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## SPORT AS AN ECONOMIC DRIVER: ANALYSIS AND REVIEW OF EUROSTAT'S SPORT SATELLITE ACCOUNT 2025

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**Abstract:** The monograph *EU Sport Satellite Account: Research into estimating the economic value of sport in the EU – 2025 edition* offers a methodologically coherent and empirically grounded assessment of the economic role of sport in the European Union. Drawing on the Sport Satellite Account framework and the upgraded Vilnius 3.0 methodology, the study quantifies the direct and indirect contributions of sport and identifies structural differences in the development of sport economies across Member States. The findings indicate that sport functions as both an economic and societal driver, generating value that extends beyond measurable financial outputs to include health, social cohesion and overall well-being. Through transparent data procedures and a reproducible methodological design, the monograph provides reliable evidence demonstrating that, in 2019, sport accounted for 3.4% of the EU's GDP and 3.8% of total employment, underscoring its relevance for policy planning and sustainable development.

**Keywords:** sports economy; Sport Satellite Account (SSA); economic impact of sport; GDP and employment; European Union

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## Introduction

The economic and social role of sport in contemporary societies has been gaining increasing prominence - not only in terms of public health and social cohesion, but also as a significant economic sector (Stanković, 2025). However, due to the diversity of sport-related activities - ranging from professional sport and recreational participation to equipment production, sport tourism and media industries - determining the overall economic value of sport presents a considerable methodological challenge. To address these complexities, a standardized analytical framework known as the *EU Sport Satellite Account (EU SSA)* was developed, enabling comparable and coherent quantification of sport's contribution to the economy across EU Member States under the coordination of Eurostat and the European Commission.

The latest edition of this framework, *EU Sport Satellite Account: Research into estimating the economic value of sport in the EU - 2025 edition*, authored by Themistoklis Kokolakis and Anna Kleissner, provides an updated methodology, consolidated datasets and practical guidance for constructing sport satellite accounts at both national and European levels, applying harmonized definitions and conceptual foundations. This approach positions sport not merely as a cultural or social activity, but as an integral component of the real economy - one that contributes measurably to gross domestic product (GDP), gross value added (GVA), and employment. As the third major stage in the development of EU SSA (following the editions based on the 2005 and 2012 frameworks), the monograph builds upon the 2018 *Study on the Economic Impact of Sport through Sport Satellite Accounts* and advances the methodology to the Vilnius 3.0 version, with the aim of ensuring long-term comparability of measurements and providing a reliable guide for national statistical offices.

Integrating sport into the system of national accounts through SSA entails an expanded definition of sport encompassing direct sport activities (sports clubs, operation of sport facilities, sport services), the production of sport goods and equipment, as well as sport-related economic activities such as retail trade, tourism, transport, media, and other sectors whose revenues depend directly or indirectly on sport (SpEA & SIRC, 2018). This approach yields a more comprehensive depiction of the actual scope of the "sport economy."

Such a quantitative framework has substantial implications for public policy and strategic planning (Tošić, 2023). It enables policymakers to recognize sport as a sector with measurable economic benefits, to monitor its development over time, to conduct cross-country comparisons, and to plan investments in infrastructure, education, tourism, or equipment industries on the basis of reliable and comparable

data. In this sense, the EU SSA serves as a tool that links statistics, economics and public policy, providing an empirical foundation for assessing sport not only as a social value, but also as a significant economic actor.

## **Methodological Framework and Contribution**

The central methodological contribution of this report lies in the consistent application of the Sport Satellite Account (SSA) framework in accordance with the Vilnius 3.0 methodology, which represents the most advanced European standard for the statistical measurement of sport-related economic activities. A key feature of this methodology is the clear distinction between *characteristic* and *connected* sport products and services, ensuring precise identification of economic activities that can be directly or indirectly attributed to the sport sector. This distinction enables a more streamlined classification, improved comparability with other satellite accounts, and a clearer separation between the “core” of sport and its broader economic linkages. In addition, the report systematically integrates SSA with the European System of Accounts (ESA 2010), allowing standardized reporting and full compatibility with the official macroeconomic statistics of the European Union.

The use of input–output tables (IOT) and extended multiregional input–output models (MR-IOT) provides a robust basis for estimating the direct, indirect, and induced effects of sport, including value-added and employment multipliers at both inter-sectoral and cross-country levels. Such methodological coherence significantly enhances the comparability of results across Member States and improves the capacity to monitor long-term trends within the sport economy.

The authors devote particular attention to the transparency of the statistical process: data sources (business statistics, labour force surveys, administrative registers) are clearly documented, as are the steps involved in constructing thematic accounts - from the initial classification of activities to the production of final tables and indicators. This structure makes the monograph not only an analytical publication but also a practical methodological guide, particularly valuable for national statistical teams developing or refining their own SSA systems (Eurostat, 2025).

Key SSA findings for 2019 indicate the substantial economic role of sport within the European Union. According to Eurostat, sport-related activities generated €627.5 billion in gross value added, representing 3.4% of the EU's GDP, while supporting 9.27 million jobs, or 3.8% of total employment (Eurostat, 2025). These outcomes encompass both direct effects - such as sport services and educational activities in

sport - and indirect effects across industries closely connected to the sport ecosystem, including retail, public services, and segments of the tourism sector.

Value-added multipliers based on IOT/MR-IOT modelling show that each €1 of final demand in the sport sector generates approximately €1.70 in value added across the broader economy. This finding has important policy implications, highlighting sport's potential as an instrument of economic stimulation, particularly in relation to investments in infrastructure, programmes, and events.

The employment structure further illuminates the nature of the sport economy: the largest share of employment is concentrated in sport services, educational services, and recreation/tourism-related activities. This distribution demonstrates that the sport sector is highly labour-intensive, rendering it especially relevant for local development strategies and employment-support measures (Stanković, 2023).

Finally, the monograph contextualizes its findings through comparison with the previous pan-European SSA published in 2012. The observable growth in the economic weight of sport, combined with continuous methodological refinement of the SSA approach, confirms the stability and increasing importance of this instrument for comprehensively tracking both direct and indirect effects of sport within the EU economy (Eurostat, 2025).

### **Interpretation of Results in the Context of Public Policy**

The practical value of the findings is multifaceted and is reflected in their direct applicability to policy planning and decision-making (Kostadinović, Ilievska Kostadinović, 2025). On the one hand, the SSA framework provides a reliable and evidence-based foundation for decisions on public funding - from the construction and maintenance of local sport infrastructure to the design of national physical activity programmes and public health strategies. On the other hand, the framework enables the quantification of the broader economic effects of sport, including indirect supply-chain linkages and intersectoral connections, thereby preventing the systematic underestimation of the sport sector's total contribution to the economy (Ahlert & Repeining, 2024).

Although the economic outcomes are significant, the authors emphasize that the sport sector also encompasses dimensions that are more difficult to quantify yet hold equally important socio-political relevance. Among these are social benefits such as improved population health, enhanced social cohesion, and increased overall well-being (Ilievska Kostadinović & Kostadinović, 2025). These non-material be-

nefits underscore the need to understand sport not merely as an economic activity, but as an instrument that extends beyond traditional development policies (Stamenković, 2017), with the potential to influence quality of life and sustainable community development in the long term.

While the choice of 2019 as the reference year is justified - given that it represents the last "normal" year before the COVID-19 pandemic - this temporal boundary also entails certain limitations. The monograph does not capture the deeper structural shifts in supply and demand that occurred after the pandemic, many of which significantly transformed sport participation patterns, sectoral financing, and the operation of sport infrastructures across European countries. This opens avenues for future research that should address post-pandemic transformations and their economic implications.

Furthermore, although the report offers a pan-European overview, it is important to note that micro-level comparability may be constrained by national differences in the quality of primary statistical sources and in the maturity of domestic SSA systems. Variations in institutional capacity, data availability and methodological implementation can affect the precision and consistency of national accounts.

Another enduring methodological challenge concerns the classification of connected products. Boundaries between sport, tourism, entertainment and recreation are often fluid, making it difficult to delineate activities with precision and necessitating continuous refinement of input matrices, classification systems and intersectoral linkages. This challenge is inherent to the SSA approach and represents an area for further development of statistical standards and analytical techniques.

For researchers in sport economics, the monograph serves as an example of methodologically rigorous and well-documented practice, offering a reproducible research procedure, comparable indicators and a reliable numerical basis suitable for various types of comparative analysis. This is particularly valuable for studies addressing cross-country multiplier estimates, sectoral structures of gross value added and employment, or scenario modelling of public investment in the sport sector. Owing to this methodological transparency, the monograph can serve as a stable reference point for the continued advancement of analytical research in sport economics.

From the perspective of policymakers, SSA-based results offer an opportunity to set priorities in an evidence-based manner at both national and local levels. They allow investments in sport infrastructure, educational programmes and local development initiatives to be grounded in measurable effects (Pavićević, Jovanović & Đoković, 2024) and enable systematic monitoring of their outcomes over time. This positions

SSA as a valuable instrument for planning and evaluating policies rooted in empirical evidence.

In the spheres of sport management and media, findings related to revenue structures and the influence of digital OTT platforms can be effectively integrated with market data for strategic planning in areas such as regional broadcasting rights, the organisation of sport events or the development of sport tourism. Although the monograph primarily focuses on macroeconomic and mesoeconomic dimensions, its results offer meaningful guidance for decision-makers at operational and industry levels, particularly in the context of market changes and the digital transformation of the sport ecosystem.

### **Economic Aspects of Sport**

The economic significance of sport in the European Union is most clearly reflected in the findings presented in the *EU Sport Satellite Account - 2025 edition*, which provides the most comprehensive assessment to date of the macroeconomic effects of sport within the Vilnius 3.0 methodological framework. According to data for 2019, the sport economy generated €627.5 billion in gross value added, representing 3.4% of the EU's total GDP, while 9.27 million people were employed in sport-related activities - equivalent to 3.8% of the European labour force. These indicators demonstrate that sport is not a marginal segment of the economy, but rather a stable, diverse and dynamic system of intersectoral connections.

The structure of the sport economy, as outlined in the monograph, highlights that the majority of economic value does not emerge from the narrow "core" of sport activities, but from the broader environment of connected industries. While *characteristic goods and services* - such as sport organisations, sport facilities and training services - represent the directly measurable component of the sector, the dominant share of gross value added originates from *connected goods and services*. This wider segment includes sport equipment, sport tourism, media and digital platforms, trade and logistics services, as well as educational and health-related activities linked to sport. Estimates indicate that 65–70% of total sport-related GVA derives from these connected activities, confirming that sport's economic importance is rooted in its multisectoral nature and strong inter-industry linkages.

Sport also represents a clear example of a labour-intensive sector, in which value creation relies heavily on a large number of service-based activities (Dašić et al., 2024a; Dašić et al., 2024b). Employment in sport spans a wide range of segments -

from coaching and event organisation to hospitality, tourism, media, marketing and the retail of sport equipment. In this sense, sport makes a significant contribution to local economies (Milačić, 2024), while its multiplicative structure explains its greater resilience to economic crises compared to certain industrial branches. Input–output models used in the monograph show that each euro of final demand in the sport sector can generate €1.7–€1.8 in total output across the economy, placing sport among the sectors with the highest potential to stimulate economic growth (Ratković, 2023; Kovačević, 2024).

A valuable insight of the monograph concerns the long-term dynamics of development: comparative data show that between 2012 and 2019, direct sport-related GDP increased from €279.7 to €368.8 billion, while total effects measured through SSA exceeded €600 billion, with employment rising from 5.67 to 6.05 million, and reaching 9.27 million jobs when indirect effects are included. This confirms that the sport economy grows not only in absolute terms but also in relative terms - the sector’s share within the broader European economic structure has been steadily increasing (see Table 1).

**Table 1.** Comparative indicators of the development of the sport economy (2012–2019)

Year	Gross Value Added (GVA) of Sport (billion €)	Share in EU GDP	Employment (million)	Share in Total Employment
2012	279.7	2.2%	5.67	2.6%
2019	368.8 (direct) / 627.5 (total SSA)	3.4%	6.05 / 9.27	3.8%

Within the European Union, different models of sport economy development can be distinguished. Tourism-oriented countries generate the highest levels of economic output through sport tourism and hospitality services. Industrial-service economies create value primarily through the production of sport equipment, media industries and professional sport, while certain countries with strong public sectors cultivate a social model in which sport plays a central role in local communities and public services. These distinctions confirm that the sport economy is not a homogeneous phenomenon, but rather reflects the institutional and cultural specificities of each country.

Taken together, the evidence suggests that sport should be viewed as an important developmental resource. Through its structure, growth dynamics and multiplicative effects, the sport sector contributes to employment, tourism, industry, infrastructure and media, while simultaneously generating substantial social benefits. The monograph convincingly demonstrates that sport is not merely organised physical acti-

vity, but a complex economic system that produces measurable effects at macroeconomic, regional and social levels - thus warranting systematic support and strategic planning within public policy.

## Conclusion

The monograph *EU Sport Satellite Account: Research into estimating the economic value of sport in the EU - 2025 edition* represents one of the most significant contributions to contemporary economic analysis of sport within the European Union. By applying an enhanced SSA framework and the Vilnius 3.0 methodological standard, the authors succeed in integrating sport into the system of national accounts in a manner that enables reliable monitoring, quantification and cross-country comparability of economic effects. As a result, sport is no longer treated as a peripheral or auxiliary activity, but is recognised as a clearly defined and structurally relevant component of the EU's economic landscape.

The 2019 results at the core of the analysis demonstrate that sport exerts a stable and measurable impact on the European economy through both direct and indirect channels. Direct effects reflect activities closely tied to the sport sector - such as sport services, facility management and sport education - while indirect effects reveal the extensive interconnections between sport and other industries, including manufacturing, retail, logistics, public services and tourism. The multiplicative effects derived from input-output models further confirm the high degree of intersectoral integration and provide insight into how sport functions as an economic driver, particularly at local and regional levels.

Shifts in demand structures, physical activity patterns and the organisation of sport institutions indicate the need for future SSA analyses to incorporate the complexities of new behavioural and economic dynamics. In addition, the heterogeneity of European countries in terms of statistical capacity, institutional maturity and the quality of primary data presents both a challenge and an incentive for the continued refinement of SSA methodology. The monograph not only systematizes the economic effects of sport but also serves as a practical manual for SSA implementation at national levels. Its detailed explanations of the classification of characteristic and connected products, the construction of input-output matrices and the interpretation of indicators make it a valuable resource for statisticians, researchers, economists and policymakers. It confirms that sport is a labour-intensive, multisectoral and developmentally relevant domain offering significant opportunities for the integration of economic, social and health policies.

The broader social dimension of sport is also of particular importance. Although SSA primarily measures economic effects, the authors rightly emphasize that sport generates non-material benefits, including improved health, the promotion of social cohesion, the strengthening of community ties and the encouragement of active lifestyles. These benefits, though difficult to quantify in economic terms, meaningfully shape public policy and justify investments in sport infrastructure, physical activity programmes and educational initiatives.

Overall, the monograph provides compelling evidence that sport is not a marginal social activity, but a complex economic system whose effects permeate a wide range of economic sectors. It demonstrates that advanced statistical frameworks such as SSA (Manescu, 2023) play a crucial role in understanding the economic reality of sport while guiding future research and policy development. In this regard, the *EU Sport Satellite Account: 2025 edition* serves as a foundational document that sets standards for future analyses and contributes to building an integrated, evidence-based perspective on sport as an important economic and social resource of the European Union.

#### **Conflict of interests:**

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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