

Exporting countries in world football

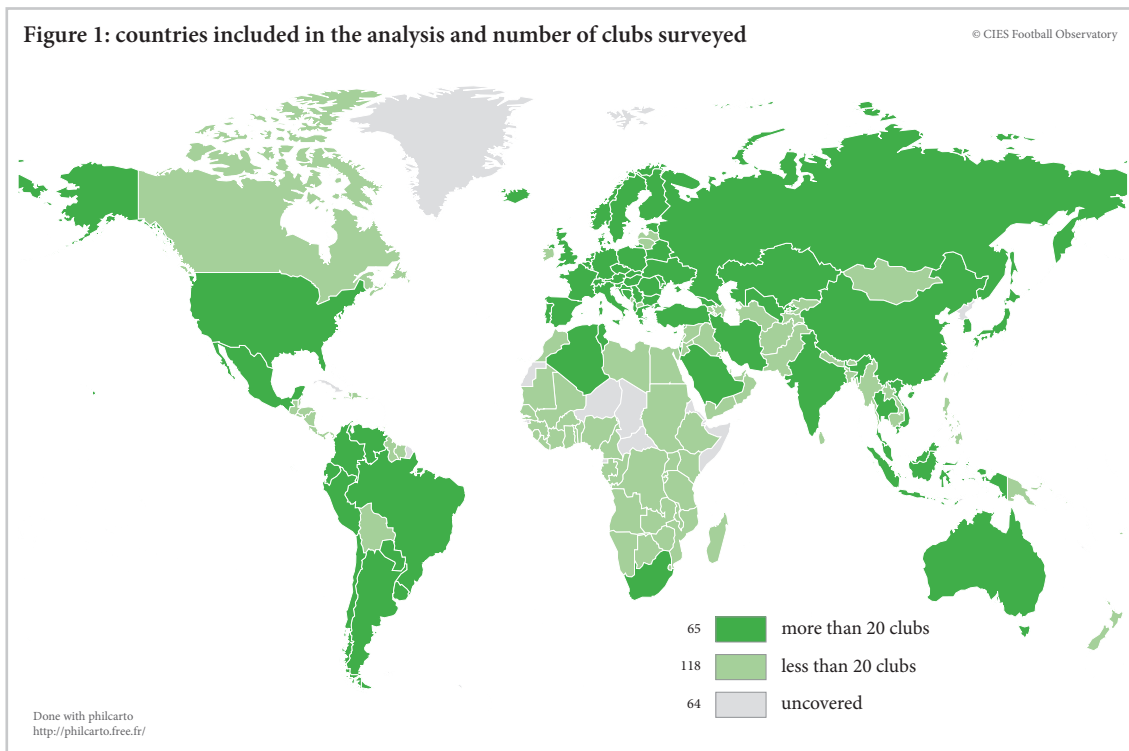
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1. Introduction

Professional football has always been a stimulus for the international migration of players. This is particularly the case in today's globalised world. Although quotas limiting the number of foreign players continue to exist in most leagues, they are generally less restrictive than in the past.

This Report analyses the origin of foreign players in 6,135 clubs and 458 leagues of 183 countries situated in all of the existing Confederations: Europe (UEFA), Asia (AFC), Africa (CAF), South America (CONMEBOL), North and Central America (CONCACAF) and Oceania (OFC).

The analysis is carried out on five different levels: (1) worldwide; (2) in Asia (leagues of AFC countries); (3) in Latin America (leagues of CONMEBOL countries and Latin countries in the CONCACAF); (4) in Europe (leagues of UEFA countries); and (5) in United States leagues



2. Exporting countries

In total, 18,660 foreign players of 194 origins were recorded in the leagues taken into account in the analysis. Footballers playing outside of their country of origin make up about 13% of squads.

With 1,784 players, Brazil is the most represented country among foreigners. Brazilians are clearly ahead of Argentineans (929 players) and the French (758). These three nationalities alone account for almost 20% of foreigners present on a global level.

Two other countries have more than 500 of their nationals in foreign clubs: Serbia (607 players) and Nigeria (596). Among the fifteen countries exporting the most players are six European, five African and four South American nations.

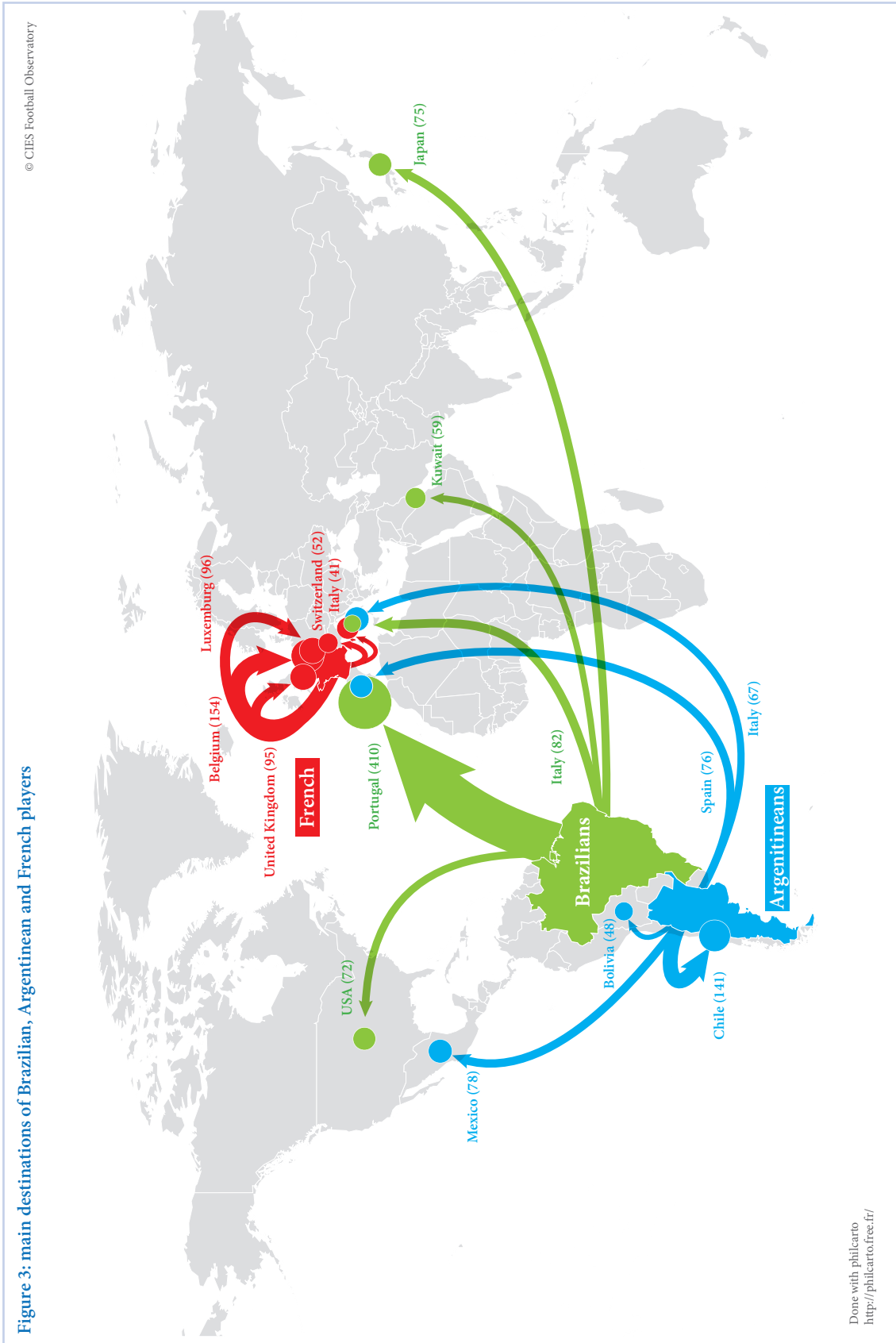
Despite the recent below-par performances of its national team, Brazil remains an exporter country of footballers par excellence. One finds Brazilians present in almost all of the countries studied, making them the only truly global workforce.

No South American country is among the top five destinations of Brazilians. However, three of the five main destinations of Argentineans are to be found in South America. Similarly, the principle countries to which French players migrate are geographically close to the home country.

Figure 2: main origins of foreign players in the world

1.	Brazil	1,784
2.	Argentina	929
3.	France	758
4.	Serbia	607
5.	Nigeria	596
6.	Spain	497
7.	Croatia	477
8.	Colombia	440
9.	Portugal	392
10.	Senegal	377
11.	Ivory Coast	370
12.	Cameroon	366
13.	Ghana	365
14.	Bosnia-Herzegovina	363
15.	Uruguay	354

The complete rankings are available on demand at football.observatory@cies.ch



3. Exporting countries in Asia

Brazilians constitute by far the largest contingent of footballers expatriated in Asia (437 players). They represent more than a fifth of the total number of foreigners. This is the highest concentration measured for a Confederation.

Only three AFC-member countries are in the top ten ranking of the most represented nations in Asia: South Korea (106 players), Japan (85) and Syria (47). When it comes to recruiting abroad, Asian clubs tend to favour footballers from other continents.

Though Brazilians are by far the most numerous, African footballers are also very well represented in Asian teams. This is notably the case for Nigerians (127 players), Ivorians (57), Cameroonians (53) and Moroccans (44).

In total, only 23.6% of foreigners present in Asia come from other associations that are part of the AFC. This result reflects the solid integration of Asia in the global footballers' market despite the existence of quotas strictly limiting the presence of foreigners in clubs.

Figure 4: main countries of origin of foreign players in Asia

1.	Brazil	437
2.	Nigeria	127
3.	South Korea	106
4.	Japan	85
5.	Ivory Coast	57
6.	Cameroon	53
.	Spain	53
8.	Syria	47
9.	United Kingdom	45
10.	Morocco	44

Figure 5: distribution of foreigners in Asia by Confederation of origin

	Number	%	
1.	CAF	537	26.9%
2.	CONMEBOL	521	26.1%
3.	AFC	471	23.6%
4.	UEFA	419	21.0%
5.	CONCACAF	40	2.0%
6.	OFC	10	0.4%
	Total	1,998	100.0%

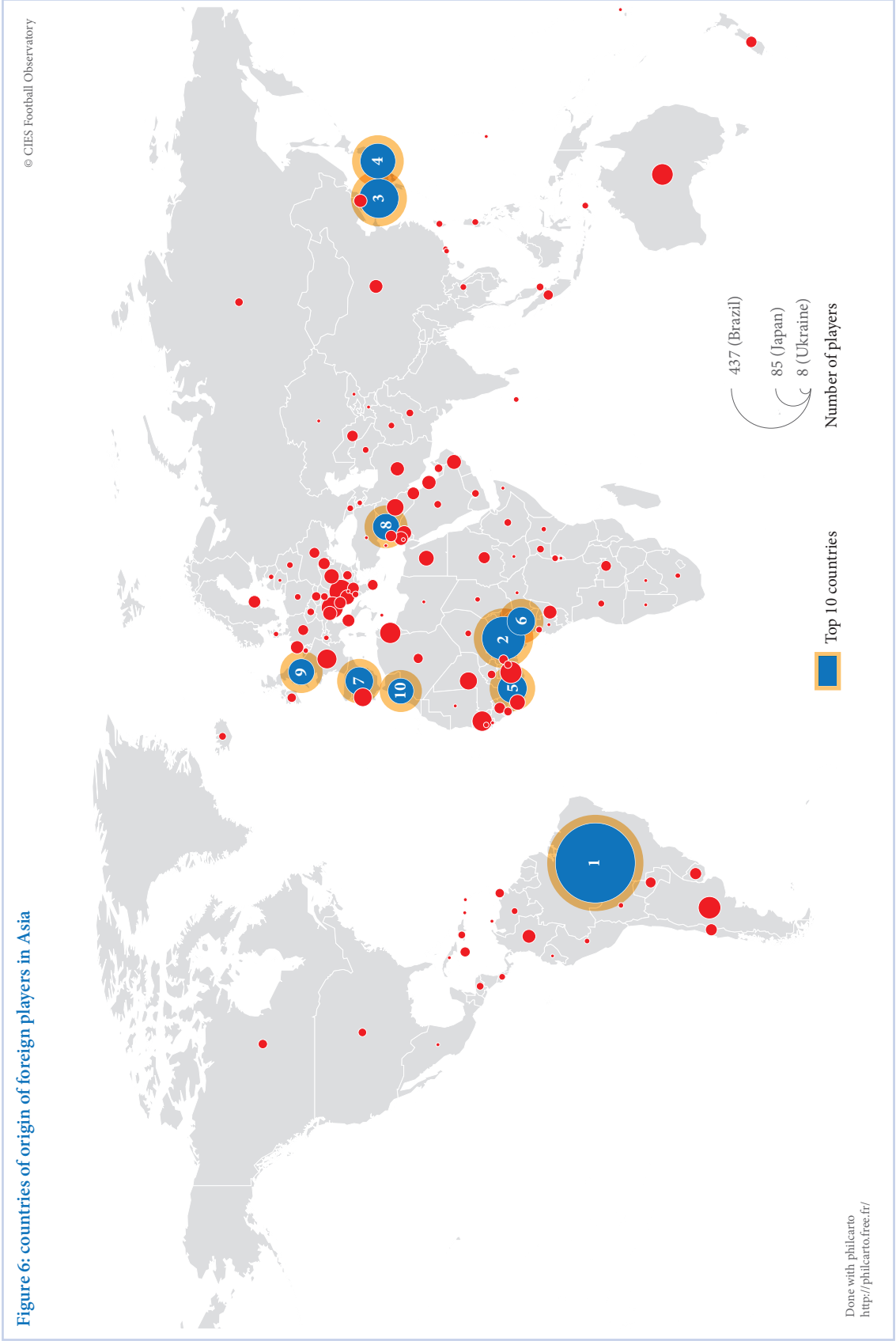


Figure 6: countries of origin of foreign players in Asia

4. Exporting countries in Latin America

While Brazilians are the main workforce on a worldwide level, Argentineans play a similar role in Latin America. With 511 players abroad, they account for almost 30% of foreign players in Latin America.

Only 124 Brazilians are present in foreign clubs in Latin America. Their number is inferior not only to that of Argentineans, but also to that of Colombians (306 players), Uruguayans (236) and Paraguayans (199).

Nine of the ten countries with the highest contingent of foreigners in Latin America are from this geographical zone. This finding shows that the importation of players in the region essentially follows a logic of proximity.

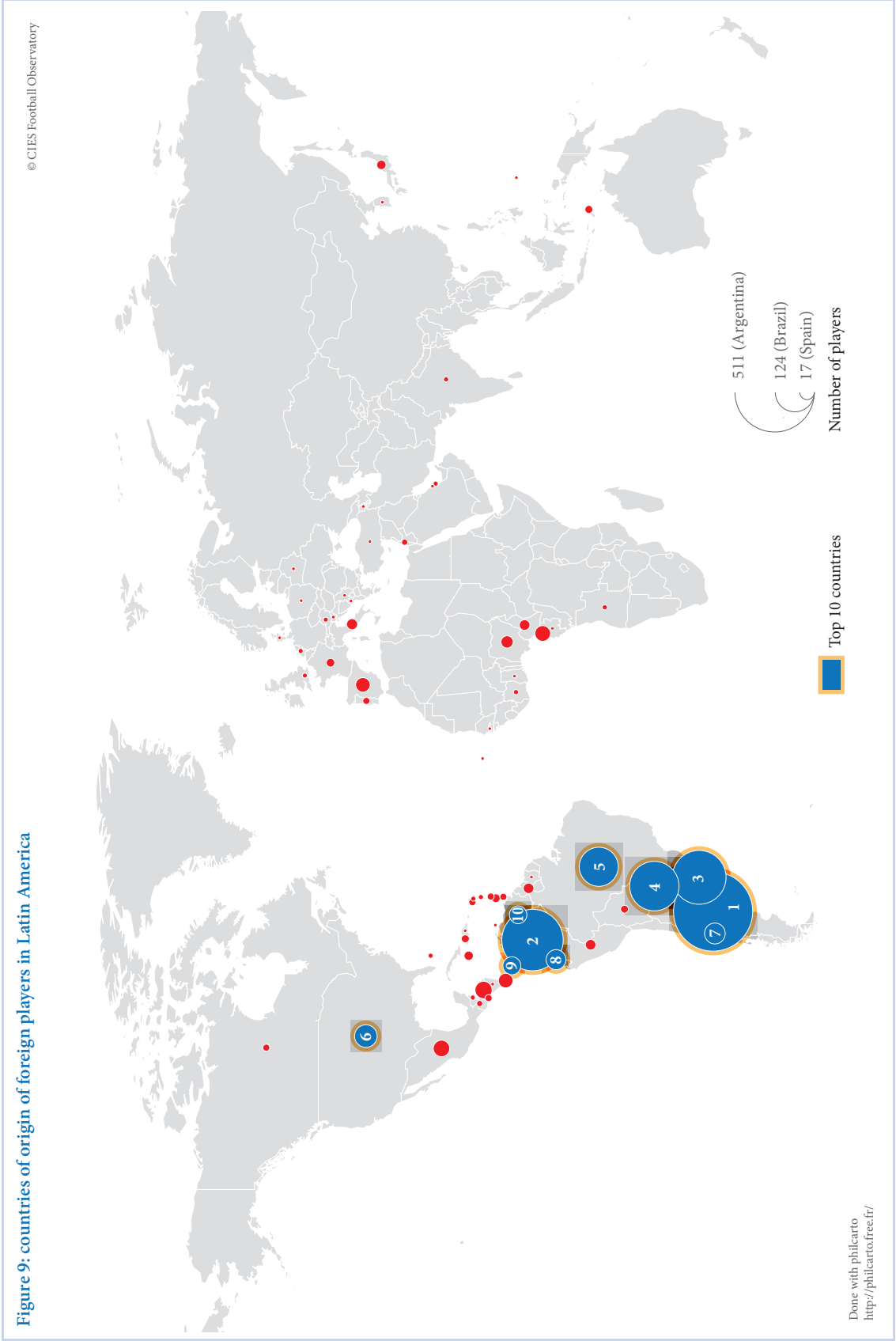
In no other zone analysed is the percentage of foreigners originating from another country of the employer club's Confederation as high as in Latin America: 1,482 foreigners from CONMEBOL associations out of a total of 1,798 (82.4%).

Figure 7: main countries of origin of foreign players in Latin America

1. Argentina	511
2. Colombia	306
3. Uruguay	236
4. Paraguay	199
5. Brazil	124
6. USA	41
7. Chile	35
8. Ecuador	32
9. Panama	26
10. Venezuela	25

Figure 8: distribution of foreigners in Latin America by Confederation of origin

	Number	%
1. CONMEBOL	1,482	82.5%
2. CONCACAF	193	10.7%
3. UEFA	51	2.8%
4. CAF	49	2.7%
5. AFC	23	1.3%
6. OFC	-	0.0%
Total	1,798	100.0%



5. Exporting countries in Europe

Similar to the Asian context, Brazil is the most represented origin among foreigners under contract with professional or semi-professional clubs in Europe: 1,134 players. However, the proportion of Brazilians among foreigners is much lower in Europe (8.5%) than in Asia (21.9%).

France is the second-ranked player exporter country on a European level (687 players), followed by Serbia (560). Aside from Brazil, the most represented extra-European origins are Nigeria (401 players), Argentina (388) and Senegal (315).

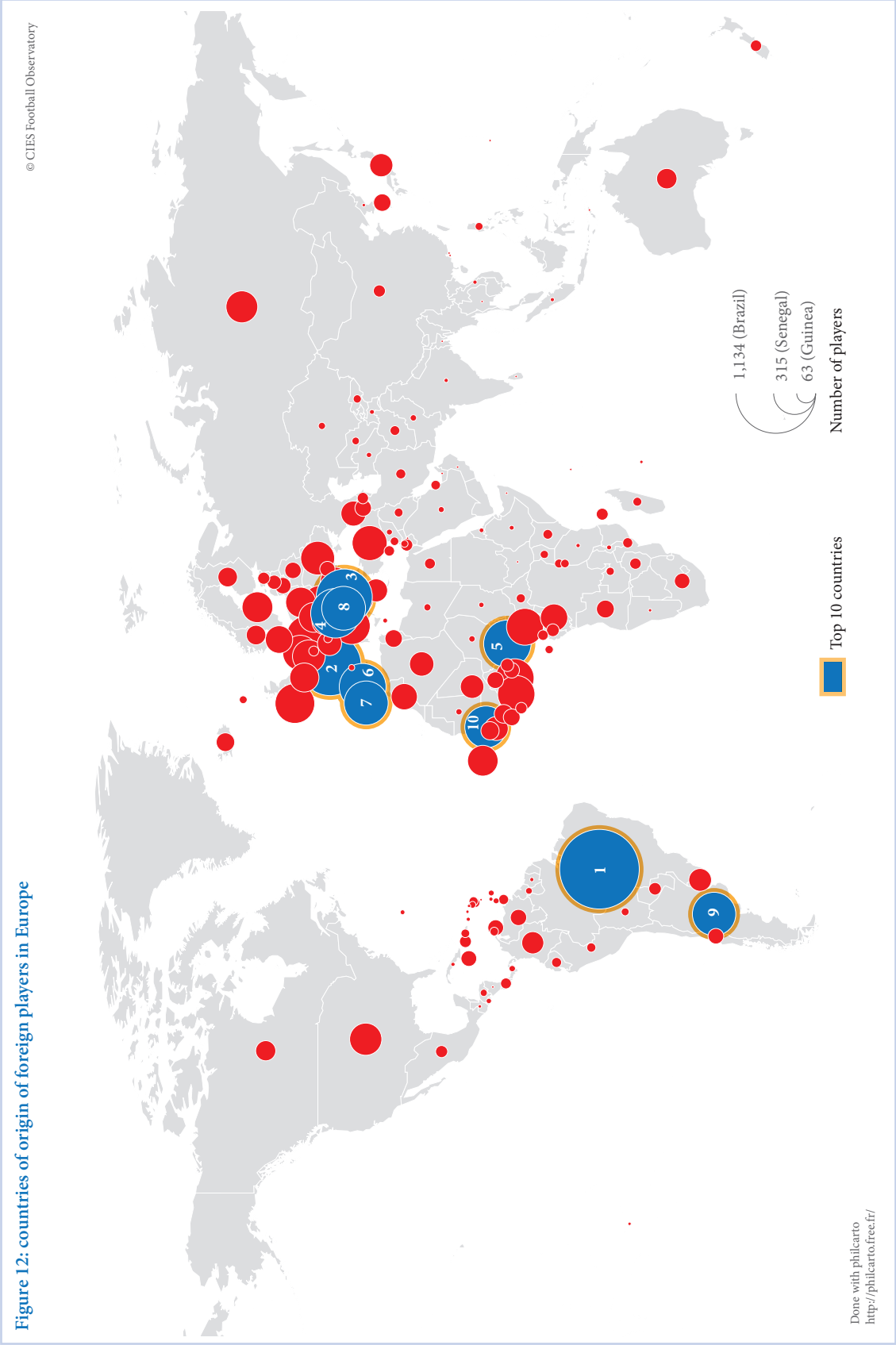
European clubs studied employ footballers from 176 countries. This reflects the very wide reach of the existing recruiting networks. Nevertheless, in relative terms, a majority of foreigners still come from other European associations: 56.1%.

Figure 10: main countries of origin of foreign players in Europe

1.	Brazil	1,134
2.	France	687
3.	Serbia	560
4.	Croatia	439
5.	Nigeria	401
6.	Spain	391
7.	Portugal	345
8.	Bosnia-Herzegovina	344
9.	Argentina	338
10.	Senegal	315

Figure 11: distribution of foreigners in Europe by Confederation of origin

	Number	%
1. UEFA	7,498	56.1%
2. CAF	3,036	22.7%
3. CONMEBOL	1,814	13.6%
4. CONCACAF	569	4.3%
5. AFC	420	3.1%
6. OFC	25	0.2%
Total	13,362	



6. Exporting countries in United States leagues¹

Football in the United States is undergoing considerable development. This is why we have chosen to analyse this country specifically. In total, four leagues are taken into account. Canadian players are not considered as foreigners, as is the case for Americans in Canadian teams in the leagues in question.

Three countries supply the most footballers to US teams: Brazil (77 players), the United Kingdom (70) and Jamaica (61). In the top ten places, we also find an African country (Ghana), as well as other countries from South America (Argentina and Colombia), Central America (Mexico and Honduras) and Europe (Spain and France).

The marked diversification of international recruitment of US clubs also appears from the analysis of the distribution of foreigners according to their Confederation of origin. Players from UEFA associations are the most numerous (227), but only constitute 30.7% of foreigners.

The further development of football in the United States will, without doubt, be accompanied by an increase in transfers on a worldwide level. In the race for new talent, US teams will progressively become tougher rivals for European, Asian and South American clubs.

¹ Major League Soccer, North American Soccer League, United Soccer League and Premier Development League.

Figure 13: main countries of origin of foreign players in United States leagues

1.	Brazil	77
2.	United Kingdom	70
3.	Jamaica	61
4.	Argentina	39
5.	Colombia	33
6.	Mexico	29
7.	France	25
8.	Spain	25
9.	Ghana	22
10.	Trinidad and Tobago	18

Figure 14: distribution of foreigners in United States leagues by Confederation of origin

	Number	%
1. UEFA	227	30.7%
2. CONCACAF	193	26.0%
3. CONMEBOL	175	23.6%
4. CAF	112	15.1%
5. AFC	26	3.5%
6. OFC	8	1.1%
Total	741	

