

RESPONSIBALL

RESPONSIBALL Ranking 2015

**The Fifth Annual Social Responsibility
Ranking of Football Leagues in Europe**

September 2015

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RESPONSIBALL Ranking 2015

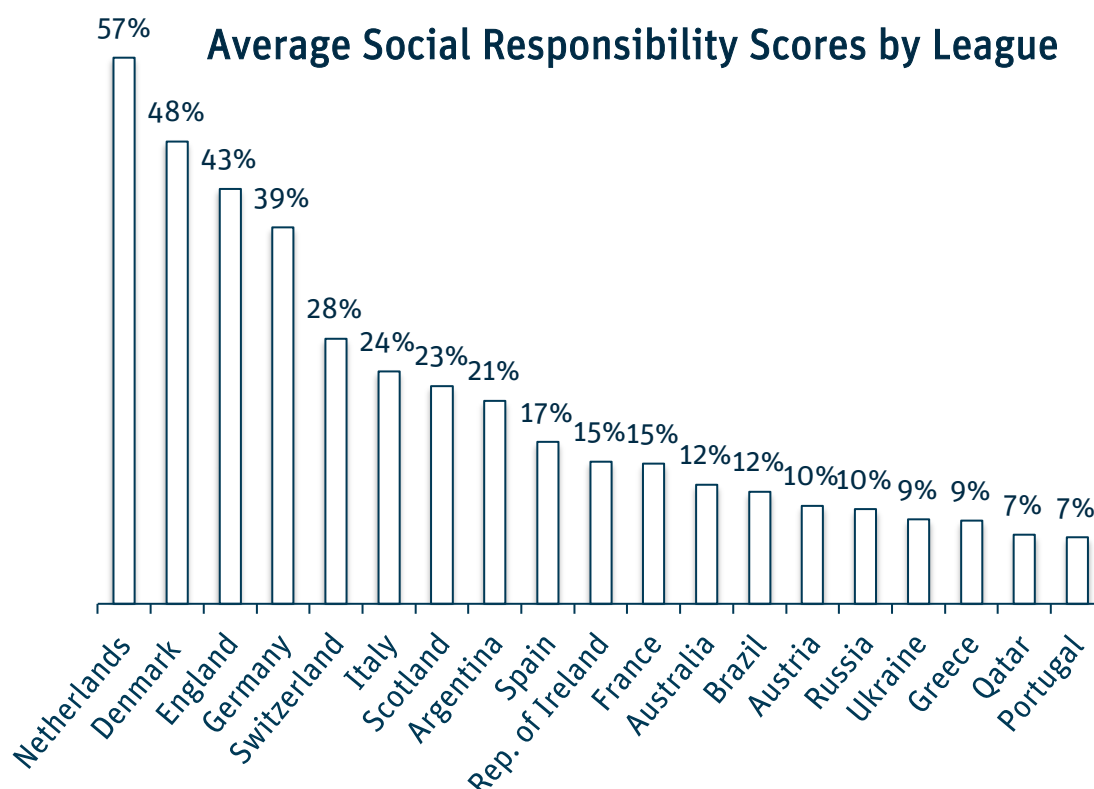
1	(2)	Netherlands	 Eredivisie		
2	(1)	Denmark	 Superliga		
3	(4)	England	 Premier League		
4	(3)	Germany	Bundesliga		
5	(-)	Switzerland	Super League		
6	(5)	Italy	Serie A		
7	(-)	Scotland	Premiership		
8	(-)	Argentina	Primera Division		
9	(6)	Spain	La Liga		
10	(11)	Rep. of Ireland	Premier Division		
11	(9)	France	Premier Division		
12	(-)	Australia	A-League		
13	(-)	Brazil	Serie A		
14	(-)	Austria	Bundesliga		
15	(12)	Russia	Premier League		
16	(14)	Ukraine	Premier League		
17	(13)	Greece	Super League		
18	(-)	Qatar	Stars League		
19	(10)	Portugal	Primeira Liga		

The Ranking

Welcome to the fifth annual RESPONSIBALL Ranking for the 2015/2016 season. This report details our research into social responsibility at football clubs in Europe's top leagues.

As with every year for the past five years, we have assessed football clubs' commitment to social responsibility (SR) - to the extent that certain aspects are communicated transparently - across three main pillars: Governance, Community, and Environment.

This year, clubs from the top leagues of 19 different countries have been selected to raise awareness of and demonstrate the level of SR in elite level professional football.



Looking Further Afield

Last year, we conducted a review of the SR indicators that are used to analyse the information that football clubs communicate on their websites.

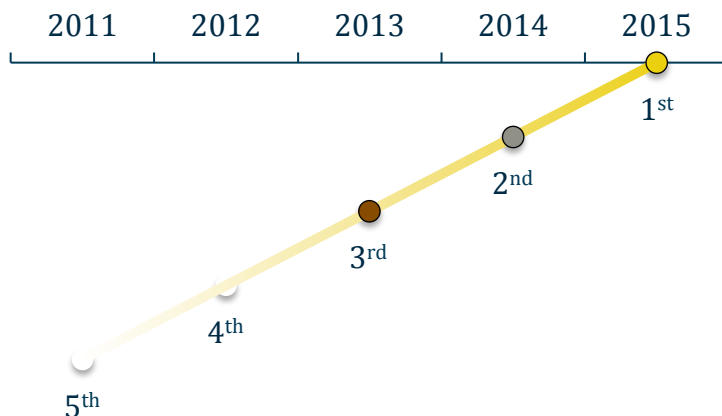
We focussed on the same leagues as the year before to compare and discuss any fluctuation in the positions of the leagues. Interestingly, there was not much (bar one major surprise). More on that in [last year's report](#).

This year, we widened our research to include new leagues, as well as some outside of Europe. This decision was taken, on the one hand, to satisfy the curiosity of interested parties and, on the other, to witness how these new leagues fared against our indicators.

New Leaders

Last year, we were swept off our feet by Danish clubs' overnight rise to the top of the ranking. Although Denmark has stuck around this year, proving it was no anomaly, this year's leaders, the Dutch Eredivisie clubs, come as much less of a surprise.

The Dutch clubs have achieved the highest average SR score since the beginning of the RESPONSIBALL Ranking. They have been slowly but surely – and very consistently – working their way up the ranking over the years, as the graph below illustrates.



The pattern of this steady rise over the five years is not matched by any other country in the ranking, and would not have come as a surprise to observers of the RESPONSIBALL Ranking.

The Eredivisie has topped the ranking this year by a clear margin of 9 per cent, with six of its clubs featuring in the top 10, and 10 of them in the top 20.

We turned to Ezra de Korte – who is from the Netherlands, and involved in the social and sustainable development of organisations, including sport organisations, business and NGO's, on a daily basis – to shed some light on the changes on the ground that have led to this decision:

“There is a big transition currently taking place in the Netherlands in which we seem to be moving towards to a more value driven society. Organisations are taking a lot more responsibility for the value they contribute to society. If we take a look at the football clubs, we have observed a strong growth with respect to the development of communities. Clubs and federations are becoming more aware of their role and purpose in society.

“I am not surprised that the Dutch competition is ranked number one this year. The football clubs have a unique opportunity to make quick decisions as they are smaller in size compared to the clubs in England or Germany, where we are currently also seeing a movement in taking more responsibility for societal needs. Due to the high number of opportunities to innovate, this in turn gives possibilities to grow.”

We asked Ezra if he has observed any concrete changes in the past five years, which could explain the Dutch clubs' SR development in the RESPONSIBALL Ranking.

“Five years ago we were able to observe pioneers trying out experiments where they were prototyping what they were able to contribute to their community. They observed the fundamental role that the community has in the development of a football club. Since a large amount of the fans come from the surrounding communities, they play a very important role towards the ‘health’ of the football club.

“This has given us the opportunity to see best practices develop over the years. As such, many football clubs were able to form partnerships with corporate organisations. These organisations in, for example, the health insurance, energy and mobility sectors were starting to see the social potential and power of football clubs to create shared social value through cooperation. This has since become more interesting on the commercial side due to the ‘social partnerships’ between football clubs and corporate organisations. Since fans are potential clients for corporate organisations, there is a large untapped potential in the development of shared valued partnerships.”

We then asked Ezra if he could explain how Dutch clubs have been raising the bar, with specific examples.

“The football club AZ Alkmaar has especially impressed me. First of all they have a transparent and clear website, which is very user-friendly and incredibly accessible. Compared to the rest of the league, AZ Alkmaar is doing a great job in tackling technical sustainability.

“Whilst working on their community development programmes, they are also partnering with businesses specialised in using energy in new ways and dealing with other environmental issues. Due to this more holistic view of social responsibility, they are more open to identifying opportunities and translating them into concrete actions. I believe this is a best practice others can certainly learn from. Especially looking at the fact that, for many football clubs, the environment is still a missed opportunity.

“Another example is the football club Heracles Almelo. They used to have a stadium with a capacity of around 8,000 people. Last year they built a new stadium with a capacity of 13,000 people. Their bid book for the stadium was called “Sustainable Winning”. In it they explained that every decision made involved due consideration of innovative social solutions and environmental benefits. In every step they took they looked for win-wins for the football club and community.

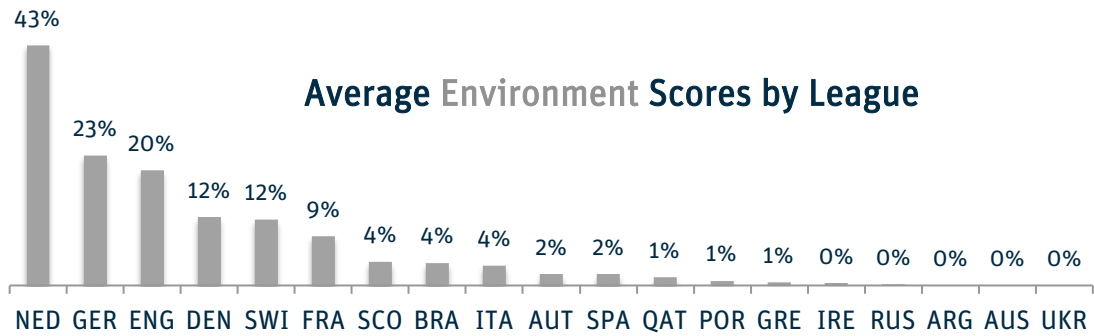
“For the club, it could involve fan engagement, performance and attractiveness for both fans and players. On the SR side, they looked at employment, environment and community. I believe they did a great job by having a “sustainable winning”-focused bid book. At their first match of the season, everyone involved, from the fans to the players, the city, and the whole organisation behind this initiative were incredibly proud. Responsibility and performance are a golden combination!”

Ranking Medallists

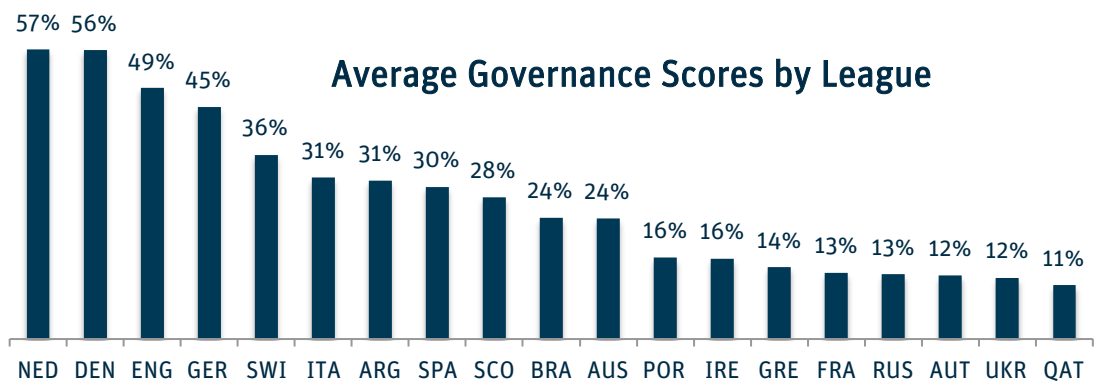
The **Dutch Eredivisie** receives the **gold medal** this season with an SR score of 57 per cent. Now not a surprise, the **Danish Superliga** is in **silver medal** position with 48 per cent – the same score as last season. The English **Premier League** finished in **bronze medal** position this year, with a score of 43 per cent, preventing a consecutive third year decline in rank.

Somewhat surprisingly, the German Bundesliga has been ousted from the top three for the first time since the ranking began. It's clubs scored an average of 39 per cent this year – still a respectable score, given the other scores – but still not expected from a league with a strong tradition of democratic representation of fans within its clubs. There are only two German clubs in the top 20 this season, and only one in the top 10.

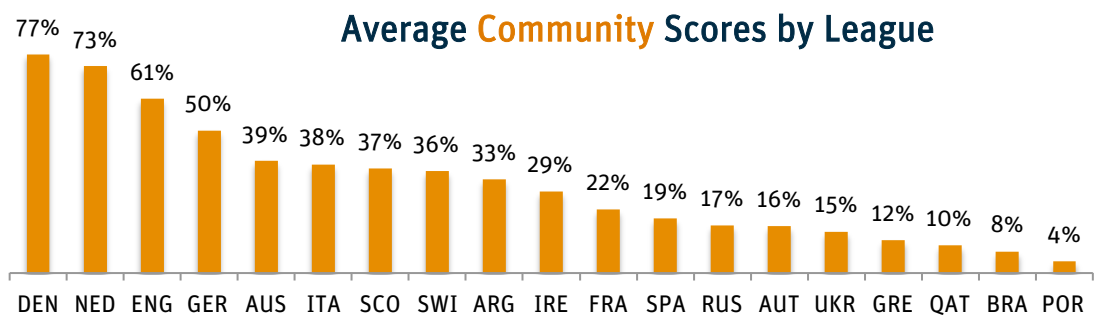
The Dutch clubs' strong lead owed much to their prowess in the **Environment** pillar. Indeed, they scored the highest average Environment score (43%) since the ranking began – well ahead of the German clubs in second place (23%) and English Premier League clubs in third (20%).



Eredivisie clubs also led the **Governance** pillar (57%), nudging out Danish Superliga clubs (56%) and English Premier League clubs (49%).

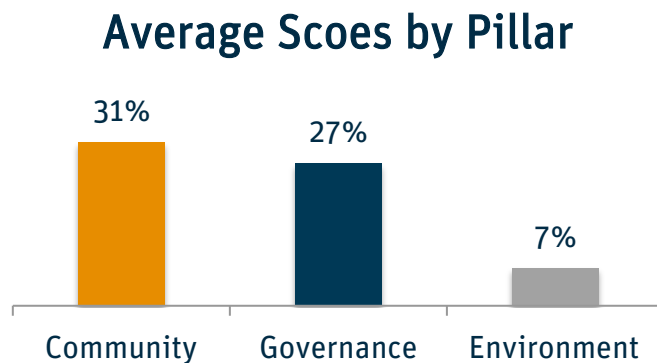


Eredivisie clubs' strongest pillar was the **Community** pillar (73%), though here they were just beaten to top spot here by the Danish Superliga clubs (77%). Again, English Premier League clubs finished third under this pillar (61%).



Pillar Comparisons

Despite Eredivisie club's good Environment score, we again find that clubs are much stronger in the Community and Governance pillars than they are in the Environment pillar. For instance, leagues achieved the highest scores under the Community pillar (31 per cent on average), suggesting that efforts in this domain are more easily implemented and/or communicated.



The relative ease of implementation may be due to the long-standing tradition of addressing community development issues, with 'football in the community' schemes present in some nations since the 1980s. Similarly high scores under the Governance pillar (27 per cent on average) could be explained by the fact that this area is often reviewed, providing clubs with a structure that facilitates implementation.

Environmental practices more difficult to implement and communicate

Conversely, the leagues scored lowest under the Environment pillar (7 per cent on average), perhaps reflecting the fact that this pillar requires greater initial fixed costs. Initiatives are more resource-intensive and more closely linked to financial investments, despite potentially resulting in substantial long-term savings.

New Countries

This year we looked at the clubs playing in the top divisions in seven countries that had not previously been assessed. Four of these countries are outside of Europe. Of those seven countries, Switzerland scored the best, being ranked overall between neighbours Germany (4th) and Italy (6th). Qatar finished worst (18th), positioned between 17th placed Greece and last placed Portugal, which suffered this year's biggest decline in rank. That Qatar finished near the bottom of the table is quite surprising, given the growing reputation of the Stars League clubs. Judging by the individual club scores, however, the strength in SR is only limited to one or two clubs and even then, is not across the three pillars.

Methodology

Data Sources

We have included 19 top-tier national leagues in our ranking. The Ranking is based on the analysis of information that football clubs communicate on their websites. This reflects a philosophy that good practices in SR should be communicated and shared by football clubs.

Analysis

The analysis covered three main SR pillars of Governance, Community, and Environment. It involved the evaluation of over 50 pre-defined SR indicators created by adapting guidelines from widely recognised SR frameworks and standards, such as GRI G4 and ISO 20121.

Review of indicators

Three internal stages and two external stages (direct feedback from partners and a public survey) made up a review to re-define the indicators last year. The objective of the review was to ensure that the indicators we use are current – up to date with international standards – and relevant to football, and also that they met three important principles 1) Applicable to all football clubs; 2) Reasonably expected to be found on the website of the football club; and 3) Relevant to making a positive and sustainable impact on communities. Indicators can be found on www.responsiball.org

Results

Leagues were ranked across four main areas: the three SR pillars, and an overall SR ranking, which we got from taking the average score of the three pillars. Rankings are attained by calculating the average score for each club across the three pillars (weighted equally), and then combining these scores to find the average score for all clubs in a league.

Limitations

The limitations to our methodology are as follows:

- 1) The indicators we use are not standards. We do not set required standards for SR at football clubs.
- 2) These indicators have been used because they are non-specific. They were chosen because they should apply to all clubs. Clubs must implement their SR strategy according to the needs of their stakeholders.
- 3) We check the information that is available on websites because we believe that communication is an essential facet of SR. A more thorough check would involve a physical audit of the club but, due to the extent of such a task, this was not possible.

About RESPONSIBALL

RESPONSIBALL is the first point of reference for responsible football clubs. It supports the progress of social responsibility at all football clubs.

An initiative funded by the work of Schwery Consulting, RESPONSIBALL provides an online platform for a community of practitioners within the football sector to act in unison; thus promoting and maintaining high standards of meaningful social responsibility.

RESPONSIBALL has two main goals at the heart of its mission:

- To showcase good practice in governance, community development and environmental stewardship; and
- To support a community of practitioners who want to **connect** with others, **share** good practices, **compare** and progress.

Connect

RESPONSIBALL supports a community of people who want to connect with others that share similar passions, interests and jobs - all of whom understand, or want to learn more, about the how football clubs can work in harmony with their communities and the environment.

Share

RESPONSIBALL is built to house a community that can exchange knowledge and insights. It holds a Good Practice database that allows members to easily upload and share good practices that may be useful or interesting for others.

Compare

RESPONSIBALL incorporates many search fields on the online Good Practice database so that members can compare club practices with others' on a similar level (by Division, Revenue, Country, and so on) and progress along their own path.

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