

# Export-quota to the top 5 Leagues - the Swiss Super League outshines them all

Philipp Reich for WATSON ([www.watson.ch](http://www.watson.ch)) – 07 February 2023

***The Super League is often called the "training league". But does it live up to this reputation? The analysis shows that in an international transfer comparison, Switzerland leaves all competing leagues behind in at least one category.***

The Swiss Super League is a small fish by international standards. And small fish are usually eaten by big fish. This is also the case for the clubs in Switzerland's top league. Sooner or later, the best players move on. The big destination: the lauded football countries England, Germany, Italy, Spain and France - the five best and most lucrative leagues in Europe.

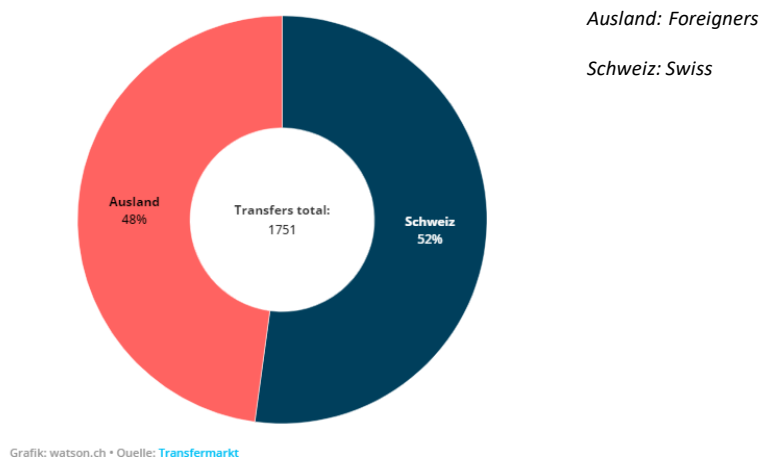
The small fish that is the Super League swims in a small pond in international comparison. It is not suitable for the big fish - but it also pursues a completely different business model. The Super League is considered one of the most interesting "training leagues" - promoting young talents and selling them at a profit is the strategy of almost all clubs.

But does the Super League really live up to this reputation? Can the business model work for all clubs? And how many players actually transfer from the Super League to a top 5 league? In order to answer these questions, we used data journalistic methods to search the transfermarkt.ch football database for all Super League departures since the 2003/04 season, when ten teams were played for the first time, and then took a closer look at them.

## How many transfers there have been in the last 20 years

A total of 1751 Super League players have changed clubs in the last 20 seasons. All summer and winter transfers were taken into account, with the exception of loan deals. More than half of all transfers (913) were made between two Swiss clubs, on the other hand, 838 players were transferred from abroad.

### ***Origin of all Super League transfers since 2003:***



## To which country footballers are transferred

By no means all of the 838 foreign transfers led to one of the five lauded football countries. The 73 different destinations include exotic football countries such as Libya, Angola, Peru and Indonesia. For the players, this means adventure - but for the Swiss clubs, it does not mean big transfer revenues.

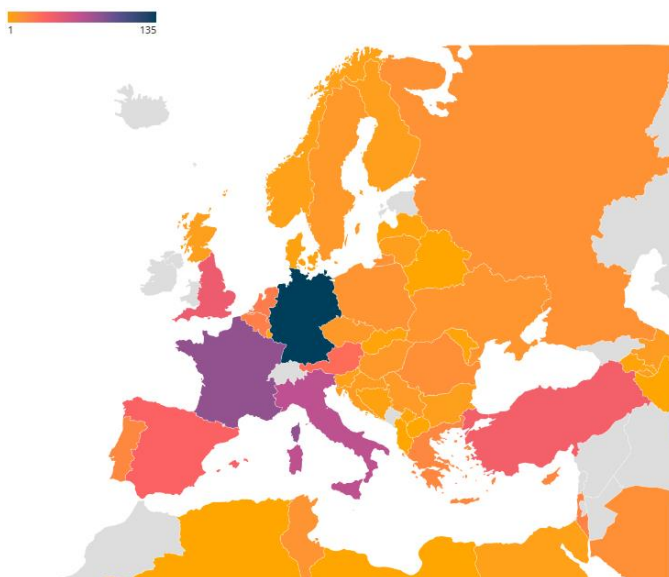
### Where the Super League players move to:



Grafik: watson.ch Quelle: [Transfermarkt](#)

The biggest market, however, is Europe. This is where the majority of all transfers from Switzerland take place. Of 838 transfers abroad, 685 were to a league of a UEFA member association. The most popular destination is Germany (135 transfers), followed by France (83), Italy (67) and England (44). Behind them, Turkey (40) ahead of Spain (36) prevents the total dominance of countries with a top 5 league.

### Where the Super League players move to:



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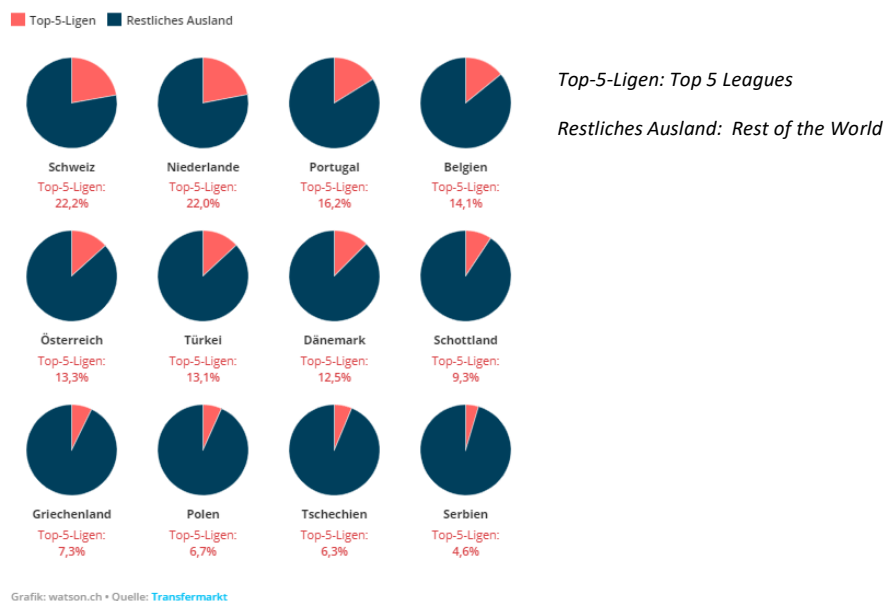
So Switzerland mainly exports to the big football countries - but that doesn't make it the big training league. Because a Top 5 country is not the same as a Top 5 league. For many Super League players, a lower league is also (financially) more attractive than the Swiss football grounds. Of 365 transfers to Germany, France, Italy, England and Spain, only 186 led to the five most prestigious football leagues and to the very big money pots. The rest of the players signed on in a lower league.

## Number of transfers to one of the top 5 leagues

186 players have thus transferred directly from the Super League to one of the top 5 leagues since 2003 - that is around 10.6 per cent of all transfers and 22.2 per cent of all foreign transfers. In comparison with the other medium-sized football leagues in Europe, this is the top figure. Although the Belgian Jupiler Pro League has exported more players to the top 5 leagues in absolute terms over the past 20 years with 239, there are also 18 teams in the top Belgian league instead of only 10, as in Switzerland. In percentage terms, Belgium therefore clearly lags behind Switzerland with a share of 14.1 per cent of Top 5 transfers of all foreign transfers.

Only the Dutch Eredivisie, which likes to be called the "best training league in Europe", can keep up with the Super League in terms of the top 5 quota. 330 out of 1500 players, i.e. exactly 22 per cent of all foreign transfers, made the leap from the Eredivisie to one of the five big leagues. This puts the Dutch top league virtually on a par with the Super League.

## Share of top 5 transfers in all foreign transfers:

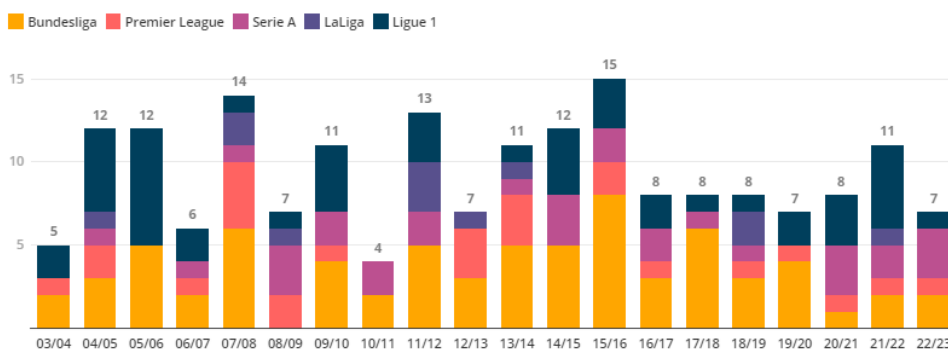


The Portuguese league can only accommodate 16.2 per cent of its foreign transfers in a top 5 league. But what the Portuguese have to offer is highly coveted - and correspondingly expensive. The departures from Portugal are worth considerably more on average than those from the Super League, which is particularly evident at the top. Already 69 players have left the highest Portuguese league for an amount of 20 million euros or more. Switzerland has only had two such top-class players to offer so far: Breel Embolo and Manuel Akanji.

Not all that glitters is gold in the Super League: of the 186 Swiss top 5 transfers, only 77 have played more than 60 league games (about two full seasons) in one or more of the top 5 leagues after leaving the Super League. The mere transfer to one of the five big leagues does not mean that a player will be able to establish himself there.

For the majority of players who dare to move abroad, the dream of a great international career does not come true: players like Kevin Rüegg, Albion Ajeti or Ulisses Garcia returned to the Super League sooner rather than later. Players like Granit Xhaka, Manuel Akanji or Mohamed Salah, who have made it with a top international club, are still the great exception today.

### ***Transfers from the Super League to a top 5 league since 2003:***



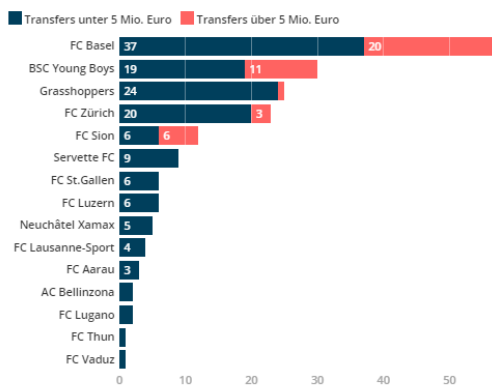
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### **How high the transfer revenues are for the clubs**

Whether the players succeed is of secondary importance to their former Swiss clubs. They are primarily interested in the transfer fees they collect for the players. Here the following applies: The more renowned the target club of a player is, the higher the transfer fee often is. The clubs depend on the income to make up for their structural deficit. A million-euro transfer to a top 5 league, for example, can save an entire business year. However, one cannot rely on such a transfer taking place every year.

FC Basel has had a good transfer hand since 2003: the club has been able to sell 57 players to a top 5 league, 20 of them for 5 million euros or more. Apart from the former serial champions, only YB managed to generate a significant transfer profit in recent years.

### ***Number of departures to a top 5 league since 2003:***



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The rest of the league has to bake smaller bread. A transfer to a top 5 league and the associated millions will remain the big exception for them. Nevertheless, these clubs are also dependent on transfer profits. Instead of one big transfer, they try to make their money with many smaller ones. The justified reputation of the Super League as one of the best training leagues in Europe definitely helps. But in the big transfer pool of Europe, the Swiss Super League still remains a small fish.

[Link to the original article](#) (German)