

FIFA[®]



**PLAYERS' STATUS
DEPARTMENT
REPORT 2020/2021**



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Foreword

Dear readers,

It is our pleasure to present the second annual FIFA Players' Status Department Report, covering the period from 1 July 2020 to 30 June 2021.

The 2020/2021 season was dominated by the COVID-19 pandemic, and the significant increase in the number of cases lodged before the FIFA decision-making bodies can be directly attributed to the financial impact of the pandemic on global football. COVID-19 also had a significant impact on the international movement of players as, for the first time since 2016/2017, the number of applications for international transfers involving minors dropped – although this number still remained very high.

As part of its commitment to promote transparency in its regulatory affairs, FIFA has recently published three documents related to players' status matters.

In September 2020, FIFA published a new Guide to Submitting a Minor Application, the primary objective of which is to explain the process and documentary requirements relating to international transfers involving minors. This publication was prompted by the recent codification of new exceptions, the high number of cases received and their increasing complexity, and the need to provide legal certainty to football stakeholders.

In January 2021, FIFA published two informative documents regarding international football eligibility. The first-ever Commentary on the Rules Governing Eligibility to Play for Representative Teams seeks to explain the rules concerning player eligibility to play for a national team. This publication followed the first modernisation of the eligibility rules by the FIFA Congress since 2008. It was accompanied by a first-ever Guide to Submitting a Request for Eligibility or Change of Association, which sets out the process and documentary requirements for such matters.

This level of regulatory transparency has been welcomed by stakeholders and the general public alike.

During the 2020/2021 season, several important amendments were made to the Regulations on the Status and Transfer of Players (RSTP) and the Rules Governing the Procedures of the Players' Status Committee and the Dispute Resolution Chamber (Procedural Rules).

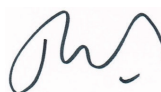
These included:

- temporary rules regarding the release of players to representative teams as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic;
- protection for female professional players relating to pregnancy and childbirth;
- a minimum regulatory framework for coaches;
- a new exception to the prohibition on the international transfer of minors;
- amendments to the process regarding the enforcement of monetary decisions; and
- specific procedural aspects designed to make FIFA procedures more efficient.

In the 2021/2022 season, we look forward to continuing this commitment by publishing a new and improved commentary on the RSTP. In line with The Vision 2020-2023, in May 2021 the FIFA Congress approved the formation of the Football Tribunal to consolidate FIFA's regulatory decision-making functions into a single body. The Football Tribunal will decide its first cases in the fourth quarter of 2021 and will be complemented by overhauled Procedural Rules.

We hope you enjoy the statistics and data compiled in this report.

Yours faithfully,



James Kitching
Director of Football Regulatory



Erika Montemor Ferreira
Head of Players' Status



Overview*

Within the Legal and Compliance Division, the Players' Status Department (PSD) has a wide range of competences deriving from the Regulations on the Status and Transfer of Players (RSTP) and the FIFA Statutes.

The PSD deals with all disputes and applications under the competence of the deciding bodies: the Players' Status Committee (PSC) and the Dispute Resolution Chamber (DRC).

The PSD's work can be divided into two main areas: a) dispute resolution, including contractual disputes involving players, coaches, clubs and member associations, as well as solidarity mechanism and training compensation matters; and b) registration and eligibility matters, including disputes over the release of international transfer certificates (ITCs), applications to change association, eligibility matters concerning playing for national teams, and applications to register minors.

Currently, depending on the particular area, parties can lodge a claim or submit an application through different channels, including via email and the Transfer Matching System (TMS).

The COVID-19 pandemic affected football in many ways, with international transfers decreasing but the number of disputes increasing. During the 2020/2021 season, the PSD received a total of 9,785 cases, applications and enquiries – an all-time high. This growth was especially driven by a strong increase in dispute resolution cases (+22.5%), while registration and eligibility cases decreased slightly, by 7.7%. This decrease was the result of a significant reduction in the number of applications for the registration of minors (-32.7%), although the number of other issues in fact grew compared to 2019/2020.



9,785
cases and
applications
received in
2020/2021

Figure 1: Cases and applications received by the PSD in 2020/2021

Disputes resolution	3,986
Players' Status Committee	654
Dispute Resolution Chamber	3,332
Employment-related disputes	1,187
Solidarity contribution claims	1,503
Training compensation claims	642
Registration and eligibility	5,799
ITC rejection disputes	85
Validation exceptions	1,791
Applications for minors	3,694
Eligibility	105
Changes of association	124
Total	9,785

*All references to terms and articles in this report are to the FIFA Regulations on the Status and Transfer of Players (February 2021 edition) as well as to the FIFA Rules Governing the Procedures of the Players' Status Committee and the Dispute Resolution Chamber (January 2021 edition), which were applied during the reporting period. These regulations were replaced, on 31 August 2021, by the FIFA Regulations on the Status and Transfer of Players (August 2021 edition) and by the FIFA Procedural Rules Governing the Football Tribunal (October 2021 edition).

Dispute resolution

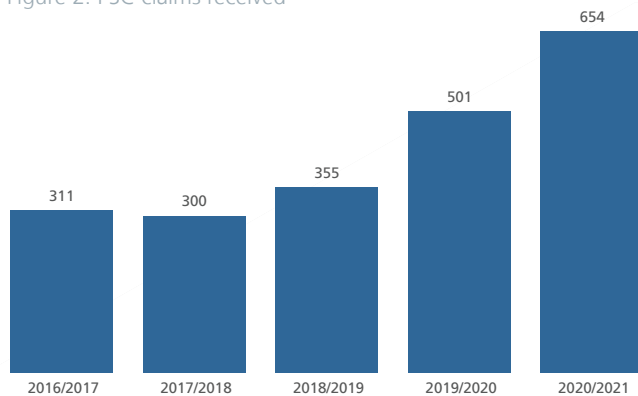
Currently, the PSC and the DRC are the FIFA decision-making bodies that are competent to adjudicate on contractual and regulatory disputes between member associations, clubs, players, coaches and licensed match agents, in accordance with article 6 of the Rules Governing the Procedures of the Players' Status Committee and the Dispute Resolution Chamber as well as articles 22, 23 and 24 of the RSTP.

1. Players' Status Committee

According to article 22 c) and f) and article 23 of the RSTP, the PSC is competent to hear contractual disputes between a club or an association and a coach of an international dimension, as well as disputes between clubs belonging to different associations. The PSC may also impose the sanctions described in the FIFA Statutes and the RSTP on member associations, clubs, players, intermediaries and licensed match agents.

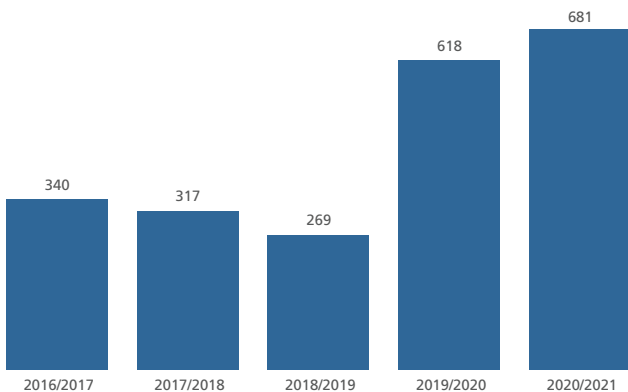
The number of claims received by the PSC continues to grow, reaching a new high of 654 in 2020/2021. This represents an increase of 30.5% compared to 2019/2020 and is more than twice the number in 2017/2018.

Figure 2: PSC claims received



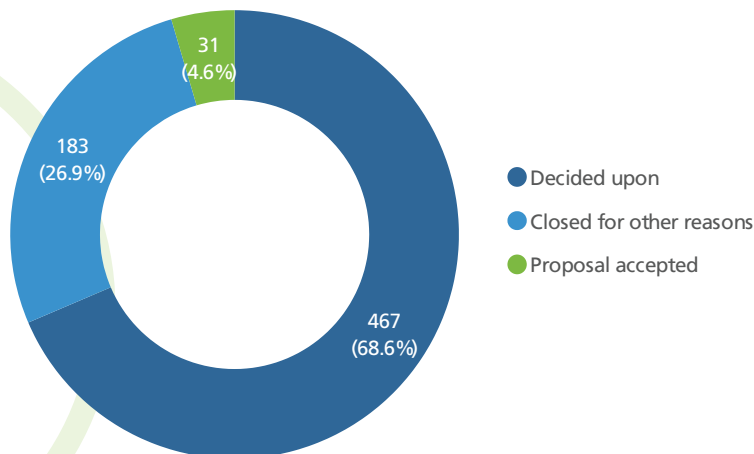
Some 681 claims were resolved in the 2020/2021 season, which corresponds to an increase of 10.2% compared to the previous year and more than twice the number of claims resolved in 2016/2017.

Figure 3: PSC claims resolved



More than two thirds of these cases were decided upon by the Bureau of the PSC or a single judge of the PSC, while 26.9% of the claims were closed for other reasons, e.g. because the parties reached an amicable settlement, the claim was time-barred, a situation of *res judicata* was determined, or because the claim was not completed by the party and could not be processed. In January 2021, FIFA introduced a new process which allows the case handler to propose a settlement to the parties without the need for a formal decision. Since then, 31 claims have been resolved with the proposal accepted (or not rejected) by the parties.

Figure 4: PSC claims resolved in 2020/2021 by closure type



2. Dispute Resolution Chamber

The DRC provides dispute resolution on the basis of equal representation of player and club representatives, along with the participation of an independent chairperson. The DRC is currently composed of one chairperson, two deputy chairpersons and 26 members.

According to article 22 paragraphs a), b), d) and e) and article 24 of the RSTP, the DRC is competent to adjudicate on:

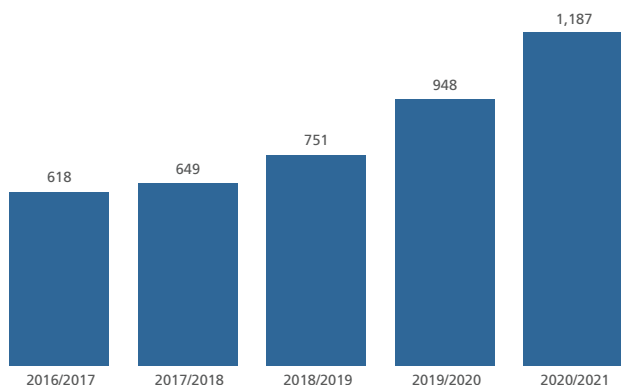
- disputes between clubs and players in relation to the maintenance of contractual stability (articles 13-18) where there has been an ITC request;
- employment-related disputes between a club and a player of an international dimension;
- disputes relating to training compensation (article 20) and the solidarity mechanism (article 21) between clubs belonging to different associations; and
- disputes relating to training compensation (article 20) and the solidarity mechanism (article 21) between clubs belonging to the same association provided that the transfer of a player at the basis of the dispute occurs between clubs belonging to different associations.

All disputes related to training compensation and the solidarity mechanism are processed exclusively via TMS.

2.1 Employment-related disputes between players and clubs

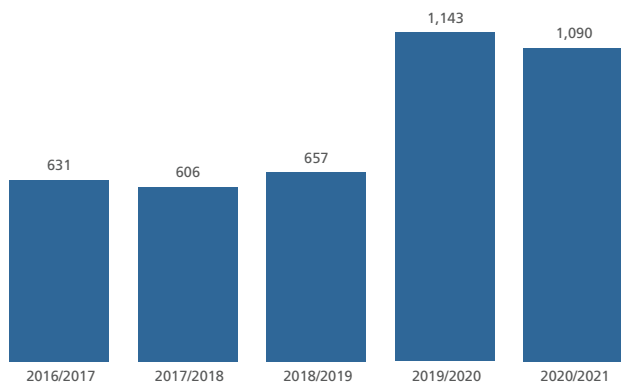
In 2020/2021, and for the first time ever, the DRC received more than 1,000 employment-related disputes. The total of 1,187 claims represents an increase of more than 25% compared to 2019/2020.

Figure 5: Employment-related disputes received



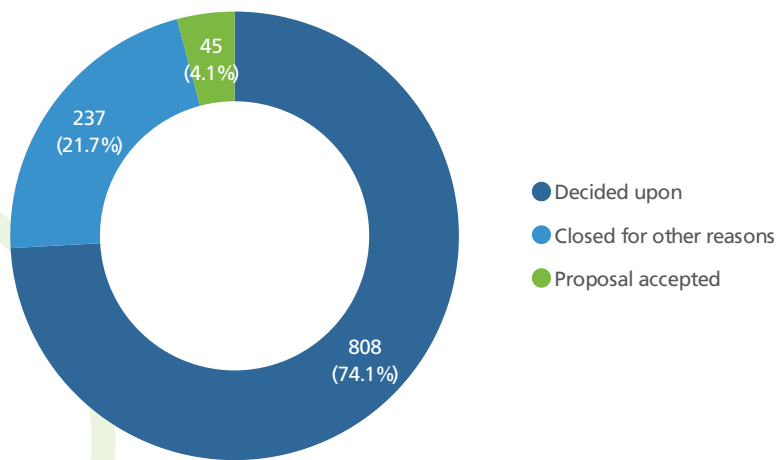
In the same period, 1,090 cases were resolved. As expected, this constitutes a slight decrease compared to the record 2019/2020 season, during which the backlog of pending cases was drastically reduced to practically zero. The number of cases resolved in 2020/2021 was still more than 65% higher than in 2018/2019, however.

Figure 6: Employment-related disputes resolved



A total of 74.1% of these 1,090 claims were decided upon by the DRC or by a DRC single judge, and a further 21.7% were closed for other reasons. The remaining 4.1% of claims were settled after a proposal from FIFA was accepted by the parties – an option that was only introduced in January 2021.

Figure 7: Employment-related disputes resolved in 2020/2021 by closure type



2.2 Claims processed via TMS

Two categories of claims are received, processed and adjudicated entirely through TMS:

- a) Claims for solidarity contribution
- b) Claims for training compensation

2.2.1 Claims for solidarity contribution

The number of solidarity contribution claims filed in TMS has grown constantly over the past five seasons, reaching the total of 1,503 in 2020/2021. During the same period, some 1,534 claims for solidarity contribution were resolved.



1,503
claims for solidarity contribution filed in 2020/2021

Figure 8: Solidarity contribution claims received

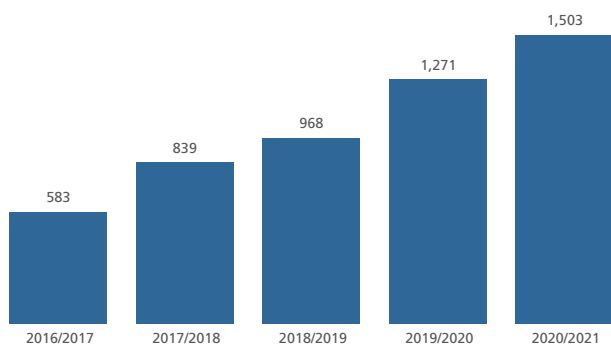
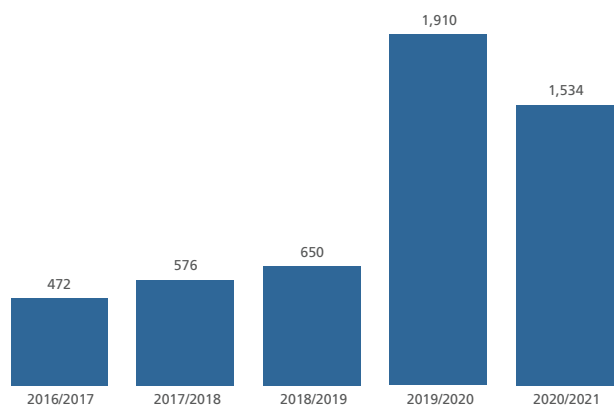
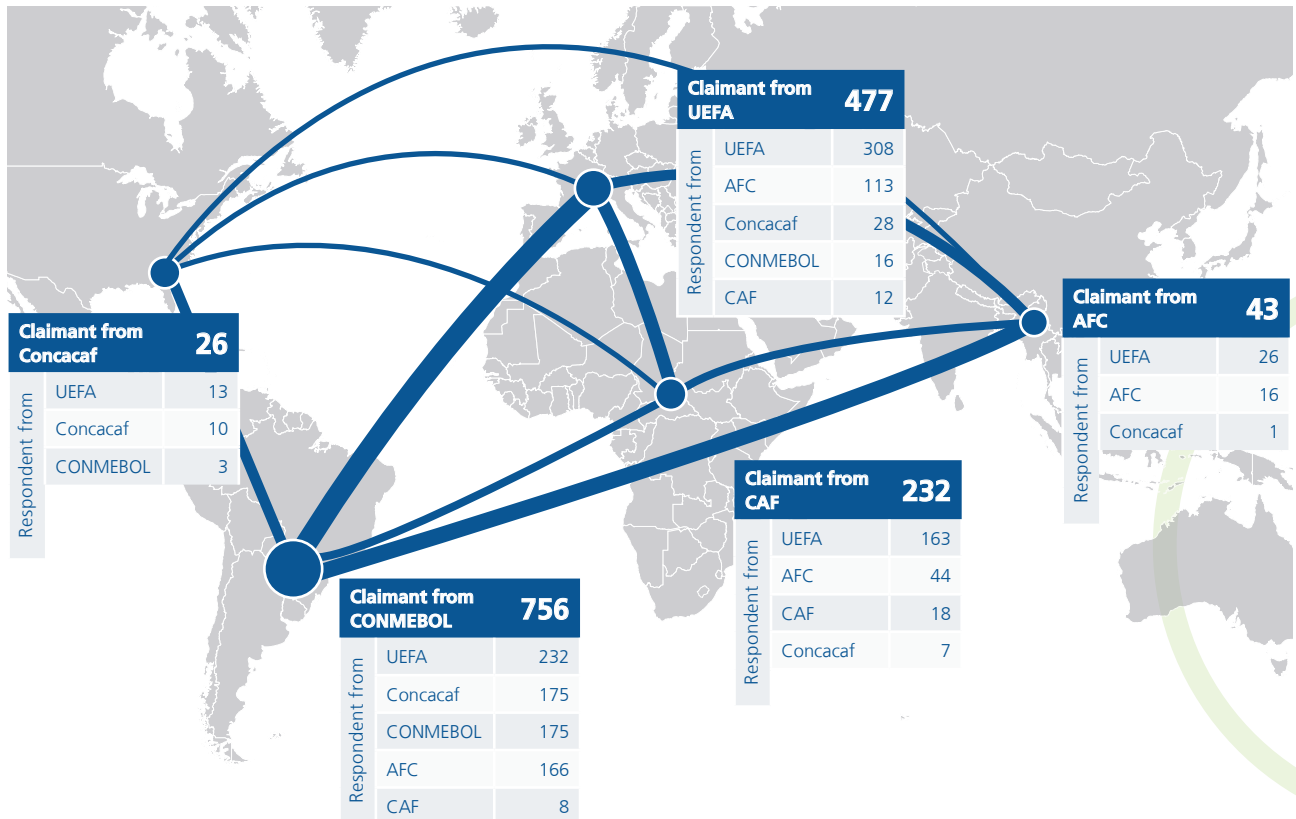


Figure 9: Solidarity contribution claims resolved



As in the previous season, the highest number of solidarity contribution claims resolved in 2020/2021 came from claimant clubs affiliated to CONMEBOL member associations (756). At the same time, the respondent clubs were predominantly located in UEFA member associations (742 cases). The OFC was the only confederation with no clubs represented in any of these claims, either as the claimant or as the respondent.

Figure 10: Breakdown of resolved claims for solidarity contribution by confederation of the claimant and the respondent, 2020/2021



Clubs from three associations – Brazil, Argentina and Colombia – were responsible for 76.3% of all claims filed by CONMEBOL clubs and more than one third of all solidarity contribution claims worldwide. As in the previous season, the top three associations in 2020/2021 in terms of the number of respondent clubs were Turkey, Saudi Arabia and Mexico.

Figure 11: Top ten associations by the number of claimants for solidarity contribution claims resolved in 2020/2021

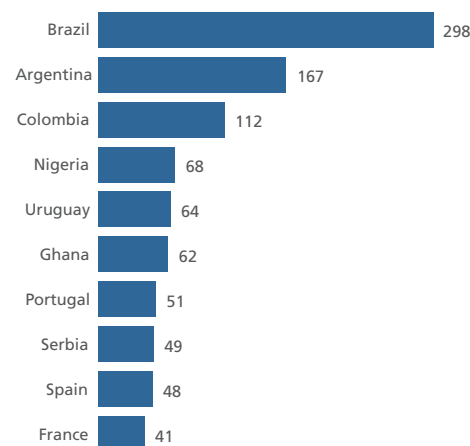
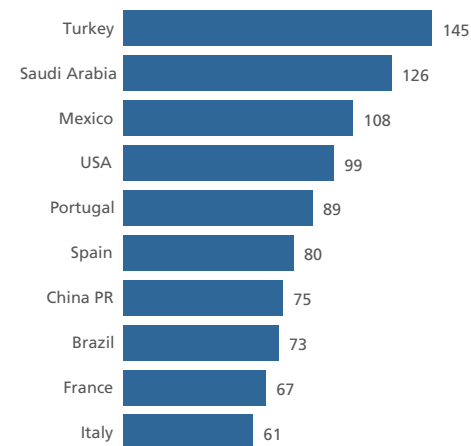


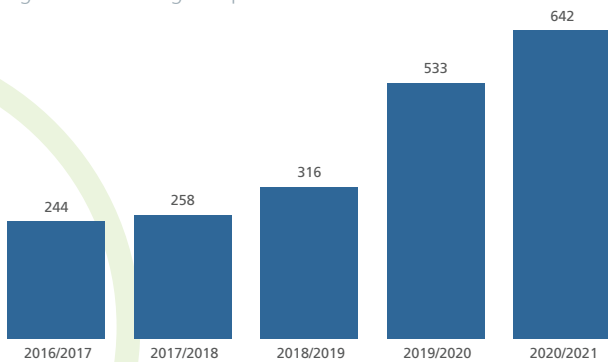
Figure 12: Top ten associations by the number of respondents for solidarity contribution claims resolved in 2020/2021



2.2.2 Claims for training compensation

The DRC received a total of 642 claims for training compensation through TMS in 2020/2021. This represents another increase of 20.5% compared to the previous season and continues the general growth path observed in recent years.

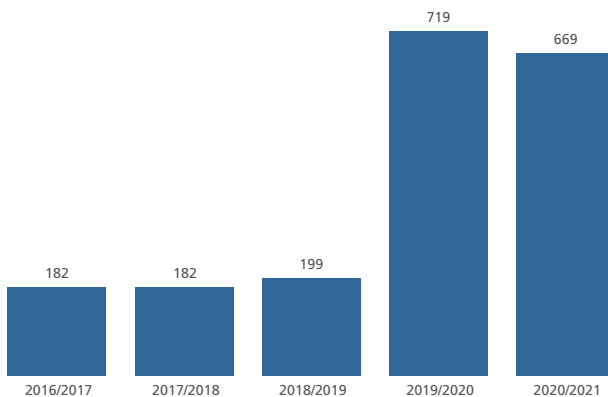
Figure 13: Training compensation claims received



642
claims for training
compensation filed
in 2020/2021

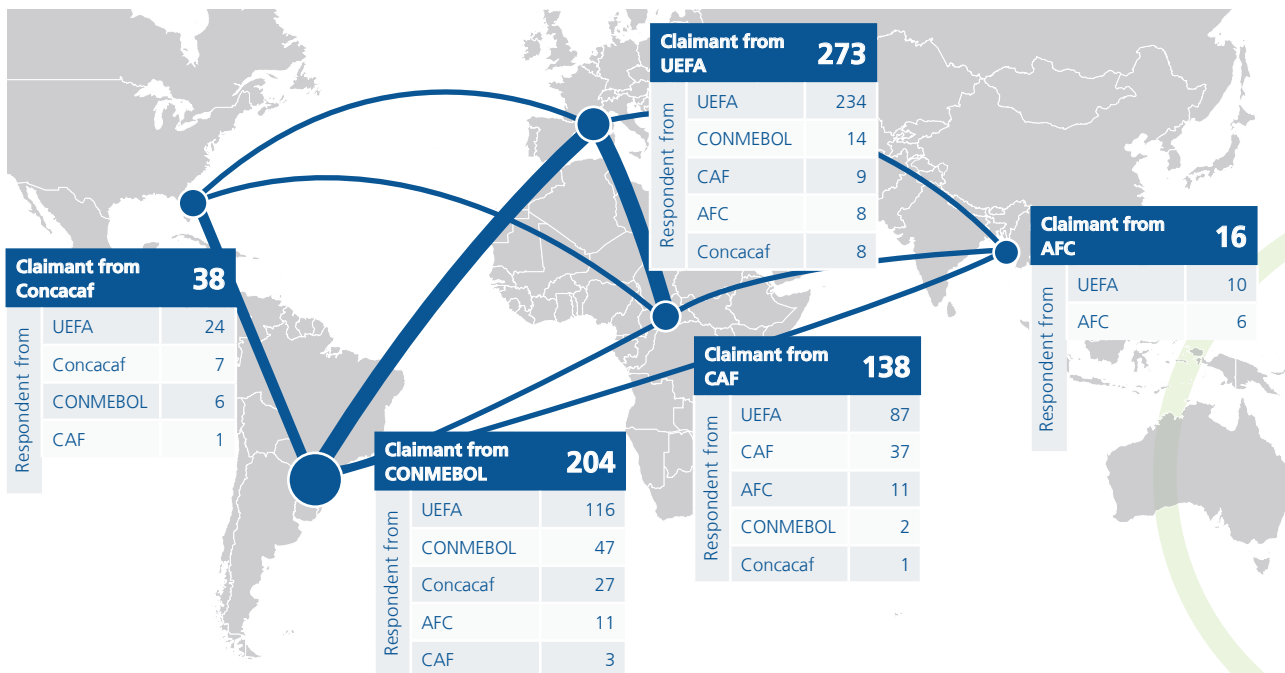
After reaching a record high of 719 in 2019/2020, the number of resolved claims for training compensation stayed at a similar level in 2020/2021 with the total number, 669, representing a small decrease of 7.0%. Compared to earlier seasons, however, 2020/2021 saw more than three times as many claims for training compensation resolved.

Figure 14: Training compensation claims resolved



In more than two thirds of the resolved claims for training compensation, the respondent was affiliated to a UEFA member association. UEFA clubs were also the claimant in 40.8% of the claims, followed by CONMEBOL clubs, who lodged 30.5% of all claims.

Figure 15: Breakdown of resolved claims for training compensation by confederation of the claimant and the respondent, 2020/2021



While the resolved claims for training compensation were lodged by claimants from 78 different member associations, the top five associations alone (Brazil, Colombia, Spain, Argentina and Italy) accounted for 37.8% of them. There was slightly more balance in terms of respondents, however, as 86 member associations had at least one club as a respondent in 2020/2021. Nevertheless, the top five associations still represented just over 30% of the total.

Figure 16: Top ten associations by the number of claimants for training compensation claims resolved in 2020/2021

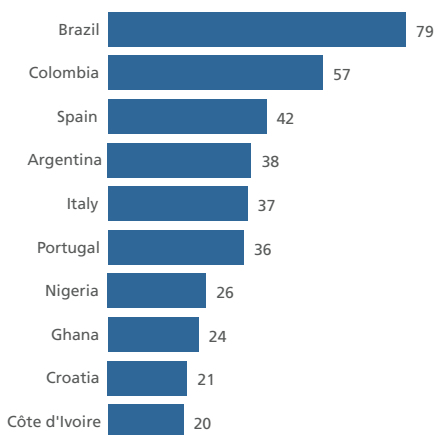
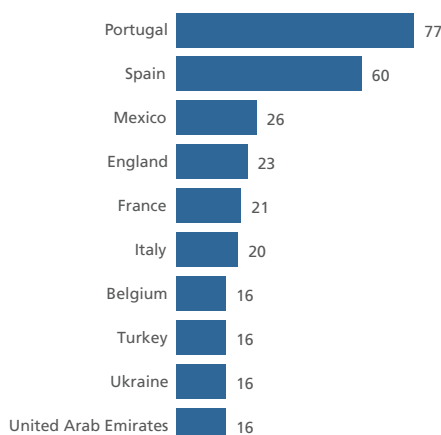


Figure 17: Top ten associations by the number of respondents for training compensation claims resolved in 2020/2021



Registration and eligibility matters

1. ITC disputes

The issuance of the ITC by the member association at which the player is registered to the association to which the club wishing to register the player is affiliated is an important part of any player transfer.

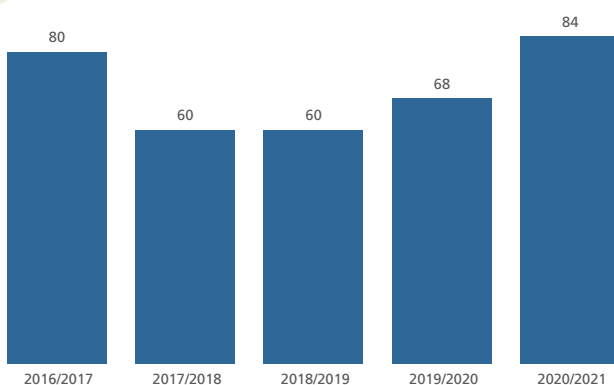
Once the member association of the player's new club has lodged a request in TMS for the player's ITC in line with article 8.2 paragraph 4 of Annexe 3 to the RSTP, the former association must, within seven days of the date of the ITC request, either (i) deliver the ITC in favour of the requesting association, or (ii) reject the ITC request and indicate the reason for the rejection.

If the ITC request is rejected by the former association, the player's new association may either accept or dispute the rejection (cf. article 8.2 paragraph 7 of Annexe 3 to the RSTP). If the player's new association wishes to proceed with the registration despite the opposition of the former association, it should apply to FIFA for a provisional player registration.

The PSC is the body that is competent to allow a player to be provisionally registered with the engaging club. Any such decisions are always without prejudice to the merits of any contractual or financial dispute between the parties (cf. article 8.2 paragraph 7 of Annexe 3 to the RSTP).

In the 2020/2021 season, there were 88 refusals to release an ITC, but in only 85 of those did the requesting association actually file a request for the PSC to provisionally register the player. The number of provisional registrations granted by the PSC after an ITC rejection dispute has been relatively stable in recent years, with 84 such registrations granted in the 2020/2021 season. Requests for ITCs can also be rejected in international transfers involving amateurs, and five of the 84 provisional registrations granted in 2020/2021 did in fact involve amateur players.

Figure 18: Provisional registrations granted by the PSC



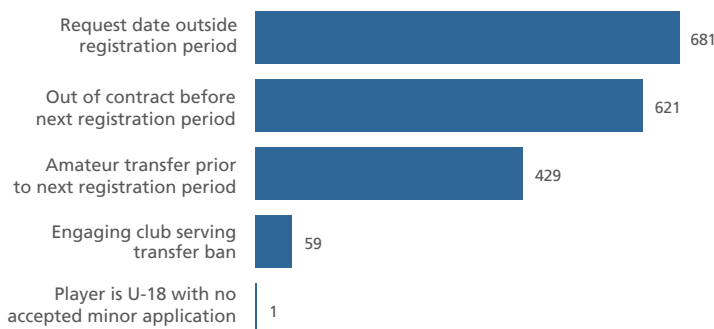
2. Validation exceptions for ITCs

Every international transfer must take place within a registration period (colloquially known as a “transfer window”) set by the member association and entered in TMS. Subject to article 6 paragraph 1 of the RSTP, if a member association requests an ITC outside of a transfer window or if the club that wishes to register the player is serving a registration ban imposed by a FIFA decision, the request will automatically be blocked by TMS.

A validation exception occurs (i) whenever the association of the engaging club requests a player’s ITC outside of the registration period defined in TMS, and in circumstances in which the exceptions set out in article 6 paragraph 1 of the RSTP are not applicable, and (ii) whenever a club serving a transfer ban and/or a registration ban enters a transfer instruction related to the engagement of a player.

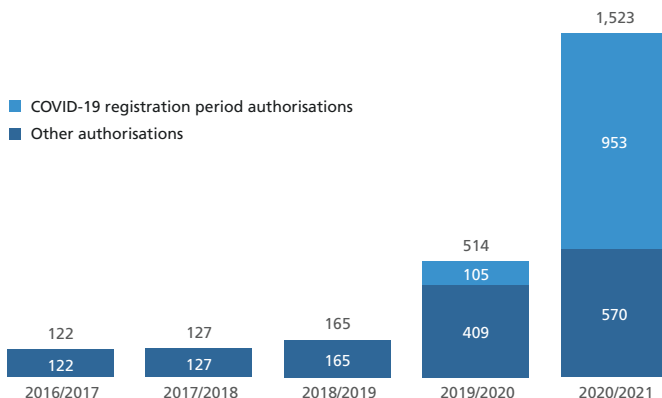
In the 2020/2021 season, a total of 2,500 ITC requests triggered the automated TMS mechanism, involving 2,480 transfers. Requests for the PSD to override a validation exception were lodged in 1,791 of these cases, and of those, almost 40% (681) related to ITC request dates outside of the registration period, while another 35% (621) were in respect of out-of-contract players moving before the next registration period.

Figure 19: Intervention requests received by the PSD in 2020/2021 by type of validation exception



In the 2020/2021 season, there was a sharp increase not only in the number of cases that triggered the automated mechanism in TMS but also in the number of validation exceptions granted. Validation exceptions were granted in 1,523 cases, 953 of which related to the temporary transfer window adjustments made in response to the COVID-19 pandemic as per FIFA’s amendments to the RSTP (cf. FIFA circulars 1714 and 1720).

Figure 20: Authorisations of transfers with validation exceptions by the PSD



3. Applications for the registration of minors

In addition to its exclusive role in all transfers related to 11-a-side football, TMS also plays a major part in monitoring and authorising the international movements of minor players (article 1 of Annexe 2 to the RSTP). The term "minor" is defined as any player who has not yet reached the age of 18 (cf. definition 11 of the RSTP), while an "application" refers to the submission of a request by the engaging member association to the PSC sub-committee through TMS in one of the following two instances (article 19 paragraph 4 a) of the RSTP):

1. International transfer: a minor of any nationality who has previously been registered with a club affiliated to one association and now wishes to be registered with a club affiliated to another association.
2. First registration: a minor who has never previously been registered with a club and is not a national of the country in which they wish to be registered for the first time.

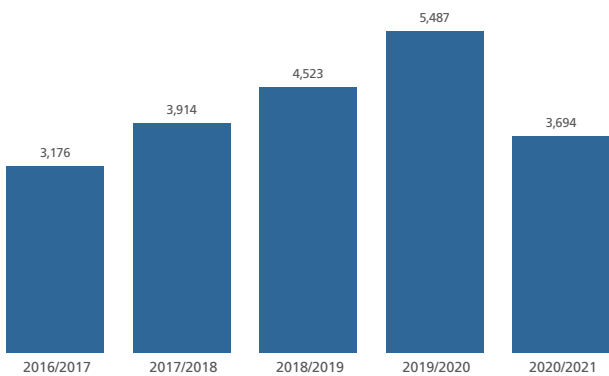
As a general rule, international transfers and first registrations of players whose nationality is other than the one where the football association operates are only permitted if the player is over the age of 18 (article 19 paragraph 1 in conjunction with article 19 paragraph 3 of the RSTP). However, there are exceptions to this rule, which are considered to be exhaustive:

- a) The player's parents have moved to the country where the player wants to register for reasons not linked to football (article 19 paragraph 2 a) of the RSTP);
- b) The player is aged between 16 and 18 and is moving within the territory of the EU/EEA or (as recently amended in January 2021) between two associations within the same country (article 19 paragraph 2 b) of the RSTP);
- c) Both the player's domicile and the new club are within 50km of their common border and the distance between the two is no greater than 100km (article 19 paragraph 2 c) of the RSTP);
- d) Prior to the request, the player has lived continuously for at least the last five years in the country in which they wish to be registered (article 19 paragraphs 3 and 4 of the RSTP);
- e) The player is moving due to humanitarian reasons without their parent(s) and could not be expected to return to their country of origin (article 19 paragraph 2 d) of the RSTP);
- f) The player is moving temporarily without their parent(s) for academic reasons in order to undertake an exchange programme, and the duration of the player's registration will not exceed one year (article 19 paragraph 2 e) of the RSTP).

Due to the high number of first registrations and international transfers of minors at amateur level, the PSC sub-committee may give member associations a "limited minor exemption" from the obligation to request authorisation via TMS (article 19 paragraph 4 c) of the RSTP as well as FIFA circulars 1209 and 1576). By enabling associations to register amateur minor players who are to be registered with purely amateur clubs – under specific terms and conditions – without a formal application having to be submitted to the PSC sub-committee, the limited exemption allows minors to participate in amateur football while maintaining transparency. However, movements of underage players within the context of limited exemptions granted to associations are not accounted for in this section.

In 2020/2021, and for the first time since 2016/2017, there was a decrease in the number of applications in comparison to the previous season, most certainly because of the COVID-19 pandemic which limited international movements for a considerable period of time. In total, there were 32.7% fewer applications in the 2020/2021 season (with a total of 3,694 applications) compared to the 2019/2020 season.

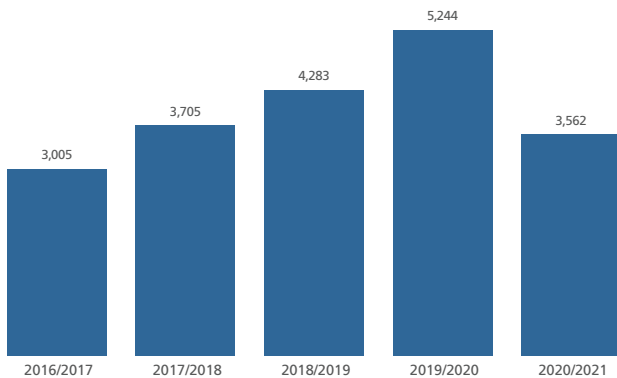
Figure 21: Applications submitted for the registration of minors



A total of 3,562 decisions were rendered in 2020/2021, representing a decrease of 32.1% compared to the previous season. Some 90.6% of these minor applications were accepted, while 8.9% were rejected and the remaining 0.5% were declared inadmissible.

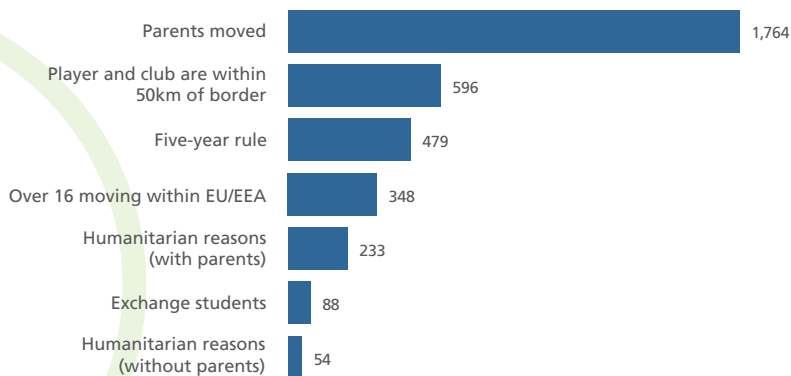
The percentage of applications for the first registration of a minor (43.0%) and those relating to transfers of minors between two different associations (57.0%) indicates a rather balanced trend.

Figure 22: Decisions by the PSC sub-committee on applications for the registration of minors



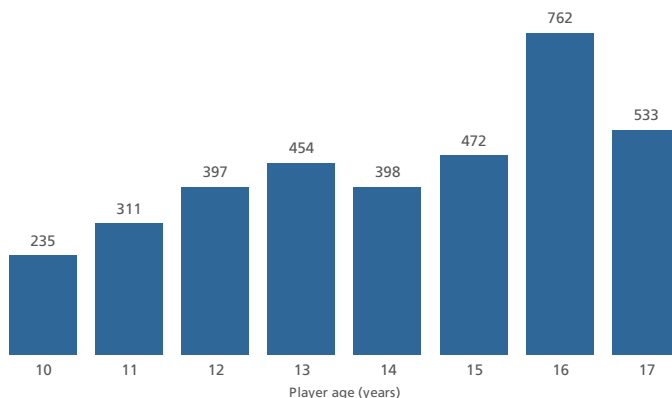
There are only six reasons on which to base the granting of an exception, with one more category having been created to ensure the appropriate protection of minor players and their families, namely a minor moving with their parents for humanitarian reasons, which formally should fall within the first reason mentioned above, i.e. a minor moving due to their parents emigrating to the country in question for reasons other than football (cf. FIFA circular no. 1635). In 2020/2021, instances of parents moving to the country of the member association applying for the registration of a minor for reasons unrelated to football made up almost half of the applications decided upon.

Figure 23: Decisions on applications for the registration of minors by applied-for exception, 2020/2021



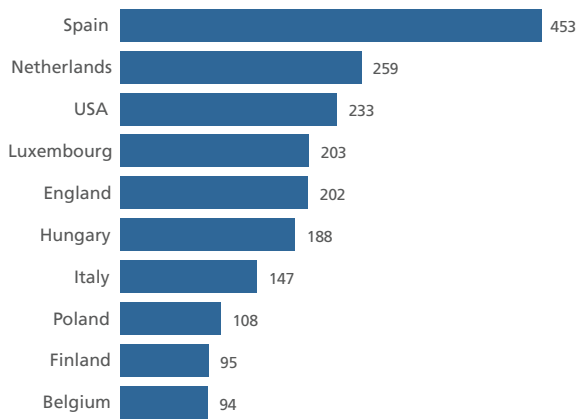
As in previous years, the distribution of the applications according to the age of the player at the time of submission of the application reveals a peak for players at the age of 16. This can be attributed to two factors: firstly, the fact that a considerable number of applications are related exclusively to those minors who have already reached the age of 16 (see exception b) above), and secondly, at 16 years of age a minor player is eligible to sign their first professional contract. In fact, 61.7% of the 240 decided-upon applications that concerned players to be registered as professionals related to players aged 16.

Figure 24: Decisions on applications for the registration of minors by player age, 2020/2021



The applications decided upon in 2020/2021 were received from 80 different member associations. The top ten associations were led by Spain with a total of 453 applications, 90.5% of which were approved, followed by the Netherlands with 259 applications, 90.0% of which were granted, and the USA in third place, with 233 applications and an approval rate of 94.4%.

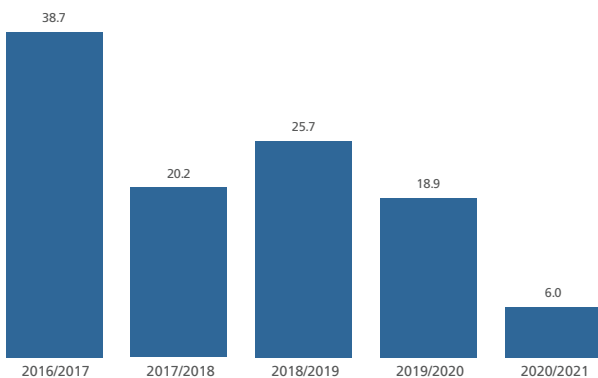
Figure 25: Top ten member associations by number of applications decided upon in 2020/2021



<1 week
 Average duration from submission to decision. Almost 90% faster than in 2015/2016.

In the 2020/2021 season, the average time taken to deliver a decision on an application for a minor registration was reduced even further to less than one week, down from a high of 57 days in 2015/2016 and 18.9 days in 2019/2020.

Figure 26: Average duration in days for the delivery of a decision on an application for a minor's registration



4. Eligibility decisions

As a general principle, any player who holds a permanent nationality that is not dependent on residence in a certain country is eligible to play for the representative teams of that country. However, there are specific provisions in the 2020 edition of the FIFA Regulations Governing the Application of the Statutes (RGAS) (since 18 September 2020; previously in the 2019 edition of the RGAS) on the eligibility of (i) players holding a nationality entitling them to represent more than one association (article 6 of the RGAS), (ii) players acquiring a new nationality at some stage, i.e. they did not hold that nationality at birth (article 7 of the RGAS), and (iii) stateless individuals (article 8 of the RGAS).

As a general rule, it is the responsibility of the association intending to call up and field a particular player to examine whether the latter is eligible to play for one of its representative teams.

In this context, however, the PSD provides guidance to all member associations with regard to the interpretation and correct implementation of the RGAS. In particular, it replies to general questions in connection with the eligibility rules, but also to specific enquiries (mostly from member associations) related to the eligibility of a particular player to play for the representative teams of a specific member association.

Furthermore, some specific cases (specifically those related to the exception laid down in article 7 paragraph 1 d) ii) of the RGAS as well as to stateless individuals) may require a formal decision of the PSC in order for the player to become eligible to represent another association in the future.

Some 105 eligibility requests were submitted to the PSD during the 2020/2021 season by a total of 48 different associations (see the top ten below). By 30 June 2021, all 105 of them had been resolved. In total, 106 cases were resolved during this period, including one additional case that had been opened before July 2020. Although in the vast majority of cases it is the responsibility of the association concerned to verify and establish whether the player fulfils the conditions to be eligible to play for its representative teams, the PSD provided guidance and assessed players' eligibility on 86 occasions. A decision was taken in 11 cases, and in all but one of them the players were declared eligible to play for the representative teams of the requesting association. Finally, some cases were also closed after a request from the FIFA administration for additional information/documentation remained unanswered.

Figure 27: Eligibility cases by outcome, 2020/2021

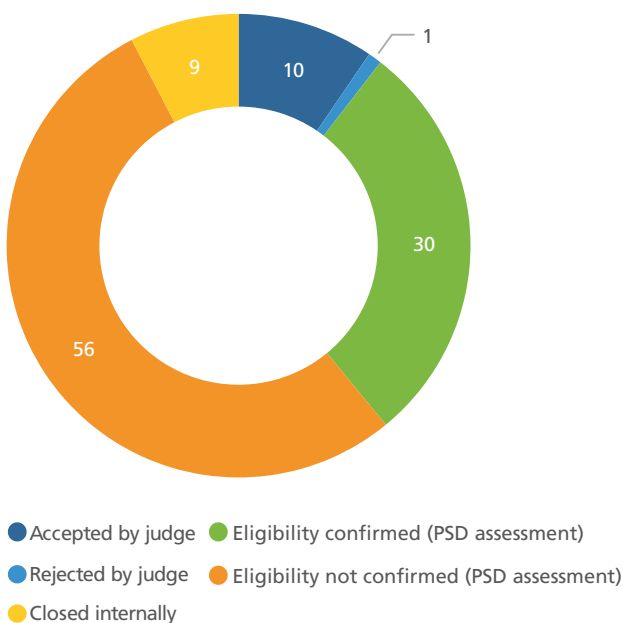
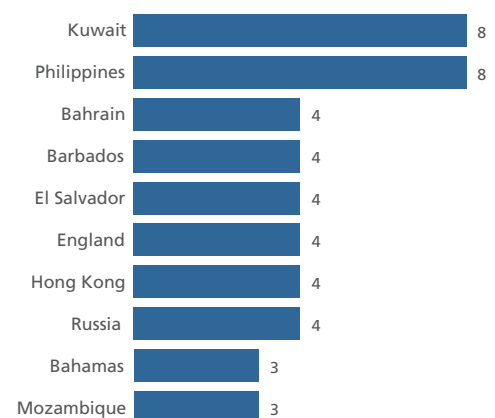


Figure 28: Top ten associations by the number of eligibility requests, 2020/2021



5. Changes of association

In principle, a player who has already participated in a match (either in full or in part) in an official competition of any category or any type of football for one association may not play an international match for a representative team of another association (cf. article 5 paragraph 3 of the RGAS).

Article 9 of the RGAS (which has replaced article 8 of the 2019 edition of the RGAS) addresses several situations deemed to be of excessive severity or hardship and now includes six exceptions to this principle.

In particular, a player may, only once, request to change the association for which they are eligible to play international matches to the association of another country of which they hold a nationality.

This is provided that the circumstances of any of the exceptions contained in article 9 of the RGAS are met. Requests for a change of association are submitted through the PSD to the PSC for a decision.

In total, 124 requests for a change of association were submitted to the PSD during the 2020/2021 season by a total of 58 different associations (see the top ten below). A total of 127 such requests were resolved, 120 of which were received after 1 July 2020 and seven just prior to the beginning of the reporting period, leaving four cases that were still ongoing on 30 June 2021.

Ten of the 127 resolved requests were closed after the FIFA administration's request for additional information/documentation remained unanswered. Decisions were necessary in the remaining 117 requests, which, with the exception of eight, were mostly accepted and authorisation was granted by the PSC for the change of association to take place.

Figure 29: Change-of-association cases by outcome, 2020/2021

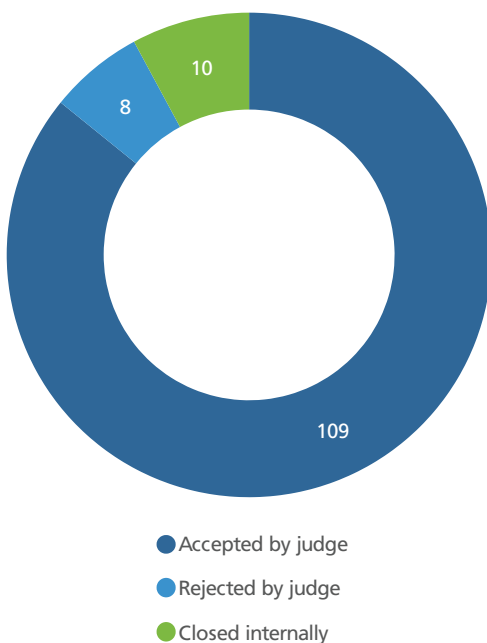
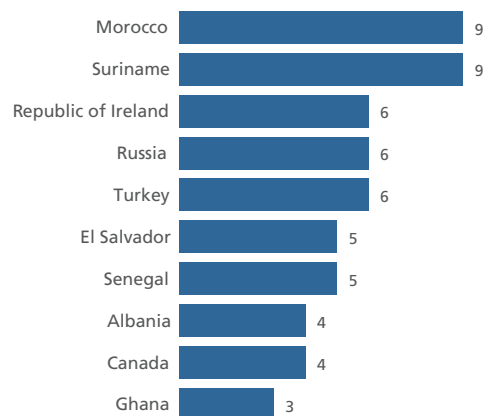


Figure 30: Top ten associations by the number of change-of-association requests, 2020/2021





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