

## How Is Diversity Represented in Basketball Organizations Active in the Romanian National Basketball League

Vlad BRANGA

"Lucian Blaga" University of Sibiu  
vladbranga@ulbsibiu.ro

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### Abstract

For years, globalization has been a topic of interest for researchers and basketball organizations alike. Because of globalization, basketball organizations are able to access a wider market for basketball players and can thus choose the most suited for their teams. However, this can also be seen as a challenge for basketball organizations as they need to take into consideration managing diversity in their teams. Considering this, the aim of this paper is to provide an insight into how diversity is represented in the Romanian National Basketball League during the 2022-2023 season. The research question for this paper is “How is diversity being considered by the Romanian Basketball Federation and Basketball Organizations active in the men’s senior division?” The method used for this paper is a literature review together with an analysis on the specific data that was gathered by the author from various sources. The results show that countries like USA and Serbia are the source for the majority of the foreign players in the league while many other countries have 1-2 players representing them. However, in regards to gender differences in basketball organizations, there are very few women hired at basketball organizations active in the Romanian National Basketball League during the 2022-2023 season. Moreover, future and more detailed qualitative or quantitative research having as target group: presidents of the basketball organizations could be conducted for more in depth analyses on how they manage diversity in their organizations.

**Keywords:** diversity, diversity management, basketball, business.

**JEL classification:** M12, M19.

### 1. Introduction

Globalization has been a topic of interest for researchers and basketball organizations alike for some years now. One reason for why globalization is important to basketball organizations is that because of globalization, basketball organizations are able to access a wider market for basketball players and can thus choose the most suited for their teams. Regarding globalization, the author underlined the importance of globalization in a previous article: “*Globalization can have a variety of effects on teams (sports or business) such as unique solution finding, improved communication and increase in conflicts. These effects of globalization are visible in every domain: economy, technology, sports, infrastructure etc. In today’s economy, companies and basketball clubs alike need to be flexible and adapt their activities according to a continuous changing economic environment*” (Braga 2020).

For a better understanding of the topics at hand, a differentiation between the terms globalization and work force diversity needs to be made. On the one hand, according to Robbins and Judge, globalization has its focus on the differences that occur between cultures from different countries. On the other hand, workforce diversity tackles the differences between people from various parts of a country (Robbins and Judge 2021). Furthermore, according to Robbins and Coulter or Cunningham, workforce diversity refers to “*the ways in which people in an organization are different from and similar to one another*” (Robbins and

Coulter 2016; Cunningham 2019). The two authors also differentiate between two types of diversity (Robbins and Coulter 2016):

- Surface-level diversity – *“easily perceived differences that may trigger certain stereotypes, but that do not necessarily reflect the ways people think or feel”*;
- Deep-level diversity – *“differences in values, personality and work preferences”*;

For the purpose of this study, we will investigate how diversity is represented in basketball organizations active in the Romanian National Basketball League during the 2022-2023 season. One way in which diversity can be observed in these organizations is by looking at the number and country of origin for foreign basketball players. While this aspect can be easily observed in basketball, not the same can be said about business organizations where this aspect is not so easily observable.

Although, globalization and workforce diversity are aspects that have a great impact on the team building of basketball organizations, in the past years the term *“deglobalization”* or certain protectionist measures undertaken by entities such as the Romanian Basketball Federation or the Ministry of Sport in Romania have appeared. In this regard, under protectionist measures we refer to those measures that countries, through their ministries take that have an impact on organizations, basketball or business alike. According to David and David *“Protectionism refers to countries imposing tariffs, taxes, and regulations on firms outside the country to favor their own companies and people”* (David and David 2017). A concrete example for such measures can be taken from the rulebook of the Romanian Basketball League that imposes that two of the five players on court need to be Romanian for the first two quarters and at least one Romanian player for the second and third quarter with no age limit. More so, the rulebook stipulates that each team can use only one naturalized player (a player that has more citizenships including Romanian). Another protectionist example comes from the Romanian Ministry of sport who decided through order Nr. 686/8.VII.2022 that regardless of the sport, 40% of the players on the court/field should be Romanian. Judging by the fact that the Romanian Basketball Federation already had such measures in place, one could state that the Federation was one-step in front concerning protectionist measures.

Considering the previous presented information, the aim of this paper is to provide an insight into how diversity is represented in the Romanian National Basketball League during the 2022-2023 season. Moreover, through the article the author will answer to the established research question for this paper *“how is diversity being considered by the Romanian Basketball Federation and Basketball Organizations active in the men’s senior division?”*.

## 2. Literature Review on Diversity Management in Sport

First, it is important to understand how and if diversity in sport is similar or different analyzed than in business. An extensive work on diversity in sport organization is the work of Cunningham entitled *“Diversity and Inclusion in Sport Organizations”*. In this book, the author quotes different researchers definitions on diversity. From these definitions, he then concludes several key aspects regarding diversity (Cunningham 2019):

- *“Diversity is a construct that is greater than a single individual”*;
- *“Diversity is concerned with differences among people”*;
- *“Diversity is concerned with both objective and subjective differences”*;
- *“Diversity is concerned with socially relevant differences”*;

Similarly, Taylor et al adapt Cunningham’s definition of diversity in the workplace: *“the presence of differences among members of a social unit that lead to perceptions of such differences and that impact work outcomes”* (Cunningham in (Taylor, Doherty, and McGraw 2008). The authors than underline a key aspect of Cunningham’s definition, which is that *“diversity is a perception and thus differences are in the eye of the beholder”* (Taylor, Doherty,

and McGraw 2008). Comparing these definitions to those in the introductory part of the article we can state that diversity is analyzed from similar points of view concerning sports and business organizations.

Second, an interesting analysis of globalization and its impact on sport management comes from Hoyer et al. The authors quote Westerbeek and Smith by stating that the following three factors are *“the most influential drivers of change in regard to the business of sport in a globalized marketplace: economy, technology and culture”* (Westerbeek and Smith in Hoyer et al. 2006). However, although these three factors are important to the subject at hand, what about the human capital and the sport (in this case basketball) organizations ability to have access to players from very different and distant markets? In this regard, Taylor et al write about an activity called *“proactive hiring”* who’s strategic objective *“is to actively increase diversity in the organization in general, or with respect to a particular surface level attribute (e.g.: gender, age, race, physical disability), with the intent of capitalizing on the potential benefits of a diverse workplace”* (Taylor, Doherty, and McGraw 2008). If we would analyze the basketball organizations active in the Romanian National Basketball League during the 2022-2023 season from the point of view of proactive hiring, we could only see this happening on player level and not or not so much on administrative level. However, Taylor et al consider that there are certain benefits if an organization would capitalize on the potential of a diverse workplace, such as (Taylor, Doherty, and McGraw 2008):

- increased creativity;
- improved problem solving;
- increased understanding of the marketplace (especially if we consider the participation of Romanian basketball organizations in international championships such as those organized by Euroleague (Eurocup) or FIBA (Basketball Champions League, Europecup));
- improved recruiting;

However, there are also challenges about diversity management. Covell et al write that the diversity challenge is a newer and important challenge for sport managers (Covell et al. 2007). Furthermore, concerning the human capital aspect, they note, *“Although the coordination of human resources has never been easy, this growing diversity in the workplace represents a challenge as well as a special opportunity for management”* (Covell et al. 2007). However, one could state that it is up to the management of the basketball organizations to take advantage of this aspect in order for them to ensure hiring of the most suited players/staff for their organization.

Thirdly, according to Jarvie, *“some have argued that it is important to distinguish between international and global sport”* (Jarvie 2013). In this regard, Beech and Chadwick note that, *“There is no commonly held definition of internationalization and so one can generally say that internationalization has taken place when the operations of an organization have ceased to be exclusively domestic”* (Beech and Chadwick 2013). If we would analyze the basketball organizations active in the Romanian National Basketball League during the 2022-2023 season from this point of view, we could say that they are international only from two points of view. First, concerning the foreign players and coaches that they hire, and second, because some of the organizations are also active in European championships such as those mentioned previously. Furthermore, also according to Beech and Chadwick, *“it is only in recent decades that the international nature of sport has increasingly been recognized as a focus for business managers”* (Beech and Chadwick 2013). Although in this article we tackled the topics of globalization and internationalization together, that is because *“the concept of internationalization is inextricably associated with globalization”* (Gulak-Lipka 2020).

As we can see diversity management is as present in basketball organizations as it is in business ones. However, one might state they diversity is more easily visible in basketball because foreign players are often in the spotlight in media and in the social world surrounding the organization. More so, diversity management in basketball is an aspect that is in the interest or focus of international Basketball Federations such as FIBA or the NBA. In the fourth section of this article we will describe in what way the topic is in their focus and how or if the Romanian National League does similar researches.

### 3. Method

In order to achieve the aim of this paper: *to provide an insight into how diversity is represented in the Romanian National Basketball League during the 2022-2023 season* the author underwent a thorough and extensive research in order to be able to gather the necessary data. In this regard, the author used several sources, such as:

- Official Website of the Romanian National Federation: [www.frbaschet.ro](http://www.frbaschet.ro);
- Basketball news media website: [www.baschet.ro](http://www.baschet.ro), [www.unitedhoops.ro](http://www.unitedhoops.ro);
- International Database regarding Basketball players: [www.eurobasket.com](http://www.eurobasket.com);
- The official websites of the basketball organizations active in the Romanian National Basketball League during the 2022-2023 season;

The reason why so many sources were necessary for this research is the fact that, although all the information necessary should have been available on the Romanian National Federations website, this was not the case. The author was able to export in excel format from the website of the Romanian National Federation the rosters of each team, but the information in most cases, in regard to date of birth, height or even country of origin was either missing or false. After centralizing the information downloaded from [www.frbaschet.ro](http://www.frbaschet.ro) the information was then double-checked, filled in where it was missing or replaced where it was false. Afterwards, the data was ready to be organized into several diagrams and numbers that will be explained in the following section.

### 4. Diversity Management in Romanian National Basketball League

One of the inspirations for conducting this research started after the author discovered the fact that the International Basketball Federation (FIBA) together with the International Centre for Sport Studies (CIES) develop every year a public report called “*International Basketball Migration Report*” that in 2022 reached its 11<sup>th</sup> edition. The report has two sources:

- “*FIBA’s database of all men’s and women’s international transfers. This records all movements completed by players who are aged 18 and older between two respective National Federations; which has required a ‘Letter of Clearance’ to be issued by the Federation of origin to the Federation of destination.*”
- “*FIBA’s database of all players registered in 16 of the top division men’s leagues globally. In order to be eligible for inclusion in the statistics, players must have played at least once during the 2021-22 season and the total sample included 3,834 players.*”

In the following figure (Figure 1), we can see which leagues have been taken into consideration for the report. As one can easily observe, Romania has not been taken into account for the report. If we look at the history of FIBA, according to their website, Romania was one of the founding members. However, not including Romania in the report might be caused by the country ranking of FIBA, which places Romania on position 59 in Europe according to their website. Nevertheless, a somewhat similar report only for Romania can be done, as this article shows.

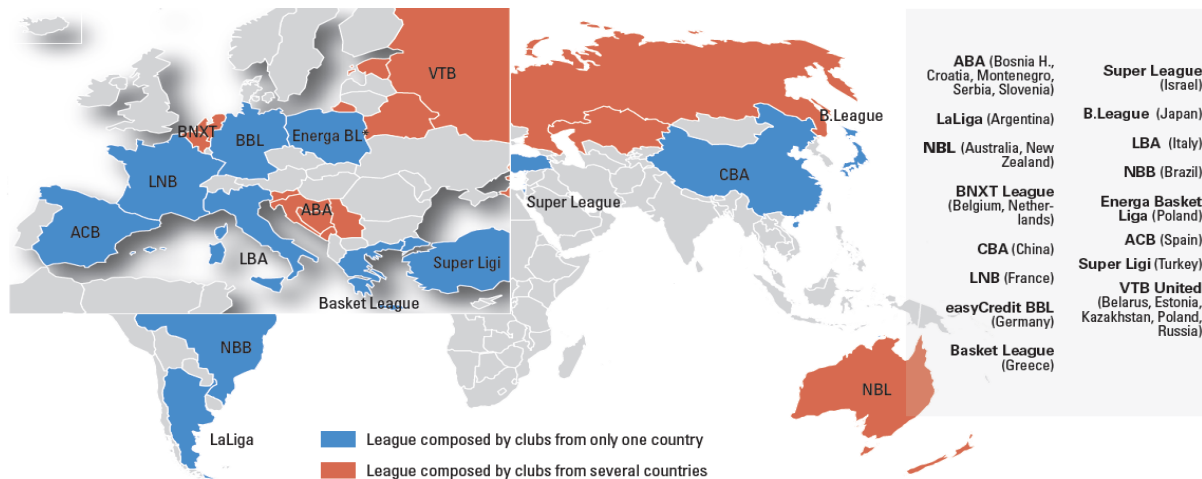


Figure 1: FIBAs 2022 International Basketball Migration Report

Source: <https://www.fiba.basketball/news/international-migration-report-2022-and-evolution-report-highlights-globalization-of-the-game>

According to the previous mentioned report, the 2022-2023 season established a new record as it was the first time that the total number of international transfers surpassed the 10.000 mark (10.467). The evolution of international transfers can be seen in figure 2 below.

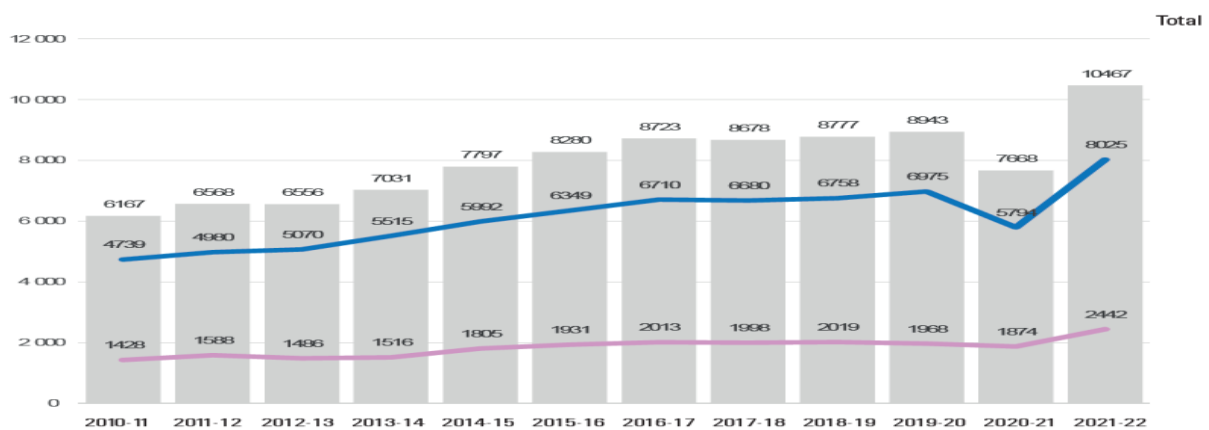
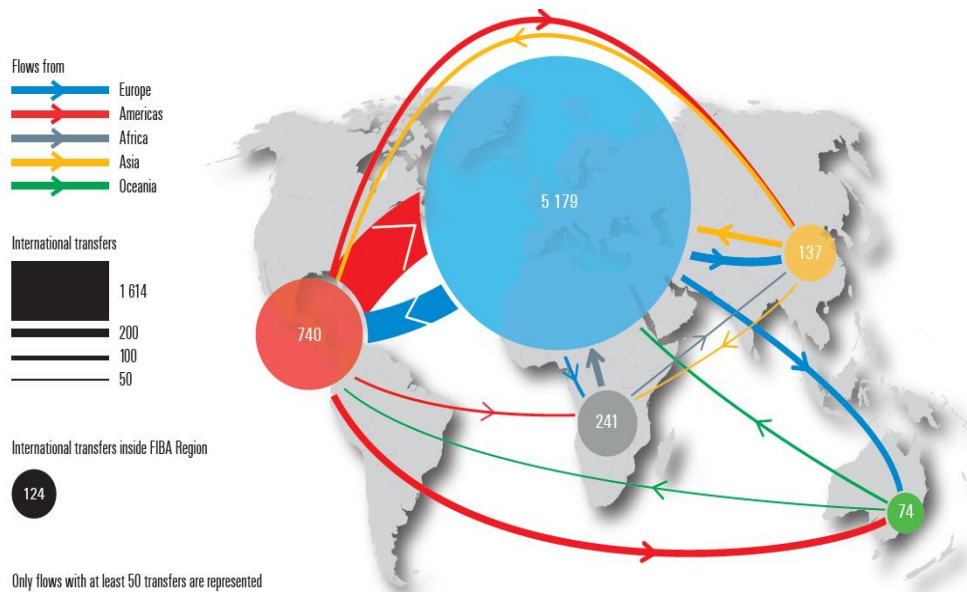


Figure 2: Evolution of International Transfers

Source: <https://www.fiba.basketball/news/international-migration-report-2022-and-evolution-report-highlights-globalization-of-the-game>



If we look at the flow between each FIBA region, the situation is, according to the report as follows:



**Figure 3: International transfers, by FIBA region**

Source: <https://www.fiba.basketball/news/international-migration-report-2022-and-evolution-report-highlights-globalization-of-the-game>

Taking these three figures, and what they represent, into consideration, the author wanted to find out how the situation in the Romanian National Basketball League for the 2022-2023 looks like. For a better overview, the following numbers contain all (currently active or who have already left the club) players, head and assistant coaches that have been transferred by Romanian basketball organization in the 2022-2023 season. At the moment this article was written, the total number of players that were active in the Romanian National Basketball League during the 2022-2023 season was 298. The number of head coaches is at 24 and that of the assistant coaches at 23. Furthermore, some general information about the players and head coaches can be seen in the following table:

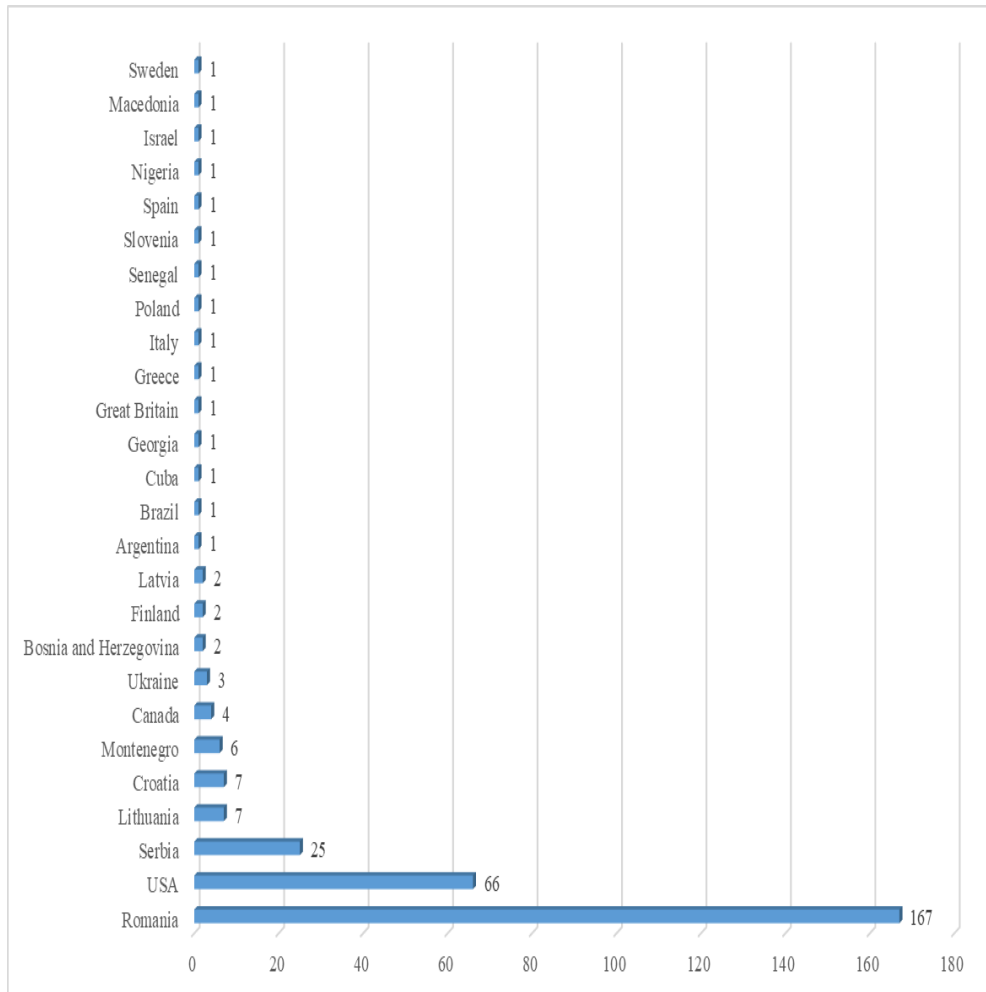
**Table 1. General information about the players and head coaches in the Romanian National Basketball League during the 2022-2023 season**

Players average age	25.44
Players average height	196.33
Head Coaches average age	47

Source: Designed by the author based on own research

An important aspect to note is the fact that the average height represented above might suffer changes because the author was not able to identify the height for a number of 33 Romanian young players that are part of the rosters for the basketball teams.

Because the aim of this research paper is to provide an insight into how diversity is represented in the Romanian National Basketball League during the 2022-2023 season, we will first have a look at the countries of origin for players, head and assistant coaches. This way we can have a better overview of which the countries that “send” the most players, head and assistant coaches towards Romania are.

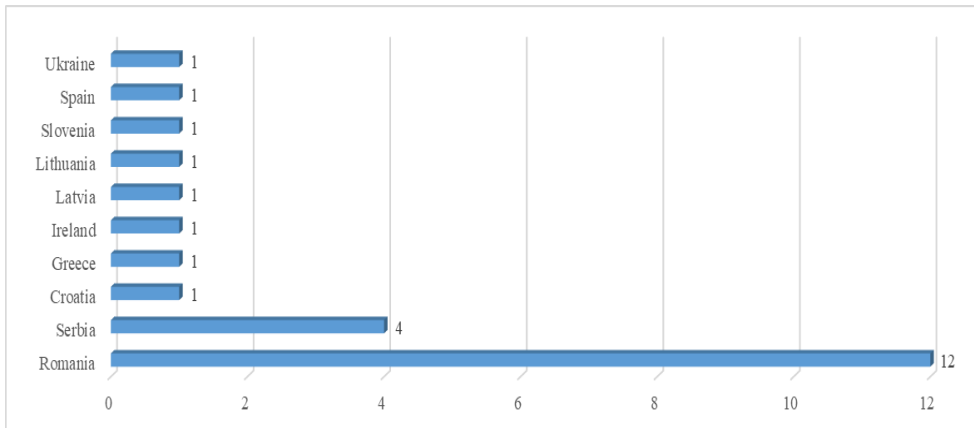


**Figure 4: Player's country of origin in the Romanian National Basketball League during the 2022-2023 season**

Source: Designed by the author based on own research

As we can see, if we do not consider the Romanian players, USA and Serbia account for the most foreign basketball players “sent” towards Romania with a total number of 84 while the rest of the countries account to a total number of 47. A reason why USA leads this top is the fact that they export a large number of players each year (1563 in 2022 according to the FIBA International Migration Report). Another reason might be the fact that many players come to play in Romania for a smaller value contract in order to get more playing time and gain statistics and experience. This however could be seen by Romanian basketball organization as a lottery. The reason for this statement is the fact, that in some cases, players cannot adapt to the FIBA rules of playing basketball, which are in some aspects different from those in NCAA or NBA. Thus, they might get a very good player for a smaller contract, or they might find themselves in need of looking again on the market if the fit between the team/organization/rules and the specific player is not there.

Concerning the head coaches, again if we leave aside the Romanian ones, the top is led by Serbia with four teams having a Serbian coach employed. The rest is divided between 8 countries as can be seen in the following figure.

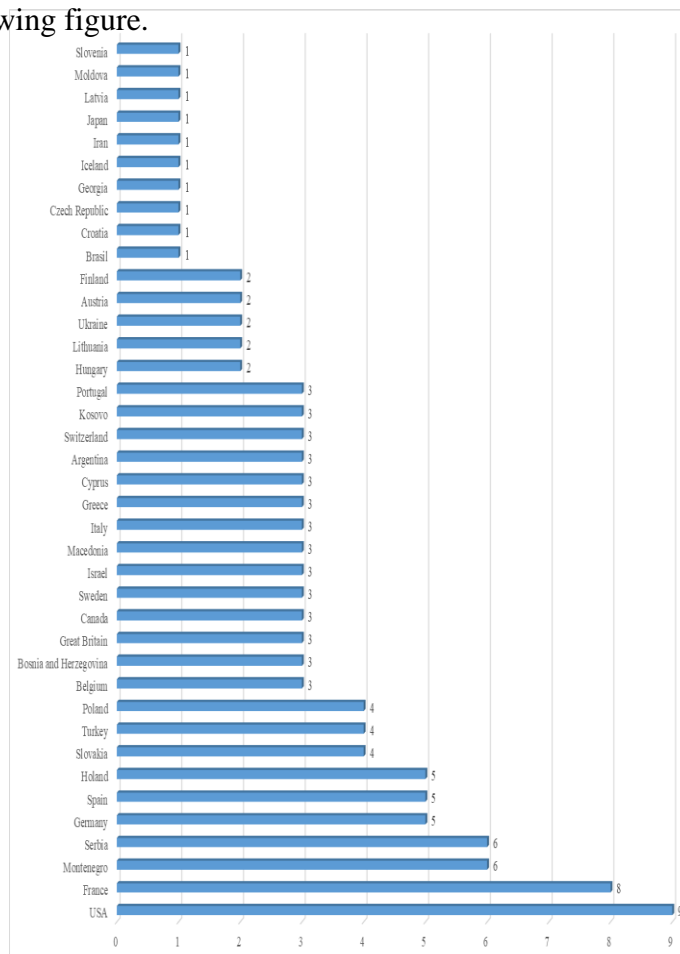


**Figure 5: Head Coaches country of origin in the Romanian National Basketball League during the 2022-2023 season**

Source: Designed by the author based on own research

The situation is a lot simpler concerning the assistant coaches. From 23, 20 are Romanians, two are Serbians and one is from Spain.

In comparison to the diagram representing the countries of origin for basketball players, we can also look at the flow of players towards the Romanian National Basketball League in the 2022-2023 season. For this, the author centralized the countries in which the players have been active in the season before signing with a Romanian basketball organization, which can be seen in the following figure.



**Figure 6: Flow of players towards the Romanian National Basketball League during the 2022-2023 season**

Source: Designed by the author based on own research



As one can see, the situation is different if we take figure six into consideration. Although USA still leads the top, the following countries have changed in comparison to figure four. This figure shows that player's movement is a lot more international/global that figure four shows.

A second inspiration for conducting this research comes from the fact that *The Institute for Diversity and Ethics in Sport* released the *2022 National Basketball Association (NBA) Racial and Gender Report Card (RGRC)*. In this report, the NBA received an overall Grade of A that comes from receiving A+ for racial hiring and B+ for Gender Hiring. Although this is also a comprehensive report, we will only try to compare the gender hiring part in the Romanian National Basketball League during the 2022-2023 season.

If we look at how the management of the Romanian Basketball Federation is constituted, from 24 members, 15 are men and nine are women. However, a closer look at the referees department shows that the majority of referees (those that have national and international credentials) are men (24) and only a few are women (3). The number of women hired in basketball organization is even lower if we look at the coaching staff. If from 24 head coaches that have been employed during the 2022-2023 season all are men, in regard to assistant coaches we found that from a total of 23, 22 are men and only 1 women assistant coach. The situation is hard to figure out for the basketball organization active in the Romanian National Basketball League during the 2022-2023 season. The reason for this is the fact that most clubs are public clubs have teams in various sports. As in this paper, we only discuss the situation of basketball teams, the author was not able to clearly identify or not at all, if and how many women are hired in each basketball department of these clubs. In addition, the causes for the shortage of women hired in each basketball department of these clubs has not been a topic for this paper. However, this can be considered as a limitation of this study but also as a potential topic for future researches. Considering this, we can state that from the proactive hiring standpoint, the Romanian Basketball Federation has a good position compared to that of the referees or the basketball clubs that play in the league that it organizes.

## Conclusion

At the beginning of this research paper, the research question was stated as being: "how is diversity being considered by the Romanian Basketball Federation and Basketball Organizations active in the men's senior division?" The answer to this question can be given from three perspectives. First, concerning the Romanian Basketball Federation, we can state that at management level, diversity can be found but the same cannot be said about the referees. Second, concerning basketball organizations active in the Romanian National Basketball League during the 2022-2023 season, we can state that diversity is at a very low level and does not represent an area of interest for managers judging by the low number of women hired in coaching or administrative (ex.: management, marketing, public relations etc.) positions for the basketball teams. Third, in regard to the players, as we could see, in the Romanian National Basketball League are players from various parts of the world, which shows a great diversity regarding the cultures present in the league. Considering this, the aim of this paper that was to provide an insight into how diversity is represented in the Romanian National Basketball League during the 2022-2023 season has been fulfilled.

Furthermore, the results show that countries like USA and Serbia are the source for the majority of the foreign players in the league while many other countries have 1-2 players representing them. However, in regards to gender differences in basketball organizations, there are very few women hired at basketball organizations active in the Romanian National Basketball League during the 2022-2023 season. Moreover, future and more detailed qualitative or quantitative research having as target group: presidents of the basketball

organizations could be conducted for more in depth analyses on how they manage diversity in their organizations.

In the end, the author would like to make some recommendations. First, to the Romanian Basketball Federation, the author would recommend to update the information of the roster of each team regarding nationality, age, height of players (especially the younger Romanian players). Another recommendation for the Romanian Basketball Federation would be to try to make refereeing more attractive in order to be able to hire more female referees. This could be done by applying several marketing campaigns such as testimonials by the current female referees. Second, to the basketball organizations, the author would recommend that they should also focus on diversity management in their organizations in order to benefit from what diversity has to offer. Finally, the author would like to mention the fact that the research was finalized on 20.02.2023. Although, the transfer period has not been concluded at this date. This means that the final numbers might be slightly different in reality. However, this should not have a great impact on the overall image presented in this paper.

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