. With the integration of more developed training infrastructure requirements in the 2018 Club Licensing and Fair Play Regulations, the importance of these two components has been further emphasised.”

The quality of Facilities within an academy can most easily be measured by assessing the available infrastructure inventory and its suitability to the environmental conditions. We can also measure such variables as the existence of infrastructure development plans or the involvement of different academy specialists in devising those plans. ✕

### 12 QUALITY AREAS

**The working processes** connected with the Facilities Quality Area include:

How many separate training fields do you have?

How many of those are full-sized? (i.e. official pitch size)

How many of those are specialised? (e.g. for goalkeepers, for football-tennis etc)

How old is the oldest field you are using?

How old is the newest field you are using?

How many pitches do you play competitive matches on?

Do you have individual locker rooms for all your age-group teams?

Do you have a room specifically set-up for player education?

Do you have a dedicated training facility for youth academy? (can be shared with first team)

When were the locker rooms last renovated? (or built, if new facility)

Do you have a hall of residence for young players?

Do you invest in infrastructure in your partner clubs?



# 5

## TALENT IDENTIFICATION

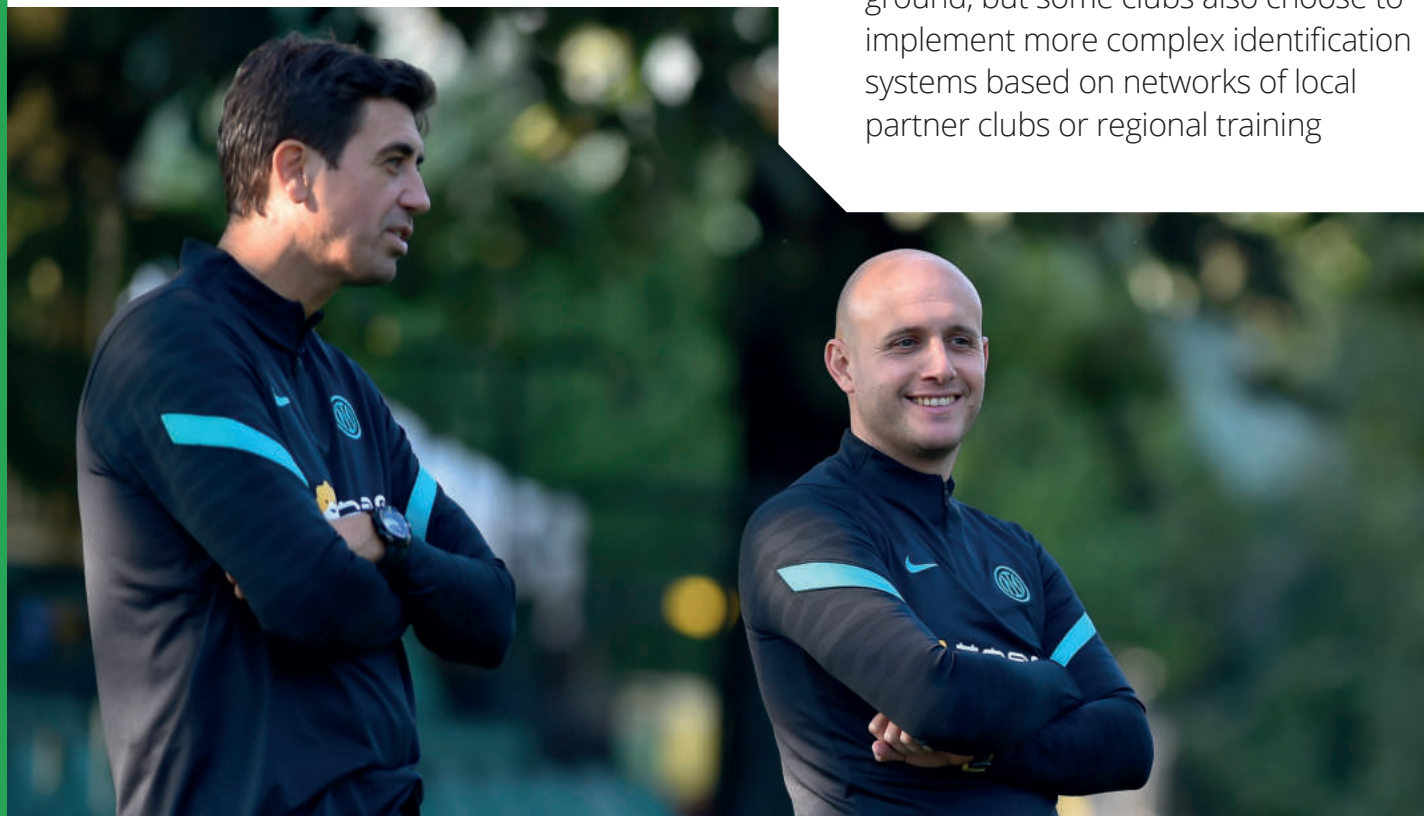
Recruitment plan, scouting software and administrative operations; quality and focus of network of schools

The goal of Talent Identification within the academy system is to ensure the success, quality and sustainability of the process through which an academy identifies and recruits its players from its surrounding environment.

**Identifying 'raw talent' and subsequently accessing that talent is one of the most significant indicators of academy success.**

Youth football isn't yet fully covered by modern match analysis tools and so a lot of working processes in this area are encapsulated by traditional or old-fashioned scouting and access to information on current players and their profiles. Academies start by controlling information on players within their local city, district, town or local region, which can then be scaled to national or international coverage.

All of this requires feet on the ground, but some clubs also choose to implement more complex identification systems based on networks of local partner clubs or regional training



“Players from abroad need at least one year to adapt”

Edmond Claus,  
AFC Ajax

centres. These can provide additional layers of contact with the youth game beyond just having eyes on games.

**Successful work in Talent Identification needs continuity, awareness of current and future trends in player skills and their development, as well as a genuine connection to the grassroots game.**

The quality of an academy's Talent Identification is inextricably linked to their productivity. Other factors can also be assessed, such as the numbers of players being monitored and the depth of their assessment. Clubs can also analyse their sources used for gathering their scouting information, and conduct stress testing on issues such as information retention when specialists leave the club. ✕

### 12 QUALITY AREAS

**The working processes** connected with the Talent Identification Quality Area include:

Do you have partner club(s)?

How many partner clubs do you have?

Do you enforce the same methodology and playing style in partner club(s) as in yours?

Do you have partner club(s) outside of your region?

Do you have partner club(s) outside of your country?

Do you have coach educators who visit partner clubs?

How many children in total are registered with your partner clubs?

Do you operate training camps or talent days for children not signed with your club?

Are training camps or talent days free or for a fee?

Do you have selection process or is any child of any ability free to attend?

Do you scout for talented players?

How many scouts evaluate the same child?



# 6

## PRODUCTIVITY

Total number of professional players produced, and their playing/staying time; their transition/contract type; plus their involvement in certain competitions/ international participation

**A**nalysing the Productivity of an academy involves identifying the quantifiable results of its work. **To measure an academy's productivity is to measure its efficiency, which is to assess its output/results in relation to its**

**targets and resources employed.**

Of course, all the processes within an academy are geared to producing players in the first team, player sales or other possible key performance indicators. However, measuring this Productivity is far from a universal undertaking, not least because in many clubs there is an ongoing debate about the main goal(s), the strategic aims, and



“When we have a player in the academy, we always believe he can become a pro”

Sune Smith-Nielsen,  
FC Copenhagen

what constitutes success.

**What is universal about Productivity, though, is that the primary goal for most academies is to produce players for the first team to compete at the highest level possible.** For top clubs, these goals may extend to producing players of an international level, too.

So, the main challenges for clubs here centre around identifying a common position about its Productivity aims in the first place, then deliver a working structure to reach those targets, and to have the correct measurement and assessment processes to verify results. ✕

### 12 QUALITY AREAS

**The working processes** connected with the Productivity Quality Area include:

Do you make any assessment of players?

Is there an assessment of the technical capacity of the players?

Are there any team-level development goals formally set for age groups?

Are there any individual development goals formally set for players?

Is there a diary of each player's development path?

Do you have 'project players'?

Is efficiency of coaches measured?

Are there any individual goals formally set for coaches on a regular basis?

Did the coach request details of the playing style in the academy when he came to the club?

Do first team scouts cooperate with youth team scouts?

Is academy director contract related to efficiency?

Is development formally assessed and discussed with players on a regular basis?



# 7

## STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE

Where does the Academy Director sit in the club structure?  
Are they a strategy creator, developer or implementer?

**S**trategic Importance is crucial to an academy system because it ensures that the academy itself and the youth development process are both treated as significant matters within the overall club structure.

A youth academy is often the largest department within a football club in terms of personnel involved, but it can often sit on the periphery of the organisation. **It is therefore**

“Players are increasingly choosing development clubs at youth level rather than size”

Tahir Karapinar,  
Fenerbahçe SK

**important for both the academy and club leadership to take the necessary steps to ensure academies are kept under the spotlight, not under the radar.**

Of course, it can sometimes be beneficial for an academy to keep a certain distance: letting coaches do their own thing has, in the past, for some clubs, led to fantastic results; think La Masia in the 1990s and 2000s. But generally, if we are to believe that academies are critical for their clubs, it makes sense for them to be a major part of the strategic conversation. For this to happen, club leaders need to



learn to understand the language of youth development, and academy leaders need to understand the workings of corporate management.

One of the fundamental challenges for academies to be heard at senior club level is the positioning of academy leaders within the club's hierarchy. **The more lines of command between the academy director and the top management can create difficulties when it comes to decision making.**

The quality of an academy's Strategic Importance efforts link to the positioning of the academy within the club hierarchy. They can be assessed by the presence of academy leaders within a club's key decision-making and strategy setting bodies, and their regular participation in strategic planning and decision making. ✕

### 12 QUALITY AREAS

**The working processes** connected with the Strategic Importance Quality Area include:

Do you have a youth academy?

Does your academy have a formalised football philosophy in place?

How long has this philosophy been implemented at your club?

Does the same style of play apply to all categories? (application of principles of football, not tactical system like 4-4-2)

Was this style of play the result of a formal research and development, or spontaneous?

Is this style of play connected with any research on your club community's preferences?

Are there any individual development goals formally set for players?

Do you have a coaching methodology department in the organisational structure?

Do you plan ahead for more than four years at your youth academy?

Does your club have a fundamental goal of strongly relying on the academy for sourcing its first team players?

Do you have a formal organogram of youth academy?

Do you have your own budget for youth academy?



# 8

## COMPETITION

Quality of domestic rivals; participation in official/friendly domestic/international tournaments

**T**he goal for any academy system is to ensure the delivery of the required level of competition in order to satisfy the demands of the development pathway.

One of the accepted approaches in professional youth development is the concept of 'talent versus talent', which is a tool for improving players by providing them a level of Competition relevant to their current and expected level of

achievement. Depending on the goals of an academy, various performance levels and Competition qualities may be required within the development process at different times, and it is up to the academy to determine the optimal levels within a player's development pathway.

**Due to the ever-growing transfer market, most clubs are also facing the need to develop players for a higher level than they can provide within their own internal structure, which further exacerbates the need to consider competitions and playing opportunities for players to**

“Development of players is largely down to the level of competition you play in”

Liam Brady, former Arsenal FC Academy Director



**gain the necessary experience.**

For this, clubs are operating increasingly complex portfolios, including competitive international tournaments such as the UEFA Youth League, which was developed with a strong participation of ECA.

The quality of an academy's Competition efforts are directly proportional to the ability of the academy to provide the required level of Competition to its players, which in turn is inextricably linked to the development plans in place, and the player pathways being designed by the academy leadership. In addition, another measure in this Quality Area could be the relative quality of rivals at domestic or international levels for different academy age groups. ✕

### 12 QUALITY AREAS

**The working processes** connected with the Competition Quality Area include:

How many pitches do you play competitive matches on?

Do you have a youth academy?

Do you take the children you want to bring in the club to domestic and foreign tournaments as trialists?

Does the first team play in the same playing style as teams in academy?

Do you have a formal process in place regarding on-loan players?

Do you have a scouting department or regular scouting service dedicated for the youth academy?\*

Did the coach request information regarding the academy playing style when he came to the club?

Is the style of play primarily focused on the result of team or development?



\* This question represents a second-order connection between a working process and the QA



# 9

## HUMAN CAPITAL

Quality of coaches, educators, administrative personnel, scouts, staff education and training; coach/player ratio

**H**uman Capital relates to an academy's ability to deliver its development plan and methodology by using the appropriate number – and quality – of personnel. This can include coaches, educators, management, administration, scouts, doctors, sports scientists, carers and any other staff that may be required to fit the needs of the setting.

Together with other Quality Areas such

as Cognitive Care, Talent Identification and Productivity, Human Capital is one of the most critical, as it is the staff who identifies and recruits players, takes care of their education and, ultimately, ensures that the academy produces the optimal number of players for professional football.

Academies are increasingly being regulated by football authorities, with staffing levels and qualities typically under the most scrutiny. Academies must also consider ongoing staff development. **A culture of continuous personal development and growth is a good sign, and the best academies**



“We use body cameras for coaches to see where are they focused on training, as a tool to help them better develop and be more efficient”

Piotr Urban,  
Legia Warsaw

**educate not only their coaches but also other staff members to ensure a continuously high level of knowledge within the organisation.**

Academy directors need to be equipped with modern management knowledge and practices. In effect, they are the CEOs of their organisation, which at the top level of the game might be structured like a mini-club within the wider club.

The quality of an academy's Human Capital efforts can be measured at a basic level by analysing the organisational structures and functions covered by available members of staff, and in a more advanced way by assessing the strategic plans of the academy versus the quantity and quality of its employees. ✕

### 12 QUALITY AREAS

**The working processes** connected with the Human Capital Quality Area include:

How many partner clubs do you have?

Do you have partner club(s) outside of your region?

Do you have partner club(s) outside of your country?

Do you educate coaches in your partner clubs?

Do you have coach educators who visit partner clubs?

Do you send your own scouts to watch your partner club matches?

Do you ask your partner clubs to provide you reports on players you are interested in?

Do you have a formally defined coaching methodology?

Are coaching methods formally transmitted to new coaches joining the academy?

Are coaching methods within methodology formally monitored?

Do you have a youth academy?

Who created the methodology?



10

# CLUB BUY-IN

First team/youth team style and methodology; history and track record of youth development; commitment from top management and owners for the future

**A**n academy needs Buy-In from the club to ensure there is consistency over the understanding of its mission and goals: from academy management to club management, and everyone in between.

Club Buy-In is closely connected to Strategic Importance. Yet while the latter is concerned with the overall position of the academy within the club hierarchy, Buy-in is encapsulated by the trust

placed in the academy by the club leaders, and the influence of the academy across the club to deliver its imprint on club activities.

**One interesting observation made about successful youth development systems boasting track records of success is that they have been initiated by a visionary individual. Then, over time, they have evolved, with new ideas and people continuing the ethos and tradition but in new ways. This continuity is a clear sign of Buy-In.**

Another common thread to many academies is the concept that their

“We need to represent what we are through our game”

Andoni Bombin,  
Athletic Club



players should play in a similar style to the first team. It is commonplace for some head coaches at first-team level to insist on using their tactical shapes and patterns in the academy as a matter of principle. In some cases, academies have turned this on its head so that the first team plays like the academy.

**Buy-In doesn't happen overnight. It is a combination of trust, and an understanding of the logic behind it to agree on a chosen path and a willingness to grant future freedom to new actions without constant verification.**

The quality of an academy's Buy-In from the club can be assessed by identifying the level of acceptability or respect of academy methods by wider club leadership. ✕

## 12 QUALITY AREAS

**The working processes** connected with the Club Buy-In Quality Area include:

Does your academy have a formalised football philosophy in place?

Do you plan ahead for more than four years at your youth academy?

Do you have school established internally under club jurisdiction?

Do you have a youth academy?

Does the club define the budget of the youth academy before season?

Was this style of play the result of a formal research and development, or rather emerged spontaneously?

Do you have formal written recruitment process for youth academy staff personnel?

Is advice provided on how to maximise players' financial values?

Is the financial department of the club involved in assessing the evolution of youth academy players values as assets?

Are players provided with an explanation of the club's strategic and operational goals ahead of such actions?

Do you have partner club(s) outside of your region?\*

Do you have coach educators who visit partner clubs?\*

*\* this question represents a second-order connection between a working process and the QA*



# 11

## COMMUNITY CONNECTIVITY

Academy communication, CSR programme, and connectivity with local environment

**S**uccessful Community Connectivity means constructing a living working interface between the club and its local community through communication, exchange opportunities and other touch points.

**An academy needs its local community for many reasons: to find future talent, as a source of human capital for academy services, and as a support mechanism or to**

“For us, parents are in the middle of the project!”

Jean-François Vulliez,  
Olympique Lyonnais

**assess performance.** It has many different touch points, not least through the players and their families, but also with other participants in the ecosystem, such as local residents who live close to a training facility, the education community in the schools where an academy's players study, or club supporters with an interest on the academy and its activities.

If these touch points are unmanaged, an academy won't be able to fully utilise the potential of its environment, or use it as a learning and development tool for internal needs.

Relatively few academies have their



own in-house communication function, but increasingly they are sources of content for the club's media output. The same can be said for CSR activities, which are natural allies of academy settings, combining sport and the younger population.

The quality of an academy's Community Connectivity can be measured by the presence of strategic communication plans for the academy, and its inclusion in the wider club's communication efforts on a regular basis. It can also be measured by quantity, and type of contact with local representatives, and a demonstration of a strategic approach to developing community connections based on strategic goals and aims set by academy or wider club management. ✕

### 12 QUALITY AREAS

**The working processes** connected with the Community Connectivity Quality Area include:

Do you hold workshops for parents of potential signings?

Do you operate training camps or talent days for children not signed with your club?

Do you have selection process or is any child of any ability free to attend?

Do players participate in marketing and PR actions?

Are players provided with training related to PR and marketing?

Does your club involve its sponsors in academy operations?

Do players work with community?

Are players briefed on how community work can impact a club's sporting success?

Are players active (they have role in which they create some content) or passive (they just show themselves at an event)?

Are the players provided an explanation of the club's strategic goals about working with the community?

Is there a plan or rules for communication with a player after he leave the club?

Is your style of play connected to your club community's preferences?



# 12

## PROFESSIONAL CONNECTIVITY

Academy participation in domestic and international community; contacts with other clubs; external visits

Successful Professional Connectivity within an academy setting involves the construction of a living working interface between the club and its professional community. It is firmly connected to other Quality Areas such as Cognitive Care and Human Capital because it serves to bring in new knowledge and practices to create professional exchanges, or to identify staff to enhance the working team.

An academy cannot exist in its own bubble for a long period of time. Instead, it needs to be an active part of the professional environment to keep at the cutting edge of development, and this is difficult without regular exchanges, study visits or other outside contacts. A lively community can be formed around individuals, ideas or facilities, and can be developed in a purely organic or semi-managed way, but it requires a degree of freedom in order to provide a platform for creativity.

Ultimately, any activity by a person within an academy setting has an element of professional connectivity, but not all activities have the same value.



“Once you play six years in the Ajax Academy, you become a member of the academy club”

Edmond Claus,  
AFC Ajax

**It is key to ensure there is a process of record keeping and knowledge transfer in place, so that new knowledge is circulated within the organisation rather than kept by individuals without being passed on.**

The quality of an academy's Professional Connectivity can be measured by the number of internal or external academy visits, and the level of visiting/visited clubs. It can also be measured by the number of professional exchanges carried out by staff members, individually or as part of a group; by the implementation of potential employee scouting databases based on specific profiles; or academic output by staff, such as publications or conference presentations. ✕

### 12 QUALITY AREAS

**The working processes** connected with the Professional Connectivity Quality Area include:

Do they receive instructions regarding desired characteristics of player?

Do scouts receive instructions regarding desired positions which are wanted for each age group?

Are there group meetings with agents?

Do you educate coaches in your partner clubs?

Do you conduct regular meetings with agents?

Are coaching methods within methodology formally transmitted to new coaches?

Are coaches sent on other education courses besides football license courses?

Do you offer employment to parents if they are from another city and consider moving their child to your club?\*

Do you have joint projects with academic/scientific community in research & development?

Do you have agreement with schools about sharing player information for their development?

Are scouts educated about specific criteriums by coaches from the club?

Do you have coach educators who visit partner clubs?\*

\* this question represents a second-order connection between a working process and the QA





Working processes represent 'what' we do at work consciously or unconsciously. Asking academy experts what they do has helped us gain valuable insight across academies...

**W**hat and how we focus on our daily work routines relates to the organisations we work for and the structure of our tasks. The working processes we use to do our duties also highlight what we find important to us and what is suitable to our philosophy or vision. How we then perform is related to the operationalisation of those processes. All of this is extremely important within the academy ecosystem, and it is all clearly interconnected.

In terms of the working processes you use, some relate to 'what' you do, 'how' you do it, and it's the combination of these processes, and how they work together, that help us perform.

On top of that, it is useful to know what you use to deliver the 'how'. Of course,

you will identify areas that need improvement, and you will find new processes to help you do this. **There will be some elements of your work that will be constrained by infrastructure and or logistics, but the 'what' and the 'how' are things**

**you can shape based on your philosophy, values, club DNA or your vision of what you see as successful for your academy and club.** These working processes describe the same environment as the 12 Quality Areas, just from a different perspective.

To help identify and describe the 12 QAs, we have used the list of working processes in the form of questions, then analysed their impact and assigned them to one or more Quality Areas. Hopefully, this list, which could in itself be seen as a concise methodology of running or development of a youth academy, could be useful when comparing to your own working processes, and might trigger some new questions for you to consider within your setting. ✕

# SURVEY INTRODUCTION

## SURVEY INTRODUCTION





## Creating and refining the survey is vital in order to receive the answers and data required for the study

**P**rocesses in football, or any other industry, are happening whether we recognise them or not. From a football academy perspective, we know what some of these processes are, regardless of the club, and that they are relevant for running an academy and the development of players. These include:

- » Talented players exist, locally, and in other areas, and somebody is needed to identify them, and watch how they play
- » Players of all ages join the club
- » Players want to perform at the highest level
- » Players learn and develop
- » Coaches develop, and the game itself evolves
- » Young players need to be educated
- » Young players are constantly dealing

with different phases of childhood (positive and negative)

» The club will need to engage and interact with the community, schools etc.

There are also other processes that we still do not recognise either because of a lack of knowledge or an inability to identify them. Yet those we do recognise and accept as important, we can convert into operational working processes. The first step is to identify them, then develop them to obtain maximum performance. Most likely, academies which recognise some or all of these processes and develop their operationalisation to the highest level will be the ones that are closest to maximising their potential.

The whole idea behind running an academy can be described with working processes within the 12 Quality Area framework. Some of these working processes will be more important than others, and some might be implemented to a lesser extent. It was important to establish which of the working processes clubs are implementing and whether or not they are applied formally. How they are operationalised is a research area in itself, and was not part of this project.

### Survey: from origins to results

Our initial list of questions was made by a team of football experts, and was refined by experts from different specialisations. These included coaches, analysts, technical directors, academy teachers, psychologists, school professors and strategy experts. From this list, we then identified a group of topics including talent identification, the people and structures involved in an academy, transition to the first team, decision making and more.

In addition, we were also interested in the respondents opinion on the questions themselves as a learning point for further research development.

Topics were aligned in the order they naturally occur in a player's development

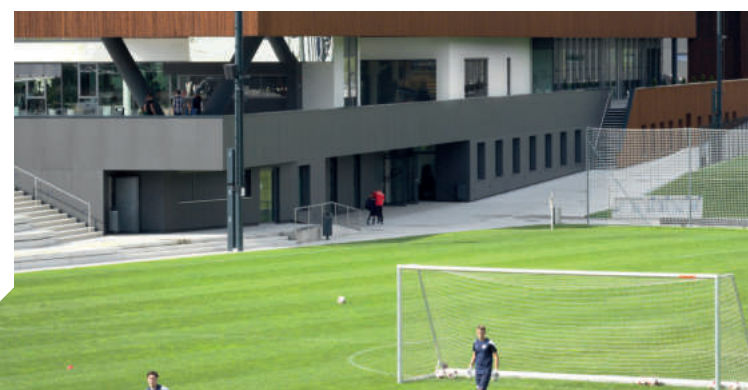
### 12 QUALITY AREAS – YOUTH ACADEMY ECOSYSTEM



pathway, from talent identification to leaving the club.

We then used nested questions to help shape the flow, which helped respondents to answer only relevant areas and ignore those where it is obvious they do not have some process in place. For instance, if an academy does not have partner clubs, it cannot send coaches to partner clubs for education purposes, and so that entire line of questioning becomes irrelevant.

Selecting an online tool with a lot of visual and formal possibilities available on different mobile platforms was also a must for this survey. An invitation was sent to all youth academy directors at ECA member clubs and they were given a time frame of seven months to respond. Response time ranged from five minutes to 30, which is reasonable considering the scope and uniqueness of the survey, and the benefits that can be derived from this research. ✕



### 12 QUALITY AREAS – SURVEY CREATION

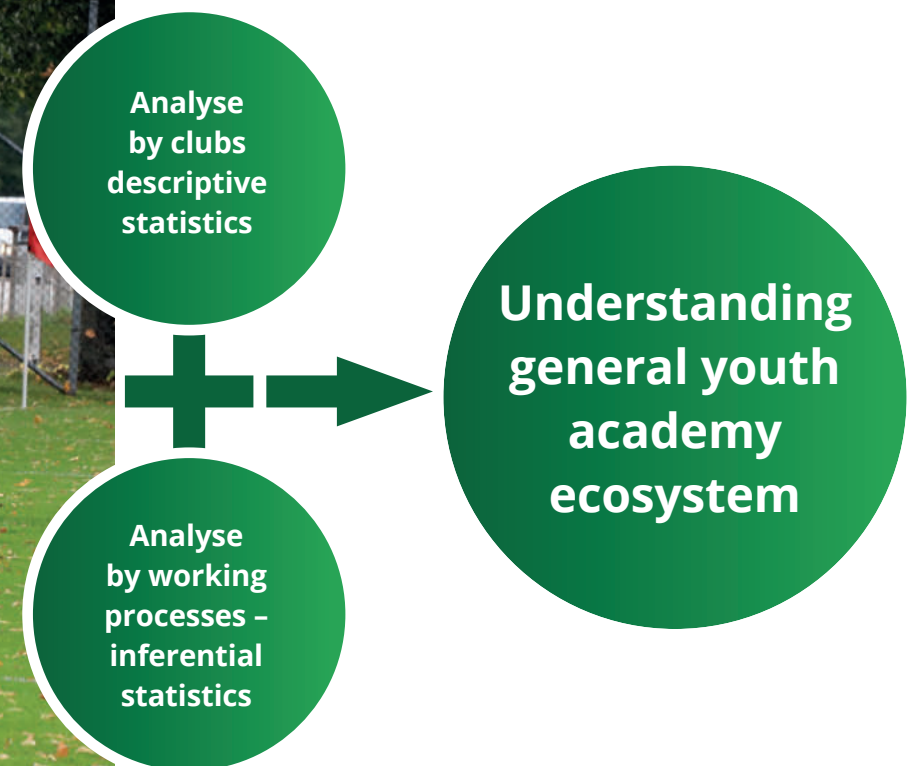


# SURVEY METHODOLOGY





The results of the survey were analysed from two perspectives, descriptive and inferential statistics



Using descriptive statistics enabled us to identify which working processes were the most used/unused within the ecosystem. We then selected averages of working processes within the Quality Areas, taking a margin of 90% (or 85%-90%), and identifying what the clubs found within those margins do and don't use. This is a new learning point, as it detects what is a 'must' to do. This enables you to compare

where your academy is in comparison the to the wider youth academy ecosystem. It certainly helped us to look at the relationships between clubs summarised in each working process percentage.

The use of inferential statistics helped us focus on the relationships and the inter-correlation between the working processes. Those working processes with more inter-correlations suggest they are more important than others, and if they do occur, others might occur too. Again, this is a learning point; you might find you can analyse the correlation of working processes and compare that with your own set-up, and the intensity of focus you place on each of them.

For this analysis, we used what is called the 'Pearson correlation'. The criteria was a significant correlation (margin 0.05).

Those working processes that appear within that margin, and those which correlate with 10 or more other working processes were identified and presented further on.

All detected working processes were then designated to a Quality Area. The learning point here is that this might enable you to analyse your own academy in the same way the QA is mapped. Detecting which Quality Areas are more and less populated by identified working processes can illustrate when it comes to demonstrating the priority of an academy.

**Ultimately, our intention here is to assist in building a constructive environment, which might lead to new developments in your academy, or communication between you and your colleagues across Europe. ✕**

# SURVEY ANALYSIS METHODOLOGY



Here, we identify the key processes in Quality Areas and observe what clubs are actually doing in their player development pathways

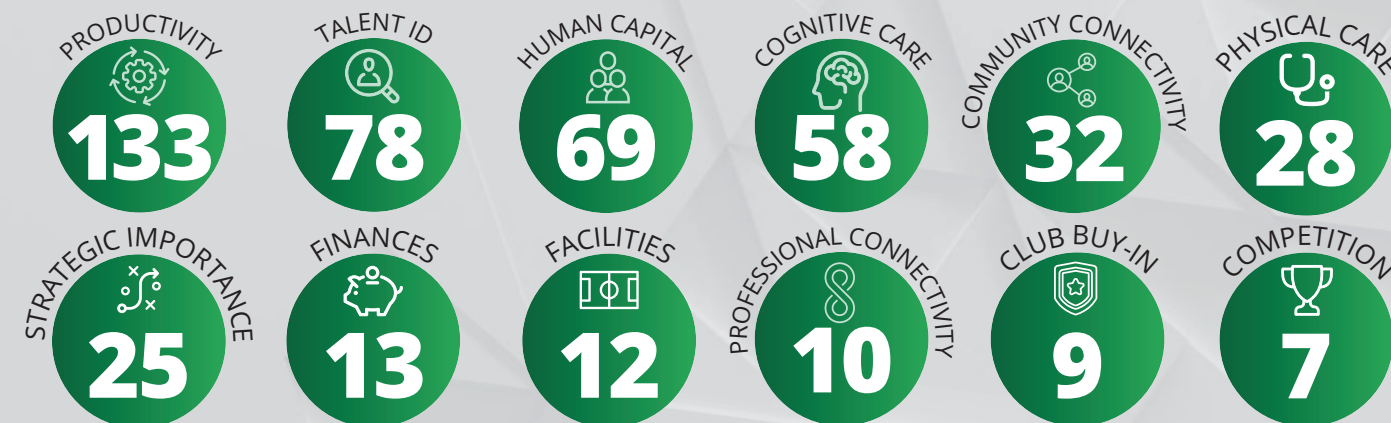
The starting point for understanding Quality Areas in relation to daily activities within the academy environment is the number of working processes connected with each of those 12 Quality Areas.

When we overlay the processes with the QAs, the one connected with the most is Productivity, with 133 working processes. This is almost double the number of Talent Identification, second on the list, with 78 working processes. **This is clear evidence that for clubs, the results of the academy's work and the mechanisms by which they bring talents into their system, are the most crucial items on the agenda.**

Other important Quality Areas from this perspective are Human Capital and Cognitive Care. This seems logical when you consider that coaches and other back-room staff are the individuals tasked with delivering the various educational and development programmes to the players. This then forms the basis of the transformation work that an academy does.

**Another interesting finding is that the four most significant Quality Areas by number of working processes relate to the entry point of the development pathway, education, the people responsible for it, and the exit point at the end of the process.**

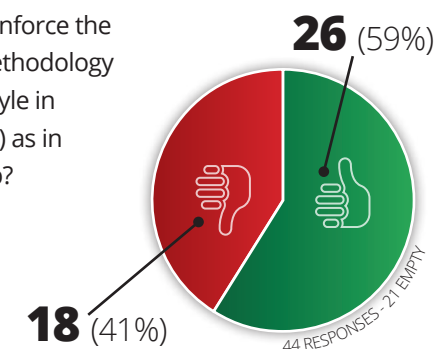
## NUMBER OF WORKING PROCESSES WITHIN QA



## TALENT IDENTIFICATION - ENVIRONMENT

Partner clubs are used by 68% of clubs, while 28% of clubs responding to the survey (59% of those which have partner clubs) enforce the same methodology and playing style in partner club(s) as in the origin club.

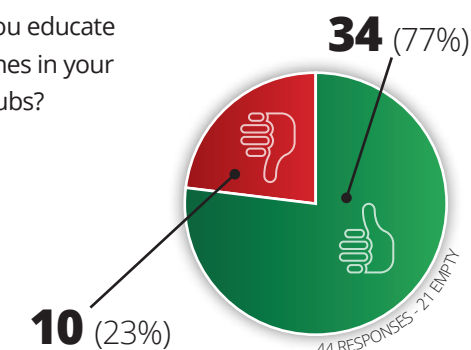
Do you enforce the same methodology and playing style in partner club(s) as in the origin club?



Education of coaches in partner clubs is conducted by 52% of surveyed clubs (77% of those which do have partner clubs). Meanwhile, 95% of clubs scout for talented players, while 84% of clubs have defined the selection criteria.

Almost half of clubs, 49%, ask partner

Do you educate coaches in your partner clubs?



clubs to provide a report on the players they are interested in, while 48% of clubs use the same selection criteria for evaluating players at partner clubs as they do for general scouting. Communication with local schools about the potential recruits is conducted by 63% of clubs, while a far bigger number, 77%, collect general information about parents prior to signing a player.

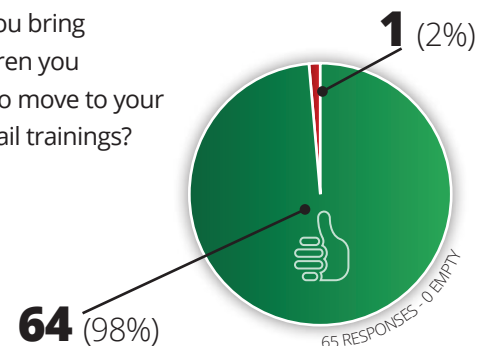
## TALENT IDENTIFICATION - CLUB

Eighty-five per cent of clubs have a database with information about potential youth players including ►

# WORKING CONCLUSIONS



**Q** Do you bring children you consider to move to your club for trial trainings?

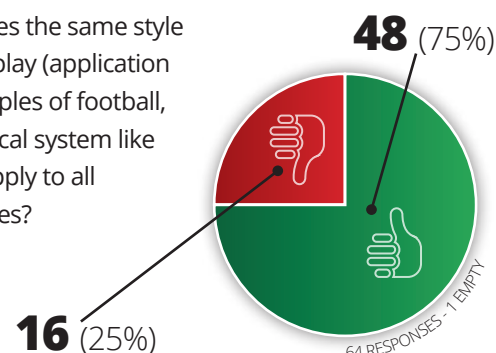


technical, tactical, physical, psychological, sociological and pedagogical information. Almost all clubs invite children to trial sessions before signing.

## PLAYING STYLE

A formalised football philosophy within an academy exists in 97% of clubs. The same style of play (application of footballing principles) is applied in all categories by a significant majority of 75% club academies.

**Q** Does the same style of play (application of principles of football, not tactical system like 4-4-2) apply to all categories?



"AFC Ajax believe that football will become more 'tailor made', space will be tighter, creativity will be more crucial, and restarts in offensive and defensive way will be more important"

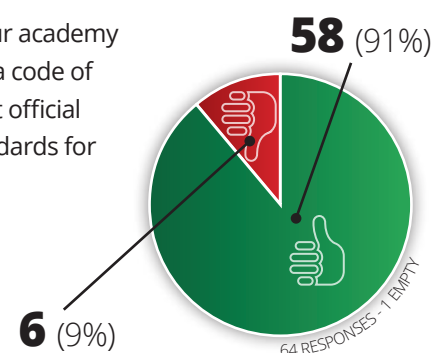
Academies are primarily focused on development, even if this means losing games and trophies, in 71% of clubs. Interestingly, 96% of those have the same style of play in all categories. In parallel, 94% of clubs have a formally defined coaching methodology in place, while in 90% this methodology is likely to have been updated within the last three years.

## PLAYERS

When it comes to individual development, 75% of academies within surveyed clubs provide a coach for individual training for various specialisations. Among them, 88% of academies have an athletics coach for individual training.

Bio-banding principles are implemented in age-group composition in 66% of clubs that also test biological age (48% of all surveyed clubs).

**Q** Does your academy operate a code of conduct or set official behavior standards for its players?

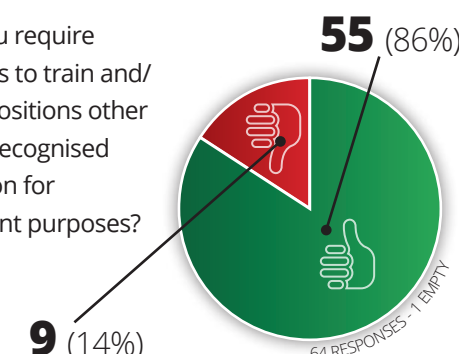


Every single academy surveyed assesses their players. These assessments are more physical than cognitive, it seems, with 98% testing physical capacity, 86% technical capacity, 83% personality, and only 8% doing an IQ test.

Individual development goals are formally set for players in 86% of academies, while a diary of a player's personal development path is kept in

67%, meaning a third of academies do not record progress.

**Q** Do you require players to train and/or play in positions other than their recognised field position for development purposes?



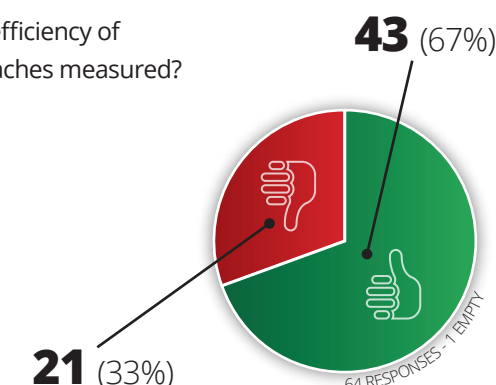
Academies have 'project players' in 81% of cases, starting from age groups U15-U16, and this implies that there is a tendency to identify the players with most perceived potential at an early stage, and making a differentiation between different categories of talents, or provide a more enhanced programme to those that have bigger chances of making it, according to their estimation.

## COACHES

Besides football license courses, coaches are encouraged to get involved in further education in 67% of academies, while a coach educator is present in a very similar percentage of clubs (66%). Internal demonstration, theoretical lectures and practical trainings are commonplace in 88% of academies, so this clearly highlights that a large proportion of academies consider coach development an important area of activity.

Efficiency of coaches is measured in 67% of academies, and among those measuring this KPI, 94% of academies assess coaches by different criteria (92% of all clubs), including 82% personality (75% among all clubs), 80% using a

**Q** Is efficiency of coaches measured?



psychological test (74% of all clubs), and specifically an IQ test in just 5% of those which do assess by different criteria.

Individual goals are formally set for coaches in 73% of academies, while 'project coaches' are present in 59%. So, just like with players (albeit a smaller rate), there is a clear categorisation of coaches and identification of those with more potential.

## TEAMS

The U23 age group exists at 31% of clubs. Planning four years ahead is carried out in 48% of surveyed clubs.

Seventy-eight per cent of academy representatives claim that they have a fundamental goal of strongly relying on the academy from sourcing its first-team players, which highlights the significance of the youth academy to overall club strategies in completing their squads.

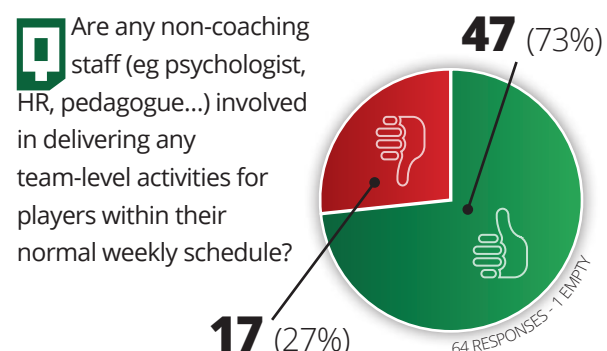
Keeping shadow lists by position for the various age groups and replacing departing players with scouted ones from this list is common in 72% of academies.

In 73% of academies, non-coaching staff are involved in delivering team-level activities for players within their normal weekly schedule, while 81% are delivering individual-level activities, which is another



indicator of individualisation in player development.

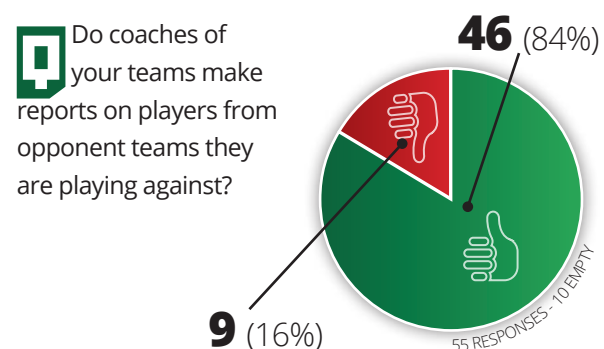
Also, and connected to that, of the teams and players that use such activities, 83% set non-football goals, as opposed to 66% of all clubs, which were participating in the survey.



## SCOUTING

Overall, 86% of academies have a scouting department or regular scouting service dedicated for the youth academy.

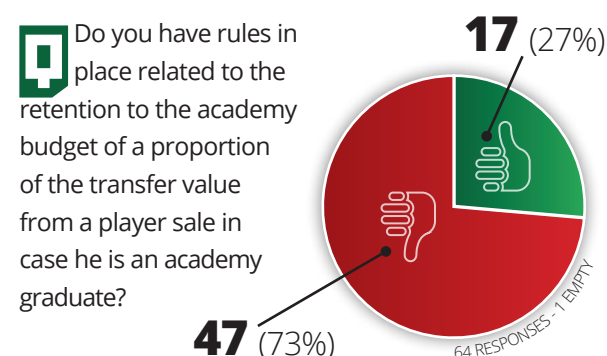
Among those, scouts are educated about specific selection criteria by coaches in 76% of academies (for contrast, this happens in 65% of all clubs participating in survey). Setting specific targets to scouts is common – they receive instructions regarding desired positions, which are wanted for each age group, in 93% of academies that have a scouting department or service for the academy (78% among



all surveyed clubs). Delving deeper into these instructions, 90% of scouts in academies with a regular scouting service receive inputs on desired characteristics of players (71% of all clubs participating in a survey). Also, coaches of teams make a report on players from opposition teams in 84% of these academies (going down to 71% of all clubs participating in a survey).

## SALE

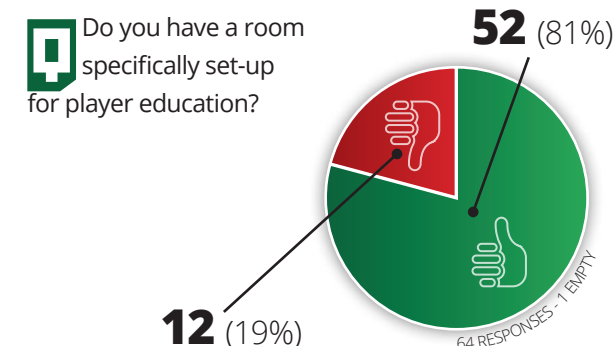
Estimation of market value of players is conducted in 45% of academies, while 38% of clubs have set rules in place regarding selling players from the youth academy before they play in the first team. Just over a quarter of academies have rules in place regarding the retention to the academy budget of a proportion of the transfer value from such a player sale.



## INFRASTRUCTURE

The oldest pitch that most academies are using is typically up to 10 years, but there are almost 40% of playing surfaces which are older than this. Facilities are split equally between individual and shared, with individual locker rooms for all age groups available in 53% of academies. Player education is held in a specifically

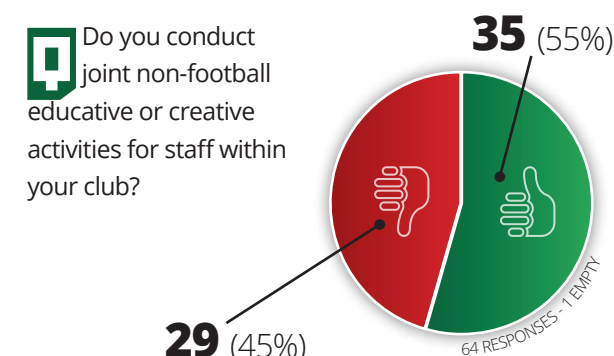
designated room in 81% of academies. A hall of residence for young players is available in 66% of academies.



Investments in infrastructure of partner clubs are rare; this is done in 14% of cases.

## STAFF

A formal organogram of youth academies exists in 94% of them, mainly because this is now one of the requirements of UEFA licensing. The recruitment process for youth academy personnel is formally set up in 58% of academies, which is a relatively low number considering the importance of human capital for the success of any academy programme.



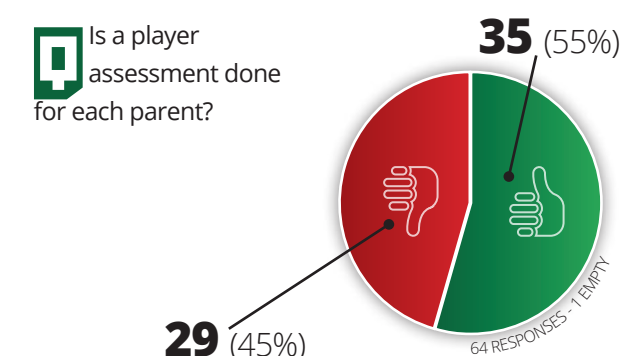
Of all the different kinds of personnel present in academies – media managers, education, welfare, analysts, sport psychologist, HR specialist, pedagogue, nutritionist, physiotherapist and sport

scientist – the most widely employed on a full-time capacity is a physiotherapist (84%), followed by sport scientist and match analyst (58%). The least widely employed in a full-time capacity is an HR specialist (22%), then nutritionist (30%). Joint non-football educative or creative activities for staff within clubs are organised in 55% of academies.

Regular KPIs and goals for academy staff (excluding sport results) are defined in 55% of academies.

## PARENTS

Regular meetings with parents are held in 94% of academies, and all those who do this have individual meetings with parents as well. An individual assessment of their child is performed in 55% of academies, which seems to suggest that just under a half of academies do not offer specific information about player development to ►



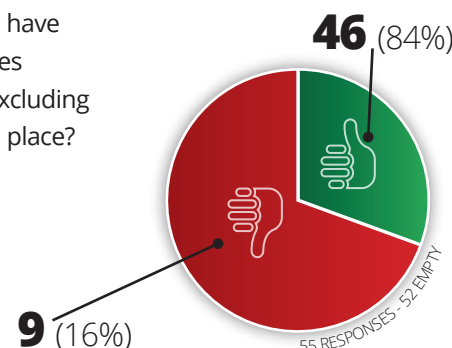
“FC Zenit believe that having the best infrastructure in the country allows attracting top players from the rest of the nation”



their parents, raising the question of what information they do provide.

Training and presentations for parents are organised in a commendable two-thirds of academies (64%), whilst having a person(s) delegated to drive better collaboration based on formal written process exists in just over half (53%) of academies. Behaviour of parents is also typically regulated. There is a code of conduct set for the parents of players in 80% of academies.

**Q** Do you have any rules limiting or excluding agent use in place?



## AGENTS

One of the areas of concern for many youth academies are relations with agents. Regular meetings with agents are held in 59% of academies surveyed. There are internal rules regarding agents formally prescribed in 66% of academies. For those academies which made assessments of

agents for each player (80% of academies), 69% of them have rules limiting or excluding agent use, but this number goes down to 14% of all clubs participating in the survey. This suggests that those clubs who place a big focus on this topic prefer their players not to use agents, but most clubs in general do not have a clear point of view on this issue.

## SCHOOLS AND ACADEMIC COMMUNITY

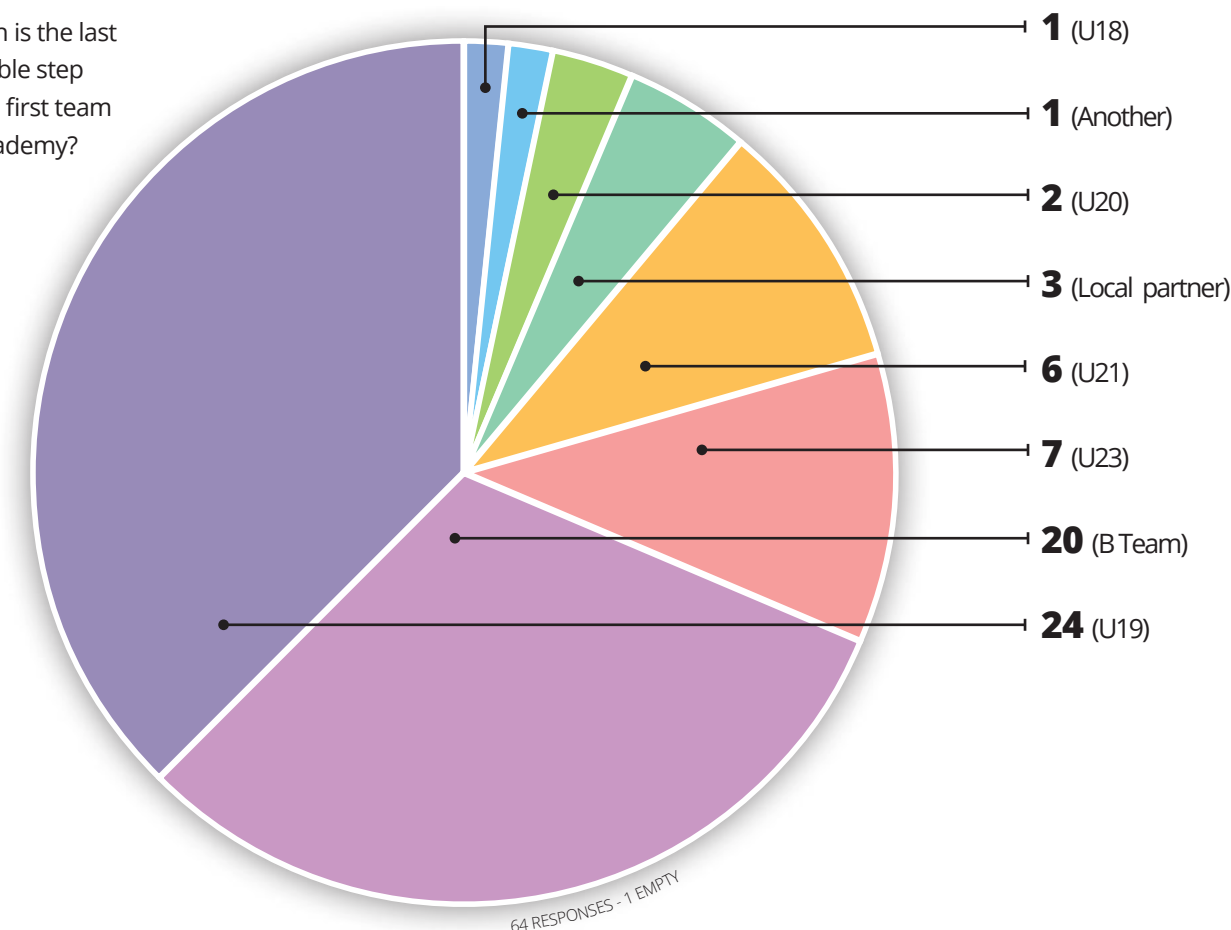
Sharing information between school and club for the better development of players exists in 77% of academies, which is a great sign that most clubs are choosing to align football and academic education for better results. Player grades are monitored in 86% of academies. Internal schooling, under the club's jurisdiction, is established in 33% of academies.

Joint projects with academic/scientific community in research and development are being pursued in 50% of academies. Training timetables are aligned to the academic timetables for youth players in a commendable 91% of academies, once again highlighting the desire to facilitate both types of education in order to ensure the holistic development of individuals as well as players.

## TRANSITION FROM ACADEMY TO FIRST TEAM

Formally prescribed processes for the transition of players from the academy to first team are implemented in 48% of academies. Meanwhile, the last step for players before the first team at just over half of all clubs is an U21, U23 or B team. This indicates that for the remainder, the

**Q** Which is the last possible step before the first team in your academy?



end point is at a younger age, even though according to the regulations a player's development should take place for a longer period of time.

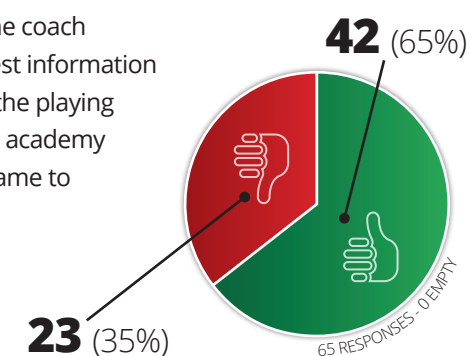
In 63% of academies, the first team plays in the same style as teams in the academy. Parent clubs choose coaches in their partner clubs in 38% of all cases. The rationale behind different stages of

the transition process, such as when they move between age groups, go out on loan or to a partner club, is explained to players in 98% of academies.

Clubs provide exit support to players who are not retained in 81% of cases. In 65% of academies, the first-team coach has requested information about the playing style of the academy teams upon arrival. On the other hand, in only 32% of academies has the first-team coach asked that the academy playing style aligns with his own one.

The first-team coach has asked to implement regular communication with representative(s) of the youth academy in 80% of cases. Also, in 88% of academies the first team coach has

**Q** Did the coach request information regarding the playing style in the academy when he came to the club?



"What would be extremely useful is to have information over the years about what that experience [of leaving the academy] is like for them"

Liam Brady, former Arsenal FC Academy Director

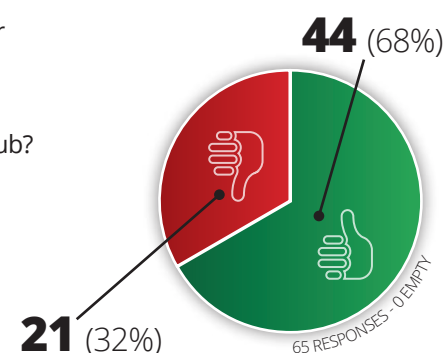


asked for information from the youth academy about players in position(s) he wanted to strengthen for the next transfer window.

## SELLING/LEAVING THE CLUB

Support to succeed elsewhere after departure is offered to players from half (51%) of academies surveyed. In 68% of academies information is collected, while there's also some reporting about the progress of players that have left.

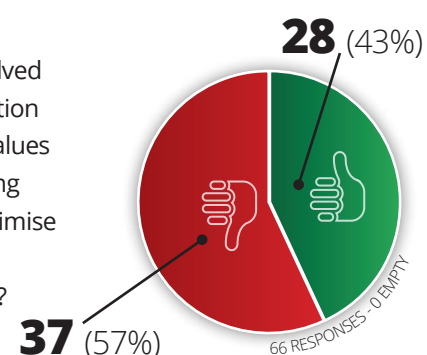
**Q** Do you monitor their further development and report on it to the club?



## RELATIONS WITH OTHER DEPARTMENTS

Budgets of youth academies are defined in 85% of academies. Interestingly, in 43% of academies, the club's financial department are involved in assessing the evolution of academy players' values as assets, and providing advice on how to maximise these values. This indicates that clubs are increasingly viewing their youth players as assets that can be maximised not only through sporting means,

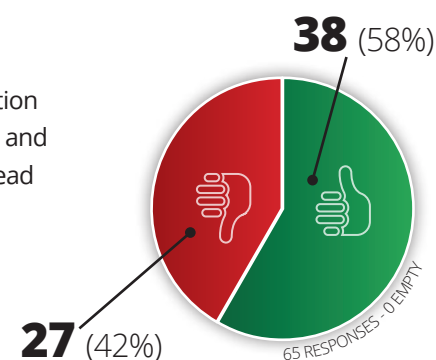
**Q** Is the financial department involved in assessing the evolution of academy players' values as assets, and providing advice on how to maximise these values from a financial point of view?



but also financial methods.

Players participate in marketing and PR actions in 82% of academies. They are provided with a briefing and explanation of the club's strategic and operational goals ahead of such actions in 58% of cases. As a result, a large number are involved without such information, meaning that improvements can be made in this area, which could lead to better outcomes for the clubs.

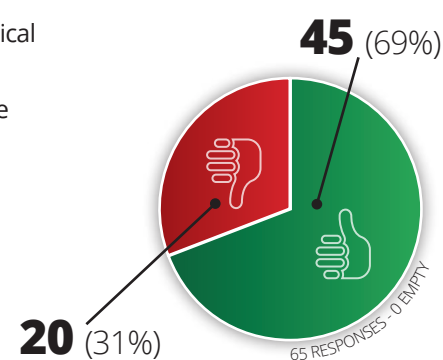
**Q** Are players provided with a briefing and explanation of the club's strategic and operational goals ahead of such actions?



## DECISION-MAKING LEVEL

The Academy Director was involved in creating a strategic document during their mandate in 72% of academies. They prefer local rather than foreign academy coaches 95% of the time. Most academy directors (55%) don't believe that former professional players are more likely to

**Q** Is there a technical committee or similar in place at the club?



provide or become better coaches. A Technical Committee or similar exists in 69% of academies. ✕

“For Sporting CP, the academy is the main factor of the club's strategy”



90<sup>+</sup>%

Most used working processes in youth academy environment, carried out by 90%+ of clubs in survey

#### TID - environment

- 97% Scout for talented players
- 94% Enter into communication with parents of potential players
- 92% Operate training camps or talent days for children not signed with the club
- 91% Hold parent meetings for potential players

#### TID - club

- 100% Bring children to the club for trial trainings

#### Youth academy - playing style

- 97% Have a formalised football philosophy in place
- 94% Have a formally defined coaching methodology
- 91% Monitor coaching methods within methodology
- 91% Transmit coaching methods within methodology to new coaches joining the academy

#### Youth academy - players

- 100% Make some kind of assessment of players
- 98% Make an assessment of the physical capacity of players
- 91% Operate a code of conduct or set official behaviour standards for players

#### Youth academy - coaches

- 97% Film youth matches for subsequent analysis
- 94% Assess coaches by various criteria

#### Youth academy - staff

- 100% Have fulltime employees at youth academy
- 94% Have a formal organogram of youth academy

#### Youth academy - parents

- 94% Hold regular meetings with parents of youth academy players
- 94% Hold individual meetings with parents?
- 91% Hold group meetings with parents

#### Youth academy - school and academy community

- 91% Align their training timetable to the academic timetables of the academy players

#### Transition from youth academy to first team

- 98% Explain to academy players the rationale behind different stages of the transition process, such as when they move between age groups, go out on loan or to a partner club

#### What's noticeable

is that processes relating to the identification of talented players and coaches are commonplace, as well as those related to Cognitive Care for players and their environment. Moreover, it's clear that a formal strategic direction based on a defined philosophy, coaching methodology and organogram of the youth academy plays a significant role among surveyed academies.

80<sup>+</sup>%

Most used working processes in youth academy environment, carried out by 80%+ of clubs in survey

#### TID - club

- 86% Maintain a database with information about potential youth players (technical, tactical, physical, psychological, sociological, pedagogical).

#### Youth academy - players

- 86% There is an assessment of technical capacity of the players.
- 86% There are any individual development goals formally set for players.
- 86% Do require players to train and/or play in positions other than their main recognized field position for development purposes.

#### Youth academy - coaches

- 88% Coaches do organize internal demonstration, theoretical lectures and practical trainings.

#### Youth academy - scouting

- 86% Do have a scouting department or regular scouting service dedicated for the youth academy.

#### Youth academy - staff

- 86% Club does define the budget of the youth academy before season.

#### Youth academy - school and academy community

- 89% Do have a procedure in the club to respond to any concerns if they are raised by school.
- 86% Do monitor players grades in school.

#### Transition from youth academy to first team

- 89% Coach does ask for information from youth academy about players in position(s) he wants to strengthen in next transfer window.

Here, identification and development of players/coaches is dominant. Also, the transition of players to the first team and interest from the first team coach,

ahead of a transfer window and as a result of injuries to first-team players, is key. Strategical direction is also prevalent via structural budgeting prior a season's start. ►

# THE MOST COMMON WORKING PROCESSES

We took frequency margins of 90%, 85-90% and below 25% to illustrate the dynamics of change

“For FC Kairat Almaty, ‘transfer of knowledge’ has been a successful tool to use”





**25%**

Least used working processes in youth academy environment, carried out by 25%- of clubs in survey

#### TID - environment

- 22% Do offer employment to parents if they are from another city and consider moving their child to your club

#### Youth academy - players

- 8% IQ of players is measured after signing

#### Youth academy - coaches

- 5% Do conduct IQ test of coaches
- 19% Do conduct any other psychological test of coaches

#### Youth academy - infrastructure

- 14% Do invest in infrastructure in your partner clubs

#### Youth academy - staff

- 22% Do have a full time HR specialist at youth academy

#### Youth academy - player agents

- 5% Do suggest the use of specific agents to your academy players
- 6% Do have any rules limiting or excluding agent use in place
- 9% There are group meetings with agents
- 20% Assessment of agents is made for each player

#### Selling/leaving the club

- 11% Do ask a departing player to complete a "leaving the club" questionnaire before moving

#### Other departments

- 16% The club does employ anyone to take care of players personal brand

There is new focus in this selection related to signing/selling processes and partners through relations with parents, and especially agents. New methods of assessment or preparation for cognitive care through IQ or other

psychological test or HR specialists employed in the academy are also present. In most cases, most clubs don't have a formalised system or trackable process when it comes to recording the players' opinions on their experiences in the academy after they leave it.

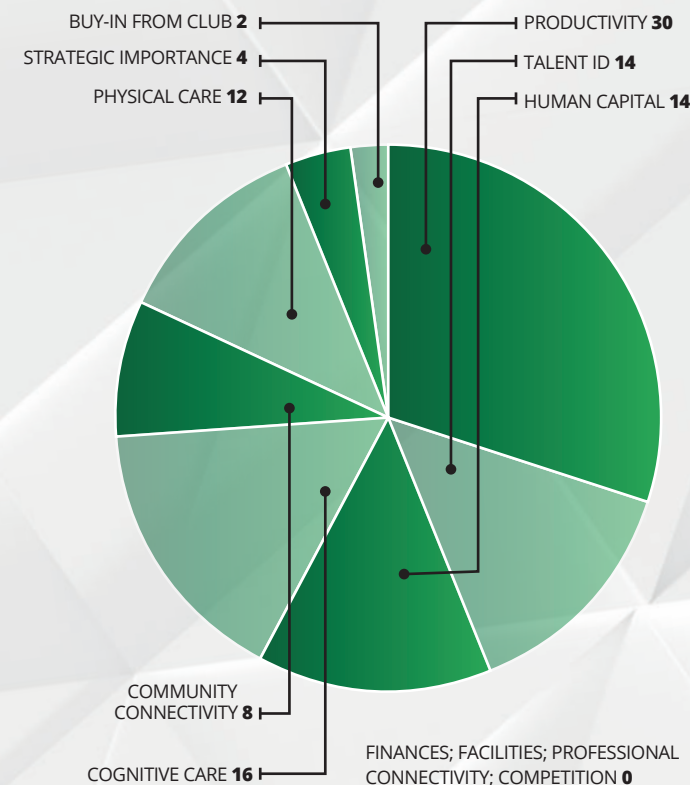
"Social media is the methodology of how young people communicate nowadays; they get praise and criticism through it"

Liam Brady, former Arsenal FC Academy Director



## COMMON WORKING PROCESSES

### 90% margin

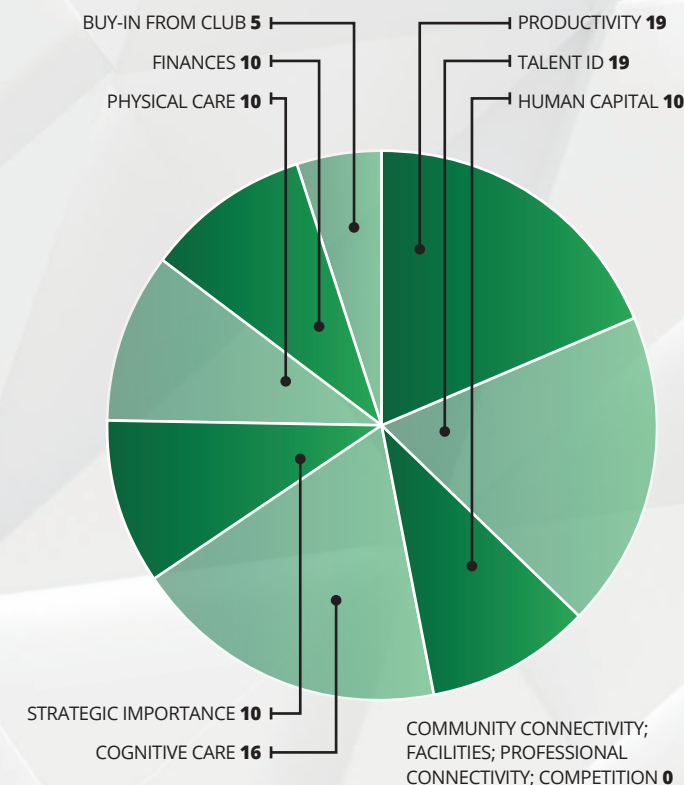


There is a very strong focus on Productivity and Cognitive Care throughout. In the 85%-90% set, the Quality Areas in focus are more balanced than in the 90%+ set. And while Strategic Importance and Finances are important for academies, they are not top priorities.

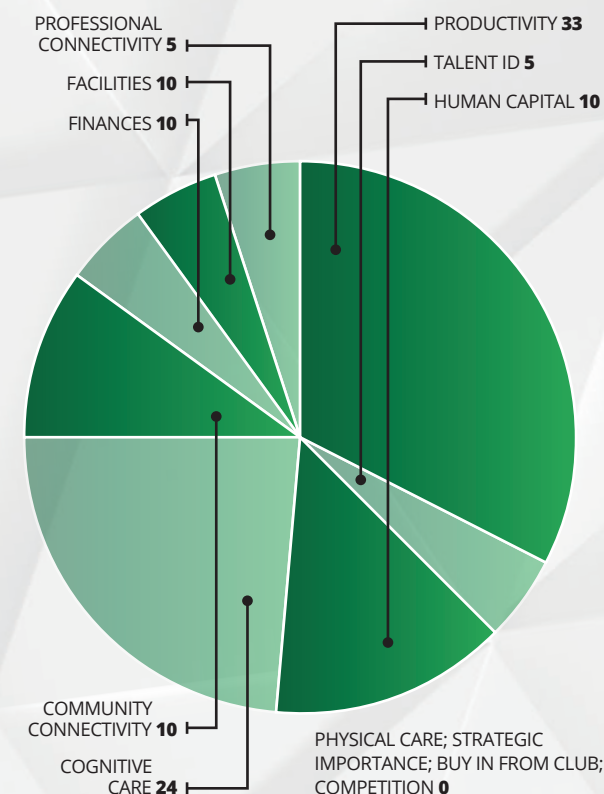
In the least used subset, Talent ID, as well as Human Capital and Finances are present in residual form, while Physical Care and Strategic Importance disappear altogether, suggesting that these aren't experimental areas for academies. This is the only subset with working processes related to Professional Connectivity and Facilities.

Obviously, there are some Quality Areas which are covered by most, if not all, academies: Productivity, Talent ID, Human Capital, Cognitive Care, Physical Care and Strategic Importance. These Quality Areas deal with the fundamental processes to an academy's operations and overall targets. ✕

### 85% - 90% margin



### 25% margin





## Which are the most common and correlated working processes, and what does this mean for academies and the way they operate?

**W**hen you analyse academy activities, it is natural that working processes, logistics and strategic subjects are correlated. Understanding which ones have the most correlation gives us an insight into the relationships between them and their position within the hierarchy.

We searched for statistically significant correlation between working processes using Pearson correlation as criteria. This enables us to arrange working processes by their level of influence on the others within an academy. It is important to understand that we do not talk about causality (i.e. where one working process is the reason another working process appears), but

correlation (when one working process is present, another process appears).

**So, working processes, which have a more significant correlation with all other working processes are more**

**interesting to consider for experts working in youth academies.**

Within the list of working processes, we have identified more than 600 statistically significant correlations. The most 'connected' working processes have correlations with 32 other working processes. If we look at absolute numbers, the question: **Do players receive learning support from the club, e.g. access to teachers or help in understanding the study materials they receive from school?** is the single most correlated working process measured.

Working processes which are correlated with it are presented here arranged by strength of correlation<sup>1</sup>: ►

# MOST CORRELATED WORKING PROCESSES



## The strongest correlation with working process behind the question: "Do players receive learning support from the club?"



<sup>1</sup> Strength of correlation goes from 0 to 1, where 1 means perfect correlation and 0 no correlation. -1 means negative correlation, so if one process is present, then the other is not.





## QUALITY AREA PERSPECTIVE

Here, we have categorised working processes, logistics and strategic subjects by Quality Area and aligned them based on the number of correlations between each QA.

This perspective shows correlation based on the overall environment of clubs participating in the survey. However, this perspective can still be understood as a reflection of youth academy activities across Europe from a statistical, and therefore more objective, foundation.

**Human Capital and Cognitive Care feature highly, which suggests people are the most important part of the development process, and not just as players or coaches but as human beings.**

The next most prevalent, and so those which relate to an academy's 'core business', are recruitment and development of players through Productivity and Talent ID. The fact that clubs and academies are focusing more on human beings is a reflection of the changing nature of club environments, and the recognition that clubs have a standing, and a duty to connect, with and to the local and professionals communities they serve. ✕

## NUMBER OF CORRELATIONS BY QA



## MOST INTERCORRELATED PROCESSES

Below is the list of all working processes, logistics or strategic subjects correlated with more than 10 other processes. The list suggests that education (including non-football content), facilities, the use of sport psychologists, educators and welfare support.

- 32 Do players receive learning support from the club, e.g. access to teachers or help in understanding the study materials they receive from school?
- 31 Are any non-coaching staff (e.g. psychologist, HR, pedagogue...) involved in delivering any team-level activities for players within their normal weekly schedule?
- 31 How many separate training fields do you have?
- 26 Do you have a full time sport psychologist at youth academy?
- 28 Do you maintain a database with information about potential youth players (technical, tactical, physical, psychological, sociological, pedagogical)?
- 27 Do you have full-time individual for education at your club's youth academy?
- 23 Do you have full-time individual for welfare at your club's youth academy?
- 23 Do you have defined regular goals or KPIs for academy staff apart from sport results?
- 22 How many of those are full-sized? (i.e. official pitch size)
- 22 Do you have a full-time match analyst at the academy?
- 21 Are any non-coaching staff (e.g. psychologist, human resources, pedagogue...) involved in delivering any individual-level activities for players within their normal weekly schedule?
- 21 Do you have a hall of residence for young players?
- 20 Do you have full-time media manager employed at youth academy?
- 19 Does your academy utilise any specialised scouting software to keep a detailed player database?
- 18 Do you have a room specifically set up for player education?
- 17 Total value
- 17 Do you asses players personality?
- 17 Do you monitor players grades in school?
- 16 Do you have a full-time pedagogue at youth academy?
- 16 Do you have a full-time nutritionist at youth academy?

- 16 Do you have joint projects with academic/scientific community in research and development?
- 16 Is there a technical committee or similar in place at the club?
- 15 Does your club keep a shadow team list by position for the various age groups and replace departing players with scouted players from such a list?
- 15 Do you conduct regular meetings with agents?
- 14 Are coaches sent on other education courses besides football license courses as a matter of practice?
- 14 Do you estimate market value of academy players?
- 14 Do you have a full-time physiotherapist at youth academy?
- 14 Is a player assessment done for each parent?
- 14 Do you have a procedure in the club to respond to any concerns if they are raised by school?
- 14 Do you align your training timetable to the academic timetables of your academy players?
- 13 Academy value
- 13 Academy income
- 13 Are there any team-level development goals formally set for age groups?
- 13 Do scouts receive instructions regarding desired positions which are wanted for each age group?
- 13 Do you have rules in place related to calculation of value delivered by the academy in case a player is promoted to the first team?
- 12 Do you educate coaches in your partner clubs?
- 12 Are there any activities related to non-verbal communication?
- 12 Do you have a scouting department or regular scouting service dedicated for the youth academy?
- 12 Do you have a full-time sport scientist at youth academy?
- 11 Do you operate training camps or talent days for children not signed with your club?
- 11 Do you have agreement with schools of your academy players about sharing information about them for their better development?
- 10 Is there a plan or rules for communication with a player after he leave the club?
- 10 Do you send your own scouts to watch your partner club matches?
- 10 Are there any individual development goals formally set for players?
- 10 Are scouts educated about specific criteriums by coaches from the club?
- 10 Do you invest in infrastructure in your partner clubs?





“FC Shakhtar Donetsk recognise the challenge of bringing up professional players and social responsible human beings while achieving very high ambition in domestic and European competitions”

What do the statistics tell us? What are the must-have processes? And could the processes being carried out by the minority actually be seen as the most advanced in the ecosystem?

- To identify the working processes that make a difference for successful academies, you need to define what being a successful academy means to you, and understand that it will create different expectations, strategies and KPIs. This, in turn, might lead to different solutions as to which processes and quality areas to focus on.
- For some academies, success means producing as many players as possible for their first team; for others it is realising high transfer fees from academy graduates, or providing the best education for their young players. So what working processes work for some clubs, won't be as important for others depending on their goals.

- **Looking at the working process conducted by more than 85% of club academies, it is clear that most are focused on Talent Identification and Productivity, followed by Cognitive Care and Human Capital.** When you consider which working processes are covered by these areas, you recognise a pattern: approach; identify, and sign. Provide whatever is needed for the development of human beings as well as footballers.
- Even though Talent Identification, Productivity, Cognitive Care and Human Capital feature in the most intercorrelated processes, there is a small yet significant difference: the order of the first two places are changed, so Human Capital and Cognitive Care come to the fore, and there are also clearer borders between them.
- **When you look specifically at which working processes are the most intercorrelated there is another clear pattern: provide an environment for the development of players; establish**

**learning paths for providers (coaches, staff, logistics, infrastructure); apply to human beings in your academy; identify talented players; develop them over time.** This suggests that there is a conscious or subconscious regular cycle in place, with a system of continuous investment in the environment.

- Physical Care and Club Buy-in are covered by 90% of academies, but do not appear in the list of most intercorrelated. On the other hand, Facilities and Professional Connectivity are represented amongst the most intercorrelated processes, but don't feature in the 90%+ set. Why? It could be that Physical Care and Club Buy-in are accepted as 'must-haves' in all club environments; present in all academies, but seen as more stand-alone areas. Similarly, one possible reason why the most widely followed list might not feature processes related to Professional Connectivity and Facilities so highly, is that these areas require significant investment, which means that not everyone can afford to focus on them before solving other more pressing issues.
- Why aren't Quality Areas such as Competition covered as much? It could be that clubs are focusing more on development than on results in their academy, and therefore competitions are not seen as particularly significant. Nevertheless, it is also important to recognise that if clubs can provide better levels of competition to their players, it should also have a positive effect on their individual and collective development. ✕

# STATISTICAL CONCLUSIONS



We interviewed 18 academy representatives from clubs all over Europe to create a series of case studies and best practices...



The qualitative research part of the project saw us carry out semi-structured interviews with 18 European clubs to create a series of academy snapshots and examples of best practices.

The academies interviewed were targeted by their levels of development and their success in the field of youth development, as well as to get a geographical representation of various regions around Europe.

Due to various reasons, not least the challenges with travel over the last few seasons, interviews took place remotely over MS Teams between April and October 2021, with each one specifically aimed at the Academy Director or equivalent position within academies in order to ensure maximum consistency between different clubs.

The authors of this publication would like to place on record their thanks to all those involved in the process for their incredible openness and willingness to share the most sensitive details of their

### OUR INTERVIEWEES WERE

**FC Kairat:** Yevgeni Krassikov & Wolfgang Geiger

**Olympique Lyonnais:** Jean-François Vulliez

**FC Inter Turku:** Jani Meriläinen

**AFC Ajax:** Edmond Claus

**Malmö FF:** Per Agren

**Legia Warszawa:** Richard Grootsholten & Piotr Urban

**FC Zenit:** Andrey Arshavin

**FC Red Bull Salzburg:** Manfred Pamminger & Bernhard Seonbuchner

**RSC Anderlecht:** Jean Kindermans

**Athletic Club:** Andoni Bombin

**HNK Rijeka:** Ranko Buketa

**Fenerbahçe SK:** Baris Alpaslan & Tahir Karapinar

**FC Internazionale Milano:** Roberto Samaden & Roberto Niccolai

**FC Zimbru Chisinau:** Andrei Trifan

**FC Shakhtar Donetsk:** Aleksandr Alexeev

**FC Copenhagen:** Sune Smith-Nielsen

**Sporting Clube de Portugal:** Tomaz Morais

**Rangers FC:** Craig Mulholland

### CASE STUDIES & INTERVIEW ANALYSIS

academy operations and strategies, which have added great value to this publication.

Across this next section, you will see what we believe to be the most relevant parts of these interviews, plus attempts to clarify some of the data acquired from the surveys and statistical analysis. Ultimately, we have tried to add a bit of the 'why', and 'how' to the 'what'.

**When it comes to sporting policy, most clubs appear to be focusing on their philosophy to produce players for the first team or for the best competitions in Europe, although a similar number are also motivated by finances. A significant number of academies interviewed are motivated by values in their DNA, and some of them are also aligned with their community, recognising the importance of correlating with community for a different number of reasons.**

More than half of the clubs interviewed define themselves as 'development clubs', while the rest are mixed between development and scouting. Almost all of them recognise the importance and benefits of well-developed processes from both perspectives. The sporting policy was, in most cases, created spontaneously, and typically from a single individual within the club. Some of them are currently in the process of development.

The majority of academies interviewed have formalised their sport policy document. In almost two thirds of our interviews, it was stated that these documents fit in with their club's overall strategy. Some club's do not have an overall strategy. Generally, the importance of aligning documents and operations to the same target(s) appears to be a tangible goal for those that are aligned, and a concern for those that aren't.

The contents of those sporting policies in more than half of the academies start from a philosophy rather than a methodology. In a quarter of academies, there seems to be a strong correlation between a sport policy document, the community/

# CASE STUDIES AND INTERVIEW ANALYSIS





history of the club and the wider environment. In another quarter – mostly those who have undergone recent significant change generally – there is no such connection. The importance of relations with the local community is considered to be important by most.

**More than half of academies interviewed have exclusive use of a scouting department and, in some cases, this overlaps with the first team.**

A minority of clubs have no scouting services. The methodology of scouting is related to geography in fewer than half of academies, while for others it's more about the process itself.

The Talent Identification process is organised through a network in almost all academies with very few exceptions. The main principles of development are related to ages, and in some cases with processes, although it is generally mixed and used in both ways. More than half of academies scout for staff and coaches, as well as players.

**Playing styles are formally described in most clubs. More than half of clubs interviewed admit to developing their style over time.** These periods of change can be spontaneous and are often in reaction to football trends, while for some it's more systematic and part of regulated academy activities. **Some clubs are happy to work in their own bubble and are less inclined to follow trends, but over half the clubs said their playing style is engrained within the club's values.**

Half of academy directors in the interview process have complete independence when it comes

to signing youth players, whilst others need to get approval from above (to stick to a planned budget). In one quarter of academies, there is a personnel motivation scheme driven by performance bonuses for selling academy players.

Fewer than half of clubs saw coaches move from the academy to the first team. Most such cases tend to be for a shorter period of transition until a more permanent replacement is found. **Most academies try to provide excellence in the quality of their coaches and staff, and by educating them in fields not always related to football.** Only one club has a formal process, and uses the transition of coaches into the first team as one of their specific goals.

In almost half of academies, there are principles of relations with the community, some which are self-driven, others driven by the overarching club philosophy. Only one club doesn't maintain relationships with its community. Almost all clubs are educating their players about social media.

**All academy goals are driven in some part by developing players, but some are driven by developing coaches and staff, too. Half of them are driven to develop well-rounded human beings as well as talented footballers.** Only a small number of academies are following how they deliver on their goals using KPIs as tool for measurement. ✕



## FOUR PILLARS OF TRANSITION

When it comes to a successful transition to the first team, the four most important pillars are:

- › Support from above (board and first team coach) (6)
- › Support and communication with player during transition (4)
- › Momentum of player promotion (4)
- › Player qualities (4)

In addition, several academy directors state that it is important to keep the same playing style (3), give players a proper chance, not to 'burn' them out in a short period of time (3), persistence of player (3), general environment for development (3), stable philosophy and strategy (2), talent (2) and individual approach (1), separate locker room during transition (1), ambition of player (1).



# Interviewing academy directors or the equivalent at 18 clubs around Europe allowed us to put more ‘meat on the bones’ to our survey findings

We aimed to keep a balanced and objective approach to each conversation in an effort to obtain the most balanced and objective results for overall analysis. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and

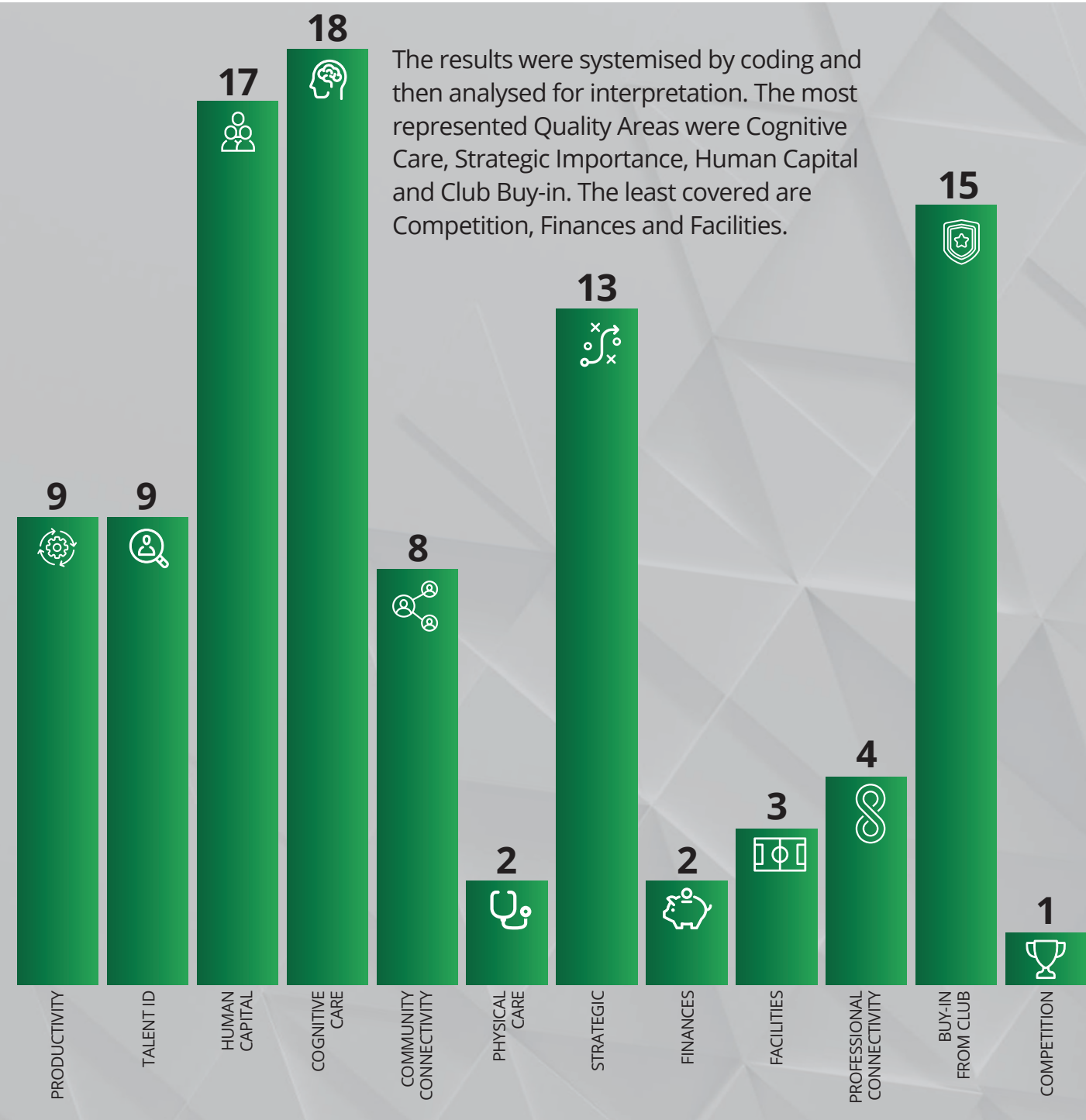
**D**uring these interviews, we had a clear target in mind to use a semi-structured process to better understand our findings from our surveys, and to cover some of the more prominent topics, such as the successful transition of players from academy to first team.

We used a list of prepared questions and topics to generate consistency in our discussions with our experts from different clubs and countries, who between them were in the position of Academy Director or equivalent to ensure similar levels of expertise and responsibility. This was very important to generate a better position for analysis, to get more confident and objective interpretation from the entire process.

project timing restrictions, these interviews were held online, which took away some of the nuances you get when you physically visit people and place.

Even though the interview plan contained more questions, we were able to use our survey results to focus on some areas and skip others, and generate a deeper discussion for the most pertinent topics. **Ultimately, our aim was to establish ‘why’ academies do what they do, ‘how’ they do it and how they connect their major operational or tactical goals with their club’s strategy, philosophy or DNA.**

The structure of the interviews covered the same areas as our survey, but also covered strategic areas, such as sport policy and the philosophy behind



# INTERVIEW METHODOLOGY



it, and more tactical areas, such as the successful transition from the academy to the first team.

Finally, it was a privilege to talk to some of the top experts from youth academies across Europe. Merely doing so was a

learning point in itself, and it’s highly recommended as a general practice to all youth academy experts to regularly exchange ideas for the benefit of all participants and the general youth academy ecosystem. ✕





# AJAX AMSTERDAM

## VITAL STATISTICS\*

According to CIES Football Observatory, the percentage of minutes by club-trained players (i.e. those aged 15-21 at the club) is:

**36.5%**  
(12 players)

AVERAGE AGE  
**23.73**

PLAYERS IN THE  
FIRST TEAM

**26**

**13** of which trained in the club (academy pupils)

WITH AN  
AVERAGE VALUE OF  
**€10,850,000**

AVERAGING  
**43.6%**  
OF MINUTES PLAYED

The Ajax Academy needs little introduction, as it is one of the most instantly recognised and admired talent development centres in world football.

Behind the many great players and famous teams that the club has produced is a set of ideas, principles and methods that have been part of the club's rich history, but which also continue to evolve and be reinvented. 'De Toekomst' [The Future], as the training centre is known in Dutch, is a combination of function and form. The club invests in its infrastructure, systems, processes and human capital, with the full expectation of seeing a sporting and commercial return on this investment. Within its walls, future players are trained alongside a discussion on the future of football itself. And the place of Ajax within that future is inextricably linked to talent development of the highest calibre, even though the club is no longer able to construct long-term squads around its most gifted graduates. It is probably not possible to fully 'describe', 'regulate' or 'assess' the Ajax phenomenon, because the research and development that goes on within this academy, like very few other ones in Europe, is at the cutting edge of youth development thinking. However, the main aim of the 12 Quality Areas framework is precisely to recognise good practice in both the tangible and intangible dimensions. ▶



## AJAX AMSTERDAM

### TOP VALUE PLAYERS FROM THE ACADEMY

#### 1. Ryan Gravenberch

Age	Position	Minutes	Value
19	M	78%	€35M

#### 2. Jurrien Timber

Age	Position	Minutes	Value
20	D	92%	€30M

#### 3. Noussair Mazraoui

Age	Position	Minutes	Value
24	D	76%	€20M

### RECORD OUTGOING TRANSFERS

#### 1. Frenkie de Jong

Age when sold	Value	To
22 (2019)	€86m	FC Barcelona

#### 2. Matthijs de Ligt

Age when sold	Value	To
19 (2020)	€85.5m	Juventus

#### 3. Davinson Sánchez

Age when sold	Value	To
21 (2017)	€42m	Tottenham

### RECORD INCOMING TRANSFERS

#### 1. Sébastien Haller

Age when bought	Value	From
26 (2021)	€22.5m	West Ham Utd

#### 2. David Neres

Age when bought	Value	From
19 (2017)	€22m	São Paulo

#### 3. Miralem Sulejmani

Age when bought	Value	From
19 (2008)	€16.25m	Heerenveen





AJAX AMSTERDAM

# QUALITY AREAS SNAPSHOT



## PHYSICAL CARE

- › All young players, but particularly the U17s and U18s, enjoy the same access to facilities as the first team.



## COGNITIVE CARE

- › Players are challenged by moving up the age groups. High-performing players receive additional attention.
- › Players play in different positions to identify strengths and weaknesses.
- › An individual approach used, with personality assessed as well as ability.
- › Players encouraged to find match solutions by themselves (creativity), then by learned mechanisms.
- › Players trained in comms/social media.
- › 5 player progress meetings a year (2 official moments with the parents).



## FINANCES

- › Academy budget: €11.5m (10% of overall club budget).
- › Academy receives transfer bonuses.



## FACILITIES

- › Facilities consist of 7 pitches (3 artificial, 4 hybrid), 1 half-size pitch, boarding fields, and 1 indoor pitch.
- › Host families accommodate players.



## TALENT IDENTIFICATION

- › The youth scouting department is separate from the first-team scouting department, and it has 14 pro scouts and 100 volunteers.
- › Shadow team for each generation.
- › Youngest players targeted within a 40km radius of Amsterdam. The older the age group, the larger the radius (U15 upwards is international). Professional youth scouts recognise, assess and recruit all players up to U18s.
- › In terms of Talent ID, players are assessed by their technical skills, the choices they make within the Ajax playing principles, and their mental and physical capabilities.
- › They have links with 30+ clubs nationally and 5 internationally.

## PRODUCTIVITY



- › Aim is to develop players who can impact at Champions League level.
- › Development, not winning, is the main objective.
- › They also produce coaches: Frank de Boer, Danny Blind, Louis van Gaal, and Marcel Keizer.
- › Process of transition: U18s > reserves/U19s > progress communication > pre-season camps > first team. Success depends on the club's philosophy, its willingness to promote players, the playing style, and promoting players at right time.



## STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE

- › There are 4 pillars to the club's business model: 1. develop academy players: 2. use former players to scout: 3 international scouting; 4. prepare next generation.
- › Formalised policies born from the city's cultural identity of global trading.
- › Club identity is attacking, dominant and positive/arrogant game.
- › Influenced by Rinus Michels, Johan Cruyff, Louis van Gaal and others in 70's, 80's and 90's.



## COMPETITION

- › Ajax's main unique selling point is that other Dutch clubs are not as successful transferring academy players to the first/national team.



## HUMAN CAPITAL

- › They scout for coaches and have a profile of coach they are looking for.
- › They are not looking for best coaches, but best coaches for Ajax.
- › Keen to promote staff internally.



## BUY-IN FROM CLUB

- › Similar principles and values in academy and first team, though first team more focused on winning versus academy development.
- › All technical policy decisions are made by the Technical Director, Academy Director and First Team Coach.



## COMMUNITY CONNECTIVITY

- › Community work is important, and Academy has input from the Foundation.



## PROFESSIONAL CONNECTIVITY

- › Football will be more 'tailor made'.
- › 'Space' will be tighter.
- › 'Creativity' and 'restarts' will be increasingly important.
- › Aim is to make the opponent make more choices during a game. ✗





# ATHLETIC CLUB

## VITAL STATISTICS\*

According to CIES Football Observatory, the percentage of minutes by club-trained players (i.e. those aged 15-21 at the club) is:

**50.9%**  
(14 players)

AVERAGE AGE  
**26.77**

PLAYERS IN THE FIRST TEAM

**25** 

**15** of which trained in the club (academy pupils)

WITH AN AVERAGE VALUE OF  
**€9,807,692**

AVERAGING  
**38.15%**  
OF MINUTES PLAYED

Bilbao is a Spanish club with a reputation known all over the world for developing young footballers from the Basque country (population 2.2 million).

It is unique to have most of your players come from your local region, and for your club to be able to compete and be successful in one of the best football leagues in the world. Athletic are the fourth most successful club in La Liga with eight titles to their name, and second only to Barcelona in terms of Copa Del Rey wins. It has never been relegated from the top flight since its inception in 1929. And yet, despite this pressure to produce players for the first team, the club's academy staff doesn't appear to feel any burden. Rafa Alkorta is the club's Sport Director and Andoni Ayarza the Head of the Academy. Andoni Bombin, renowned for his international experience in China, is the Chief of Methodology. The academy does not appear to have a formalised strategy, but all the club's employees know its history and values. It can be argued that the work culture in this club is of the highest level, where all the employees know the vision and have a common goal that they strive for in their daily activities. Throughout its history, the Bilbao academy has been able to sell its players to the best football clubs in Europe. ▶



## ATHLETIC CLUB

### TOP VALUE PLAYERS FROM THE ACADEMY

#### 1. Iñaki Williams

AGE	POSITION	MINUTES	VALUE
27	F	70%	€25m

#### 2. Unai Simón

AGE	POSITION	MINUTES	VALUE
24	GK	100%	€25m

#### 3. Unai Núñez

AGE	POSITION	MINUTES	VALUE
24	D	62%	€20m

#### 4. Yeray Álvarez

AGE	POSITION	MINUTES	VALUE
27	D	57%	€20m

### RECORD OUTGOING TRANSFERS

#### 1. Kepa Arrizabalaga

AGE	Age when sold (2018)	VALUE
23	to Chelsea	€80m

#### 2. Aymeric Laporte

AGE	Age when sold (2018)	VALUE
23	to Manchester City	€65m

#### 3. Javi Martínez

AGE	Age when sold (2012)	VALUE
23	to Bayern Munich	€40m

### RECORD INCOMING TRANSFERS

#### 1. Iñigo Martínez

AGE	Age when bought (2018)	VALUE
26	From Real Sociedad	€32m

#### 2. Yuri Berchiche

AGE	Age when bought (2018)	VALUE
28	From Paris Saint-Germain	€24m

#### 3. Álex Berenguer

AGE	Age when bought (2020)	VALUE
25	From Torino	€12m





# QUALITY AREAS SNAPSHOT



## COGNITIVE CARE

- › Values: commitment, effort, respect.
- › Integral department with psychologist at head; pedagogue for education, safeguarding officer, match analyst, physio and sports scientist.
- › Agreement with 3 schools.
- › Main structures in development process: 1. conditional; 2. cognitive; 3. coordinate; 4. competitive; 5. playful creative. 6. psico-socio-emotive.
- › Internal Education-Development department for players/coaches.
- › Player profiles set against a defined game style. Want players to stay at club for at least 2 years after signing. From U14, they are in federation school system.
- › Education links with Milan, Salzburg, Southampton, SL Benfica and more.



## FINANCES

- › Academy budget is 10% of club's overall budget.
- › Some bonuses in place for coaches since last season.



## FACILITIES

- › 8 pitches.
- › Residence for players in place with capacity for 58 players.



## TALENT IDENTIFICATION

- › 20 scouts (4 in Pamplona, 2 in Gíburkoa, 2 Alava Province, and the rest work in Basque region).
- › First select players at U10 level.
- › Coach's responsibility to report any interesting players.
- › 156 feeder clubs, classified from 1 to 3 in terms of the number of players raised for Athletic. Education and investment in these clubs.
- › Scouting and coaching is profiled by club's playing philosophy.
- › 3 phases in each scouting area: 1. ID players with different scouts; 2. general assessment with 3-4 scouts; 3. assessment by profile of players on his position.



## PRODUCTIVITY

- › No pressure to produce players.
- › Academy goal is to produce players for the first team based on club philosophy.
- › Set up teams at U11 level and, if possible, keep them together through the age groups.

Before U14, they do not use any players outside of the Biscay province.

- › Process of transition: they try to put players in difficult situations – let them try in first and second team.
- › They have promoted many coaches from the academy to the first team.



## STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE

- › Philosophy defines how they play.
- › Since 1898, formalised sporting philosophy is to be the most important club in the Basque region.
- › Players are most important element.
- › Club goal is to develop players.
- › Decision on signing player depends on Sport Director, Assistant, Academy Director and Head of Scouting.
- › Decision on signing academy staff: Sport Director, Assistant and Academy Director, with CEO approval.

management-coach meetings.

- › They organise internal education.



## BUY-IN FROM CLUB

- › Style of play is the same for all teams.
- › First team coach has no influence on academy. Sporting Director hires coaches based on club model.
- › Style of play is formally described as: offensive (direct, using wings), defensive (high pressure, high defensive line), and with transition (try to connect 3/3 asap).



## COMPETITION

- › The only club to target and use only Basque (local) players.
- › All the teams play in difficult situations by facing older age group teams. The third team is playing in third division with mostly U19 players



## COMMUNITY CONNECTIVITY

- › Foundation involves academy players in different projects such as visiting prisons, working on projects for people with no families.



## HUMAN CAPITAL

- › Scout for local coaches.
- › Weekly assessment on team performance. Monthly academy



## PROFESSIONAL CONNECTIVITY

- › Their model can be adapted. Style currently changing: GK has to play good with his feet. ✗





# RSC ANDERLECHT

## VITAL STATISTICS\*

According to CIES Football Observatory, the percentage of minutes by club-trained players (i.e. those aged 15-21 at the club) is:

**32.5%**  
(12 players)

AVERAGE AGE  
**21.66**

PLAYERS IN THE  
FIRST TEAM

**33**

**16** players of which trained in the club (academy pupils)

WITH AN  
AVERAGE VALUE OF  
**€2,803,125**

AVERAGING  
  
**19%**  
OF MINUTES PLAYED

Anderlecht is the most successful club in Belgian football, with five European trophies and 34 league titles.

They hold the record for the most consecutive league titles wins, five, between 1963/64 and 1967/68. Anderlecht's Academy is considered one of the best in Europe. Throughout its history, the club has trained such players as Enzo Scifo, Vincent Kompany, Romelu Lukaku and Youri Tielemans. The academy has been headed by the experienced Jean Kindermans, the club's Technical Youth Director since 2005, and he has a lot of experience in sharing knowledge with other academies all over Europe. During our research, Kindermans displayed incredible passion and exceptional knowledge. Integral to Anderlecht's academy is the promise to parents of players that their children will receive the best football education, but also top academic education to finish high school. ►



## RSC ANDERLECHT

### TOP VALUE PLAYERS FROM THE ACADEMY

#### 1. Yuri Verschaeren

AGE	POSITION	MINUTES	VALUE
19	M	33%	€11m

#### 2. Anouar Ait El Hadj

AGE	POSITION	MINUTES	VALUE
19	M	30%	€4.8m

#### 3. Francis Amuzu

AGE	POSITION	MINUTES	VALUE
21	F	57%	€3.8m

### RECORD OUTGOING TRANSFERS

#### 1. Youri Tielemans

20	Age when sold (2017)	€26.2m	to Monaco
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#### 2. Jérémy Doku

18	Age when sold (2020)	€26m	to Rennes
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#### 3. Albert Sambi Lokonga

21	Age when sold (2021)	€17.5m	to Arsenal
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### RECORD INCOMING TRANSFERS

#### 1. Nicolae Stanciu

23	Age when bought (2016)	From Steaua Bucharest	€9.7m
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#### 2. Bubacarr Sanneh

23	Age when bought (2018)	From Midtjylland	€8m
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#### 3. Michel Vlap

22	Age when bought (2019)	From SC Heerenveen	€6.9m
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# QUALITY AREAS SNAPSHOT



## COGNITIVE CARE

- › Considered the best club for youth players in Belgium, with a programme containing football and education (with club supporting players on education).
- › Online education well guarded, and shown only by coaches to player.
- › There is a code of conduct for players, parents, coaches and educators.
- › They meet with parents twice a year, first before each season and mid-season, where players, parents and coaches talk about progress.
- › Main principles of development: football (technical, physical and mental) and education (values and personality).
- › Social media is a huge important part of their development.



## FINANCES

- › Budget is tricky to challenge with best in Europe (Bundesliga, Serie A). Rate of raising successful players is higher than success of buying in.
- › Academy is 8-12% of club budget.



## TALENT IDENTIFICATION

- › Scouting department has 25 voluntary scouts.
- › There are shadow teams for each generation.
- › Evaluation of academy players at the beginning of the season, with 4-5 weeks of assessment following training/matches.
- › Scouting methodology sees scouts receive mission from youth coordinator to categorise players of interest.
- › Coaches use even their players for scouting. After each match, they ask team who was best player on the pitch and why.
- › Target Brussels for 6-10-year-olds, and spread the search nationally at high-school age.



## PRODUCTIVITY

- › Development: 5x5 games, then 8x8, and finally 11x11. From U14 level, develop players as part of team – more freedom for coaches to develop tactics and develop teams.
- › Academy objectives: 1. education of youth players for the first team; 2. develop players for best European leagues; 3. nurture players to have a future which isn't dependent on playing football.
- › Key to success in transition: 1. talent; 2. smart work; 3. patience; 4. momentum.



## FACILITIES

- › Use family residences instead of dorms to help with language development and multiculturality.



## STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE

- › Focused principally on development but also on scouting. They want to integrate players as soon as possible.
- › A formalised sporting policy was created in 2005 and is evaluated every 1.5 seasons.



## COMPETITION

- › All clubs in Belgium work the same way but do not have same budget, knowledge or prestige.



## HUMAN CAPITAL

- › Head of youth academy decides on coaches and signings but he uses opinions of other experts in academy.
- › Everybody who comes to the club needs to fit the club DNA and philosophy.
- › Online education is encouraged to



## BUY-IN FROM CLUB

- › Academy has an important place in the club's history, and so it can have a big influence on the first team.
- › First team coach has little influence on the academy.



## COMMUNITY CONNECTIVITY

- › Club as a whole works closely with the community on projects, with academy playing its part.



## PROFESSIONAL CONNECTIVITY

- › Follow football trends and analyse teams across Europe.
- › Coaches are obligated to identify how football will change in the future.
- › Objective and scientific data are also used for evaluation. ✕





FC

COPENHAGEN

## VITAL STATISTICS

According to CIES Football Observatory, the percentage of minutes by club-trained players (i.e. those aged 15-21 at the club) is:

**22%**  
(5 players)

AVERAGE AGE  
**25.04**

PLAYERS IN THE FIRST TEAM

**26**

**6** players of which trained in the club (academy pupils)

WITH AN AVERAGE VALUE OF  
**€1,983,333**

AVERAGING  
**39.33%**  
OF MINUTES PLAYED

FC. Copenhagen have won 13 Danish Football Championships and eight Danish Cups, and they have reached the group stage of both the Champions League and Europa League more times than any other Danish club.

Copenhagen is the capital and largest city in Denmark with a population of 794,128. The club mostly focus to bring talented players to the academy from Copenhagen, from across Denmark and the other Nordic countries (Sweden, Norway and Iceland). In 2021, the club made a record transfer by selling Mohamed Daramy, a player trained in their academy, to Ajax Amsterdam, for €12m. FC Copenhagen academy representatives also pointed to the important economic aspect of the academy. If the academy is able to supply the first team with the right number of players, the first team will be able to make better transfers to the remaining positions. Their goal is to have 10 players from the academy in the first team. ►



FC. COPENHAGEN

## TOP VALUE PLAYERS FROM THE ACADEMY

### 1. Jonas Wind

AGE	POSITION	MINUTES	VALUE
22	F	82%	€7m

### 2. Viktor Kristiansen

AGE	POSITION	MINUTES	VALUE
19	D	85%	€4.3m

### 3. Elias Jelert

AGE	POSITION	MINUTES	VALUE
18	M	0.63%	€0.4m

## RECORD OUTGOING TRANSFERS

### 1. Jonas Wind

AGE when sold (2022)	VALUE
23	€12.8m to VFL Wolfsburg

### 2. Mohamed Daramy

AGE when sold (2021)	VALUE
19	€12m to Ajax

### 3. Denis Vavro

AGE when sold (2019)	VALUE
23	€10.5m to Lazio

## RECORD INCOMING TRANSFERS

### 1. Pep Biel

AGE when bought (2019)	VALUE
22	€5m From Zaragoza

### 2. Ísak Bergmann Jóhannesson

AGE when bought (2021)	VALUE
18	€4.5m From Norkopping

### 3. Akinkunmi Amoo

AGE when bought (2022)	VALUE
19	€4.3m From Hammarby



# QUALITY AREAS SNAPSHOT



## PRODUCTIVITY



- › Academy goal is to produce players and staff members for the first team via development and scouting.
- › The goal is to have 10 homegrown players in first team squad so they can spend more on fewer players.
- › The U19s work together with the first team.
- › Transition success is based on 1. clear club strategy; 2. relationship between first team and academy; 3. academy and first team sharing same methodology; 4. player quality; 5. timing.

## COGNITIVE CARE



- › Evaluate players on a 3-5-year period, not each year.
- › Dream and mindset to play with the best in the world.
- › U14s-U16s players go to the same school, while U17s-U19s are educated within the club's school.
- › Education is an automatic part of a player's contract.
- › Development principles centre around education philosophy, curriculum and training methodology.
- › Development process: Up to U13s – 8x8 and 5x5; U14s-U17s – 11x11; U19s revolves around the first team.
- › Players are educated on communication and social media.



### FINANCES

- › Players from Sweden and Norway cost too much.
- › From 2015, a cost of top-200 player has risen from €200-300k to €2-3m.



### FACILITIES

- › Academy has 15% of club budget.
- › There are performance bonuses.



### TALENT IDENTIFICATION

- › Aim for most players to be from Copenhagen or other Nordic countries. Danish/Nordic players should equate to 70% of squad.
- › Want to find the best talents at 16. In each age group, they buy 3 players from Sweden, Norway and Iceland.
- › Scouting department: Head of recruitment (Nordic + world), 8 full-time, plus 15-20 volunteers and development coaches for 50 feeder clubs.
- › Shadow team for each generation.
- › Scouting methodology includes player profiling, sport psychology assessment, education and player care, and evaluation of parents.



### STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE

- › The club was founded in 1992, the Academy 13 years ago. Three years ago, it became a key part of the strategy.
- › The formalised sport policy has 7 areas: 1. strategy + KPIs, economy; 2. player education model; 3. scouting; 4. facilities; 5. R&D – a theoretical fundament to the Academy's daily training; 6. football data & analysis; 7. talent identification within FC Copenhagen kids' football.
- › Decision on signing players is discussed between Head Coach, technical coaches, and scouts, then decision made by the Academy Director, Head of Recruitment and Sporting Director.
- › Strategy to produce coaches from academy to the first team.



### COMPETITION

- › Copenhagen's is considered one of the best academies in Denmark.
- › Their goal is always to win the league and be in the Champions League.



### HUMAN CAPITAL

- › They scout for coaches and other staff as part of their strategy.
- › Organise other non-football education for coaches.



### BUY-IN FROM CLUB

- › The playing style is not the same in academy and first team.
- › The first team coach has influence on the U19s, but not below.



### COMMUNITY CONNECTIVITY

- › The club shares its identity with the wider city; with an emphasis on science and education.
- › There are weekly community plans, with the goal to increase education, innovation and help.



### PROFESSIONAL CONNECTIVITY

- › Compare themselves to Ajax Amsterdam.
- › Follow football trends and its future. ✕





# FENERBAHÇE SK

## VITAL STATISTICS\*

According to CIES Football Observatory, the percentage of minutes by club-trained players (i.e. those aged 15-21 at the club) is:

**0.3%**  
(3 players)


AVERAGE AGE  
**27.59**

PLAYERS IN THE  
FIRST TEAM

**29** 

4 players of which trained in  
the club (academy pupils)

WITH AN  
AVERAGE VALUE OF  
**€1,325,000**

AVERAGING  
 **6%**  
OF MINUTES PLAYED

Fenerbahçe is one of the most successful and best supported football clubs in Turkey.

They hold the record for the most national titles won, 28 in total, with 19 Turkish Super League titles, 6 National Division titles and 3 Turkish Football Championship titles. They've also got 26 national cups in the trophy cabinet. They're based in Istanbul, the largest and most populous city in Turkey (population 15,519,267), and the country's cultural, commercial and financial centre. What is interesting is that, in the Fenerbahçe academy, they use a lot of sports (not only football), for example judo and boxing. At the present time, the Turkish club is developing its academy and wants it to provide more players to the first team. Nevertheless, the club from Istanbul has a recognisable brand and in the past was able to sell its players to the best clubs in Europe. Looking at the current development of the academy and the population of Istanbul, it seems that the academy of this club should reach an increasingly higher level. ▶



FENERBAHÇE SK

## TOP VALUE PLAYERS FROM THE ACADEMY

### 1. Arda Güler

AGE	POSITION	MINUTES	VALUE
16	M	1%	€0.75m

## RECORD OUTGOING TRANSFERS

### 1. Elvir Baljic

24	Age when sold (1999)	€21m	to Real Madrid
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### 2. Vedat Muriqi

26	Age when sold (2020)	€18.5m	to Lazio
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### 3. Eljif Elmas

19	Age when sold (2019)	£16.1m	to SSC Napoli
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## RECORD INCOMING TRANSFERS

### 1. Dani Güiza

27	Age when bought (2008)	From Mallorca	€14m
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### 2. Emmanuel Emenike

26	Age when bought (2013)	From Spartak Moscow	€13m
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### 3. Raúl Meireles

29	Age when bought (2012)	From Chelsea	€10m
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# QUALITY AREAS SNAPSHOT



## COGNITIVE CARE

- › Players are going into one of 6-7 schools, but the club is looking for more contracts with other schools.
- › Use a lot of sports such as judo, boxing and table tennis to enhance decision making and fair play. They educate all young players in the club's history.
- › Development principles: U9-U13 education group, fun in game; U14-U16 development group; U17 and upwards a performance group, moving on to the first team.
- › They organise education on communication and social media.



## FINANCES

- › President and board are planning on making financial developments.
- › Sporting policy is in a process of change, and the club is looking more to the future than immediate glory.
- › National economic situation isn't good, hence the bigger academy focus.
- › Budget is 2.2% of total club budget.



## FACILITIES

- › Two training facilities, and there is a project to build a third one.



## TALENT IDENTIFICATION

- › Scouting department has 6 full-time staff and other volunteers.
- › They have a collective shadow team for all age groups, with plans for one for each age group.
- › Academy player evaluation.
- › New scouting methodology to be put in place. Currently, U14s players don't use the facilities to stay.
- › Coaches play a role in scouting by reporting on their matches and watching others.
- › A franchise of schools is involved, who monitor players within their set-up – and at other clubs – in a tournament.
- › Most players are not from wealthy families whether that's İstanbul, the Aegean region or the rest of Turkey.



## PRODUCTIVITY

- › Academy goals: 1. develop players for the first team; 2. earn money for academy; 3. bring in good people with the right personality, and a connection to the club; 4. develop short and long-term plans.
- › First team watch young players.

Academy train with the first team. 4 out of 28 must be from academy.

- › Transition: 1. be mentally prepared; 2. compete physically; 3. academy players to play better than transferred players; 4. keep players in control in first period of transition.



## STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE

- › Focus now on development.
- › Sport policy and style of play in a process of change and formalisation.
- › Their goal is to be: 1. champions of Turkey; 2. successful in player production and education.



## COMPETITION

- › All Turkish clubs looking at their academies more.
- › Young players are choosing development clubs, and coaches are moving into academies.



## HUMAN CAPITAL

- › After scouting, academy directors watch players and then decide. Board consulted if a transfer is big.
- › Scouting for other experienced staff.
- › Academy Director suggests when players ready for first team, but decision made by Sporting Director.
- › They organise internal education about football and HR matters.
- › Almost all staff are full time.



## BUY-IN FROM CLUB

- › Style of play is the same in academy and first team, but not formalised.
- › First team coach will talk to academy and its players.



## COMMUNITY CONNECTIVITY

- › Fans are very committed. When the first team loses a match, they buy more than when they win. The club is very important in the community.
- › They want to be the best attacking team in Turkey. Community wouldn't accept a defensive style.
- › Club is principled, so players are regulated in their communication with the community.
- › Players are obligated to participate in community projects.



## PROFESSIONAL CONNECTIVITY

- › They're building a database of methodologies from other coaches. ✕





# INTERNAZION ALE MILANO

## VITAL STATISTICS\*

According to CIES Football Observatory, the percentage of minutes by club-trained players (i.e. those aged 15-21 at the club) is:

**0.1%**  
(1 player)

AVERAGE AGE  
**28.48**

PLAYERS IN THE  
FIRST TEAM

**25** 

**3** players of which trained in  
the club (academy pupils)

WITH AN  
AVERAGE VALUE OF  
**€12,500,000**

AVERAGING  
 **2.5%**  
OF MINUTES PLAYED

Inter Milan is the only Italian side to have always competed in the top flight of Italian football since its debut in 1909.

The club has won 31 domestic trophies including 19 league titles, the Coppa Italia seven times and the Supercoppa Italiana on six occasions. *I Nerazzurri* has also won both the Champions League and UEFA Cup three times and FIFA Club World Cup once. Inter's Youth Sector, with its director Roberto Samaden, works daily with the aim of training players on and off the pitch and developing them for the first team. The greatest satisfaction for Academy staff is seeing a player go through the Youth Sector and be a protagonist in the first team. Their activities are aimed at training more young people in different regions, which should bring long-term results. Despite Milan being a large city (population 1.35 million), it should be noted that Inter has to compete for talent with several major Italian clubs locally, not least their city rivals AC. ▶



## FC INTERNAZIONALE MILANO

### TOP VALUE PLAYERS FROM THE ACADEMY

#### 1. Federico Dimarco

AGE	POSITION	MINUTES	VALUE
24	DF	52%	€17m

#### 2. Andrea Pinamonti

AGE	POSITION	MINUTES	VALUE
22	F	5%	€12m

#### 3. Sebastiano Esposito

AGE	POSITION	MINUTES	VALUE
19	F	6%	€6.4m

### RECORD OUTGOING TRANSFERS

#### 1. Romelu Lukaku

Age when sold (2021)	Value	To
28	€121m	Chelsea

#### 2. Zlatan Ibrahimović

Age when sold (2009)	Value	To
27	€74m	Barcelon

#### 3. Achraf Hakimi

Age when sold (2021)	Value	To
22	£71m	Paris Saint-Germain

### RECORD INCOMING TRANSFERS

#### 1. Romelu Lukaku

Age when bought (2019)	Value	From
26	€74m	Manchester Utd

#### 2. Christian Vieri

Age when bought (1999)	Value	From
28	€46.48m	Lazio

#### 3. Achraf Hakimi

Age when bought (2020)	Value	From
25	€45m	Real Madrid





# QUALITY AREAS SNAPSHOT



## COGNITIVE CARE

- › Sport policy covers medical, performance, technical areas, education, and playing style.
- › Official values exist. Promotion through projects/experiences.
- › Use experience rather than theory for learning. 'Starting points for learning are values!'
- › 53 players live in residence, with 12-15 experts taking care of them. They meet families 1-2 times a year and support parents in exchanging information.
- › Development consists of a three-year programme, which is simple, easy and individual.
- › Use biobanding, grouping athletes on attributes rather than age.
- › Communication and social media education.



## FINANCES

- › Academy has its own budget for each new season,
- › No performance bonuses.



## FACILITIES

- › They have a training facility and an international reach, so link-ups with other clubs.



## TALENT IDENTIFICATION

- › Scouting department has three parts 1. 16-19 (1 coordinator and 4 scouts); 2. 12-15 (1 coordinator and 21 scouts); 3. grassroots (1 coordinator and 14-15 scouts)
- › Shadow teams work on a weekly basis with training centres, aiming to keep the same players through their development phase.
- › Evaluation of players from academy is fundamental.
- › Methodology of scouting is for every scout to know everything and every player in Italy.
- › Coaches sent to see scouted players.
- › Scouts use a database called the 'The Football Squad Academy Software'.



## PRODUCTIVITY

- › They have graduated one coach, Andrea Stramaccioni, from the academy to the first team.
- › The main academy goal is to produce players and educate people.
- › The process of transition is:
  - U8-U18 > U19 > first team.
- › The keys to success in transition are:
  1. to understand the existence of a lack of players going from academies to the first team in Italy;
  2. having a first team coach willing to use academy players.

- › Targeting grassroots football in Italy up to U14s level, and U16s in Europe.



## STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE

- › Goal is to form player for the first team by development and scouting.
- › Want a mix of players from their region with external players, and a strong scouting system.
- › From grassroots upwards, there is a formalised sporting policy.



## COMPETITION

- › Compare themselves to clubs such as Athletic Bilbao, RB Salzburg and Southampton.



## HUMAN CAPITAL

- › Helping to develop Italian football at a grassroots level.
- › Programme is open for coaches to be creative and express themselves.
- › Decision on signing players falls mainly with the Academy Director.
- › Scout for other staff.
- › Educate coaches not only about

football, but send them on other coaching courses, too.

- › Organise internal education, also not related to football.



## BUY-IN FROM CLUB

- › There is a commonly shared desire to improve the opportunities for academy players in the first team.
- › The U9s-U18s, and U19s, exist in their own frameworks.
- › Style of play from U9 to U18 is the same; then the U19 is the same as the first team.



## COMMUNITY CONNECTIVITY

- › Inter has a huge community connection in Italy and around the world, and they have received reward from UEFA for their grassroots project, 'World football'.



## PROFESSIONAL CONNECTIVITY

- › Follow football trends. ✕





# FC INTER TURKU

## VITAL STATISTICS\*

According to the club, the percentage of minutes by club-trained players (i.e. those aged 15–21 at the club) is:

**N/A**  
(N/A)

AVERAGE AGE  
**24.86**

PLAYERS IN THE  
FIRST TEAM

**27** 

**7** players of which trained in  
the club (academy pupils)

WITH AN  
AVERAGE VALUE OF  
**€100,000**

AVERAGING  
 **16.5%**  
OF MINUTES PLAYED

Inter Turku are one of the most successful clubs in Finland, and they have won one Finnish league title, two Finnish Cups, and one League Cup.

The city of Turku itself is based in the south west of the country, with a small population of 191,331. For the Inter Turku academy, school is a very important part of the development process. Uniquely, the Finnish Olympic Committee also provides dual career possibilities for players to be educated in parallel with football. The club organises its schedule around school timings to increase efficiency. They're also open to all kids, and so once a week everyone is free to come to train from U13-U19 levels. Sports Director Jani Meriläinen admits that the club wants to develop its academy and that they're committed to training the best players for the first team. Undoubtedly, the average standard of living in Finland is relatively high, so football is not always the first choice for young people. However, it seems that the club's actions to promote sport among young people may, to some extent, change this attitude. ▶



FC INTER TURKU

## TOP VALUE PLAYERS FROM THE ACADEMY

### 1. Juuso Hamalainen

AGE	POSITION	MINUTES	VALUE
27	DF	70%	€300,000

## RECORD OUTGOING TRANSFERS

### 1. Ari Nyman

22	to Thun
Age when sold (2007)	
€0.6m	





# QUALITY AREAS SNAPSHOT



## PHYSICAL CARE

- › One physio, a doctor, psychologist, nutritionist, and two educators.



## COGNITIVE CARE

- › Club is assisted by the Finland Olympic Committee. The club has a good relation with local schools and schedules their sessions around school hours. They also have internal educators and mentors.
- › They have two annual open discussions with parents.
- › The main principles of development are: 1. physical fitness; 2. individual coaching if talented; 3. feedback conversations.
- › A media officer organises education on social media and communication.
- › Mental strength is seen as the key to success in transition.



## FINANCES

- › Academy budget comes from the parents of players, making up 25% of the total club budget.



## FACILITIES

- › 1 artificial pitch at the club, while they also use 3 other artificial



## TALENT IDENTIFICATION

- › Recently started a scouting department, which is volunteer-based. Club coaches are scouting when playing other teams, and they cover 60% of Finland.
- › They have monthly scouting reports.
- › Talent identification process involves learning more about players that interest them using a questionnaire covering 50 topics. If the player is interested, and the club in them, they speak to the parents, and invite the player to trial to be assessed by coaches.
- › Once a week, the city pays for any willing young players to train with the U13-U19s, city pays. This usually involves 350 kids.

## STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE



- › Consider themselves a development club.
- › Sporting policy was inaugurated in 1990 by the then CEO. It's natural, culture related, not formalised, with a strong Dutch influence (due to heritage of Joep Traksmas, one of their coaches).
- › Their club strategy is a four-year plan.
- › Not common to have an Academy Director in Finland.
- › Their style of play is attractive, attacking, with a tiki-taka build-up.

pitches, and 3 grass pitches, around the city. Access to 1 indoor pitch.

- › Facilities are concentrated around the stadium.
- › The winter poses climate and infrastructure problems.



## PRODUCTIVITY

- › Academy's goal is to produce players for the first team and have more visibility in community.
- › The process of transition involves the second team in the third division.



## COMPETITION

- › HJK Helsinki stronger from U17s level, but both clubs considered fairly competitive until that point.



## HUMAN CAPITAL

- › Signing players and recruiting support staff is a Sporting Director decision.
- › First Team Coach decides who comes through to first team, then discussed with Sporting Director and coaches.
- › U17s coach works with the first team.



## BUY-IN FROM CLUB

- › Style of play is the same in the academy and first team.
- › First Team Coach has no influence on the academy.



## COMMUNITY CONNECTIVITY

- › Local society is impatient, and very little professional respect given to football or sport in general.
- › Club building a clear identity.
- › Always played attacking football. Fans want to watch domestic players.
- › Local players of U13-U19 ages given access to training with the club in an initiative paid for by the city.



## PROFESSIONAL CONNECTIVITY

- › Talk a lot with junior coaches about football development, especially the English Premier League. ✕





# FC KAIRAT

## VITAL STATISTICS\*

According to the club, the percentage of minutes by club-trained players (i.e. those aged 15–21 at the club) is:

**28%**  
(N/A)

AVERAGE AGE  
**24.80**

PLAYERS IN THE FIRST TEAM

**23**

**12** players of which trained in the club (academy pupils)

WITH AN AVERAGE VALUE OF  
**€0.4m**

AVERAGING  
**20%**  
OF MINUTES PLAYED

In modern history, Kairat is the fourth most successful football club in Kazakhstan.

In modern history, Kairat is the most titled football club in Kazakhstan. Historically, in the 24 years before they played in the Kazakh league, Kairat was the leading Kazakh club during the Soviet period and the only representative of the Kazakh Soviet Socialist Republic in the Soviet Top League. They are strongly influenced by tradition. They are aiming to not just be the most successful in Kazakhstan, but also to be more competitive in Europe. Almaty is the largest city (population almost 2 million) in Kazakhstan and until 1997 was the capital, located in the south-eastern part of the country, at an altitude of about 700m above sea level. An interesting example of the functioning of the FC Kairat academy is the fact that there are bonuses for the appropriate number of appearances of players from the academy in the first team. In the case of selling a player trained in the academy, employees also receive a bonus. Undoubtedly, such activities serve as a motivating tool for all employees. ►



FC KAIRAT

## TOP VALUE PLAYERS FROM THE ACADEMY

### 1. Nuraly Alip

AGE	POSITION	MINUTES	VALUE
22	D	98%	€1.8m

### 2. Aybol Abiken

AGE	POSITION	MINUTES	VALUE
25	M	53%	€1m

### 3. Artur Shushenachev

AGE	POSITION	MINUTES	VALUE
23	F	67%	€1m



# QUALITY AREAS SNAPSHOT



## COGNITIVE CARE

- › Pressure is a big motivation and is seen as good for development.
- › Educational department consisting of 1 pedagogist and 3 other personnel.
- › Formal co-operation with 2 schools (in Kazakh and Russian languages) for U14s-U18s.
- › Main principles of development include cognitive, technical/ tactical, video analysis, regular goals meetings.
- › Development stages: 1. talent identification; 2. mentality/ development; 3. work with satellite clubs and U19s; 4. first team, or sale.
- › Overload training sessions so that match situations seem easier.
- › Teamwork key. If everybody does their job then everything works.



## PHYSICAL CARE

- › Doctors and a physio.



## FINANCES

- › Budget is 15% of club total.
- › Academy coaches awarded bonuses if any of their players play more than 10 games for the first team.
- › CEO will give bonuses to coaches and staff in academy if academy players sold.



## FACILITIES

- › 2 academy facilities with 5 standard pitches and 1 indoor pitch.
- › Training camp, and residence for 125 people.



## TALENT IDENTIFICATION

- › Scouting department.
- › Shadow teams from the U18s-first team.
- › Internal scouting is used alongside external scouting.
- › Scouting methodology is a pyramid which starts with 'branches' and franchises alongside tournaments and open days, and which ultimately finishes with the first team.



## PRODUCTIVITY

- › Development methodology is to produce first team players and national players.
- › No KPIs; they follow the development of players, relying on coach opinions. Archive player data.
- › Academy goal is producing players and coaches.
- › Process of transition: U19 > Satellite club > first team > sale.
- › Key to achieve success in transition: the coach is key. Second is the training process. Education of players outside of football also key.

- › Look at mentality and personality.
- › Video analysis is key, with reports to help decision making.
- › Kazakhstan is their targeted area.
- › Player profiles for each position.



## STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE

- › Development of players and coaches for first team and, later on, sale.
- › Sport policy created by transferring of knowledge from Germany.



## COMPETITION

- › Want to be like RB Leipzig/Salzburg, the "Ajax of Kazakhstan".
- › Their academy is most attractive in Kazakhstan.



## HUMAN CAPITAL

- › Scout for coaches and other staff, and develop them through transfer of knowledge process.
- › Continuously work on playing style.
- › They organise internal education.
- › Coaches are receiving education to



## BUY-IN FROM CLUB

- › First Team Coach affects development of youth academy by promoting players when necessary.
- › Style of play is the same in the academy and first team.



## COMMUNITY CONNECTIVITY

- › Principle in relation with community is to socialise by activities with schools and city government.
- › Academy, players, coaches and staff are involved in community projects.



## PROFESSIONAL CONNECTIVITY

- › Follow football trends.
- › Organise education with external partners. ✕





# LEGIA WARSAW

## VITAL STATISTICS\*

According to the club,  
the percentage of minutes by  
club-trained players (i.e. those  
aged 15-21 at the club) is:

**11.5%**  
(6 players)

AVERAGE AGE  
**26.35**

PLAYERS IN THE  
FIRST TEAM

**31** 

**9** players of which trained in  
the club (academy pupils)

WITH AN  
AVERAGE VALUE OF  
**€350,000**

 **17.4%**  
OF MINUTES PLAYED

Legia Warsaw is the most successful club in Polish history, winning the Ekstraklasa – the Polish top flight – a record 15 times.

They've also won four Polish Super Cup trophies, and they're the only club to have never been relegated from Poland's top division. Legia Warsaw have been a huge provider of players to the Polish national side down the years, which is no surprise as they have access to many talents on their doorstep; Warsaw itself is the largest Polish city with almost two million inhabitants. In recent years, the club has invested a lot of money in building the largest training centre in Poland for its academy and first team, which can be easily compared with the best in Europe. The Legia Training Centre is based near Warsaw in Grodzisk Mazowiecki, and at its head is Richard Grootsholten, an individual with extensive experience in the Netherlands. Piotr Urban, the Academy Co-ordinator, has previously worked with a host of Spanish clubs. Both Richard and Piotr are strongly committed to introducing the highest standards to the Warsaw academy, and combining the best practices from the Netherlands and Spain in the Polish environment. The future looks promising... ►



LEGIA WARSAW

## TOP VALUE PLAYERS FROM THE ACADEMY

### 1. Cezary Misztka

AGE	POSITION	MINUTES	VALUE
20	G	28%	€3.5m

### 2. Mateusz Wieteska

AGE	POSITION	MINUTES	VALUE
25	D	88%	€2.5m

### 3. Szymon Włodarczyk

AGE	POSITION	MINUTES	VALUE
19	F	9%	€2m

## RECORD OUTGOING TRANSFERS

### 1. Radosław Majecki

20	Age when sold (2020)	€7m	to Monaco
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### 2. Michał Karbownik

19	Age when sold (2020)	€5.5m	to Brighton
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### 3. Sebastian Szymański

20	Age when sold (2019)	€5.5m	to Dinamo Moskva
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## RECORD INCOMING TRANSFERS

### 1. Bartosz Slisz

20	Age when bought (2020)	From Zagłębie Lubin	€1.8m
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### 2. Lirim Kastrati

22	Age when bought (2021)	From Ferencváros	€1.4m
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### 3. Dominik Nagy

21	Age when bought (2017)	From Ferencváros	€1m
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# QUALITY AREAS SNAPSHOT



## COGNITIVE CARE

- › Academy starts at U10s and they play beside Legia Stadium until U13.
- › At U14s, players move to train and live at Legia Training Centre.
- › Every department has its own management.
- › School also influences player development, and players have targets they need to meet in school.
- › Maintaining good relationship with parents is key.
- › From 10-13, the main principles of development are focused on technical progression.
- › Want players to play freely, so to take risks and make mistakes.
- › Technically, games are important for learning.
- › Media workshops.



## FINANCES

- › Budget is 8-9% of club total.



## FACILITIES

- › 7 pitches: 4 natural (1 at Legia Stadium U10s-U13s), 2 artificial at LTC (U14s-Legia 2), plus 1 artificial.
- › 1 dome for winter



## TALENT IDENTIFICATION

- › Scouting department, with 5-6 full-time members and a larger surrounding network, who evaluate their own players.
- › Shadow teams in each generation.
- › The scouting department and coaches meet at the beginning of the season.
- › Coaches help with scouting by reporting on the opposing players.
- › To help identify talent have a partnership with more than 20 clubs. They also profile all players by age, and share knowledge with coaches from partner clubs.
- › They invite best players to play in trials and tournaments.

## PRODUCTIVITY



- › The main goal of the academy is to develop players for the first team and Polish national team.
- › Their main KPI is selling players, but they need to develop more for the national team.
- › Process of transition sees players

train with the first team, but first-team focus on winning everything is a challenge for Academy players.

- › Transition success involves serious attention paid to the right players, and promotion at the right time.



## STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE

- › Aim is to develop players, earn money from transfers, but also to help those that do not make it be socially capable and successful away from football.
- › At academy level, development comes before results. The individual is more important than the team.
- › Playing style is dominant and positional, while their methodology is based on social and human aspects.



## COMPETITION

- › They claim to be the biggest academy in Poland. Main competition is from Lech Poznan, Zagłębie Lubin, and Pogon Szczecin.



## HUMAN CAPITAL

- › Head of Academy ultimately decides on signing players and staff.
- › Coaches encouraged to learn about communication and methodology.
- › Coaches are analysed on their results, but development is also important. Equipped with body cameras for

analysis. Also obligated to visit other clubs and conduct presentations.

- › Coaches educated to speak English and other non-football related topics, and receive external education.
- › 90% of academy staff are full time.



## BUY-IN FROM CLUB

- › Academy and first team are aligned.
- › Principle is the same in academy and first team, but first team can adopt formation for needs of game.



## COMMUNITY CONNECTIVITY

- › Expectations are high from fans and sponsors when it comes to community engagement.
- › Sporting policy is influenced by fans: discipline, bravery and pride. Fans are passionate and demanding.



## PROFESSIONAL CONNECTIVITY

- › Some follow football trends, but their sporting policy is set for three years. ✕





# MALMO FF

## VITAL STATISTICS

According to the club,  
the percentage of minutes by  
club-trained players (i.e. those  
aged 15-21 at the club) is:

**28.3%**  
(5 players)

AVERAGE AGE  
**24.74**

PLAYERS IN THE  
FIRST TEAM

**27**                                                                                         

**9** players of which trained in  
the club (academy pupils)

WITH AN  
AVERAGE VALUE OF  
**€787,500**

AVERAGING  
**29.58%**  
OF MINUTES PLAYED

## Malmö FF is the most successful club in Swedish football history.

Malmö enjoyed a period of dominance in the 1970s and in total they've won a record 22 Swedish championship titles and 14 national cup titles. The city of Malmö is based southern Sweden and centred around a seaport located on the Öresund Strait, with a population of 317,245. The club partners with schools and they have 18 in total, which generally produce better results than other schools in Sweden. If children have bad grades, they're not allowed to train: it's that simple. The academy is headed by Per Ågren, who was a Malmö player in the 1980s and 90s and the club's Director of Sports between 2011 and 2013. As a club, they cooperate with Premier League clubs and scouts in Scandinavia. If a scout finds an interesting player, he might not go to the Premier League immediately but could be directed to Malmö to gain more experience. The most famous player academy export is centre forward Zlatan Ibrahimović. ▶



MALMO FF

## TOP VALUE PLAYERS FROM THE ACADEMY

### 1. Anel Ahmedhodzic

AGE	POSITION	MINUTES	VALUE
22	DF	86%	€7.5m

### 2. Erdal Rakip

AGE	POSITION	MINUTES	VALUE
25	M	48%	€0.9m

### 3. Amin Sarr

AGE	POSITION	MINUTES	VALUE
20	F	9%	€0.9m

## RECORD OUTGOING TRANSFERS

### 1. Zlatan Ibrahimović

19	€7.8m
Age when sold (2001)	to Ajax

### 2. Markus Rosenberg

22	€5.3m
Age when sold (2005)	to Ajax

### 3. Afonso Alves

25	€4.5m
Age when sold (2006)	to Heerenveen

## RECORD INCOMING TRANSFERS

### 1. Mathias Ranégie

27	From BK Häcken	€1.5m
Age when bought (2011)		

### 2. Kingsley Sarfo

22	From IK Sirius	€1.45m
Age when bought (2017)		

### 3. Afonso Alves

22	From Orgryte	€1.33m
Age when bought (2004)		



# QUALITY AREAS SNAPSHOT



## PRODUCTIVITY



- › Target is for 15% of the first team squad to consist of academy players, with one or two joining first team each year. They want four of their U16 players to reach elite football.
- › Considers itself a development club.
- › Transitional process goes from U16s in the academy, to U17s and U18s, then under the watch of the Sporting Director before first team.
- › Key drivers to transition success are 1: work hard; 2. have a coach/board willing to give opportunities; 3: give players a proper chance to succeed.

## COGNITIVE CARE



- › There is a style of play, a behaviour, a methodology of coaching and different exercises, but coaches can also be creative within the club framework.
- › They created a code of conduct in 2020 and they have online education to help share their values.
- › Their schools are very successful and their facility in Malmö is the best in the area.
- › Main principles of development involve doing a lot with the ball and other physical exercises. Focused more on development rather than results.
- › Values: joy, ambition, fair play and teamwork.



### PHYSICAL CARE

- › Part-time doctor, fitness coaches (1 full time, 7 students) and therapy, video analysis. First team has a mental coach, and someone who works with children in schools.



### FINANCES

- › Budget is about 5% of club total.



### FACILITIES

- › They have 7 pitches in total, including two artificial pitches at the club stadium.
- › They can house 15 players at the stadium, with laundry and food supplied.
- › Working alongside local community to create an indoor pitch.



### TALENT IDENTIFICATION

- › First team and academy each have their own scouts. They see around 85% of kids from the local schools, which is around 1,000 a week.
- › The U14s team and upwards have shadow teams. Academy players are constantly evaluated.
- › All coaches acts as scouts, too.

- › They have a network of 55 clubs. The educate the clubs in their playing style and values.
- › Principally targeting south Sweden.



### STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE

- › Annual academy plans are approved by board in accordance with vision and mission.
- › Sporting policy is organic and rooted in the club's history.
- › Education a big part of strategy.
- › Sport policy and club strategy both formally exist.
- › Playing style is formally described as 'offensive', with a solid defence and defending from the top.



### COMPETITION

- › In Sweden they have certified academies. This process is renewed, and currently Malmö have the best in Sweden. Their main competition comes from AIK, Hammarby and Göteborg. They compete more with Denmark clubs.



### HUMAN CAPITAL

- › Academy Director controls signing players up to U16, older players are the jurisdiction of Sporting Director.
- › Coach contracts renewed on an annual basis. Coaches receive internal/external education (on leadership, set pieces etc).



### BUY-IN FROM CLUB

- › Academy and first team share a style of play.
- › First Team Coach has no influence on academy.



### COMMUNITY CONNECTIVITY

- › In Sweden, many clubs have big connections within the cities, particularly schools.
- › Community projects include 'Carrier Academy', where they invite unemployed fans to be match sponsors, plus sending players in to schools to discuss nutrition and more. ✕





# OLYMPIQUE LYONNAIS

## VITAL STATISTICS\*

According to CIES Football Observatory, the percentage of minutes by club-trained players (i.e. those aged 15-21 at the club) is:

**27.6%**  
(9 players)

AVERAGE AGE  
**24.5**

PLAYERS IN THE FIRST TEAM

**24** 

8 players of which trained in the club (academy pupils)

WITH AN AVERAGE VALUE OF  
**€13,890,000**

AVERAGING  
**29.25%**  
OF MINUTES PLAYED

Olympique Lyonnais won its first French championship in 2002, starting a national record-setting streak of seven successive titles.

Lyon has also won eight Trophées des Champions and five Coupes de France. On the European stage, Lyon twice reached semi-final of UEFA Champions League. Lyon is a city in France that forms the third largest agglomeration in the country (after Paris and Marseille) with a population of 1,385,927, which means a relatively high talent pool to select from. However, what is interesting is that in the Lyon academy they look for talent all over the world, with partner clubs in Lebanon, Senegal, Portugal, Brazil, Kenya, China and Japan to name just a few. In the past, the OL academy has trained players such as Alexandre Lacazette, who currently plays for Arsenal. Therefore, the transfer of players trained in the club's academy for tens of millions EUR is no surprise to anyone and proves its value, which has been successfully operating in its current guise since the 1980s, and which demonstrates continuity of vision and general approach. The person responsible for the academy – Jean-François Vulliez – clearly outlined the vision and the way of functioning of the academy. We can say that this academy is very well organised and the people employed in it work together to achieve the set goal. ▶



## OLYMPIQUE LYONNAIS

### TOP VALUE PLAYERS FROM THE ACADEMY

1. Houssem Aouar				
AGE	POSITION	MINUTES	VALUE	
23	M	89%	€35m	

2. Rayan Cherki				
AGE	POSITION	MINUTES	VALUE	
18	M	16%	€21m	

3. Maxence Caqueret				
AGE	POSITION	MINUTES	VALUE	
21	M	81%	€18m	

### RECORD OUTGOING TRANSFERS

1. Tanguy Ndombélé		
22	Age when sold (2019)	€60m to Tottenham Hotspur

2. Alexandre Lacazette		
26	Age when sold (2017)	€53m to Arsenal

3. Ferland Mendy		
24	Age when sold (2019)	€48m to Real Madrid

### RECORD INCOMING TRANSFERS

1. Jeff Reine-Adélaïde		
21	Age when bought (2019)	From Angers €25m

2. Joachim Andersen		
23	Age when bought (2019)	From Sampdoria €24m

3. Lisandro López		
26	Age when bought (2009)	From FC Porto €24m



# QUALITY AREAS SNAPSHOT



## COGNITIVE CARE

- › The club's methodology is based on a playing/training DNA, capitalising on good staff practices, innovation and creativity, and a solid framework with good management.
- › Their values are humility, respect, commitment and excellence.
- › They have schools for U14s players and partnerships with high schools for U15s and upwards.
- › Players compared by tactical influence, awareness, determination, confidence, happiness, serenity, anxiety, stress, joy, and by using mental, technical, athletic and cognitive resources.



## FINANCES

- › Budget is less than 5% of club total.



## FACILITIES

- › 7 pitches, a training camp, medical centre, a yoga room, gym, dorms and a locker room.



## STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE

- › Four pillars: result, structure, academy and commitment. Identity of game: intensity, love for the game,



## TALENT IDENTIFICATION

- › A third of their academy players come from Lyon, a third from the surrounding region, and the rest in the area between Lyon and Marseilles.
- › There are scouting departments for Lyon, the wider region around Lyon, and for Paris. There are four full-time staff who scout only for international talents.
- › There are shadow teams for each generation.
- › Their methodology sees them develop player profiles which need to fit the DNA of the club.
- › 31 partner clubs in France, 38 worldwide. In France, of the 31 clubs, 28 are located within 100km of Lyon, 3 around Paris.

## PRODUCTIVITY



- › Their objective is to produce two players a season capable of Champions League football.
- › They produced 2 coaches from the academy to the first team.
- › Academy is independent of the first team, but Academy Director decides

when a player is ready for the B team. The Sporting Director decides when player is ready for the first team.

- › Key success to transition is having one academy member of staff within the first-team set-up.

- › surpassing yourself and attacking.
- › Sport policy developed over 25 years and aligned with the overall global strategy.
- › Sporting policy values include a training methodology, innovation, research skills, staff performance, management methodology, and a pedagogical approach to individuals.
- › Produce humans and players which can become good citizens. Coaches task is to add value to players.



## COMPETITION

- › Consider themselves France's best.



## HUMAN CAPITAL

- › Sportive performance section helps with education, administration and logistics, international issues; board relations, and professional team.
- › Academy Director decides on signing players, who then sign for minimum of two years.
- › They scout for staff and look for open-minded individuals.



## BUY-IN FROM CLUB

- › First Team Coach can change playing style, but has no influence on academy.



## COMMUNITY CONNECTIVITY

- › Fans want results, entertainment, but also academy players in first team.
- › Club is influenced by the community: they want to preserve today's DNA, but be prepared for cultural change.
- › Community relations are mostly spontaneous.



## PROFESSIONAL CONNECTIVITY

- › They try and anticipate football of the future. ✕





# RANGERS FC

## VITAL STATISTICS\*

According to CIES Football Observatory, the percentage of minutes by club-trained players (i.e. those aged 15-21 at the club) is:

**7.6%**  
(2 players)

AVERAGE AGE  
**27.00**

PLAYERS IN THE FIRST TEAM

**29**

4 players of which trained in the club (academy pupils)

WITH AN AVERAGE VALUE OF  
**€650,000**

AVERAGING  
**32.25%**  
OF MINUTES PLAYED

Rangers is one of the most successful football clubs in the world, winning the SPL 55 times and picking up 33 Scottish Cups, 27 Scottish League Cups, and the Cup Winners' Cup.

This heritage acts as a source of pride and responsibility for the club's sporting leadership. Among their other European achievements, the club played in the Cup Winners' Cup final in 1961 and 1967, and in 2008 reached the UEFA Cup final. Glasgow is Scotland's largest city (population 593,060) and is considered its commercial capital. The Greater Glasgow metropolitan area has approximately 2.1 million people within 15 miles of the city centre, but most of the population of Scotland is focused on the Central Belt, which is an area spanning the lands between the rivers Clyde in the west and Forth in the east. Geographical access to Scotland's talent pools is not a major issue. Despite that, Rangers seek to cover the entire country and operate dedicated training centres in several locations in order to be able to offer a Rangers-led development programme to aspiring players without the need to travel into Glasgow. Head of Academy Craig Mulholland is undoubtedly proud of his club's achievements, but he also sees the need to develop the academy, which is also supported by the club's management. ▶



RANGERS FC

## TOP VALUE PLAYERS FROM THE ACADEMY

1. Allan McGregor			
AGE	POSITION	MINUTES	VALUE
39	GK	44%	€0.5m

2. Robby McCrorie			
AGE	POSITION	MINUTES	VALUE
23	GK	5%	€0.5m

3. Alex Lowrie			
AGE	POSITION	MINUTES	VALUE
18	M	N/A	N/A

## RECORD OUTGOING TRANSFERS

1. Nathan Patterson	
20 Age when sold (2022)	€15m to Everton

2. Giovanni van Bronckhorst	
26 Age when sold (2001)	€13.5m to Arsenal

3. Alan Hutton	
23 Age when sold (2008)	€13m to Tottenham Hotspur

## RECORD INCOMING TRANSFERS

1. Tore André Flo	
27 Age when bought (2000)	From Chelsea €18m

2. Michael Ball	
21 Age when bought (2001)	From Everton €9.75m

3. Mikel Arteta	
20 Age when bought (2002)	From Barcelona B €7.9m





# QUALITY AREAS SNAPSHOT



## STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE



- Development seen as key to being more sustainable.
- Five-year strategy, and hope to have more academy players playing with the first team in that time.
- Key sporting policy points:
  1. changing the working culture;
  2. game model, football model, player behaviours, how Rangers play;
  3. infrastructure around players.
- Academy KPIs: player performance, process, international players, assets value, coach value, monetary savings, social/education objectives.



## COGNITIVE CARE

- They work exclusively with one school partner creating 18 hours of contact time per week. It is one of the top 10 academy schools in Scotland, and has teachers, a full-time education officer, a player care team of 10-12, plus a well-being officer, psychiatrist, sport psychologist, preacher etc.
- The principles of development centre around challenging players out of their comfort zone. They want to test leadership and stress zones, while also providing safe and stretch periods. They monitor how they apply this in training/games.
- No 'command coaching' up to the age of 16. Clear teaching styles and principles with lots of guided discovery learning.



## FINANCES

- Club has struggled financially in recent years, but they've placed massive investment in the academy in the last six years.



## FACILITIES

- No dorms. Place young players with families through choice.



## TALENT IDENTIFICATION

- 45 scouts which scout for all ages, plus 4-5 volunteers in the academy.
- Evaluate pre-academy players using a multidisciplinary approach.
- Key points to their scouting methodology: 1. sign players at pre-academy age; 2. use of preliminary and secondary schools; 3. signing players from England and Northern Ireland at U16s level, utilising talent space for 17-19 year olds.
- Coaches play a role in scouting.
- Scouts help them identify talent, who are then invited to development centres and tested at regional academies.
- Targeting all of Scotland.



## PRODUCTIVITY

- Financial pressure has seen focus shift to developing players.
- Sporting Director meets with manager and coaches daily to assess the needs of the first team.
- First team watch academy matches.
- Successful transition is based on developing the best talent, quality of the environment, and giving opportunities.



## COMPETITION

- Scotland's most successful club with – along with Celtic – the best academy. Aim is to be in top 15 academies in Europe. CIES research is the standard of measure.



## HUMAN CAPITAL

- Decisions on signing players made by a scouting team of six, alongside a Co-ordinator and Academy Director.
- They scout for other coaches and other staff and use PhD students.
- Each head of department decides on

bringing in their own personnel.

- Coaches have challenges set, and a well-developed programme to follow.
- Staff follow an education programme and their own individual development programme.



## BUY-IN FROM CLUB

- B team replicates first team. U18s has its own principles.
- First Team Coach has an influence on B team.



## COMMUNITY CONNECTIVITY

- Their history of success is a barrier; need to communicate to fans the need to try and succeed sustainably.
- Very proactive with local community. Players are educated in its importance.



## PROFESSIONAL CONNECTIVITY

- Keen to follow football trends but COVID-19 has made that harder. ✕





# HNK RIJEKA

## VITAL STATISTICS

According to CIES Football Observatory, the percentage of minutes by club-trained players (i.e. those aged 15–21 at the club) is:

**15.5%**  
(7 players)

AVERAGE AGE  
**23.75**

PLAYERS IN THE FIRST TEAM

**28**

6 players of which trained in the club (academy pupils)

WITH AN AVERAGE VALUE OF  
**€441,667**

AVERAGING  
**11%**  
OF MINUTES PLAYED

Rijeka are founder members of the Croatian top flight and are based in the city of the same name (population 108,622), close to the Italian border.

They're the third-most successful football club in the country, having won one Croatian league title, two Yugoslav Cups, six Croatian Cups and one Croatian Super Cup. The representatives of the club believe that in Croatia it is easy to find good players, and easy to identify players in set positions. Looking at the population of this country (3,888,529) and their international success in various sports, it can be concluded that this is indeed the case. Academy representative Ranko Buketa believes that the main principle of development is speed: speed of players, speed of thinking and speed of accepting demands. ►



HNK RIJEKA

## TOP VALUE PLAYERS FROM THE ACADEMY

### 1. Hrvoje Smolcic

AGE	POSITION	MINUTES	VALUE
20	D	59%	€3.2m

### 2. Matej Vuk

AGE	POSITION	MINUTES	VALUE
21	LW	18%	€0.75m

### 3. Ivan Lepinjica

AGE	POSITION	MINUTES	VALUE
21	M	14%	€0.5m

## RECORD OUTGOING TRANSFERS

### 1. Andrej Kramaric

AGE	VALUE
23	€10m

Age when sold (2015) to Leicester City

### 2. Filip Bradaric

AGE	VALUE
27	€4.85m

Age when sold (2019) to Cagliari Calcio

### 3. Matej Mitrovic

AGE	VALUE
24	€4.2m

Age when sold (2017) to Besiktas

## RECORD INCOMING TRANSFERS

### 1. Andrej Kramaric

AGE	VALUE
22	€1.2m

Age when bought (2013) From Dinamo Zagreb

### 2. Antonio Colak

AGE	VALUE
25	€0.85m

Age when bought (2019) From Hoffenheim

### 3. Dario Zuparic

AGE	VALUE
26	€0.8m

Age when bought (2018) From Pescara





# QUALITY AREAS SNAPSHOT



## PHYSICAL CARE

- › 3 doctors (1 full time, 2 part time) plus 3 physios and 1 additional part-time physio.



## COGNITIVE CARE

- › Players need to be able to play in different styles.
- › Motto is 'Together we are Rijeka', and 'To die, not to beg'.
- › Coaches need permission from Head of Academy to talk to parents and vice versa. Pedagogue in team communicates with schools and reports to club.
- › Development process separated into age groups. U7 is an open school of 3 groups: multilateral movement with and without ball; multilateral how to play, and systematic football training (training by position, adaptation to senior football, max level of stabilisation).
- › Line of communication between education and psychologist, pedagogue, nutritionist and educator.



## FINANCES

- › Budget is 15% of club total.



## TALENT IDENTIFICATION

- › They have a scouting department in the academy.
- › Rijeka is a small part of Croatia, but they can easily target players in Kvarner and other areas.
- › They have one general scout (full time) and 11 voluntary scouts, one of which covers Slovenia and Bosnia (their key target areas).
- › They do not have shadow teams for each generation. Instead, scouts try to fill gaps in teams.
- › Scouts watch all internal/external matches and compare their own players to the opposition.
- › They have partnered with other clubs.

## STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE



- › Sport policy was created naturally and hasn't been formalised, though their coaching methodology has.
- › The important elements for the club are the people, infrastructure and budget.
- › Decision on signing players and staff

shared between Head of Academy and Sport Director.

- › They find it easy to put strategy on paper but harder to deliver on the pitch.
- › Playing style more important than result.

- › COVID-19 means they've been unable to travel or organise their annual tournament: "Kvarnerska rivijera."



## FACILITIES

- › 3 pitches, 2 of which are artificial.



## PRODUCTIVITY

- › Produced 1 coach from academy to the first team in the last 15 years.
- › Academy goal is to produce players for the first team.
- › There's a simple process of transition: academy > loan > first team.
- › The success of this process relies on: excellence in all games, and mental preparation. Players taught to make mistakes and learn from them.



## COMPETITION

- › Hajduk Split and Dinamo Zagreb are dominant and attract players first.



## HUMAN CAPITAL

- › Recognise good coaches.
- › Head of academy discusses coaching



## BUY-IN FROM CLUB

- › Training very similar tactically whether academy or first team, and First Team Coach sometimes trains academy players. The academy style of play is influenced by First Team Coach.



## COMMUNITY CONNECTIVITY

- › Fans and community expect them to play a certain way.
- › One employee in control of club's community engagements.



## PROFESSIONAL CONNECTIVITY

- › Use big tournaments to see what is developing and tweak their methodology accordingly. ✕





# FC RED BULL SALZBURG

## VITAL STATISTICS

According to CIES Football Observatory, the percentage of minutes by club-trained players (i.e. those aged 15-21 at the club) is:

**19.7%**  
(6 players)

AVERAGE AGE  
**23.32**

PLAYERS IN THE  
FIRST TEAM

**28** 

**6** players of which trained in the club (academy pupils)

WITH AN  
AVERAGE VALUE OF  
**€3,483,333**

AVERAGING  
 **26.5%**  
OF MINUTES PLAYED

FC Red Bull Salzburg have won the UEFA Youth League and reached the UEFA Europa League Semi-finals. More recently, after making the UEFA Champions League group stage three times in a row, they became the first Austrian club to reach the Round of 16.

The club has won the Austrian league 15 times, the Austrian Cup eight times and Austrian Supercup three times. Salzburg is a city located near the German border in the Alps with a population of 148,256. Looking at their transfer history, it is clear they know how to find talent. They are also very successful when it comes to selling players to Europe's leading clubs, the best example of which is Erling Haaland, one of the most valued players in the world today. ▶



## FC RED BULL SALZBURG

### TOP VALUE PLAYERS FROM THE ACADEMY

1. Nicolas Seiwald			
AGE	POSITION	MINUTES	VALUE
20	M	86%	€16m

2. Luka Sucic			
AGE	POSITION	MINUTES	VALUE
19	M	59%	€14.5m

3. Junior Adamu			
AGE	POSITION	MINUTES	VALUE
20	F	49%	€4.3m

### RECORD OUTGOING TRANSFERS

1. Patson Daka	
22 Age when sold (2021)	€32m to Leicester City

2. Naby Keita	
21 Age when sold (2016)	€29.75m to RB Leipzig

3. Enock Mwepu	
23 Age when sold (2021)	€24.5m to Brighton & Hove Albion

### RECORD INCOMING TRANSFERS

1. Noah Okafor	
19 Age when bought (2020)	From Basel €11.2m

2. Maximilian Wöber	
21 Age when bought (2019)	From Sevilla €10.2m

3. Erling Haaland	
18 Age when bought (2019)	From Molde €8m

Information comes from Transfermarkt



# QUALITY AREAS SNAPSHOT



## COGNITIVE CARE

- › Everyone at the club is always learning, not just players.
- › A player is human first, then a footballer. The most important part of their development is game philosophy. 'When you learn, aim to learn for the next level.'
- › A school co-ordinator plans the schedule with different schools, one of them founded by the club.
- › School is an important part of a player's development, and if players are lazy and not hitting their grades, they cannot play.
- › Trust and time are the most important elements of the development process. The values are: responsibility on the pitch, building the individual to build the team.



## FINANCES

- › Academy has its own budget for each season and bonuses are awarded to coaches if they meet specified criteriums.



## FACILITIES

- › High-level academy with 6 pitches and a full-size indoor pitch, Soccerbot, agility area, and boarding school.



## PRODUCTIVITY

- › Every individual player has a structure, and it is everybody's responsibility to keep contact with player.
- › The success of player transition depends on this structure and having different pathways for each individual, and the club having the confidence and trust to bring players through. They like to help players to understand their pathway, to develop trust.



## STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE

- › Their main aim is to develop well-rounded human beings and players, and coaches and other staff, capable of working



## TALENT IDENTIFICATION

- › Scouting department has 10 scouts.
- › Each generation has a shadow team.
- › Scouting methodology includes player profiles, a philosophy, and is based on how they watch the game.
- › Coaches are also scouts and they compare players in club to opposition. Youth Co-ordinator, Sporting Director and CEO decide on incoming players.
- › Identify abilities in other sports. Must be multi-talented.
- › They target Salzburg principally, then the country.

at the highest level.

- › Ralph Rangnick, the current Manchester United manager, initiated the academy's philosophy 10 years ago. His philosophy remains.
- › The sporting policy consists of processes, a playing style, methodologies, and dominating in games (no matter who has the ball).



## COMPETITION

- › There is no comparison with other academies in Austria. Salzburg stands out.



## HUMAN CAPITAL

- › They have KPIs which involve all departments being supported by HR, and the setting of two annual goals.
- › They organise internal education, nothing externally.
- › They use Red Bull resources to educate and motivate.
- › They have a full-time team including a doctor, teaching staff, welfare officers, a match analyst, sport psychologist,

HR specialist, pedagogue, nutritionist, physiotherapist, and a sports scientist.



## BUY-IN FROM CLUB

- › Style of play is the same in academy and first team.
- › First team has no influence on the academy.



## COMMUNITY CONNECTIVITY

- › There's a strong working community which is multicultural, open minded, full of problem-solvers and highly motivated.
- › The club and its sporting policy not currently engaged with the community.



## PROFESSIONAL CONNECTIVITY

- › They actively visit other clubs and reciprocate by welcoming others to Salzburg, and participate in informal football academy networks. ✗





# FC SHAKHTAR DONETSK

## VITAL STATISTICS\*

According to the club, the percentage of minutes by club-trained players (i.e. those aged 15-21 at the club) is:

**25.4%**  
(9 players)

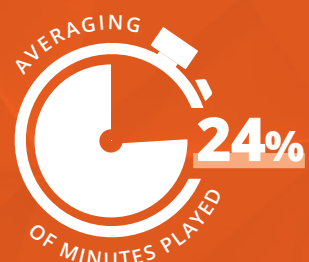
AVERAGE AGE  
**24.75**

PLAYERS IN THE FIRST TEAM

**29** 

**9** players of which trained in the club (academy pupils)

WITH AN AVERAGE VALUE OF  
**€2,440,000**



Shakhtar was originally based in Donetsk in the Donbass region, but after the occupation of the territory by pro-Russian separatists in 2014, they were forced to move to Lviv, then to Kharkiv.

They now play their home matches at NSC Olimpiyskiy, Kyiv. Shakhtar is one of the most successful and wealthiest teams in Ukraine and, alongside Dynamo Kyiv, one of the leading two clubs within the country. Arguably their greatest moment came on 20 May 2009, after a 2-1 victory in extra-time against Werder Bremen saw them become the first team in independent Ukraine history to win the UEFA Cup. They currently have no bespoke developed training facility since they have moved from Donetsk, and it's arguably their biggest issue to resolve. Due to political turmoil and warfare, a well-organised club must reorganise itself in a new home. It's a challenge, but looking at the club's success to date and the professionalism of its managers, it should be presumed that positive solutions will soon be achieved. What is interesting is that they have 14 Brazilian players in their first team squad. They specialise in scouting young talent from this country, benefitting from their talents, and then selling them on to top clubs. ►



## TOP VALUE PLAYERS FROM THE ACADEMY

### 1. Mykola Matvienko

AGE	POSITION	MINUTES	VALUE
25	D	68%	€11m

### 2. Anatoliy Trubin

AGE	POSITION	MINUTES	VALUE
19	GK	67%	€8m

### 3. Valeriy Bondar

AGE	POSITION	MINUTES	VALUE
22	D	26%	€3m

## RECORD OUTGOING TRANSFERS

### 1. Fred

AGE	Age when sold	VALUE	TO
22	2018	€59m	Manchester Utd

### 2. Alex Teixeira

AGE	Age when sold	VALUE	TO
26	2016	€50m	JS Suning

### 3. Fernandinho

AGE	Age when sold	VALUE	TO
28	2013	€40m	Manchester City

## RECORD INCOMING TRANSFERS

### 1. Bernard

AGE	Age when bought	VALUE	FROM
20	2013	€25m	Atletico Mineiro

### 2. Pedrinho

AGE	Age when bought	VALUE	FROM
23	2021	€18m	Benfica

### 3. Taison

AGE	Age when bought	VALUE	FROM
24	2013	€15.24m	Metalist Kharkiv





**FC SHAKHTAR  
DONETSK**

# QUALITY AREAS SNAPSHOT



## COGNITIVE CARE

- › An education control unit teaches players about things away from the pitch/communicates with parents.
- › The club also has a link to schools, preparing players for life away from football, too.



## FINANCES

- › Budget is 5% of the club total.
- › The academy goal is to be economically self sufficient.



## FACILITIES

- › Lost infrastructure – with no training facility – because of their enforced move, so is their biggest investment.



## STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE

- › Want to develop people/players with good social responsibility.
- › Currently more scouting than development due to infrastructure, but this isn't the long-term plan.
- › The sporting policy is currently separate from the academy strategy and overall strategy.
- › Playing style is not formally described, but is attacking with a high press.



## TALENT IDENTIFICATION

- › There is a scouting department in the academy and a shadow team for each generation, plus an online database from U12s upwards.
- › Scouts also evaluate players from the academy by attending training sessions.
- › Scouts travel around the country and attend tournaments and identify players to sign, follow or pursue in the future. They use document/database for scouting protocol.
- › No international scouts as unable to sign U16s.
- › When based in Donetsk, they had 11 satellite schools. Currently have none.



## PRODUCTIVITY

- › Two players in the first team are homegrown.
- › Stages of development: U7s-U12s learn the technical basis and compete in tournaments; U13s-U17s a combination of tactical, physical and mental; U18s-U20s promoted to first team, sold to other clubs or football journey ends.
- › Academy goal is to produce players for first team.
- › Transition can be complex, but the key is long-term preparation for first team.



## COMPETITION

- › Dynamo Kyiv currently better at talent identification, but the two clubs are considered to have the best quality of players in the country.
- › Would like academy to be competitive in European youth tournaments.



## HUMAN CAPITAL

- › When it comes to signing players/staff, an academy council – consisting of CEO, Academy Director, Sport Director, Football Director, strategy staff – hold quarterly meetings.
- › They have their own coaching education programme. It is also used for scouting, but means they can cherry pick the best coaches. They use coaching modules, video analysis and other projects to teach coaches.
- › Use an evaluation system for coaches in which Academy Director and co-ordinator conduct analysis.
- › They organise internal education about football and workshops about other issues.



## BUY-IN FROM CLUB

- › Academy does not follow first team style until U17-U19s.



## COMMUNITY CONNECTIVITY

- › There is an expert responsible for social projects and they're open – and active – in many areas.
- › Lots of grassroots programmes where club links with local factories and schools, plus a 'Shaktar Social' project, which links with people with social needs in the Donetsk area. Big connection with fans and women's football.



## PROFESSIONAL CONNECTIVITY

- › Designated expert delegated to look into trends and methodology, while coaches encouraged to share knowledge with other coaches. ✗





# SPORTING CP

## VITAL STATISTICS\*

According to CIES Football Observatory, the percentage of minutes by club-trained players (i.e. those aged 15-21 at the club) is:

**34%**  
(6 players)

AVERAGE AGE  
**24.23**

PLAYERS IN THE  
FIRST TEAM

**26**

**11** players of which trained in  
the club (academy pupils)

WITH AN  
AVERAGE VALUE OF  
**€9,500,000**



The Portuguese way of training youth football players is widely respected in Europe, and the Sporting academy is undoubtedly one of the best in the world.

It is worth noting that Sporting have to compete with another top European club – Benfica, for talent in Lisbon, a city with a population of just over 500,000 in the city itself, plus a larger talent pool within the metropolitan area and other central and southern regions of the country. Domestically, Sporting have won 19 Primeira Liga titles and 17 Portuguese Cups. Tomaz Morais is the head of the Youth Football Sporting academy, and he is vastly experienced in another team sport – rugby. In its history, Sporting has trained, among others, players such as Nani and Nuno Mendes, but they are most famous for developing Luis Figo and Cristiano Ronaldo, who have both held the accolade of best player in the world at certain points in their careers. At Sporting, there is very strong connection between the academy and the first team, which undoubtedly contributes to their success. The academy is well organised with clear areas in which football development and school education are important. The Academy also has a strategic place in the entire club, as evidenced by its level of budget. ►



## SPORTING CP

### TOP VALUE PLAYERS FROM THE ACADEMY

#### 1. Nuno Mendes

AGE	POSITION	MINUTES	VALUE
19	D	13%	€40m

#### 2. João Palhinha

AGE	POSITION	MINUTES	VALUE
26	M	79%	€28m

#### 3. Gonçalo Inácio

AGE	POSITION	MINUTES	VALUE
20	D	74%	€17m

### RECORD OUTGOING TRANSFERS

#### 1. Bruno Fernandes

25	Age when sold (2020)	€64m	to Manchester Utd
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#### 2. João Mário

23	Age when sold (2016)	€40m	to Inter Milan
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#### 3. Islam Slimani

28	Age when sold (2016)	€31m	to Leicester City
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### RECORD INCOMING TRANSFERS

#### 1. Paulinho

28	Age when bought (2021)	From Braga	€16m
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#### 2. Bas Dost

27	Age when bought (2016)	From VFL Wolfsburg	€11.85m
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#### 3. Luciano Vietto

25	Age when bought (2019)	From Atlético Madrid	€11m
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SPORTING CP

# QUALITY AREAS SNAPSHOT



## STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE



- › Academy directors Paulo Gomes and Tomaz Morais, together with the multidisciplinary coordinators, initiated the new sporting policy and strategy three and a half years ago. The main focus is

recruitment and the academy players' development – which happens in and out of the four lines.



## COGNITIVE CARE

- › Club has a core set of values.
- › Scouts and team managers are responsible for communication and relationship with parents and schools. Club works with a group of schools.
- › Athletic and mental education is a key part of player development. Players are also taught to use all techniques, cognitive skills, and quick decision making. They are also educated about nutrition, recovery, strength, discipline, and social media/communications.
- › Players are taught to keep it simple. Quality of movement is very important. But it's not just football, the overall strategy also includes how to live a good athletic lifestyle, and comes with an individual development plan.



## FINANCES

- › Academy budget is 10-15% of total club budget.
- › No performance bonuses.



## FACILITIES

- › They have a dorm which has acts as a residence for 66 academy players.



## TALENT IDENTIFICATION

- › They have 5 academies in 5 different areas.
- › Scouting is a very important part of development, and the academy scouting department consists of 200-300 volunteers working across various regions in Portugal.
- › They have shadow teams for all generations and aim to have 5

players in each position. The goal is to have the 3 best players in each position.

- › The methodology of scouting includes an education plan, but the scouts connect with the families and act as educators for the players.
- › Not all the players play in regular games... they can also play in schools, beach football and, sometimes, in other sports.



## PRODUCTIVITY

- › The development process is split U7s-U13s, U14s-U17s, U19s-U23s. After U16s level, competition becomes increasingly important. Players are required to find consistency before representing the A/B teams (the B team plays in Portugal's third division).
- › Coaches and physios have and do move from academy to first team.
- › The Academy goal (KPI) is to produce at least three first team players and at least 80% of players for the B team.
- › The transition process is easier when they have a first-team coach who gives young players a chance.



## HUMAN CAPITAL

- › The Academy organises an annual internal education plan directed for all the Player Centred Model staff.
- › Hiring coaches is an internal decision based on a set of principles; the main one is having a pedagogical profile.



## BUY-IN FROM CLUB

- › The academy's mindset is not the same as the first team. Instead, a game model promotes a long-term development pathway.
- › There is still a very strong connection with the first team, and a monthly strategy meeting exists between the Sports Director, Academy Football Director, Technical Director, First Team Technical Staff, B Team Coach and age-grade Head Coaches.



## COMMUNITY CONNECTIVITY

- › Community and stakeholders relations are very important and there is a strong tradition of this. ✕





# ZENIT ST. PETERSBURG

## VITAL STATISTICS

According to CIES Football Observatory, the percentage of minutes by club-trained players (i.e. those aged 15-21 at the club) is:

**17.5%**  
(12 players)

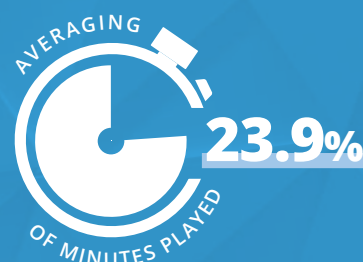
AVERAGE AGE  
**26.65**

PLAYERS IN THE FIRST TEAM

**23**

7 players of which trained in the club (academy pupils)

WITH AN AVERAGE VALUE OF  
**€1,385,714**



Founded in 1925, FC 'Zenit' is a symbol of St. Petersburg (population 5,351,935). It is one of the most successful sporting organisations on and off the pitch in Russia.

Having won the treble in 2019/20, FC 'Zenit' were crowned Russian Premier League champions for a third time in a row in 2021. FC 'Zenit' also won the UEFA Cup and the UEFA Super Cup in 2008. The club's well-established youth setup has combined with working alongside world-leading coaches such as Dick Advocaat, Luciano Spalletti, André Villas-Boas and Roberto Mancini to provide a strong foundation. The club's squad is strong and superior to most of the teams in the country, but this also means it can be challenging to promote players from the Academy to the first team. However, several players who have graduated from the Academy play an important role in the current first team, including centre-back Dmitri Chistyakov and winger Aleksey Sutormin. FC 'Zenit' Gazprom-Academy is headed by former striker Andrey Arshavin, one of the best players in the club's history. This club is expecting to deliver a trend of constant development over the next few years. In 2020-2021 over 30 Academy players have been called up to the Russian national teams. ▶



## ZENIT ST. PETERSBURG

### TOP VALUE PLAYERS FROM THE ACADEMY

#### 1. Dmitri Chistyakov

AGE	POSITION	MINUTES	VALUE
28	D	34%	€3.8m

#### 2. Aleksey Sutormin

AGE	POSITION	MINUTES	VALUE
28	F	41%	€3.2m

#### 3. Danil Krugovoy

AGE	POSITION	MINUTES	VALUE
23	D	22%	€2m

### RECORD OUTGOING TRANSFERS

#### 1. Hulk

AGE	Age when sold	VALUE	TO
29	(2016)	€55.8m	to Shanghai SIPG

#### 2. Leandro Paredes

AGE	Age when sold	VALUE	TO
24	(2019)	€40m	to PSG

#### 3. Ezequiel Garay

AGE	Age when sold	VALUE	TO
29	(2016)	€24m	to Valencia CF

### RECORD INCOMING TRANSFERS

#### 1. Malcolm

AGE	Age when bought	VALUE	FROM
22	(2019)	€40m	From Barcelona

#### 2. Hulk

AGE	Age when bought	VALUE	FROM
26	(2012)	€40m	From Porto

#### 3. Axel Witsel

AGE	Age when bought	VALUE	FROM
23	(2012)	€40m	From Benfica



# QUALITY AREAS SNAPSHOT



## COGNITIVE CARE

- › The club does not demand results from 10-15-year-olds, but they are put under pressure and control.
- › Academy coaches and specialists try to develop well-rounded humans, not just footballers, who are aware of the pitfalls of social media/comms.
- › Academy has staff who keep in touch with schools and who hold bi-annual meetings with parents.
- › Academy coaches work with U7s-U17s players, but some youth coaches can progress to Zenit-Y, Zenit-2 or even first-team level.



## FINANCES

- › The club's aim is to earn more than it spends, and the Academy budget is 6% of club budget.
- › There are performances bonuses.



## FACILITIES

- › FC 'Zenit Academy has the best infrastructure in Russia.
- › Boarding school for players aged 12 and above (33 rooms, 74 beds).
- › World-class facilities include 5 pitches, a 3,000 capacity stadium, 1 indoor football pitch and other



## TALENT IDENTIFICATION

- › Academy's Scout department is looking for talent across Russia, principally Saint Petersburg.
- › Annual/bi-annual meeting of coaches and scouts helps to decide which first-team positions need to be strengthened.
- › Players are constantly evaluated in the Academy by scouts/coaches.
- › Talent identification process includes partnerships with other clubs and academies, participation in different tournaments for each age group, organisation of own international tournaments and use of global connections/relationships with top clubs and academies.
- › FC 'Zenit' Academy has its own unique digital database, which tracks player progress.

## HUMAN CAPITAL



- › The Academy is under the authority of the Club President. He signs contracts, but the decision-making is entrusted to the Academy Director (aided by coaches on new players).
- › Own Coach Qualification Center

helps to educate coaches and to improve their qualification level. Coaches usually work full time, only 5% of them work part time.

- › Coaches are required to learn English.

training facilities, plus a gym, sauna, rehab complex, and hotel (109 beds).



## PRODUCTIVITY

- › Their goal is to bring up the players ready for FC Zenit's first team squad who will be well-educated and respectful of the club's values and traditions, or to prepare top-level players to be sold to other clubs.
- › Currently, an effective system is being formed for players to move vertically from the Academy to the youth team and then the main squad. For this purpose, a special Talent Committee (First Team Coach, Zenit-2 Coach, Zenit-Y Coach, Academy Head coach and Club President) was created.
- › The key now is to prevent hindering talent from breaking through.



## STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE

- › Earlier, the Academy philosophy was influenced by Netherlands, but this no longer works in Russia. Academy is bringing through a period of change and is creating its own unique system.



## COMPETITION

- › FC 'Zenit' Academy usually finishes in top 3. FC 'Krasnodar' is considered to be the closest rival in terms of climate, infrastructure, city culture, while FC 'Lokomotiv' (Moscow) is considered the best at scouting and bringing players through to first team.



## BUY-IN FROM CLUB

- › Style of play is not the same in academy and first team.



## COMMUNITY CONNECTIVITY

- › The club is committed to entertaining its fans with attractive football.
- › Largest fan base in Russia, most followed Russian club online, and a growing following abroad. ✕





# FC ZIMBRU

## VITAL STATISTICS\*

According to the club, the percentage of minutes by club-trained players (i.e. those aged 15-21 at the club) is:

**55%**  
(10 players)

AVERAGE AGE  
**20.44**

PLAYERS IN THE FIRST TEAM

**24** 

**10** players of which trained in the club (academy pupils)

WITH AN AVERAGE VALUE OF  
**€0.04m**

AVERAGING  
**19.6%**  
OF MINUTES PLAYED

FC Zimbru Chisinau is a Moldovan football club based in Chisinau (population 674,500), the nation's capital. In the domestic league, Zimbru has historically been the dominant force, winning eight league titles and five Moldovan Cups.

Zimbru's monopoly for the Moldovan championship was interrupted by Sheriff Tiraspol, which has a different strategic focus to the club from the capital. What is interesting is that the players of FC Zimbru still constitute the basis of the youth national teams of Moldova, which consolidates the position of the Zimbru academy in this country. Andrei Trifan, an academy representative, was able to show data that revealed what percentage of players from their academy reach the professional level, as well as what percentage play in Europe, play at a lower level or who have ended their football journey. FC Zimbru is undoubtedly an example of a club that gives players from the academy chances to play in the first team, which means the average age of that first team is just over 20 years. ▶



FC ZIMBRU

## TOP VALUE PLAYERS FROM THE ACADEMY

1. Silviu Smalenea				
AGE	POSITION	MINUTES	VALUE	
19	GK	68%	€150k	

2. Vlad Raileanu				
AGE	POSITION	MINUTES	VALUE	
19	M	27%	€80k	

## RECORD OUTGOING TRANSFERS

1. Kyrylo Kovalchuk			
22	Age when sold (2009)	€0.36m	to Tom Toms

2. Alexandru Antoniu			
24	Age when sold (2019)	€0.3m	to Rubin Kazan

## RECORD INCOMING TRANSFERS

1. Aleksey Zhdanov			
24	Age when bought (2006)	€0.2m	From Ventspils

2. Andriy Burdiyan			
24	Age when bought (2011)	€0.1m	From PFK Sumy





# QUALITY AREAS SNAPSHOT



## COGNITIVE CARE

- › Currently working alongside the Moldovan FA on an initiative called Project 'We', which helps with coaching, physical conditioning and session plans.
- › Focus on development rather than results.
- › Local school professors communicate directly with the club and collect information about players' education. Coaches encouraged to communicate with parents of players at all levels.
- › First phase of development is to attract children to football and have fun. Players learn to shoot, pass and improve individual skills. As they develop, they work on technical skills, and then their understanding of the game.



## FINANCES

- › No current budget, just subscriptions paid for by parents, which currently covers everything.



## FACILITIES

- › They have a training facility camp and a boarding school.



## PRODUCTIVITY

- › Main goal is development of players for the club's first team and other clubs across Europe.
- › Scouts evaluate which players should step up to next level by using tests. (physically, mental, technical).
- › Sold four players in the last year.
- › 73% of academy players go on to play football, most of them professionally – 19.5% play in Europe and 10% at an amateur level. 17% retire and become coaches or other sport employees.
- › Success of transition depends on academy and first team having a similar style of play, and players having the right attitude to succeed and deal with stressful situations.



## TALENT IDENTIFICATION

- › There is no scouting department, but they have three scouts each covering U9s, U10-U14s and U15-U19s. Coaches also scout.
- › Project 'We' helps to identify best players in each region, and these regions play each other. Club chooses the best players.
- › Process includes a franchise in other regions alongside communication with clubs and schools.
- › Club is allowed to take one player from any club in Moldova, just need to pay compensation based on age.



## STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE

- › Main goal is development of players.
- › Sport policy was created because finances restrict buying players.
- › Focused on strategy of development rather than result.
- › Their style of play is formally described as offensive, high pressure, negative and positive pressure, dominant in game.



## COMPETITION

- › They do not compare themselves to any rivals at a professional level, but Academia Raduje Verža is seen as the next best academy.
- › Other clubs in Chisinau look to sell players to Zimbru.



## HUMAN CAPITAL

- › Decision on new signings fall on the coach of each group, but also the Technical Director for ages and the Director of Academy.
- › U19s coach is the assistant coach at first-team level.



## BUY-IN FROM CLUB

- › Sporting policy fits the club's overall strategy and formally exist together.
- › Style isn't the same between teams, particularly when coaches change.



## COMMUNITY CONNECTIVITY

- › Seen as the home of local football.
- › They have plenty of projects within the community.
- › Trying to promote sport as a big part of life for children and community.

## PROFESSIONAL CONNECTIVITY

- › They visit other clubs to learn, share knowledge and stay on top of trends. ✕



Together, our surveys  
and interviews  
have revealed new  
learnings about how  
academies operate...

To recap, our survey revealed 'what' clubs are doing in their academies, including the most and least widely shared working processes, highlighting what everyone and almost nobody does. The interviews enabled us to understand more about the 'how' and 'why' and gave us a deeper understanding of the survey data... a first-hand account of how academies are being run.

Using these working processes and Quality Areas has enabled us to see **the primary focus areas of European youth academies; Productivity, Talent Identification, Human Capital and Cognitive Care.**

The statistical analysis reveals that some significant working processes place Human Capital and Cognitive Care at the core of academies, as **player and coach/ staff welfare becomes increasingly important.**

We have also learned 'how' academies operate in terms of Talent Identification, Scouting, and Organisation, and how they align all of that with how they perform on the pitch and their DNA.

**It is clear that many academies are keen to keep up with trends, scout for staff and coaches,** educate them about club processes and KPIs and help them achieve their own goals of professional growth.

**The most successful academies have a clear philosophy which is formalised by documents and processes and shared by all staff.**

Most academies develop and seek to implement a playing style and coaching methodology, but aligning it with their first team is less prominent/more difficult.

**It is also very important to have buy-in from the club for the development of the academy.** This is recognised in a number of processes that allow academies to function independently, like budgeting

and provision of resources to maintain things like long-term recruitment databases, as well as the sensitive and final stage of developing well-rounded humans into professional players – that of transition from academy to the first team.

**Academy Directors believe that the most important factors for successful transition are support from above (board and First Team Coach), support and communication with player(s) during transition, momentum of player promotion and player qualities.**

**There appears to be no hard and fast single recipe for running a successful academy,** but it's clear that aligning operations within it, and the wider club, will support you in reaching your potential.

It helps to identify working processes which might enable you to be more efficient – whether you miss anything from the list of what virtually everyone does (90%), or want to try to implement something that few academies do (25%). The latter option could include IQ testing, or progressing from basic social media training, to pro-actively educating players on building brands.

By aligning a playing style with your 'true self' or DNA, the identity or community of the club, and by developing a working methodology and all other operations based on the values which came from it, and then challenging yourself with what others do, could also help you be more efficient.

We hope this publication will help you inform your future plans and projects to increase performance, and even contribute to reaffirming the origin of your passion in youth development. We wish you, your players and staff every success for the future, and many enjoyable years of running the academy within your club. ✕

# CONCLUSIONS



# GLOSSARY

**Assessment** The systematic collection, review, and use of information about working processes for quality improvement, planning and decision-making.

**Bio-banding** The process of grouping athletes by growth/maturation rather than age.

**Case studies** Sample entities which provide a qualitative perspective. Our interviews produced academy snapshots and examples of best practices.

**Club DNA** A club's fundamental and distinctive characteristics, beliefs or qualities.

**Club values** Core beliefs that shape the way club staff behave and operate.

**Coaching methodology** A systemised plan, with rules, techniques and principles which define how coaching is driven.

**Correlation** A statistical measure that expresses the extent to which two variables are linearly related to describe simple relationships without making a statement about cause and effect.

**Descriptive statistics** Characteristics of observed data, which enabled us to identify which working processes were the most/least used.

**Desk research** A type of market research that involves collecting and examining information that already exists.

**Development of academy** A goal or process which aims to improve key performance indicator(s).

**Ecosystem** All the stakeholders, environments and processes which effect football.

**Efficiency** The ability to produce something with minimum waste, effort or energy.

**Football philosophy** The principles and statements which define a club identity on and off the pitch.

**Frequency** How often something repeats in a sample under observation.

**Inferential statistics** These enable you to make generalisations about a population.

**Interrelated working processes** Working processes with the most significant correlations.

**Interrelated working processes** The possible relations between the working processes, and their position within the process hierarchy.

**IQ test** An assessment that measures cognitive/intellectual abilities.

**KPI** A quantifiable measure used to evaluate success of an individual or an organisation (or part thereof).

**License courses** Courses for the education of coaches as required within a domestic league.

**Margin** A defined border of an observed variable, which splits a sample into two groups for interpretation.

**Pearson correlation** This measures the strength of the linear relationship between two quantitative variables.

**Personality** Individual differences in characteristic patterns of thinking, feeling and behaving.

**Playing style** A specific and repeatable interpretation of football on the field.

**Quality areas** Quality Areas cover the entire scope of professional football youth development.

**Quality markers** The variables based on which a given quality area can be estimated.

**Semi-structured interview** A type of interview in which the interviewer asks only a few predetermined questions while the rest are not planned in advance.

**Statistical analysis** Investigating trends, patterns, and relationships using quantitative data.

**Statistically significant correlation** This is indicated by a probability value of less than 0.05. This means that the probability of obtaining such a correlation coefficient by chance is less than five out of 100.

**Strategic framework** A coherent system of principles used to outline plans to achieve future goals.

**Strategy** A general plan to achieve one or more long-term or overall goals.

**Success of academy** A club goal defined by the main goals set for the academy. It is not universal.

**Tactical formation** How players in a team generally position themselves on the pitch.

**Working processes** Any method that employees use to create value for the organisation.

## Pouya Yaghoubinia

Pouya is a former youth football coach who has also worked for six years in the world of finance and banking. He works as Football Development Analyst for ECA on projects and research related to youth football development, implementing the ECA Youth Football strategy for the 2021-23 cycle.



## Dr. Slaven Marasović

Slaven has experience in management reform, developing methodologies for the development of youth academies, as well as experience in successful transformation of youth development systems as Chairman of the supervisory board of HNK Hajduk Split. He is experienced in designing researches based on statistical analysis.



## Dr. Adam Metelski

Adam is a former professional basketball player with experience in the U.S. and Europe. He has graduated from five universities in economics, psychology and sociology and is currently Associate Professor at the Poznan University of Economics in Poland. His main research interests include athlete dual careers and employee motivation.



## Konstantin Kornakov

Konstantin has plenty of experience in the football industry. He has a systematic approach and an analytical mind with more than six years at Heart of Midlothian FC. He was also the founding sports advisory of research firm LTT Sports in 2015. He is the co-author of the ECA Club Management Guide and two previous ECA youth academy publications.



# PROJECT TEAM



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# **YOUTH** **FOOTBALL** **2021-23**

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