Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Toolkit







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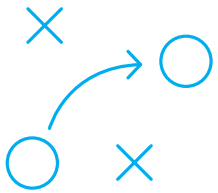
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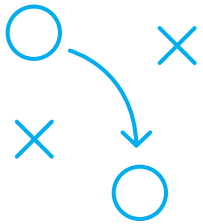
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Foreword

Michele Uva
UEFA Executive Director of Social and Environmental Sustainability



We are living in a unique time, where it is more important than ever to stand united for the values of equality, diversity, and inclusion. It is in these values that we can ensure that anyone who is involved in football feels respected, valued, and safe.

In line with our strategic outlines, UEFA remains committed to working proactively to build a football for ALL, echoing the objectives of our #FootbALL programme. In this, we call on everyone in football to create an environment where our differences are considered as something positive to the sport and all involved in it.

This toolkit aims to support national associations, clubs and leagues by developing a coherent understanding across the football landscape of what EDI involves, and how everyone in the game has a role to play in progress of these topics. This, all with the aim of creating a football environment that reflects the diversity of society, removes barriers, challenges discrimination and ensures that every individual enjoys equal rights, opportunities and a genuine sense of belonging.

We are actively working at all all levels of the football pyramid - across grassroots level and elite level - to remove barriers, to develop equal opportunities, and create inclusive environments in European football. Within this, we engage with organisations and individuals in action across the topics within this toolkit, constantly considering the specificities of these, but also how they interact with one another.

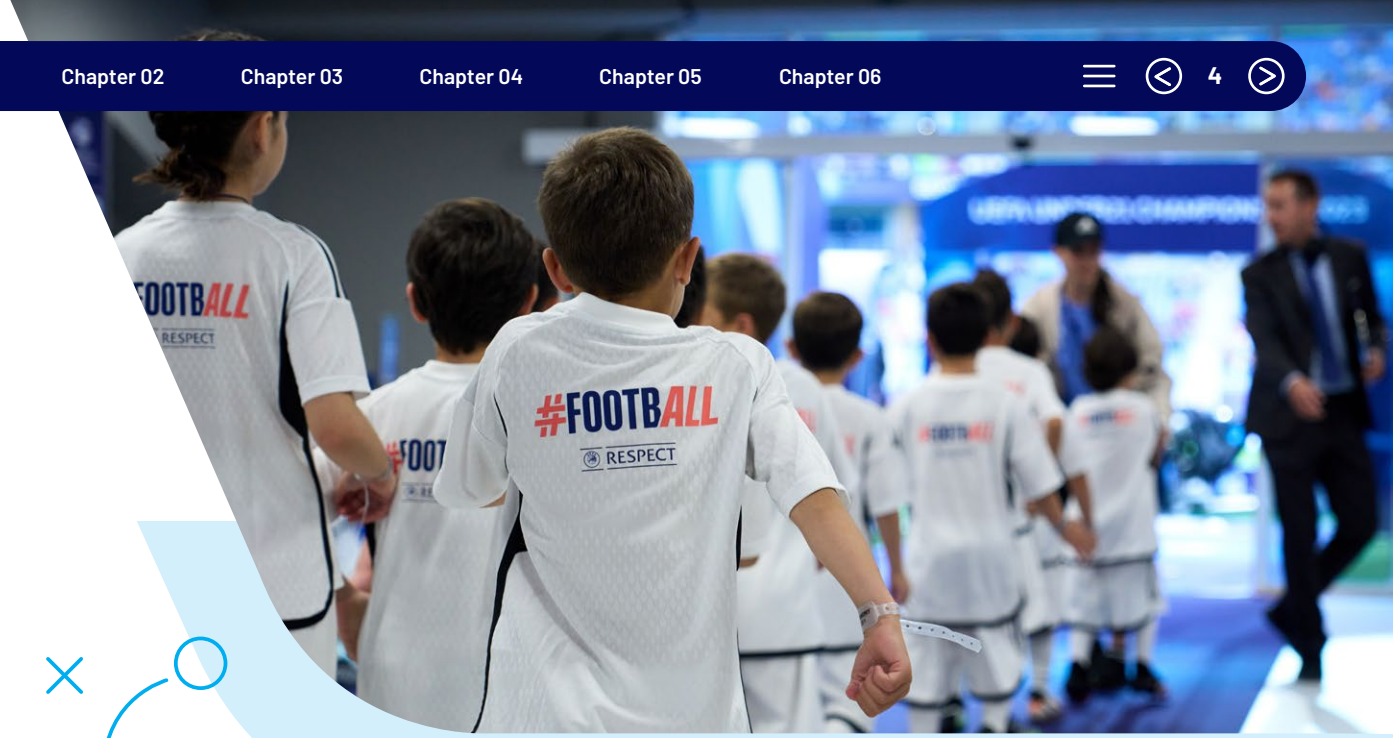
To ensure that the diversity within the game is valued and that everyone can perform to the best of their abilities, we require work around equality and inclusion.

In short: Diversity powers performance. Equality and inclusion protect it.

This toolkit adds to a wider catalogue of UEFA Sustainability resources, where all toolkits and guidelines are interconnected in many ways, and should be used not as standalone resources, but as a support network for inspiration, activation, and acceleration. All aiming to maximise positive impact.

We encourage all active in football to engage with this resource and consider how they can play their role in ensuring concrete impact through actions in football and in civil society.

#FOOTBALL



Introduction

Equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) are concepts that should be considered by all involved in football. It is through the diversity of the people involved that the European football landscape continues to grow, and it is key that we ensure that diverse groups can fully contribute to the game. Through proactive work towards equality and inclusion, we can contribute to enriching the game, both on and off the pitch.

Developing aspects of EDI within European football is in line with UEFA's strategic values – respect, equality, openness, unity, excellence, integrity and fairness – and it is identified as one of the social policies within the UEFA Football Sustainability Strategy 2030, Strength through Unity. It also reflects the values of UEFA's FootbALL Programme, which emphasises the message that everyone is welcome in football.

The FootbALL project provides a platform for highlighting UEFA's work on social sustainability – in this case, equality, diversity, and inclusion –, and sharing best practices, significant achievements, and important information across the football ecosystem. This toolkit is an essential resource within the FootbALL programme, and UEFA is committed to translating this into relevant languages used across Europe, to further strengthen its reach and impact.

In all its work across sustainability, UEFA engages with the full football ecosystem to ensure that there is one common language and approach, enabling UEFA, national associations, clubs, leagues and other stakeholders to amplify football's positive impact and make the most of our collective efforts.

As an inaugural member of the United Nations initiative Football for the Goals, UEFA is also committed to playing an active role in supporting the global football community in its efforts to engage with and advocate for the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

We invite all football stakeholders to use this toolkit to support their work and as a foundation for local, national and international activities related to equality, diversity and inclusion. This will ensure that respect is maintained as a guiding value, encouraging inclusive practices and activities across European football.

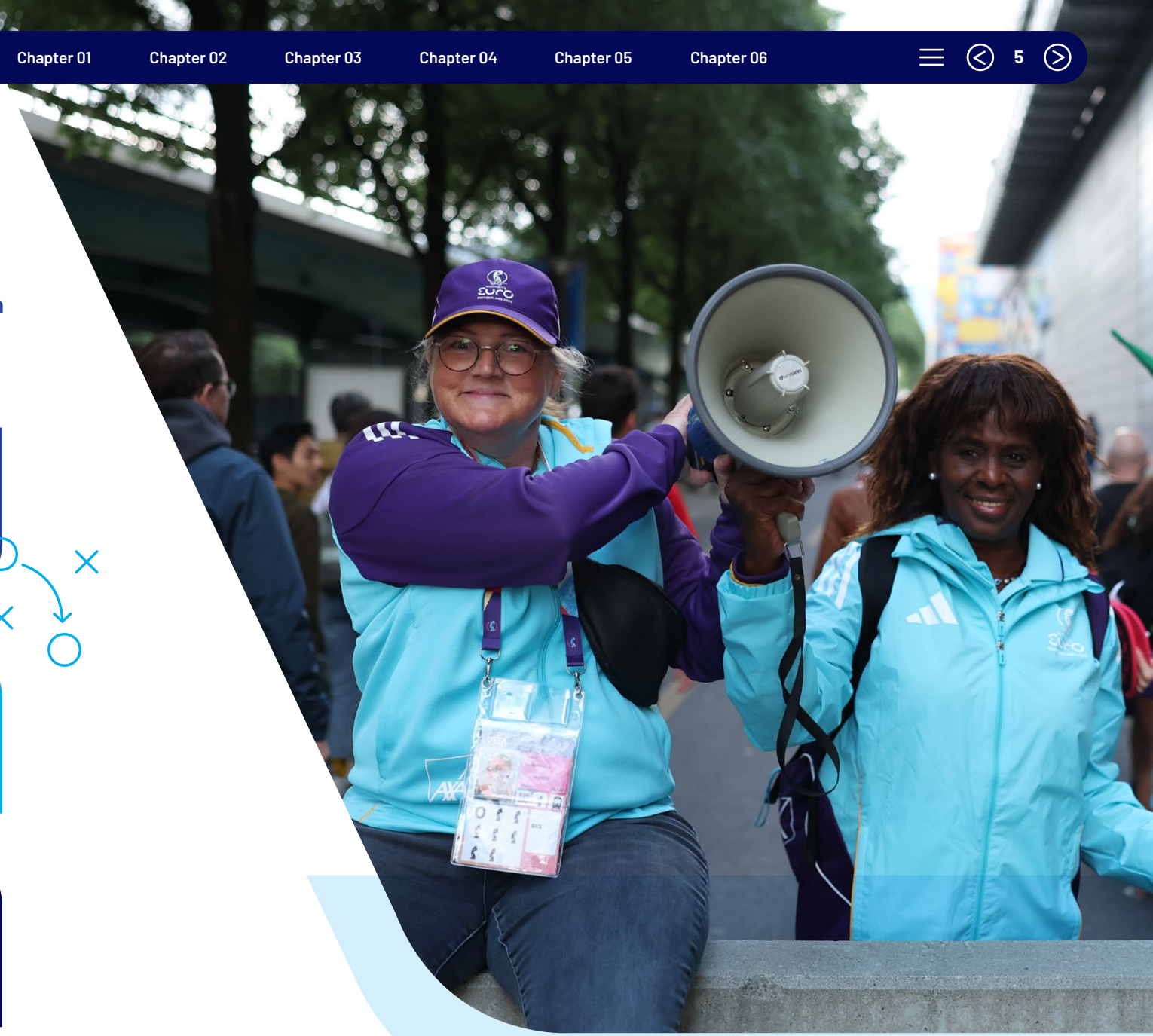
What is the toolkit?

The UEFA Equality, Diversity and Inclusion toolkit is a resource aiming to:

present
the value and values of EDI in European football

define
the football context for increasing equality, diversity and inclusion

identify
areas of action and key considerations related to diversity characteristics across the European football landscape



Why has the toolkit been created?

This toolkit has been developed to provide guidance and resources to further encourage and accelerate action towards achieving equality, diversity and inclusion.

It will encourage the reader to reflect on the following:

1. Why EDI should be considered in all that we do
2. How we can leverage football to create positive change related to these topics
3. How EDI actions can be accelerated across football

As within the UEFA Football Sustainability Strategy 2030, Strength through Unity, this toolkit is centred around the terms 'equality', 'diversity', and 'inclusion'. It should be noted that EDI efforts include many additional dimensions such as equity, belonging and intersectionality, and that different organisations will use different terms for their work within these areas.

A brief overview of common terms include:

Belongingness – The state or feeling of belonging to a particular group

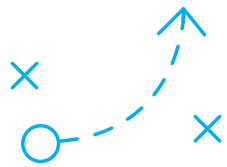
Diversity – The state of being diverse; variety

Equality – The state of being equal, especially in status, rights or opportunities

Equity – The quality of being fair and just, especially in a way that takes account of and seeks to address existing inequalities

Inclusion – The practice or policy of providing equal access to opportunities and resources for people who might otherwise be excluded or marginalised

Intersectionality – The interconnected nature of social categorisations as they apply to a given individual or group, regarded as creating overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination or disadvantage



Additional notes:

- Inclusion vs belonging
  Inclusion is the action of ensuring that people are included, while belonging is the feeling of being included, welcomed and respected. One is an action, the other is an outcome.
- Equality vs equity
  Equality looks to ensure that everyone has the same opportunities, resources, rights, etc., while equity focuses on ensuring fairness by making sure that each person has the resources they need. The first gives everyone the same thing, while the second considers each person's specific situation. For example, equality would ensure that everyone receives a copy of a book, while equity would make sure that everyone can read the book, for example, through a translation or other accessibility measure.
- Diversity
  A more in-depth definition, in this context, would be "the presence of differences in characteristics such as ethnicity, gender, age, disability, sexual orientation, socio-economic background and other identity factors". It should also be noted that one person cannot be diverse, it is only relevant in the context of a group.

Who is the toolkit for?

Football holds a power unlike any other sport in the world. We know that it is one of the most popular sports, both in terms of participation and viewership, and it is important to understand how we can best leverage this popularity when working towards creating a more equal, diverse and inclusive game.

That is why this toolkit has been created, to stand as a resource for national associations, leagues, clubs, teams and anyone else who is active in European football.

It is important to consider EDI across operations – not only on the pitch, but across the full activities of one's organisation. UEFA has therefore identified the three areas presented on the right:

On the pitch
Focusing on all those directly involved in the game and all related activities.

Off the pitch
Focusing on all those involved in the organisation and administration of the sport.

In the stands
Focusing on the fans and spectators who attend matches, tournaments and events.

Across these three areas, there is great potential to proactively develop projects, programmes and activities to foster more diverse participation and to accelerate both equality and inclusion within the sport.

None of these areas exist in a vacuum, but they are all interconnected and, in the larger perspective, they interact heavily. However, for the purpose of this toolkit, they have been looked at separately for the purposes of clearly defining areas of action, specific considerations and possible measures.





- Social media platforms and online environments provide a secondary dimension to all three main areas of action, and so it is important to consider them across EDI activities.
- While this toolkit does not specifically address online interactions and activities, UEFA provides further support on such topics through its programme towards fighting online abuse and the Take Care programme.



On the pitch

This section looks at all activities and people involved in matches and training across grassroots and elite levels. This includes players, coaches, team staff, referees and officials.

The focus will lie on education and engagement, ensuring that those involved in the game are aware of the value and values of EDI, and are engaged in creating an environment that is welcoming to all.

Emphasis will also be placed on the importance of acting as a role model and playing a proactive role in building inclusive cultures. This is mainly relevant to referees and coaches, but also to players, who can leverage their platform to act as a spokesperson for EDI.

Within this area, it is important to consider both national and international regulations, including but not limited to the IFAB Laws of the Game, and a number of UEFA regulations.



Off the pitch

This section concerns those involved in managing football organisations, whether within a confederation, national association, league or club. It aims to ensure that they understand not only their role but also the impact of EDI-focused activities and projects.

The focus will lie on aspects such as organisational values, HR processes and policies, as well as cross-organisational engagement. Decision-making and governance will also be taken into account.

National legislation is very relevant to this area, and users are encouraged to ensure that they have a clear understanding of national employment legislation, as well as legislation related to EDI topics.



In the stands

Fans and spectators are a major part of the football culture, therefore, this area focuses on ways to include all fans as well as engage them in celebrating the diversity of the European football community.

This section will emphasise the development of inclusive cultures and processes through engagement and will focus heavily on clear, coherent and transparent communications.

Working with supporter organisations, fan networks and supporter liaison structures can support the co-creation of inclusive cultures and help ensure that measures taken reflect the diversity of supporter experiences across Europe.

Within this area, it is important to consider event regulations and policies and, in many cases, national legislation related to EDI topics. When approaching this topic, both the rights and responsibilities of fans and spectators as ticket holders should be factor in to any decisions.

How to use the toolkit

This toolkit aims to present the key areas of consideration in relation to EDI in football. It should be noted that all the concepts and constructs presented within this document need to be considered in relation to the national and local context and legislation.

The toolkit should therefore be used as a guide to inspire, activate and accelerate collaborative action for more diverse, equal and inclusive football environments.

Toolkit structure

The toolkit has been developed with the end user in mind and aims to provide a coherent structure across all the topics, presenting information in a clear and concise manner.

Following the overview of EDI and its importance, each topic-specific chapter has been structured as such: 1) the topic context, 2) good practices and important considerations, and 3) references and a checklist.

The toolkit does not define requirements or regulatory framework but stands as a tool for users to develop their understanding of the main points of consideration within each topic. To support this, the chapter specific checklists have been developed to be used as a self-reflection tool, helping users to identify areas for development for each topic. Similarly, the references linked in the end of each chapter aims to provide the user with a kick-start to further developments within their organisation based on the self-reflection.

Strategic approach

To advance EDI efforts in football, we need to work together towards clear priorities, targets and KPIs. Organisations are encouraged to follow five key steps:



01. Commit

Ensure that there is a clear strategic commitment to EDI across the organisation's activities, policies and communications.



02. Create ownership

Identify a team or a person responsible for ensuring that these commitments are translated into concrete activities. To support this person or team, the organisation should ensure that the values of EDI are embedded across the whole organisation.



03. Develop strategic priorities, targets and KPIs

Assess current needs and resources to establish strategic priorities and actions. Include KPIs to provide a clear picture of what success looks like.



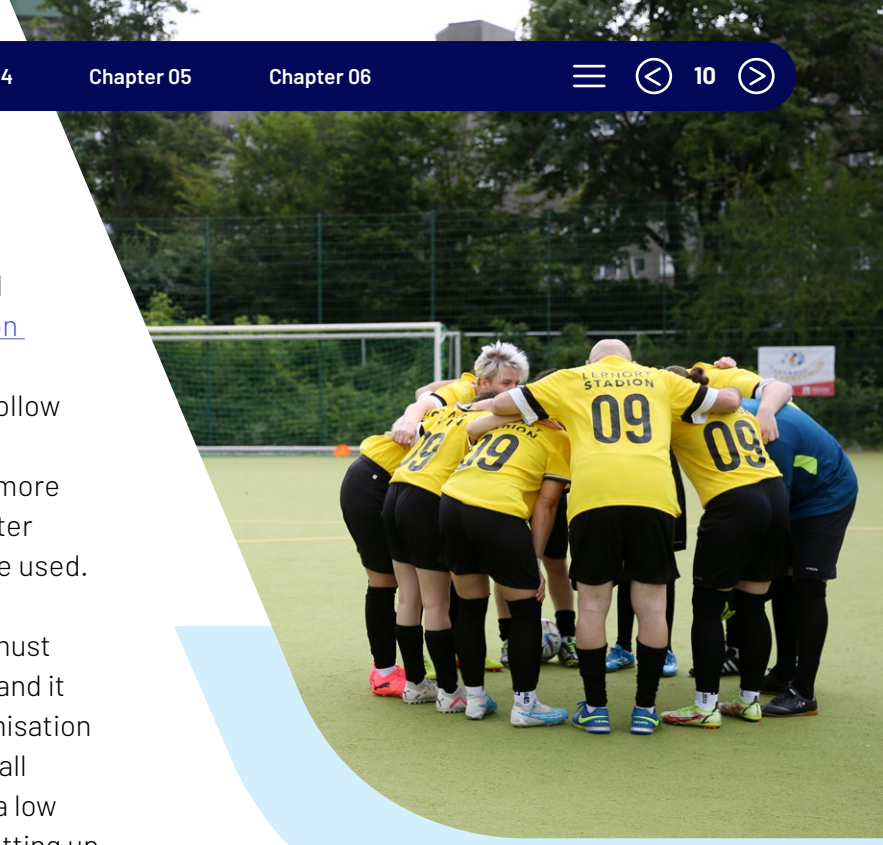
04. Take action

To achieve these strategic priorities and targets, follow a clear action plan and work collaboratively with stakeholders. Engaging with stakeholders is key for developing relationships and establishing commitments, and will support your organisation's efforts in all areas, whether football-related or involving non-football organisations such as national or local governments, law enforcement or academies.



05. Measure and report

Measuring an action's impact is the only way to determine its success. Interact with local communities and diverse groups of players, referees, fans, employees and volunteers to gather first-hand feedback. Reporting should take place yearly, and strategic priorities, targets and KPIs should be reviewed regularly to ensure continued relevance in line with social developments.



The importance of community engagement

As EDI encompasses such a wide and complex scope of activities and efforts, community engagement will be critical to the success of any project - the affected communities, groups and individuals must play an active part in this work.

It is therefore important to identify the key stakeholders and resources available within the football ecosystem, whether it is fan groups, expert organisations, local communities, activist groups or individuals. Understanding who can be a valuable resource and building trusting relationships with them will ensure policies and projects can be co-created, and that the local expertise and experiences are taken into consideration at all stages of the process.

The value and restrictions of data collection

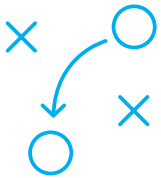
When measuring and reporting progress, data can help to ensure that KPIs are identified, and that progress or decline can be measured and tracked.

The wide and complex topics encompassed by EDI will require each organisation to consider both international and national legislation before collecting any data, as much of the data of interest within these topics is personal and must be collected in a safe and transparent manner.

Across Europe, many countries are bound to comply with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), which ensures that organisations that collect personal data follow a set framework of legal restrictions and procedures, aiming to give the individual more control over their personal data and a better understanding of how it can and cannot be used.

Before collecting any data, organisations must understand the legal restrictions in place, and it is also good practice to implement anonymisation procedures, such as when dealing with small groups of respondents, either because of a low number of respondents overall or after splitting up data based on specific demographics.

When collecting data, it is also be important to consider the language used and the sensitivity of what you are looking to collect. How questions are asked can impact the sense of inclusion that the respondents experience. For example, when asking a person's title, giving only the options of Mr and Mrs can be seen as exclusive, as it not only limits the answers to the binary male and female, but it also assumes that any female respondent is married.



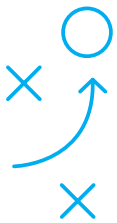
Always consider the value of the data collected against what it might 'cost' to ask the question. Again, these topics are highly sensitive and often very personal, so any collection process should ideally allow the respondent to choose not to disclose specific information. This approach should be explained before the start of the data collection process. If no such options are included, there is a risk of respondents not completing the data or entering incorrect data, either because of a lack of options or to keep their information personal.

Additional resources

As all social sustainability topics are interconnected, it is impossible to speak about EDI without also speaking about anti-racism, child and youth protection and health and well-being, among others. Users are therefore encouraged to also refer to UEFA's other resources:

- UEFA Human Rights Commitment
- UEFA Accessibility Guidelines
- UEFA child and youth protection
- UEFA Healthy and Sustainable Catering Guidelines
- UEFA online safety
- UEFA OUTRAGED toolkit
- UEFA refugee support
- UEFA Take Care programme
- UEFA Walking Football toolkit

Many social topics also need to be considered alongside sustainable infrastructure, for which UEFA has developed the UEFA Sustainable Infrastructure Guidelines.



OUTRAGED

- Aiming to raise awareness and engage the full football landscape and society in the fight against discrimination, the OUTRAGED toolkit presents materials for sessions for youth players, parents, and coaches and team staff.
- The toolkit covers six specific topics: online abuse; disability hate: homophobia; refugee discrimination; sexism; and racism, and focuses on preventing, identifying and standing up to these forms of discrimination.

Take Care

- Looking to create and support healthier lifestyles, this programme provides resources and material across areas of health and well-being. The programme contains a dedicated module on mental health, which is a highly relevance for work related to EDI.
- Mental health is relevant across all areas of diversity – exclusion, feeling different and being part of a minority can often impact our mental health.

Take Care – Mental health white paper
Take Care – Mental health documentary
Take Care – Mental health podcast
Take Care – Mental health educational session
Take Care – Mental health posters

Child and youth protection

- Children and young people are the foundation of football – they are the current and future players, fans and administrators. Ensuring their safety and protection is key, and the UEFA child and youth protection platform provides guidance and material to this end.
- The link between EDI and this topic is significant, as children and young people who belong to a minority group, whether because of their religion, gender identity, disability, etc., may require further care and safeguarding. Ensuring EDI practices are understood and implemented across child and youth safeguarding will ensure that children and young people are not only safe, but also feel welcomed and included.

Equality, diversity, and inclusion – why it should factor in to all that we do



When everyone feels welcome, the game becomes stronger

As defined in the UEFA Football Sustainability Strategy 2030, Strength through Unity, the work on this topic aims to "apply principles of equality, diversity and inclusion at all levels of European football to ensure that everyone feels respected and empowered to express themselves, enjoy and contribute to the game."

We know that when diversity is approached in an inclusive way, with equal access and opportunities as foundational concepts, individuals and groups perform better and feel both more committed and more respected within the specific environment.

In short, the value in these topics, from a football perspective, lies in making the sport welcoming for all, at all levels of the game.

Managing diversity for positive output

Diversity is, in many ways, the backbone of equality and inclusion, but it can also create barriers if not managed correctly.

When speaking about diversity, it is important to remember that no one person can be diverse, it rather refers to a group or context, and how individuals within that setting differ from one another. As previously mentioned, we want to ensure that diversity is managed positively, and that football plays an active role in engaging everyone in a committed and respectful way.

Football is a great example of the value of diversity. Take the array of skills and attributes present within a line-up. No team will be made up of only defenders or midfielders. The best team is one that is diverse, in terms of positions, player style and skills.

However, the differences between individuals can sometimes cause friction and lead to homophobia, disability hate, racism, sexism, xenophobia and LGBTQI+ hate, etc. These forms of discrimination and the issues that stem from them are based on the notion of others being different and therefore less worthy of respect, equal opportunities and inclusion.

While this toolkit focuses on the positive aspects of fostering diversity through equality and inclusion, it also relies on an understanding of the definitions and different forms or presentations of discrimination. Some important terms are defined below:

Discrimination – The unjust or prejudicial treatment of different categories of people

Harassment – Aggressive pressure or intimidation

Prejudice – Dislike, hostility or unjust behaviour deriving from preconceived and unfounded opinion

Bias – Inclination or prejudice for or against one person or group, especially in a way considered to be unfair

Microaggression – Indirect, subtle or unintentional discrimination against members of a marginalised group

This toolkit does not go into the details of safeguarding minority groups, but this topic is nonetheless very important, as these minorities are often more vulnerable to discrimination and abuse.

For content specific to discrimination, its possible negative impact on football and how we can work to fight it, we encourage all users to access the UEFA OUTRAGED toolkit.

Considering all of this, the topic of equality, inclusion and, specifically, diversity, becomes complex. We need to ensure that the benefits of EDI are the focus of activities within European football, and that there is a common understanding of the diversity of European football. Everyone has a role to play in this regard, to ensure that mutual respect is given to all involved, regardless of any individual or group characteristics.

The values of equality, diversity and inclusion

If we return to the policy overview given in the UEFA Football Sustainability Strategy 2030, we can extract the following four key values that equality, diversity and inclusion efforts aim to ensure:

1. **Everyone feels respected**
2. **Everyone feels empowered to express themselves**
3. **Everyone can enjoy the game**
4. **Everyone can contribute to the game**

The following sections will expand on the factors that need to be taken into consideration within each area, as well as on how different diversity characteristics are interconnected.

Reflection and representation of society

Understanding the value of diversity and its role as a cornerstone of equality and inclusion makes it clear why football should do its utmost to reflect the diversity of our society.

If football does not reflect society, it will struggle to be truly welcoming to all and, likewise, if football is not welcoming to all, it will struggle to reflect the full diversity of society.

By developing procedures for engagement and investing in collaborations and exchanges with local communities and society at large, we can build the foundation for a football environment that is fully representative. Efforts could include working with the local governments to stay informed of demographic developments or collaborating with local communities to ensure that their members are aware of the football organisations and activities that are available in their area.

Football and diversity will always be linked, and by actively reflecting on this fact in our work, we can ensure that football is as diverse and representative as possible.

Please note that across all areas, the **safety and security of individuals and groups, both physical and psychological, is always a priority**.

If a situation occurs that raises concerns about safety versus inclusion, safety should always come first. However, any such situation should then be analysed in full, and measures should be taken to prevent something similar from happening in the future, allowing future efforts to focus on equality and inclusion.

1. Respect

It is key for all in football to both feel respected and act respectfully. Many factors play a role in this regard, and they are highly impacted by the environment, the situation, the people involved and so much more.

Feeling respected can, in many ways, be impacted by how other people act and by aspects such as language used, infrastructure or policies. Many aspects therefore need to be considered to ensure that everyone feels respected, and these will be expanded on in the next sections of the toolkit.

2. Empowering all to express themselves

Aspects of expression will inevitably interact with aspects of respect, as respect plays an important role in making everyone feel safe and supported in expressing themselves. Expression might relate to personal topics such as sexual orientation, gender identification, disability or religion, but it can also refer to sharing one's opinions on strategic decisions, procedures, etc. When empowering people to express themselves, it is important to identify the difference between freedom of expression, sharing opinions, constructive consultations and openness, and interactions that are discriminatory, harassing or violent.



3. Enjoying the game

For everyone to be able to enjoy the game, they must feel respected and able to express themselves fully, but having access to the game is equally important. Ensuring that everyone can access the game, whether through playing or watching, is key for developing a football environment that is truly welcoming for all.

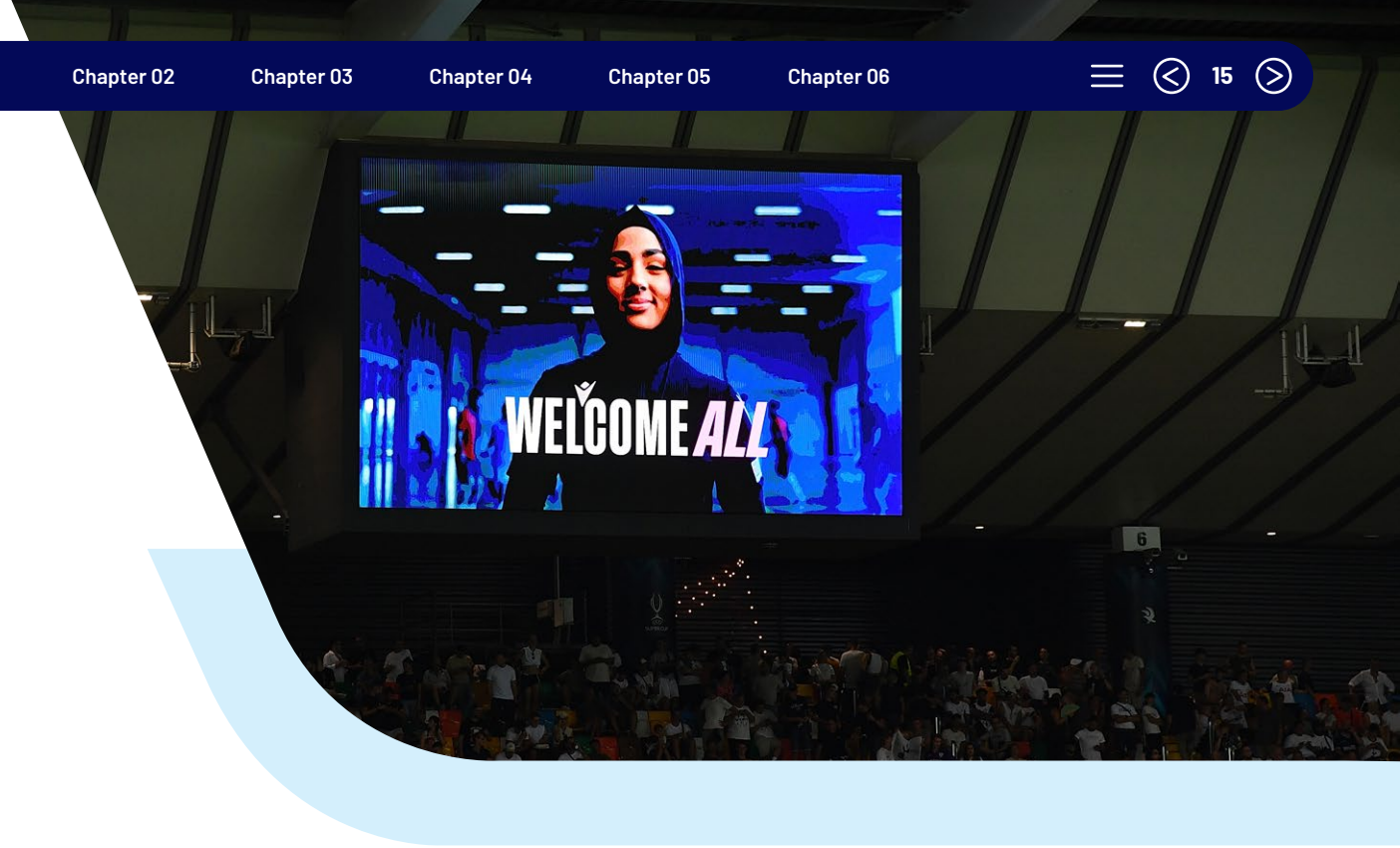
Like many other aspects of equality and inclusion, access can be dependent on several factors, such as disability, geographic location or socio-economic background. It should therefore form part of any discussions or considerations relating to any aspect of football.

4. Contributing to the game

As with enjoying the game, making sure that people are able to contribute to the game is essential for creating an environment that is welcoming for all. One of the building blocks of an inclusive football environment is allowing everyone who wants to the opportunity to play the game and get involved in the organisation of football. This could be through employment or volunteering opportunities, as a fan representative or member of an advocacy group, or by participating in consultations or open-forum discussions, etc.

Ensuring that the entire football ecosystem is working towards diverse representation in operational and administrative roles at all levels of the game is key to fostering an environment in which everyone can fully contribute to the game.

These four values are relevant to the full toolkit and will act as guiding principles for any discussions on ensuring equality and inclusion in European football.



Diversity within European football

Before we move on to concrete concepts, it is important to have a clear understanding of what we mean by diversity characteristics within European football.

Only when we understand the differences that exist between everyone involved in the game can we truly start to understand what needs to be done to implement principles of equal rights and opportunities at all levels of European football.

This toolkit includes information, concepts and considerations related to:

Disability

Ethnicity, culture and racialised identity

LGBTQI+

Nationality

Religion and beliefs

Girls and women in football

This list is not exhaustive but has been compiled to present what UEFA believes to be the most common characteristics considered when assessing diversity within European football.

It should be noted that these characteristics can be grouped and split in many different ways, and this is simply the way that UEFA has decided to present them for the purpose of this toolkit.

In the following chapters, the toolkit provides an overview of each of these characteristics based on the following structure:

- Topic description
- The football-specific context (on the pitch, off the pitch and in the stands)
- Important considerations and good practices
- Resources
- Checklist

A glossary of the terms used across this document is available at the end of the toolkit.

It should be noted that some of the concepts and considerations mentioned in one section may also be relevant to one or more of the other topics. However, to avoid repetition and to keep the format concise, these will be mentioned only once.

Intersectionality

When we speak of diversity and, consequently, equality and inclusion, it is important to recognise that these often intersect, as do diversity characteristics.

Intersectionality refers to the intersecting – or crossing over – of several characteristics and aims to emphasise the fact that no one person is only one diversity characteristic. By considering intersectionality, we avoid looking at each characteristic in a vacuum and instead take into consideration the complex ways in which several diversity characteristics might intersect, allowing us to expand further on the considerations that need to be made to accelerate equality and inclusion.

This is not easy, but by thinking about intersectionality, we will be able to much better understand the challenges in front of us, as well as the requirements and needs of those who we are aiming to support with our work.

To illustrate intersectionality, take the example of toilets at a new stadium. Let's say we are surveying existing fans and reviewing ticketing data to estimate the final size of the stadium and the required number of toilets. If we consider only one diversity characteristic when reviewing this data, say sex (for the purpose of this example, limited to male and female), we should be able to identify how many male and female toilets are needed in our facilities. Does that mean that all possible spectators and fans have been considered in the estimate? No.

First, we have considered only sex, not gender, which means that we will be forcing future spectators and fans to identify with a gender that might differ to how they identify, and by limiting this to a binary scale (i.e. male and female), we might lose participants, who decide to stop attending matches due to a lack of inclusivity.

We would also miss out on any data regarding the need for accessible toilets, as we did not take into account how many of the fans were disabled.

If we look at this issue from the perspective of intersectionality, we will be much better equipped to estimate the requirements for ensuring fully inclusive facilities, comprising accessible toilets, changing places toilets and gender-neutral toilets.

This is one concrete example, but the challenge we all face is making sure we are considering intersectionality in all that we do.

It is easy to get lost when focusing on providing solutions for specific characteristics or even specific groups within a characteristic, but we need to continue to challenge ourselves to make sure that we approach projects and activities within football with intersectionality in mind.



Chapter 01

Disability

Topic description P.18

The football context P.19

Important considerations and good practices P.24

Resources P.25

Checklist P.26

Created in collaboration with AccessibAll

01

Disability

Topic description

UEFA follows the 'social model of disability', which says that people are disabled by barriers in society, not by their impairments or differences. This means that when considering disability, the focus is on the barriers rather than the individuals who are disabled by them. This is the model applied throughout this toolkit and in the additional UEFA resources referenced within.

Rights for disabled people are enshrined within treaties such as the United Nations Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. The purpose of the convention is "to promote, protect and ensure the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by all disabled people, and to promote respect for their inherent dignity".

In football, the social model translates into accessibility and removing barriers to ensure equal access to the game at all levels.

Reducing and removing barriers means ensuring equal access for all disabled people, including:

- Wheelchair users
- Blind and partially sighted people
- Deaf and hard-of-hearing people
- People with limited or reduced mobility (non-wheelchair users)
- Colour-blind people
- Intellectually disabled people
- Neurodivergent people
- People with neurological conditions
- People with long-term health conditions
- People with mental health conditions
- People of short stature
- People with multiple disabilities and people with long-term health conditions or disabilities not listed here

As shown in the list above, it is important to understand that not all disabilities are visible. Colour blindness and mental health conditions are examples of invisible disabilities, and it is important that these are also considered in all inclusion efforts.

It is human nature to consider only the things that are visible to us, but when it comes to disability inclusion, we must understand the broader scope and proactively work to include invisible disabilities.

Inclusive language

- UEFA uses identity- or disability-first terms, in line with the social model of disability. This is the language used across this toolkit.
- It should, however, be noted that some of the organisations referenced in this chapter use person-first language, and the terms used in their material and resources may therefore differ.
- While approaches often differ on this topic, where possible, individual disabled people's preferences should always be respected.

It is also useful to know that disabilities can be permanent or temporary, and that accessibility can be beneficial to others, such as pregnant people.

Disabled people constitute the largest minority group of any population – an estimated 1.3 billion people globally[1] – so ensuring that they can participate in, enjoy and contribute to football is very important from an equality and inclusion perspective.

For more information on mental health and football, the UEFA Take Care programme has a module dedicated to the topic.

1. View source

The football context

On the pitch

Inclusion in play

An array of alternative football formats provide disabled people with playing opportunities. Some examples are presented in the following sections.



Amputee football

Amputee football is a fast-paced, highly skilled sport tailored for individuals with limb amputations or congenital limb differences. Played in a seven-a-side format on a 60m x 40m pitch, it emphasises agility, coordination and teamwork.

Amputee football fosters empowerment, visibility and community for amputees, offering both recreational and competitive pathways.
Learn more here: amputeefootball.eu



Blind football

Blind football is a Paralympic sport designed for blind and partially sighted athletes. It combines auditory cues, spatial awareness and precise communication.

Blind football promotes independence, teamwork and international representation for blind and partially sighted athletes.
Learn more here: ibsasport.org



Special Olympics football

Special Olympics football is designed for athletes with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDDs) of all ability levels, promoting inclusion, health and empowerment through sport.

Special Olympics football breaks down barriers, builds friendships and promotes visibility for athletes with IDDs.
Learn more here: www.specialolympics.org/what-we-do/sports/football



Powerchair football

Powerchair football is a dynamic indoor sport for disabled athletes who use electric wheelchairs. It combines strategy, speed and precision in a highly competitive format.

Powerchair football empowers athletes to compete at grassroots to elite levels, fostering confidence, visibility and community.
Learn more here: europeanpfa.com



Cerebral palsy football

Football for players with cerebral palsy, also known as CP football, is a seven-a-side sport for athletes with cerebral palsy, acquired brain injuries or traumatic brain injuries. It emphasises mobility, coordination and tactical play.

CP football provides a competitive outlet and community for athletes with motor disabilities or conditions, fostering inclusion and excellence.

Learn more here: www.ifcpf.com

Other disability football formats

For information on football formats not mentioned above, please refer to Para Football.

Overview

	Team size	Player eligibility	Equipment/ adaptations	Pitch size	Notable features
Amputee football	7-a-side	Lower limb amputees or limb deficiency (outfield), upper limb amputees (goalkeeper) or limb deficiency	Forearm crutches, no prosthetics	60m x 40m	Fast-paced, no prosthetics, crutch-based mobility
Blind football	5-a-side	Blind and partially sighted athletes (outfield), sighted goalkeeper	Noise-making ball, eye masks, sideboards	40m x 20m	Silence required, guided play, Paralympic sport
Special Olympics football	Futsal, 5, 7 or 11-a-side	Intellectually disabled athletes, and non-disabled players - 'Unified Partners'	Teams made up of players with and without IDDs, adapted rules and adapted coaching	Varies by format: - 30-35m x 40-50m - 35-50m x 50-70m	Unified Sport, European Football Week, focus on inclusion
Powerchair football	4-a-side	Disabled athletes using electric wheelchairs	Powerchairs with footguards, oversized ball	Basketball court (28m x 15m)	2-on-1 rule, indoor play, high-speed strategy, all ability levels
Cerebral palsy football	7-a-side	Athletes with cerebral palsy or an acquired or traumatic brain injury (ambulant disabled)	Modified rules, no offside, roll-ins and throw-ins allowed	Smaller than standard pitch	Emphasises mobility, coordination and tactical play



In addition to these specific disability football formats, accessibility considerations should be at the heart of grassroots football in general.

When working with children and young people, some might be disabled but not yet diagnosed, or there might be disabled people within a group who need specific attention, but only in certain circumstances. For example, a colour-blind player might require additional information to help them distinguish between the two teams, as usually teams are identified by the colour of their kit.

- As part of its commitment to promoting inclusivity and active lifestyles for all, UEFA has developed a walking football toolkit.
- Walking football promotes physical activity, social interaction and inclusion, contributing positively to society and local communities. Based on football, but adapted to be safer and more secure, walking football is perfectly suited to older people and disabled people.

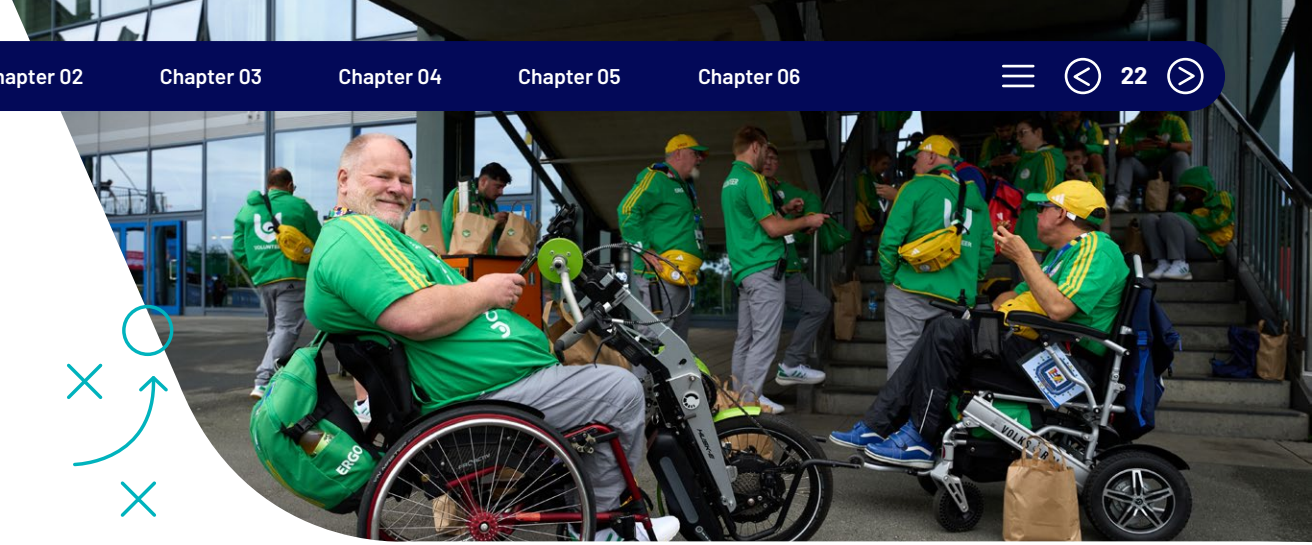
Inclusion in other roles

Disabled people should be able to participate in other aspects of the game, such as coaching, refereeing or other official roles. Any courses and training must be accessible to ensure that disabled people have equal access to the roles.

There will, however, be some tasks and responsibilities that exclude disabled people from taking on specific roles, one example being that of blind or partially sighted people not being able to referee.

When considering accessibility and inclusion, UEFA suggests that football organisations engage with local disability organisations as well as disabled fan associations to better understand what can be done to make the game more accessible.

For material on engaging players, coaches and staff members in discussions on disability hate, see the UEFA OUTRAGED toolkit.



Off the pitch

Disability inclusion should be integrated across employment and volunteering policies and procedures. Specific considerations are required to make sure that disabled people can access the workplace and volunteering projects on an equal basis, ensuring they have the opportunities to contribute to and engage in football off the pitch.

Accessible procedures should cover physical accessibility as well as web accessibility. For more information on accessibility, please see the UEFA Accessibility Guidelines.

Organisations should have a clear commitment to accessibility, including across procedures and communications relating to recruitment and volunteering opportunities. This is a complex topic, and as national legislation differs across countries, organisations should contact local disability organisations for support in auditing current procedures and developing new ones.

In line with this, disability inclusion and accessibility efforts must not focus only on visible physical disabilities, but on the full range of disabilities.

A flexible approach to working environments and conditions should be implemented to ensure that disabled people, who may otherwise be excluded from potential work, have maximum opportunities to participate. Reasonable adjustments, such as flexible working hours, hybrid working locations and providing additional software or hardware to support the individual in performing their duties, should be made by the employer.

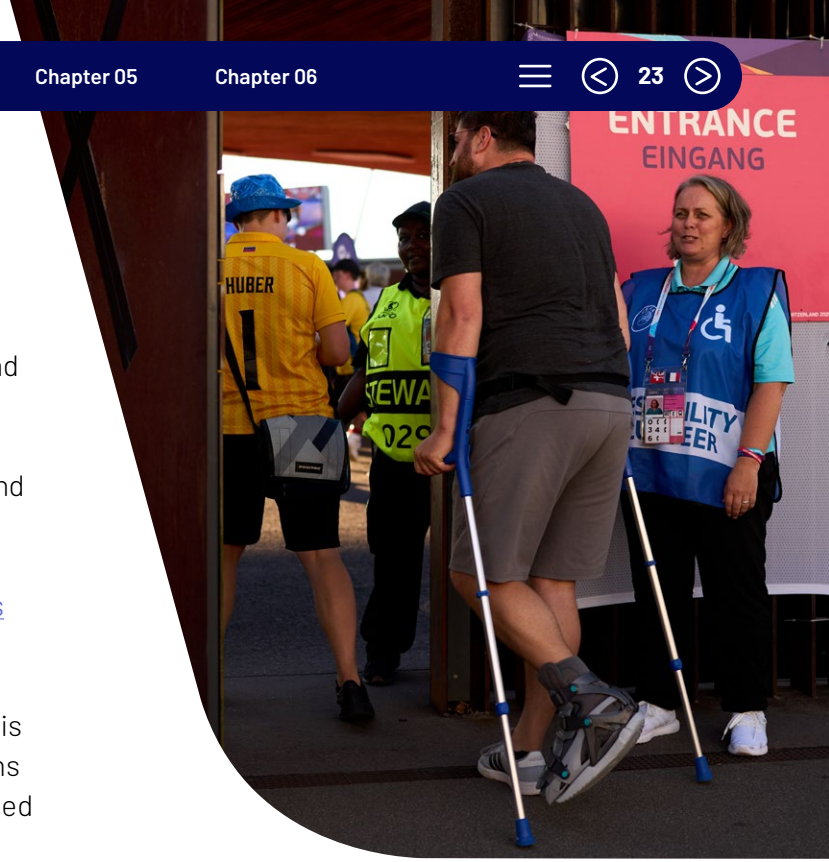
Recruitment processes should also be inclusive of disabled applicants, for example, by including measures such as online interviews or support with transport arrangements to give disabled people an equal chance.

While there are a number of disability-specific roles within the football industry, not least the role of the disability access officer (DAO), disabled people should have the opportunity to apply for all roles across the industry that match their skill set and experience.

Accessible websites and communication channels are the baseline to engaging disabled people in both employment and volunteering. Organisations should review their platforms and systems in accordance with the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines.

Organisations must ensure that workplaces and volunteering environments are inclusive of disabled people, by removing not only physical barriers, but also attitudinal barriers and stereotypes related to disabilities. This means that tasks and responsibilities should not be allocated or withheld on assumptions, but should be defined with the individuals based on their own understanding of their abilities and existing barriers.

For further information, please refer to the AccessibAll guidance note on inclusive employment practices.



In the stands

Ensuring that football is accessible for all to enjoy, independent of disabilities, is key to guaranteeing the equality and inclusion of all fans and spectators. This should ideally be factored in to the planning, development and delivery phase of every project, whether it relates to infrastructure, ticketing policies or matchday services.

From a supporter perspective, accessibility should be understood as enabling disabled fans to plan, attend and participate in football events with the same level of confidence, certainty and independence as non-disabled spectators. This includes not only physical access, but also access to information, services and decision-making that affect the matchday experience.

UEFA has developed detailed guidelines outlining important information and requirements relating to the accessibility of infrastructure and services in European football. These are based on European standards, experience and technological developments, and are an essential resource on the inclusion of disabled people in football. All organisations are encouraged to read these guidelines and to implement them across their work on accessibility.

- The UEFA Accessibility Guidelines can be found here.
- A supplementary checklist to support the implementation of these guidelines can be found here.

The UEFA Stadium Infrastructure Regulations also set out the minimum accessibility requirements. When implementing inclusion measures for disabled fans and spectators, it is important to engage directly with disabled fans and, when available, to collaborate with disabled fan networks and organisations.

The role of the disability access officer

Disability access officers (DAOs) are individuals responsible for supporting and ensuring continued progress in the provision of inclusive and accessible facilities and services on both matchdays and non-matchdays.

DAOs perform a range of tasks and roles, but their main responsibilities are advising their organisations on access and inclusion and acting as a dedicated point of contact for disabled fans.

The DAO should support their organisation in collating and publishing access information on its official platforms, as the internet is usually the first port of call for those looking for information. This can be of use not only to disabled home supporters, but also to disabled visiting supporters who may be planning to attend the stadium for the first time. The DAO's contact details should also be readily available to disabled fans attending the matches.

To constantly enhance access to facilities and services, the DAO should make sure that their organisation's commitment to accessibility is reflected in infrastructure, activities and communications.



Important considerations and good practices

★ Understand the breadth of the topic

Within the topic of disability and, specifically, in the context of equality and inclusion, it is key to understand that the range of disabilities is very wide, and disability inclusion goes far beyond considering wheelchair-user access.

Consulting and engaging with disabled players and fans, and working proactively with local or national disability organisations will provide insight into the needs of the community, and ensure that efforts are inclusive of all disabilities.

★ Train staff and volunteers

While accessible infrastructure and services are essential in ensuring accessibility to the game, the importance of training the people within your organisation should not be overlooked. Training dedicated accessibility staff is crucial, but it is important not to stop there – all active staff should have an understanding of the topic and be aware of the activities and services delivered.

Ideally, all staff should receive information and training on the topic, and it is good practice to make sure that everyone that a disabled fan might meet during their matchday experience – from stewards and security personnel to volunteers and concession staff – is informed about the services and activities available for disabled fans and trained in how to interact with differently disabled people in a way that is helpful, considerate and appropriate. This guarantees an inclusive experience, and ensures that work to remove the barriers disabled people might face continues to be implemented.

★ Use inclusive language

The social model of disability aims to shift the focus from the person and their abilities to society and its barriers, and discourages terms that have negative connotations. To reflect this, we must think about the language that we use. For example, under this model, the term 'non-disabled people' is used, not 'able-bodied people', to recognise that individuals are disabled by barriers within society.

You can access guidance on inclusive disability terminology here. However, it is important to note that each language is different, and the model of disability that an organisation follows will impact the language it uses.

★ The role of technology in delivering wider inclusion

Accessibility is not just about the infrastructure and physical facilities in place at a stadium. Accessible services, including sign language interpretation and audio-descriptive commentary (ADC) also play a vital role in ensuring that all disabled people can enjoy a positive and inclusive experience.

Assistive technology is an incredibly fast-moving and developing sector, with new and innovative solutions regularly launched to support differently disabled people. Recently-developed concepts such as haptic devices and virtual reality (VR) headsets have started to be trialled within a football environment, and development will continue at a rapid pace due to technological advances and a rise in artificial intelligence solutions.

These technological developments highlight the importance of treating accessibility as a fluid, dynamic concept and of regularly reviewing the options available as part of short, medium and long-term strategic planning. The development of new technologies can have a transformative impact on both users and service providers, enabling many more disabled people to experience a truly memorable matchday.



Resources

- Amputee football
- Blind football
- Cerebral palsy football
- Special Olympics football
- Inclusive disability terminology
- Para Football
- Powerchair football
- UEFA Accessibility Guidelines
- UEFA Accessibility Checklist
- UEFA OUTRAGED toolkit
- UEFA Stadium Infrastructure Regulations
- UEFA Take Care programme
- UEFA Walking Football toolkit
- Web Content Accessibility Guidelines

Checklist

The following checklist aims to provide a framework to evaluate disability inclusion within your organisation/team across all three key areas. Readers are encouraged to use it to reflect on work related to this topic.

Area	Question	Yes	No	n/a
All	Does your work take into consideration how this area intersects with other diversity topics?	☐	☐	☐
On the pitch	Do you provide disability football formats (e.g. blind football, powerchair football, CP football)?	☐	☐	☐
	Are disabled players included in grassroots and youth football activities?	☐	☐	☐
	Are disabled people included in the recruitment and training of officials (e.g. coaches, referees)?	☐	☐	☐
	Are training courses and materials accessible to disabled participants?	☐	☐	☐
	Do you engage with local disability organisations to improve accessibility in football activities?	☐	☐	☐
Off the pitch	Are recruitment and volunteering procedures accessible (e.g. physically, digitally, in terms of communications)?	☐	☐	☐
	Do you offer workplace adaptations for disabled employees and volunteers?	☐	☐	☐
	Are websites and digital platforms compliant with the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines?	☐	☐	☐
	Is disability inclusion integrated into all policies and procedures?	☐	☐	☐
	Are attitudinal barriers addressed through staff training and the use of inclusive language?	☐	☐	☐
	Are staff trained to understand and support a wide range of disabilities, not just visible ones?	☐	☐	☐
In the stands	Do you provide accessible seating options such as wheelchair-user spaces, easy-access seats, etc?	☐	☐	☐
	Are stewards, volunteers and staff trained to support disabled spectators?	☐	☐	☐
	Is infrastructure designed with accessibility in mind, from the planning phase onwards?	☐	☐	☐
	Do you consult with disabled fans and local disability organisations to improve stadium accessibility?	☐	☐	☐



Chapter 02

Ethnicity, culture and racialised identity

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Created in collaboration with Fare

02

Ethnicity, culture and racialised identity



Topic description

Ethnicity and culture

Although these two characteristics are separate, they are also highly connected.

Ethnicity – The quality or fact of belonging to a population group or subgroup made up of people who share a common descent or cultural background

Culture – The ideas, customs and social behaviour of a particular people or society

Ethnicity and culture are often central to an individual's sense of identity and belonging. These aspects of identity influence how people experience life, both individually and collectively as part of a community.

Culture can be deeply personal and is often formed of shared activities and identities.

Elements of culture can be shared with people across ethnicities and backgrounds – European football is a good example of one such culture.

As cultural and ethnical aspects differ widely across European football, it is good practice for football organisations to engage with their local communities to learn about the cultural and ethnical diversity within their area of activities.

Racialised identity

Modern science is clear: there is only one race, the human race. In other words, all humans belong to a single species. In fact, there is more genetic variation within populations than between them.

However, in European society, the idea of 'race' remains prevalent. It is common to define people by their race and when doing so, we often reference physical differences such as skin colour. This is known as racialisation. When we acknowledge people's differences in this way, we are referring to racialised identities.

The football context

On the pitch

Football organisations should ensure that the culture on the pitch is grounded in respect, inclusion and equality, and that no one is treated differently because of how they look or how others perceive their identity.

Efforts to promote inclusion on the pitch should focus on two core areas.

Education and engagement

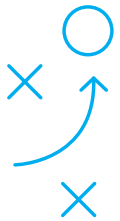
Children and young people should learn about the value of diversity and the principles of respect, equality and inclusion from their earliest involvement in football. This helps to build a positive understanding of differences and creates the foundations for respectful behaviour later in life.

While of specific importance to children and young people, these values should remain a focus across all activities, including those aimed at adults. It should be made clear to all that respect and inclusion are at the core of activities, and that everyone plays a role in creating an environment welcoming for all.

It is not only players who should be educated and engaged –coaches, team staff, referees and officials should also be trained on preventing, identifying and managing discrimination, and ensuring the game is centred around respect and inclusion. Organising modules or workshops on equality, diversity and inclusion for these roles is a good way to integrate these values into existing frameworks.

Clear and transparent procedures for reporting, responding to and addressing discriminatory behaviour are essential. Equally important is creating an environment where the realities and impact of racism and discrimination can be openly discussed, and where commitments to anti-discrimination are translated into consistent action. This work should begin at the grassroots level and continue through to the top of elite football.

Further information and material on racism in football can be found in the UEFA OUTRAGED toolkit.



Empowering referees and match officials

Everyone needs training, confidence and clear procedures to be able to prevent, identify and address racial, ethnic and cultural discrimination. As the regulators of the match environment, referees should be equipped to respond to hate speech, inappropriate gestures and discriminatory behaviour and be supported by strong organisational policies.

To empower referees, clear and concrete processes on how to actively safeguard the players and officials should be in place. These include policies like the UEFA three-step procedure, introduced to ensure that referees can act on racist incidents and other forms of discrimination, giving them the ultimate power to abandon the match.

Providing referees and officials with access to material, training and dedicated experts so that they stay up to date on key concepts, discriminatory references and gestures is good practice and supports their empowerment. This will make them feel secure in their understanding of interactions, chants and other forms of communication that go on in parallel to the match being played.



Off the pitch

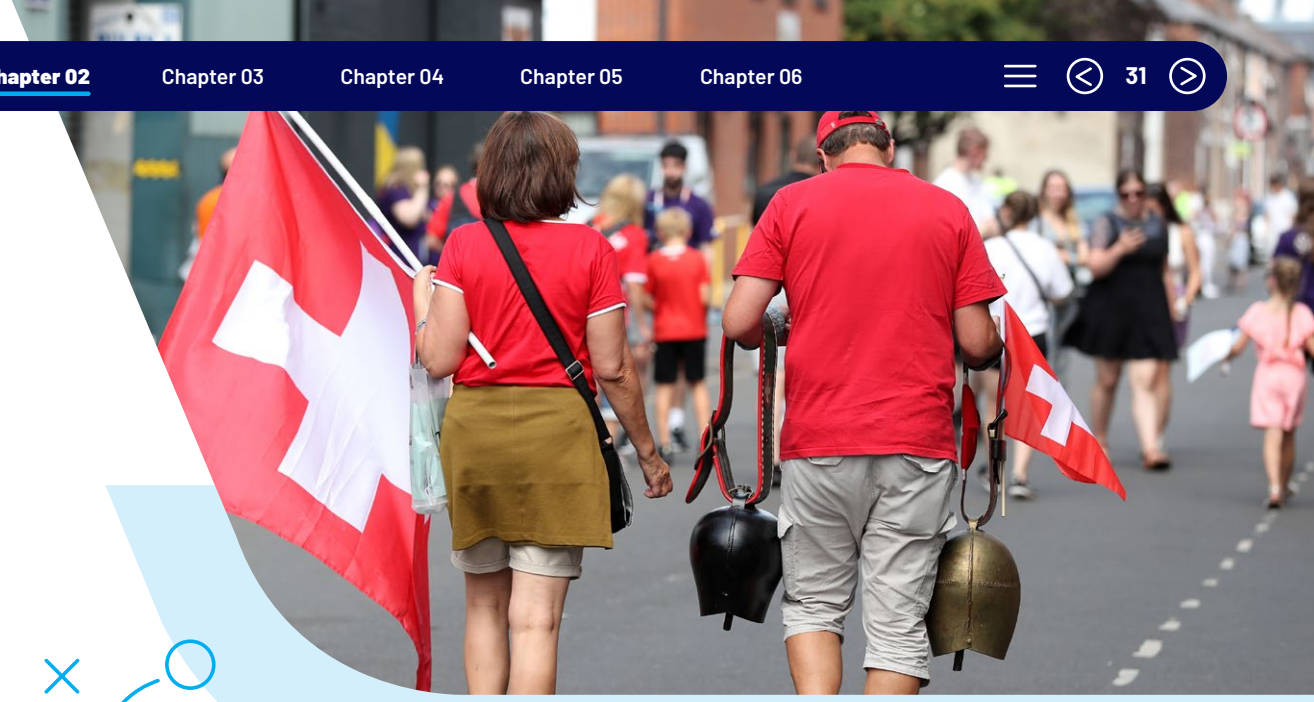
Ethnicity, culture and racialised identity shape people's experiences off the pitch just as much as on it. Stereotypes, exclusionary jokes and assumptions about cultural norms can all undermine inclusion, even in organisations with strong policy frameworks.

Leaders, managers and colleagues should model respectful behaviour, challenge discriminatory actions and help create environments where everyone feels valued and able to contribute fully.

When it comes to structures and procedures, the HR unit or recruitment team holds a great responsibility in the development of policies and procedures that limit and consistently challenge bias. Considerations include whether applicants should be asked to include a photo on their CVs, and training hiring managers to prevent and identify bias based on characteristics like skin colour.

Cultural and ethnical differences come in many forms, some of which are more visible in the workplace. It might be the way we communicate: whether we are direct or not, whether we share information in writing or through conversation, how we interpret statements or questions or how we use body language to emphasise messages. It might also be our ways of working: how we structure our workdays, the methodologies that we use or how we analyse content and information.

Differences might relate to our traditions or self-expression, reflected in things like our food or clothing. While these are less relevant to our work, understanding and sharing information and experiences about these topics can often add educational value and help to develop deeper understandings of a variety of cultures and ethnicities across the workforce.



In the stands

Supporters bring their identities, traditions and community histories into stadiums, and their experiences are shaped by how safe, respected and included they feel.

Matchday environments are one of the most visible expressions of football culture. Ethnicity, culture and racialised identity all influence what matchday looks and feels like for different groups of fans.

Creating inclusive matchday environments requires intentional design and management that recognises supporters as active participants in football culture. Consideration of supporter experience should be embedded in planning and delivery to ensure that all fans feel confident, welcome and able to express their identity respectfully.

Depending on their culture or ethnicity, fans and spectators can have a very different relationship to football and football events. This can be seen in the traditional music, chants or instruments heard in the stands, as well as in the way in which they react to winning or losing.

All supporters should feel that their identities and cultures are recognised and respected. In diverse areas, this can include providing information in multiple languages, culturally appropriate food options, inclusive messaging, spaces for prayer or reflection and visible signals that all fans are welcome.

Small design choices can significantly improve the sense of belonging for minority communities and improve their engagement with you.

Football environments provide an important place where people of different cultures and ethnicities can come together through a shared love of the game, and where cultural and ethnic traditions and expressions are celebrated.

Activities in the stands should always be respectful towards the players and officials on the pitch and other fans – discriminatory or offensive chants or other forms of expression are not permitted.

Important considerations and good practices

★ The importance of developing values of respect and inclusion

The visibility of many aspects of ethnicity, culture and racialised identity, such as skin tone, clothing and hairstyles, can lead to assumptions and opinions about someone and their worth, simply based on their appearance. For example, someone might walk by a pitch where football is played, see a black player and decide to hurl abuse and discriminatory comments at them, all based on their own prejudice. Football must play an active role in spreading and supporting positive values of respect and inclusion.

Most importantly, this work is about people. By approaching ethnicity, culture and racialised identity with curiosity, respect and care, football can build environments where everyone feels seen, valued and like they belong. That is how the game moves forward – not through statements alone, but through everyday actions that demonstrate that football truly is for all.

★ Engagement for awareness and connection

Some elements of culture and ethnicity are not visible, but relate to ideas, customs and social behaviours. Therefore, we need to actively engage across cultures and ethnicities to build an understanding of what these diverse characteristics can bring to football and how football can be welcoming and respectful of all cultures and ethnicities.

★ The impact of conscious and unconscious bias

Perceptions based on personal differences such as ethnicity, culture or racialised identity can shape how people are treated in football and how they experience the game.

These characteristics often drive both conscious and unconscious bias. To counteract this, environments must be created that are grounded in respect, fairness and inclusion, with systems in place to prevent, identify, report and remedy any incidents of discrimination, and where people are empowered to act as role models and ambassadors for respect and inclusion.

Resources

UEFA resources

- UEFA OUTRAGED toolkit
- UEFA three-step procedure

International institutions

- Council of Europe – work on anti-racism, intolerance and human rights standards
- European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights – resources on racism, discrimination and equality in a European context
- Equality and Human Rights Commission – explanations of ethnicity, discrimination and protected characteristics
- UNESCO – guidance on culture, cultural diversity and cultural identity

Further readings

- Evidence of racial bias in football evaluation and media coverage
- Fan responses and racism in football (stadium and social media implications)
- 'Forward Progress: The Rooney Rule and Its Post-SFFA Relevance
- Racial bias among fans and officials
- Racialisation and the inequitable experiences of racialised minority coaches in men's professional football club youth academies in England'
- Racisms and experiences of minorities in amateur football (UK and Europe)

Checklist

The following checklist aims to provide a framework to evaluate inclusion efforts related to ethnicity, culture and racialised identity within your organisation/team across all three key areas. Readers are encouraged to use it to reflect on work related to this topic.

Area	Question	Yes	No	n/a
All	Does your work take into consideration how this area intersects with other diversity topics?	☐	☐	☐
On the pitch	Do you have policies and procedures in place to empower referees and officials to safeguard players from discrimination and harassment based on ethnicity, culture or racialised identity, such as the three-step procedure?	☐	☐	☐
	Do you engage with players, team staff and coaches on inclusion and respecting diverse ethnic, cultural and racialised identities?	☐	☐	☐
	Do you have clear commitments towards equal treatment regardless of ethnicity, culture or racialised identity?	☐	☐	☐
	Do you collaborate with local communities to understand the local context regarding ethnicity, culture and racialised identity?	☐	☐	☐
Off the pitch	Are recruitment and HR procedures designed to prevent bias based on ethnicity, culture and racialised identity?	☐	☐	☐
	Are hiring managers trained to identify and challenge biases related to ethnicity, culture and racialised identity?	☐	☐	☐
	Are there efforts to actively share and learn about cultural traditions (e.g. food, clothing) to build understanding among employees and volunteers?	☐	☐	☐
	Are workplace practices adapted to accommodate diverse cultural norms?	☐	☐	☐
In the stands	Are diversity and inclusion messages and announcements made during events?	☐	☐	☐
	Do you engage with fan groups to promote respect and inclusion?	☐	☐	☐
	Are cultural and ethnic traditions celebrated in a respectful and inclusive manner?	☐	☐	☐
	Is the stadium environment designed to be welcoming to all, regardless of ethnicity, culture or racialised identity?	☐	☐	☐

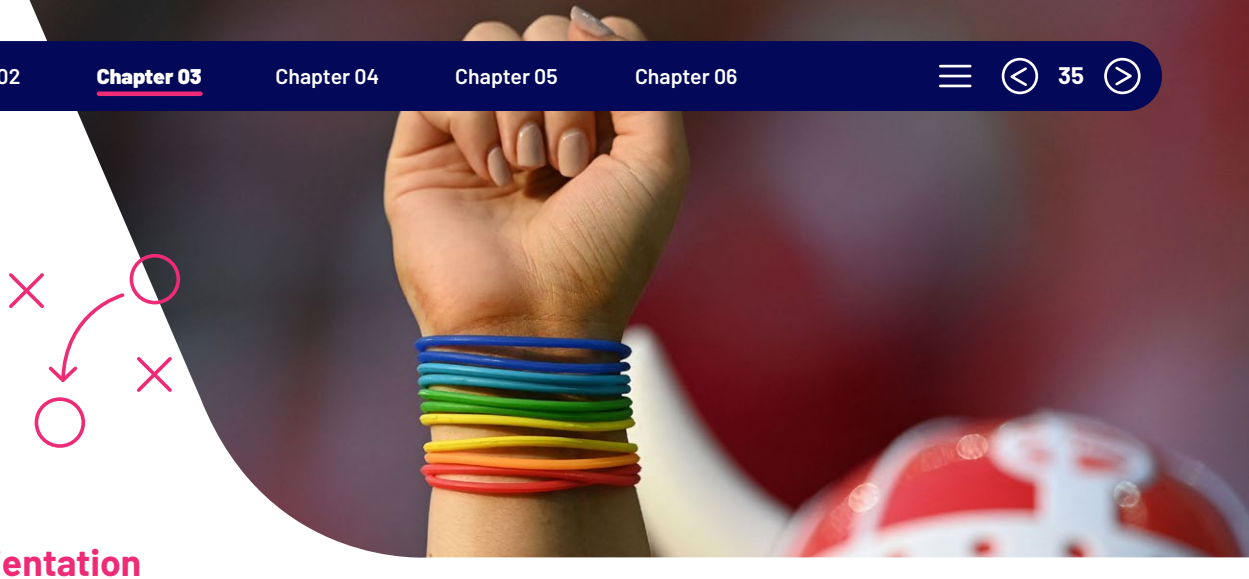


Chapter 03

LGBTQI+

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Created in collaboration with European Gay & Lesbian Sport Federation



03 LGBTQI+

Topic description

LGBTQI+ is an umbrella term that refers to people with diverse sexual orientations, gender identities, gender expression and sex characteristics.

The acronym commonly includes lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning and intersex people, while the "+" signifies other identities such as asexual and pansexual, recognising that language and identities continue to evolve, and that not everyone uses the same terms to describe themselves.

It is important to create environments where everyone feels respected, safe and able to participate, regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression or sex characteristics. While some aspects of sex and gender are also addressed in the section specific to girls and women in football, there will always be an overlap between the two sections.

Sexual orientation

Sexual orientation refers to who a person may be emotionally, romantically and/or sexually attracted to. Commonly used terms include:

- ***Heterosexual*** - Refers to a man who is attracted to women or to a woman who is attracted to men.
- ***Homosexual (gay or lesbian)*** - a person who experiences emotional, romantic and/or sexual attraction toward people of the same gender.
  - ***Gay man*** - a person identified as a man who feels emotional, affective and/or sexual attraction to other men.
    - ***Gay*** is also a generic term often used for homosexual (lesbian and gay) sexuality, and some women define themselves as gay rather than lesbian.
  - ***Lesbian*** - a person identified as a woman who feels emotional, affective and/or sexual attraction to other women.
- ***Bisexual*** - a person who feels emotional, affective and/or sexual attraction for more than one gender, whether their own and/or a different one.
- ***Pansexual*** - a person whose emotional, romantic and/or sexual attraction is not limited by sex or gender, and who may be attracted to people of any gender identity.
- ***Asexual*** - a person who experiences little or no sexual attraction to others, some asexual people experience emotional and/or romantic attraction, while others do not.

It is important to understand that sexual orientation is personal and may be described differently by different individuals.

A person's sexual orientation has no relevance to their ability to play, coach, officiate, work in or enjoy football. Inclusion work in this area focuses on preventing discrimination, challenging stereotypes and creating environments where people do not feel pressure to hide who they are.

Sex, gender identity and gender expression

It is important to understand the definitions and specificities of the three terms used in the title of this section, but also the way in which they interlink.

- ***Sex*** refers to biological characteristics and is often recorded in legal documents. While frequently described as male or female, some people are born with sex characteristics that do not fit typical definitions, for example, intersex people.
- ***Gender identity*** describes a person's internal sense of their gender. Some people identify as women or men, while others identify as non-binary or use different terms such as agender.
- ***Gender expression*** refers to how a person presents their gender to the world such as through appearance, behaviour or clothing. This can vary widely and does not necessarily align with societal expectations.

Understanding these distinctions helps reduce misunderstandings and supports respectful interactions. Language and terminology differ across cultures and languages, and organisations should remain open to learning and adapting their approaches to reflect this.

Cisgender, transgender and non-binary

In discussions about sex and gender, the terms cisgender and transgender are commonly used to describe how a person's gender identity relates to the sex they were assigned at birth:

- ***Cisgender*** refers to a person whose gender identity aligns with the sex they were assigned at birth.
- ***Transgender*** (sometimes shortened to ***trans***) refers to a person whose gender identity does not align with the sex they were assigned at birth. Transgender people may or may not take steps to socially, legally or medically transition.
- ***Non-binary*** refers to people whose gender identity does not fit exclusively within the categories of 'woman' or 'man'. Non-binary is considered a gender identity and non-binary people are commonly considered to be trans people. Anyone can identify as non-binary, regardless of their sex characteristics.

These terms are included to support shared understanding. They do not capture the full diversity of gender identities, nor do all individuals choose to use them. Respecting how people describe themselves should always be the guiding principle.



The Genderbread Person stands as a useful visual tool for understanding these terms.

The football context

The starting point when considering LGBTQI+ inclusion should be creating cultures grounded in respect, safety and belonging.

Regulations, eligibility rules and competitive structures are important and necessary, but they should be understood as part of a broader inclusion landscape rather than the sole or dominant focus. To understand both the limitations and opportunities for inclusion, it is important to keep in mind that these will have a different impact at the elite level compared to grassroots level football.

Football has a powerful role in shaping social norms. Positive equality, diversity and inclusion practices on and around the pitch can help reduce stigma, challenge harmful stereotypes and ensure that people are able to participate without fear of discrimination or exclusion.



On the pitch

Creating inclusive playing environments

At all levels of football, inclusive cultures on the pitch begin with everyday behaviour, language and leadership. Players, coaches, referees and officials all contribute to making a football environment feel safe and welcoming.

Good practices include:

- setting clear expectations that discriminatory language or behaviour based on sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression or sex will not be tolerated;
- supporting players and officials to be themselves, without putting pressure on anyone to hide or explain their identity;
- ensuring that safeguarding, well-being and respect are prioritised alongside performance.

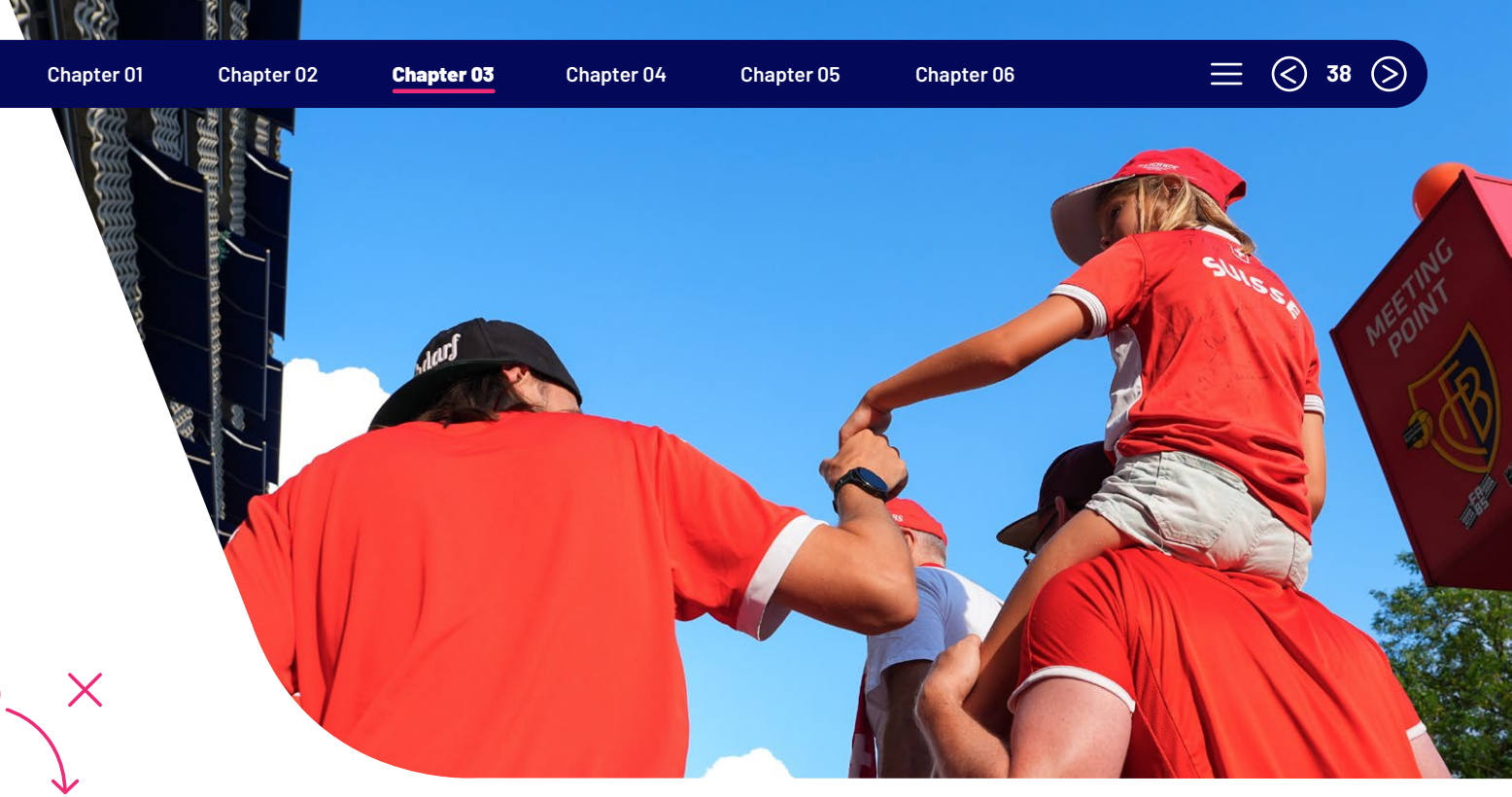
Education and engagement are particularly important. Training for coaches and officials should raise awareness of LGBTQI+ inclusion, respectful language and how to respond appropriately to incidents of discrimination.



Sex and gender in football

Football is shaped by long-established competitive structures, which are mostly organised by sex-based categories. Within this context, specifically at elite levels, questions relating to gender identity, competitive fairness and safety have become increasingly visible and, in some cases, contested. It is for each national association or football organisation to set their specific approach to inclusion with regard to sex and gender, and this toolkit aims to offer some broader considerations.

Everyone should have the opportunity and access to contribute to and partake in football activities, but the competitive aspect of the game comes with a set of considerations related to the competition's fairness. The differences in physicality between male and female players are central to this.



Physical considerations

This toolkit does not provide medical or sports science guidance, and it recognises that physical development varies significantly between individuals and sex characteristics are not strictly binary.

The below section presents a simplified, high-level overview of points that are commonly referenced during policy discussions:

- **Before puberty:**
  Differences in body size, strength, and physical capacity among children are generally limited. There is considerable individual variation at this stage of development, and the ranges of physical ability commonly overlap between boys and girls of the same age. Factors such as growth patterns, physical activity, and environment play a significant role, and physical characteristics cannot be reliably attributed to sex alone.

- **During and after puberty:**
  Puberty can influence aspects of physical development, but its timing, progression, and effects vary widely between individuals. Hormonal changes interact with a range of other factors, including genetics, nutrition, training, health and the social context. As a result, physical characteristics and performance outcomes continue to show substantial variation among both boys and girls, with overlapping ranges rather than distinct or uniform profiles. Puberty does not result in identical physical outcomes, nor does it determine capability or performance in a fixed way.

- **Competitive and safety considerations:**
  Sports policies often consider the level of physical contact, performance indicators, and risk management. Many sports policies also consider principles of inclusion, equal access, and non-discrimination alongside these.



In policy debates, attention most commonly focuses on trans women participating in women's football. When it comes to trans men, the discussion tends to concern the safety of the transgender player due to differences in physical strength and body mass.

It should be noted that policy discussions are often limited to the physical aspects of a person's sex in contrast to their gender identity. These characteristics should not be understood as defining a person's gender identity, nor as determining their ability or sporting potential.

Equally, it should not be assumed that all transgender people will proceed with hormone treatments or physically transition. Transgender and non-binary people have diverse experiences and developmental pathways; some may undertake hormone treatment or other forms of medical transition, while others will not. Such choices vary by individual and context and are not prerequisites for recognition or participation. Physical diversity exists across all populations, and assumptions that directly link physical traits to fixed gender categories should be avoided.

It is important to acknowledge that these discussions are complex and sensitive, and that they affect people differently depending on age, level of play, legal context and personal circumstances. For those directly impacted, uncertainty or restrictive environments can have significant emotional and psychological consequences.

While eligibility rules and regulations are essential, they should not overshadow the broader aim of inclusion. Organisations are encouraged to:

- communicate participation rules clearly and transparently;
- explain the rationale behind regulations in a respectful and accessible way;
- consider the well-being and dignity of all players when implementing policies;
- review approaches regularly, as scientific knowledge, legal frameworks and social understanding evolve.

At grassroots level, flexibility and creativity can support participation and enjoyment, particularly for children and young people. Mixed activities, non-competitive formats and development-focused approaches can help ensure that football remains accessible during key stages of identity development.

Psychological considerations

Regardless of regulatory frameworks, the psychological well-being of players and officials must remain central. Experiences of exclusion, scrutiny or hostility linked to gender identity or sexual orientation can lead people to disengage from football entirely.

Inclusive environments are supported when individuals in positions of responsibility:

- listen and respond with care to concerns raised by players or parents;
- avoid unnecessary assumptions or public discussions about an individual's identity;
- work with safeguarding and well-being professionals when complex situations arise.

Sexual orientation

Sexual orientation is not relevant to sporting performance. However, norms about masculinity, femininity and sexuality, combined with long-standing silence around LGBTQI+ identities in football, can create environments where some people feel visible, accepted and safe, while others do not. It is important that football provides a safe and secure environments for all, by challenging assumptions, stereotypes and misconceptions and ensuring LGBTQI+ inclusion both on an individual and institutional level.

A person's sexuality can influence how their behaviour is interpreted and judged. For example, it is often considered positive or wholesome when a heterosexual player celebrates a win with their partner. When a gay or bisexual player does the same thing, their expressions of joy or affection may attract scrutiny, criticism or claims of inappropriateness. This double standard reinforces the idea that heterosexuality is the default, and that other sexual orientations are something to be tolerated only when kept invisible.

To create inclusive playing environments, organisations must therefore do more than respond to isolated incidents. It involves actively challenging heteronormative assumptions and unspoken rules about what is considered acceptable behaviour, identities or ways of expressing oneself within football cultures.

In this context, it is important that the environment around the game is respectful and accepting of all sexual orientations, and that at all levels of the game, everyone, including players, coaches, referees and officials, feels supported and safe to be open about who they are, if they choose to be.

Within European football, the narrative persists that men involved in the game are heterosexual, while women are lesbians. These assumptions are not reflective of reality and should be understood as outcomes of historical exclusion, stigma and a lack of visible role models, rather than as inherent truths. They place unfair pressure on individuals, whether by forcing silence, encouraging speculation or assigning identities that may not be accurate.

Football organisations should work proactively to create environments where no such assumptions are made. No one involved in football should feel afraid or at risk when being open about their sexual orientation, and similarly, no one should feel that their sexual orientation is presumed or questioned because of their involvement in the game.

Education, visibly committed leadership and clear policies all play a role in changing these attitudes. Engaging with local and national LGBTQI+ organisations can support football bodies in understanding lived experiences, developing inclusive practices and addressing both cultural norms and structural barriers related to sexual orientation.

For material on engaging players, coaches and team staff in discussions about homophobia and LGBTQI+ hate, see the UEFA OUTRAGED toolkit.

Off the pitch

Employment and volunteering

In administrative, professional and volunteer roles, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression and sex are generally not relevant.

Instead, inclusion efforts should focus on equal access, respectful workplace cultures and inclusive policies. Efforts here should ensure that all feel represented and included, as well as ensuring better insights into the actual situation within the organisation.

Key considerations include:

- using inclusive and gender-neutral language in policies and communications;
- ensuring that data collection distinguishes clearly between legally required information and optional self-identification, which offers a wider range of gender identities;
- preventing, identifying and managing gender inequality;
- providing gender-neutral facilities where possible;
- challenging heteronormativity (the notion that heterosexuality is the norm) in everyday workplace practices.

For example, while there might be legal reasons to collect data from employees or volunteers on their sex, any questions should clearly distinguish between sex and gender. Ideally, the information required should be stated explicitly. This can be done, for example, by asking for a person's sex as listed in their passport, connecting the information required to an established and nationally recognised identifier. In such cases, it is important to fully understand the scope and limitations of this information within the national context and to include the options that are legally recognised within the country.

Ideally, if there are not legal specifications as to the data required, data collection questionnaires should allow participants to choose from a wider range of gender identifications. This makes everyone involved feel represented and included and guarantees that the data collected is of value, ensuring better insights into the actual situation within the organisation.

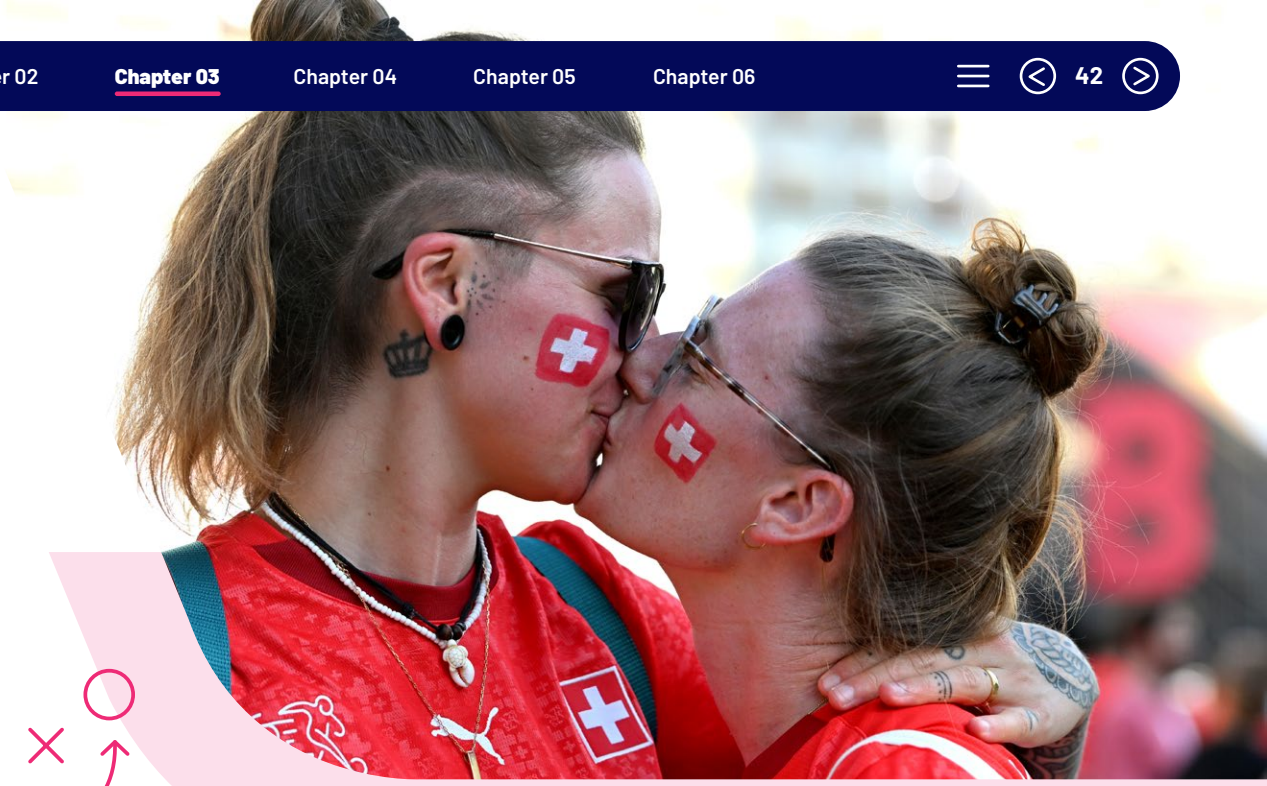
Collecting data on sexual orientation should only be done in relation to equal treatment efforts, as it has no bearing on any other area.

Policies and procedures

When considering LGBTQI+ inclusion in the workplace, travel and parental leave policies are examples of areas that might require specific attention.

LGBTQI+ staff may have safety concerns when travelling to certain countries and should be supported if they decline to do so. Laws and cultural aspects might make them feel unsafe or uncomfortable visiting certain destinations. For an overview of the legislative situation worldwide, the ILGA World maps can stand as a useful resource.

Parental leave policies should recognise diverse family structures, including same-sex and adoptive parents. Consider the use of language in these policies, e.g. using the term 'parental leave' instead of 'maternity' and 'paternity'. Organisations are also encouraged to investigate extending parental leave support to cover adoptive and same-sex parents. When doing so, it is important to consider the national parental leave support structures, as well as the organisation's own insurance agreements. Understanding these aspects will provide a better insight into the investment required and the possible impact of more inclusive parental leave policies.



In the stands

Football stadiums and stands are powerful social spaces where identities and group dynamics are expressed visibly and collectively. For LGBTQI+ supporters, these environments can be affirming and celebratory, but they can also be shaped by deeply rooted cultural norms that make participation unsafe or exclusionary.

Inclusion in stadiums and stands means being able to attend matches, express support and participate in fan culture without feeling the need to conceal one's identity or modify behaviours.

Evidence from supporter organisations, academic research and incident reporting shows that LGBTQI+ fans are disproportionately exposed to hostile chants, targeted verbal harassment and, in some cases, physical violence in and around stadiums. Homophobic and transphobic chanting remains a recurring issue in parts of European football, often framed as 'banter' or rivalry, but threatening and demeaning to those targeted.

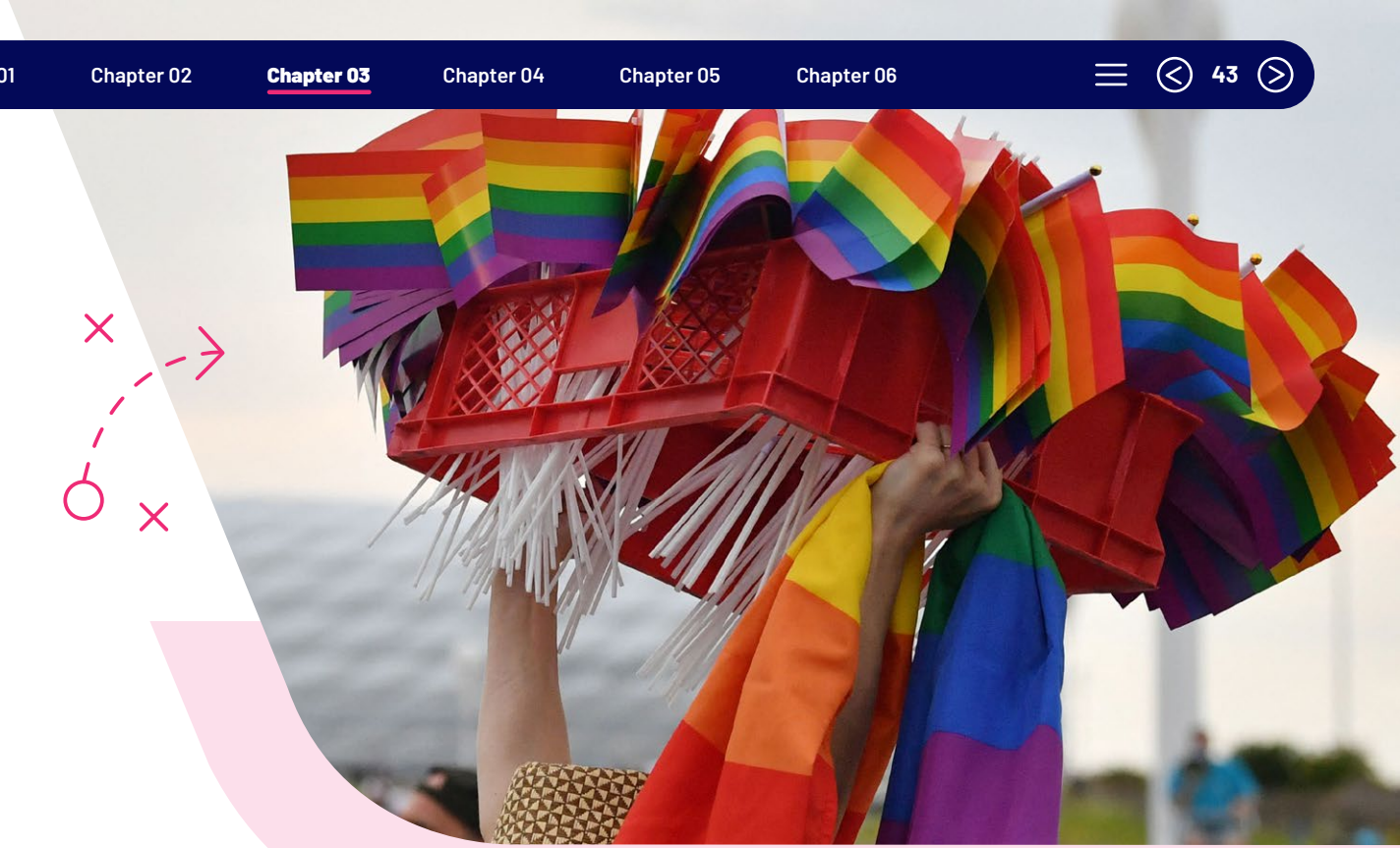
Creating inclusive stands therefore requires addressing culture as well as infrastructure. Inclusion is not achieved solely through facilities or symbols, but through sustained efforts to change norms, expectations and accountability within fan cultures.

Providing inclusive services and facilities

While bathrooms and sanitary facilities are often the only gender specific facilities that we think of related to stadium infrastructure and services, it is also important to consider aspects such as the choices offered in security checks. Allowing fans to select a preference for the gender of the steward conducting the search, without needing to justify their choice, can promote a safer, more inclusive environment for all.

Making gender-neutral bathrooms available on-site is also a good practice, ensuring that individuals are not made to define themselves based on the binary male-female constructs.

Ensuring that gender-neutral facilities and services are successfully implemented involves making sure that staff and volunteers are adequately trained and informed. Such training should cover inclusive language and how to respectfully and safely engage with all fans and spectators, regardless of gender identity.



Visibility and belonging

The presence of rainbow pride and LGBTQI+ flags of different kinds has become a way of making statements of inclusion and equality. It is best practice to allow such symbols, and if needed, to specify that political statements not relating to equality and inclusions may not be made as a part of this. If the organisers decide not to allow such flags, they must explain why.

Many national associations, teams, clubs and leagues have implemented specific events and campaigns in support of LGBTQI+ inclusion, for example, wearing rainbow or LGBTQI+ armbands or rainbow laces or using rainbow corner flags.

Symbols, campaigns and visible signals of inclusion such as pride initiatives can play an important role in demonstrating institutional commitment.

However, their impact depends on whether they are accompanied by credible actions towards inclusion. Without meaningful follow-through, visibility measures risk being perceived as superficial or performative.

Ultimately, inclusive stands are those where LGBTQI+ supporters can express support for their team without fear, where diversity is not singled out as exceptional and where respect is actively maintained by both institutions and fellow fans.

Achieving this requires long-term cultural change, informed by the voices and experiences of LGBTQI+ individuals.

It is therefore important to engage directly with fan groups and local LGBTQI+ organisations on any inclusion measures for LGBTQI+ fans and spectators.

Important considerations and good practices

★ Avoid stereotypes and create an inclusive environment

Stereotypes about gender roles, sexual orientation or appearance can undermine inclusion, even when they are unintended. Moving away from assumptions, for example, about family structures, partners or identities, helps create environments where people feel seen and respected.

Sexual orientation should in no way affect a person's ability to be involved in football. Nothing within the football ecosystem restricts or differentiates between individuals based on who they are attracted to.

★ Children and young people

When working with children and young people, it is especially important to:

- avoid reinforcing rigid gender stereotypes;
- use inclusive language when referring to families and caregivers, e.g. not making assumptions on family constellations based on aspects like heteronormativity;
- allow space for questions without putting pressure on anyone to label or disclose their identity.

★ Engagement and learning

LGBTQI+ inclusion is an evolving area. Ongoing dialogue with local and national LGBTQI+ organisations, educators and community groups is essential to keep policies and practices relevant, respectful and grounded in lived experience.



Resources

- Community guidelines – Building Inclusive and Sustainable LGBTQI+ Sports Clubs
- Good Practice: Including transgender and non-binary people in sport
- ILGA World maps
- LBTI+ Women in Sport: Research and outcomes
- Purple Policy Paper – Recommendations for Policymakers and Sports Authorities
- Sport, inclusion and LGBTI diversity
- The Genderbread Person
- The illustrated story of LGBTQI+ Sport in Europe
- The relevance of sexual orientation and gender identity in sport in Europe
- The situation of women and LGBT+ individuals in European grassroot sports
- The story of LGBTQI+ Sport in Europe
- UEFA OUTRAGED toolkit

Checklist

The following checklist aims to provide a framework to evaluate LGBTQI+ inclusion within your organisation/team across all three key areas. Readers are encouraged to use it to reflect on work related to this topic.

Area	Question	Yes	No	n/a
All	Does your work take into consideration how this area intersects with other diversity topics ?	☐	☐	☐
On the pitch	Are participation policies inclusive of transgender and non-binary players?	☐	☐	☐
	Do you consider the well-being and mental health of young players with regard to their gender identity?	☐	☐	☐
	Is there proactive support in place for players to express their sexual orientation safely?	☐	☐	☐
	Do you work with local and national LGBTQI+ organisations to ensure inclusive practices across the game?	☐	☐	☐
	Are coaches and officials trained on LGBTQI+ inclusion and respectful language?	☐	☐	☐
Off the pitch	Are employment and volunteer policies inclusive of diverse gender identities?	☐	☐	☐
	Are parental leave policies inclusive of all family structures?	☐	☐	☐
	Are active measures in place to challenge heteronormativity (inclusive language guidance, messaging from leadership, etc.)?	☐	☐	☐
	Are your communications reviewed based on an inclusive language or style guide?	☐	☐	☐
In the stands	Do you provide security checks where fans can give their preference for the gender of the steward conducting the search?	☐	☐	☐
	Are gender-neutral toilets available?	☐	☐	☐
	Are the platforms used to collect fan data inclusive of diverse gender identities?	☐	☐	☐
	Are pride and LGBTQI+ flags allowed in the stands?	☐	☐	☐
	Have you implemented visibility campaigns or events supporting the LGBTQI+ community ?	☐	☐	☐



Chapter 04

Nationality

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04 Nationality



Topic description

Nationality refers to a person's relationship with a state, and often denotes legal status and citizenship.

Although nationality may appear straightforward, it plays a highly visible and often emotional role in identity building. For some people, nationality is central to their identity, for others it is less important.

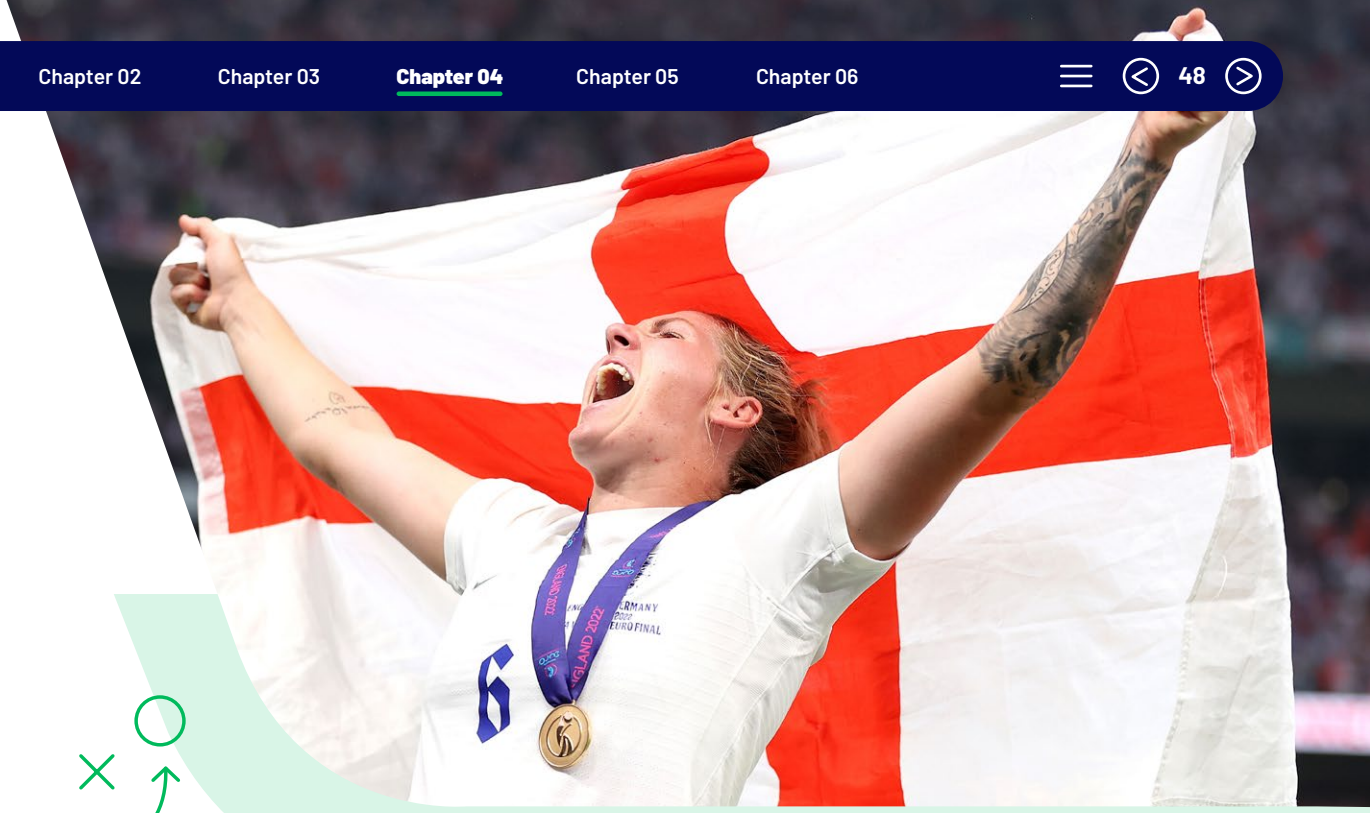
In football, a person's nationality can shape their identity, playing opportunities and how they are regarded, whether they are a player, official or supporter.

A shared nationality can unite supporters, strengthen a sense of belonging and create shared pride. While competitive rivalries between nations are a part of football, they can also lead to tension when national rivalries turn hostile.

Europe's political history, including wars, disputes and shifting borders, continues to shape how nationality is understood today. Historical grievances and media narratives can influence how people behave towards players, officials or supporters from particular countries.

For some people, nationality and legal status are not straightforward. Refugees, stateless people and individuals with complex documentation may face additional barriers to participating in football, even at grassroots level. We should be aware of these realities and seek solutions that reduce unnecessary administrative barriers while respecting legal requirements.

The dynamics of national rivalry can require careful navigation. The aim is to create an environment where respect, fairness and safety guide behaviour.



The football context

On the pitch

On the football pitch, nationality plays an array of different roles. In national team football, it is the main eligibility criterion for players, but it also feeds into the appointment of referees and officials. UEFA is the European football confederation, and participation in UEFA's national team competitions is limited to the national teams of its member associations.

Eligibility to represent a national team is governed by FIFA regulations, which set clear criteria such as place of birth, family heritage or residency. Understanding these rules helps avoid assumptions and supports players through complex decisions.

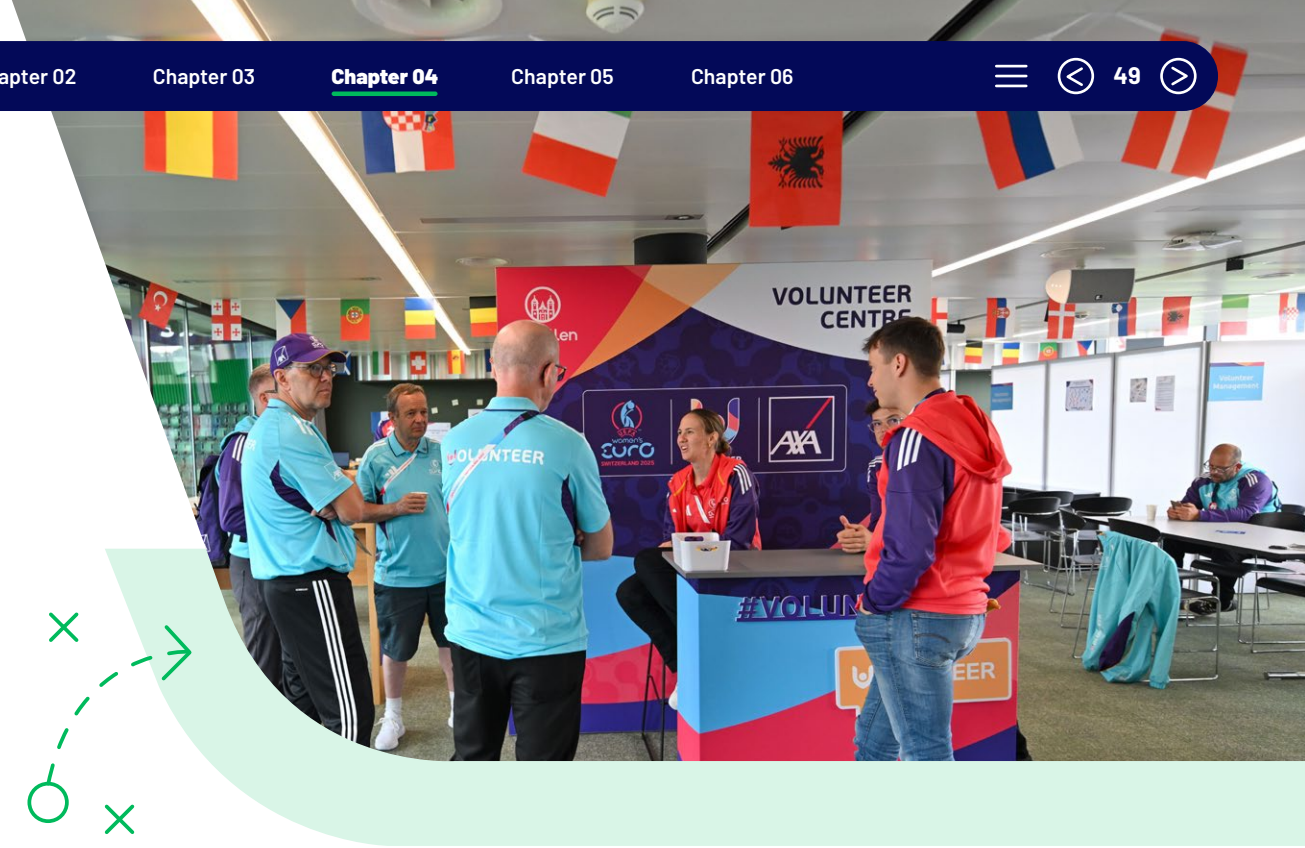
Nationality can also influence how players and officials are perceived, both by supporters and by the wider football community. Although nationality is a legal status, it is often inherently linked to a person's sense of identity, meaning it can be a personal and complex topic.

For players who hold more than one nationality, choosing which country to represent can be a difficult decision. The choice can be shaped by personal identity, cultural connection, family history, playing opportunities, resources or selection pathways. Some may feel a strong personal attachment to one nationality but find greater playing opportunities with another.

These are not simple or purely administrative choices, and they can attract public scrutiny or pressure.

Inclusive practices around nationality include providing clear information about rules and eligibility criteria to all players and officials, offering neutral support and helping them to make informed choices about what country to represent. It is also important to ensure transparent selection processes and clear communication when selecting officials.

Within club football, the topic of nationality is less prominent in relation to the game, as nationality is not an eligibility criterion for players or officials.



Off the pitch

Within football organisations, nationality can influence recruitment, legal eligibility for employment, access to volunteering pathways and how people experience belonging within a team or workplace.

These dynamics can be complex, because nationality is treated as a diversity characteristic within this toolkit, while in many countries, it is also a regulated legal requirement.

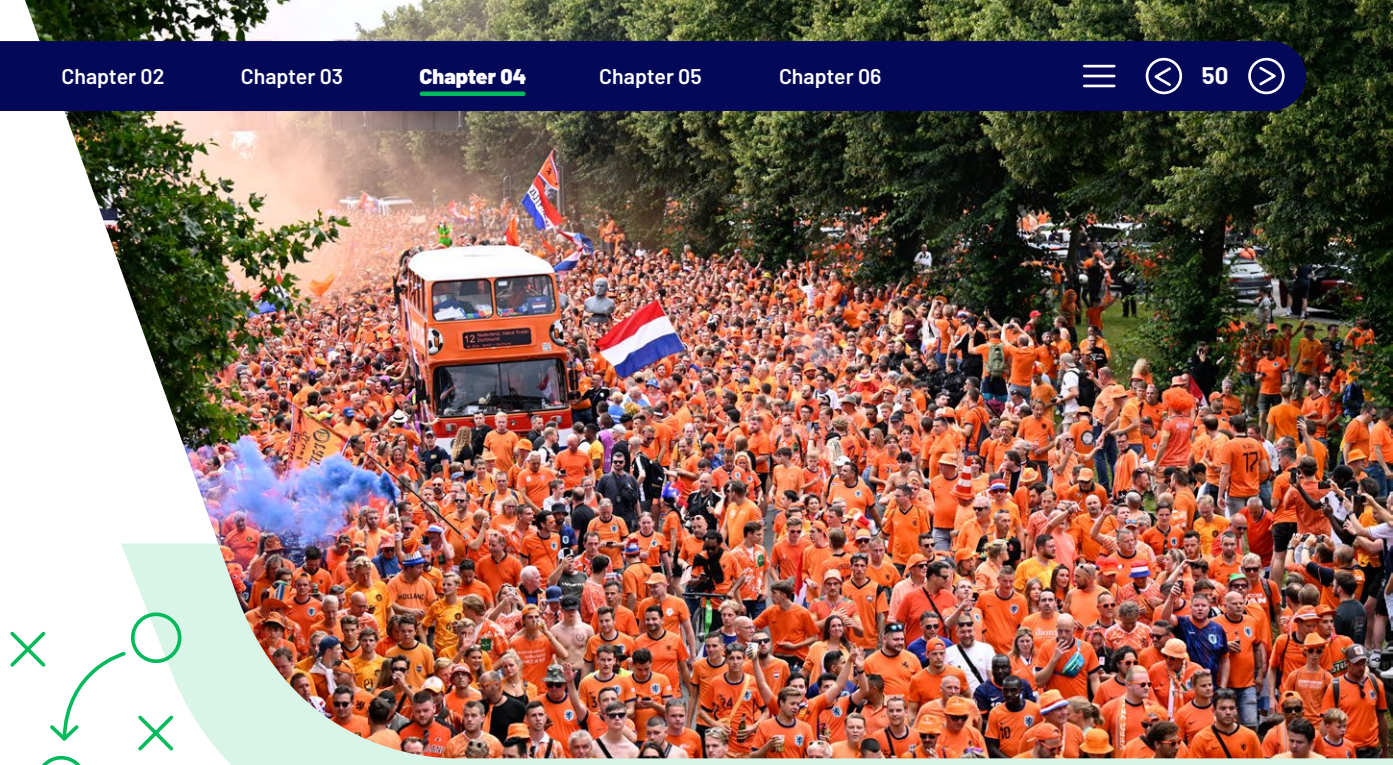
Many countries have legislation that limits the employment opportunities of people who do not hold local nationality or who are not part of regional agreements such as the European Union or the Schengen area. These rules influence who is eligible for particular roles, how visas are processed and what documentation is required. Organisations must understand and comply with their legal obligations, while also being transparent with applicants about any restrictions that may affect their ability to apply.

Once people are employed or engaged in volunteer roles, nationality should not be a barrier to inclusion, respect or progression. A workforce that includes people with different nationalities strengthens football by bringing together broader perspectives and cultural knowledge. Clear communication and fair processes all contribute to a workplace in which people feel valued and respected regardless of their nationality.

In everyday operations, assumptions about someone's nationality can influence how they are spoken to, how their abilities are perceived or whether they are considered for development or leadership opportunities. Regular training, clear organisational values and accountable leadership help prevent stereotypes and unequal treatment linked to nationality.

Nationality is also relevant to volunteering programmes. Insurance, safeguarding requirements and legal responsibilities can differ when volunteers come from different countries. Organisations should ensure that volunteers understand their rights and responsibilities, and that any legal limitations are made clear at the start.

Inclusive practices within an organisation include issuing clear communications around any relevant legislative restrictions and offering support services to people who relocate from another country, including language courses and information about local systems and bureaucratic processes.



In the stands

Nationality is highly visible in the stands during national team competitions, as supporters find pride in flags and celebrate their shared identity and culture.

Inclusive matchday environments are those where expressions of national identity can take place in a respectful way, and where fans feel confident participating in shared spaces regardless of their nationality.

These events can create a powerful sense of connection between people from the same country and help to build meaningful friendships across national groups when supporters engage with one another respectfully.

However, the positive energy can dissipate quickly; some supporters may carry historical grievances or national stereotypes into stadiums or fan zones. These dynamics can escalate if there are no clear precautions in place. The aim of prevention is not to police people's national identity or loyalty, but to ensure that matchday environments remain safe, respectful and welcoming for everyone.

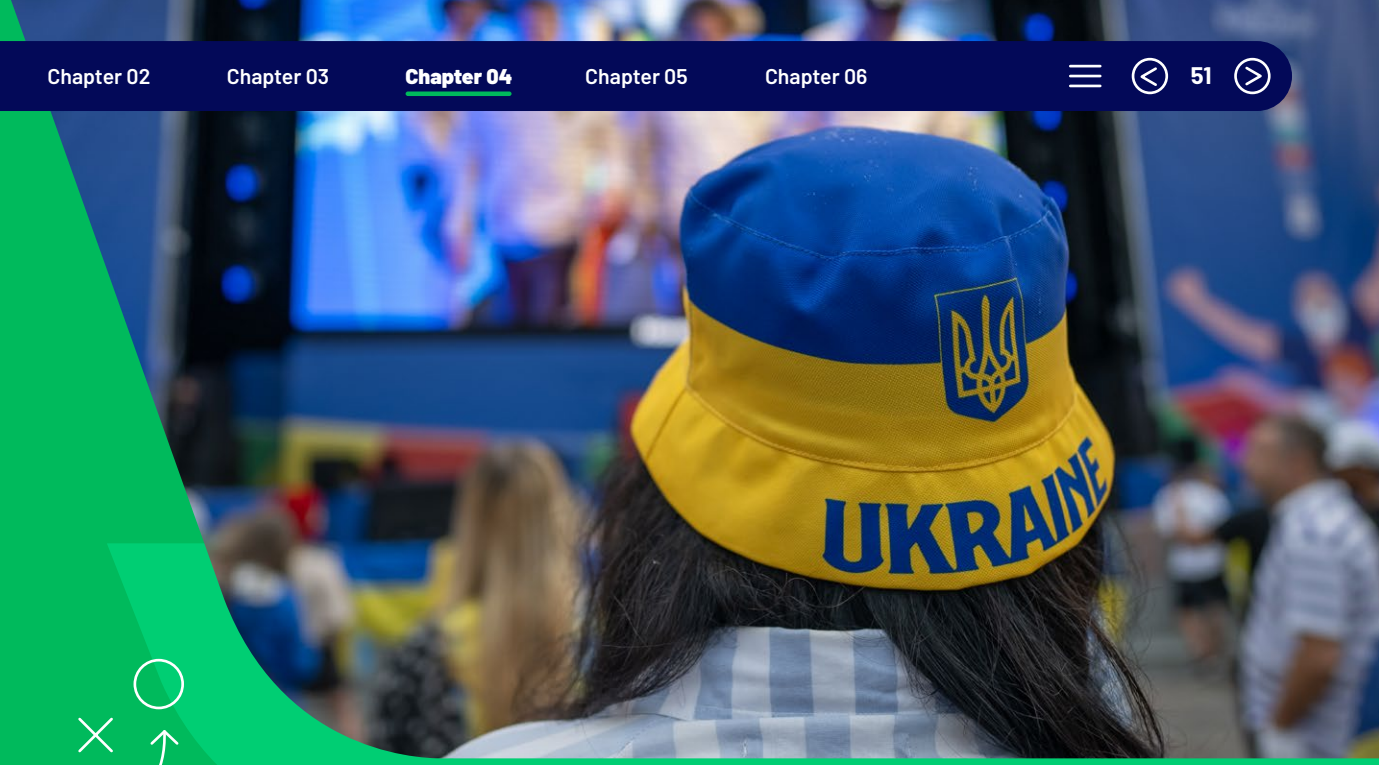
Event organisers and stadium operators play an important role in creating safe spaces for supporters from different countries. Practical measures to support these efforts include designated access routes, clearly marked seating areas and well-briefed stewards who understand the sensitivities linked to nationality.

These measures are not about segregation, but about reducing risks and ensuring that different national groups feel confident and safe in the environment.

At its best, football brings people together across borders. Supporters in the stands can model this by celebrating their own nationality with pride while still respecting others. Creating the conditions for this type of positive engagement is an important part of building inclusive and safe matchday experiences.

Examples of inclusive fan-focused measures include working with supporter groups to create positive traditions such as shared banners, mixed fan zones or joint activities that celebrate football across borders.

Important considerations and good practices



★ Different relationships to nationality

Nationality can be complex for many people. Some are very proud of their national identity and feel connected to it, while others do not consider it an important part of themselves, and some even prefer not to speak about their nationality or engage with specific aspects of it.

★ Create spaces for respectful interaction

Encourage players, officials, coaches, staff, supporters and volunteers to engage with one another in ways that build connections rather than tension. Clear expectations help to set the tone for team environments, matchdays and workplace culture.

★ Understand the nuances of nationality

People with multiple nationalities may experience additional scrutiny or pressure. Organisations should avoid making assumptions about loyalty or identity and instead focus on supporting individuals in their own choices.

★ Challenge stereotypes and assumptions

It is important to note that people of the same nationality are not all the same. Stereotypes and assumptions about nationalities can have serious consequences.

For example, police and security personnel might wrongly label specific fans as hooligans, drunks or disorderly based on their nationality, and consequently treat these fans negatively. This might detrimentally impact the experience of many fans, the majority of whom have done nothing wrong.

★ Cross-border travel and visa requirements

When it comes to international football, organisations must be aware of any visa requirements or cross-border travel restrictions or limitations put on fans and spectators. Understanding the regulations and procedures in your country and providing transparent and clear information on them ahead of events allows you to support visiting fans in making it to the match.



★ Refugee inclusion

Additional sensitivity might be required when registering a player who is a refugee or asylum seeker, specifically when moving from recreational into competitive football.

This, as additional regulatory and administrative requirements come into play, requiring adherence to the relevant FIFA provisions governing the administrative procedure for the international transfer of players.

Organisations should make sure they understand these regulations, as well as the player's specific situation and review the full registration process with them before taking any further steps.

There might be reasons to ensure that that the government authorities in the country of the player's nationality and former club are not able to potentially find out their whereabouts due to the international transfer certificate (ITC) proceedings, which could jeopardise the refugee player's safety as well as the safety of their family.

The club or association must ensure that the procedures are clear, transparent and understood by the player. The player themselves can then decide whether to proceed with the registration process.

Resources

UEFA and FIFA resources

- UEFA Refugee toolkit
- Regulations Governing the Application of the FIFA Statutes (p.64-69)
- FIFA Regulations on the Status and Transfer of Players (RSTP)

International institutions

- Council of Europe - European Convention on Nationality
- United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees – guidance on refugees, asylum seekers and stateless persons
- International Organization for Migration – information on migration, nationality and cross-border mobility

Checklist

The following checklist aims to provide a framework to evaluate the situation related to nationality within your organisation/team across all three key areas. Readers are encouraged to use it to reflect on work related to this topic.

Area	Question	Yes	No	n/a
All	Does your work take into consideration how this area intersects with other diversity topics?	☐	☐	☐
On the pitch	Are players and officials with multiple nationalities supported in their personal identification choices?	☐	☐	☐
	Are eligibility criteria based on nationality clearly presented to all involved in the game?	☐	☐	☐
	Do you actively promote inclusion and respect for all regardless of nationality?	☐	☐	☐
Off the pitch	Are recruitment and volunteering practices transparent about legal restrictions concerning nationality?	☐	☐	☐
	Is nationality treated as a valued diversity characteristic in work and volunteer settings?	☐	☐	☐
	Are inclusion and respect for all nationalities embedded in organisational culture?	☐	☐	☐
	Do you support foreign nationals joining the organisation, e.g. through language courses or by providing information about local systems and bureaucracy?	☐	☐	☐
In the stands	Are fan interactions encouraged to be respectful and inclusive across nationalities?	☐	☐	☐
	Are measures in place to prevent aggressive or violent national rivalries (e.g. separate access points)?	☐	☐	☐
	Are host cities and stadiums helped in their preparations to manage diverse national groups during events?	☐	☐	☐
	Are positive expressions of nationality encouraged in fan zones and stadiums?	☐	☐	☐



Chapter 05

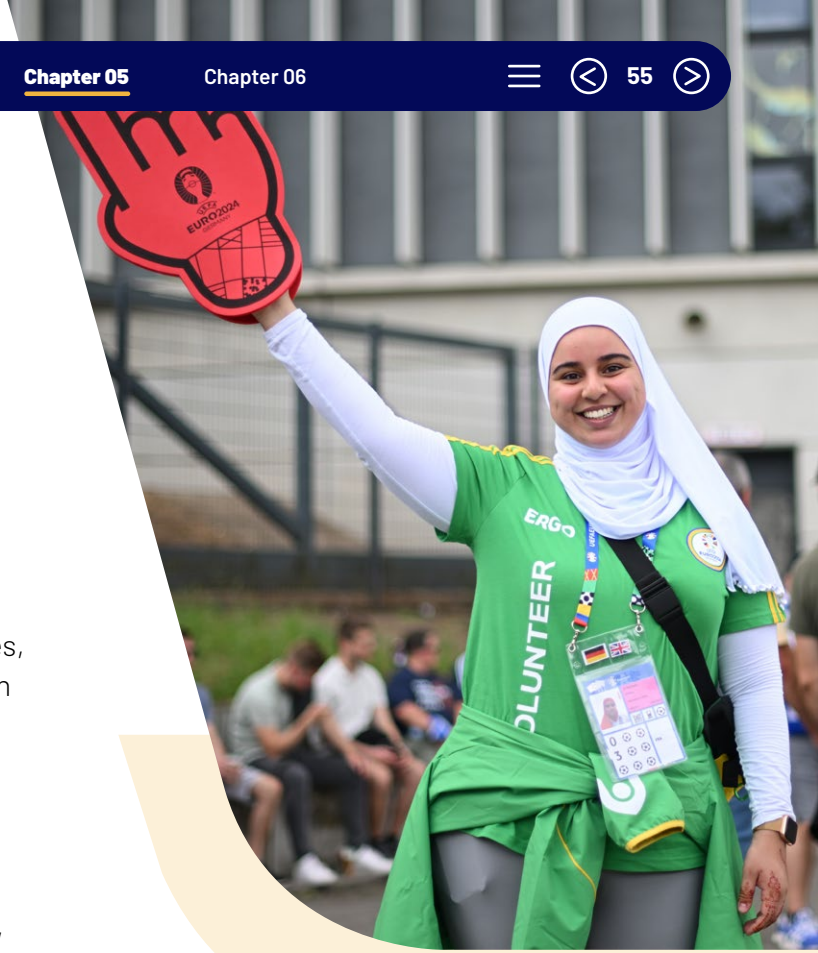
Religion and beliefs

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Created in collaboration with Fare

05

Religion and beliefs



Topic description

Religion and belief systems can be central to an individual's identity and sense of belonging. For some, this means following a faith; for others, it may involve non-religious worldviews, philosophies or ethical frameworks.

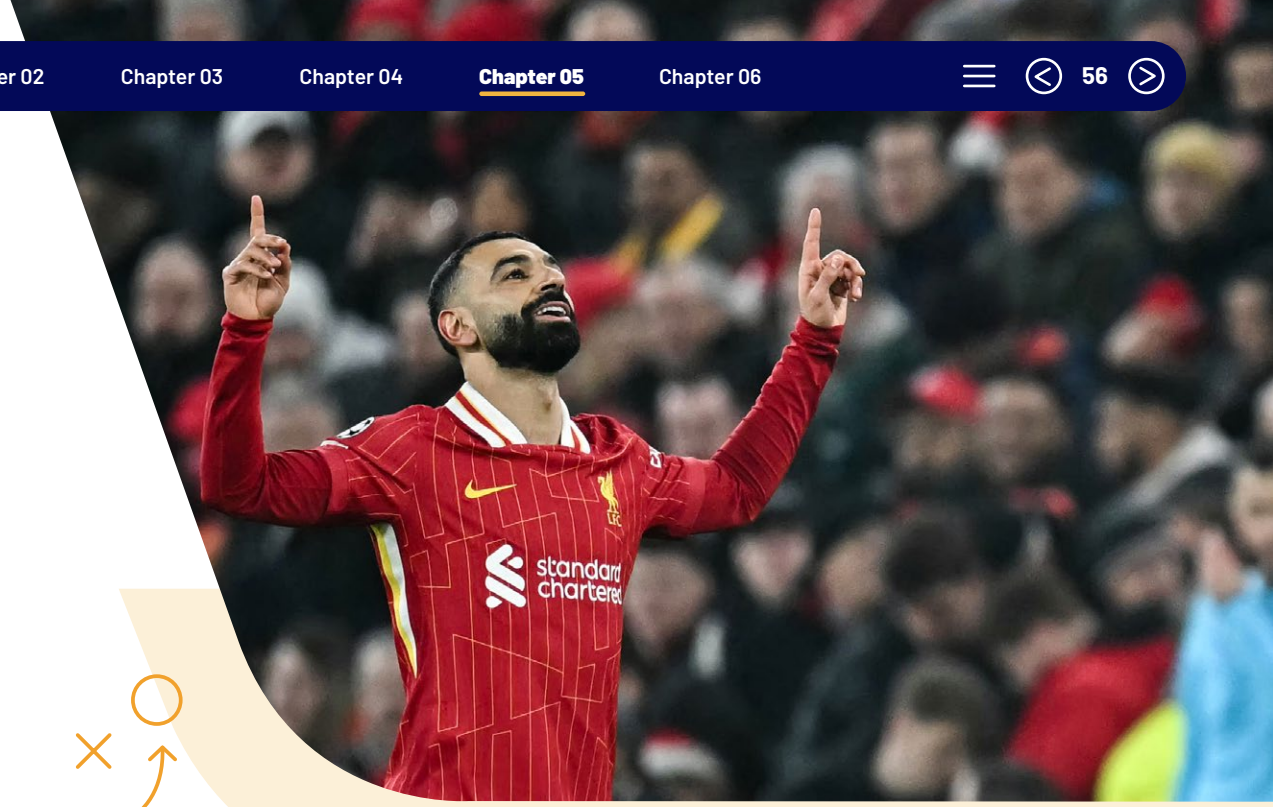
When considering equality and inclusion in football, it is important to recognise that religion and belief are deeply personal and expressed in diverse ways. People of the same faith or belief system do not all share the same practices, and assumptions based on labels can lead to misunderstandings and exclusion.

Football environments should respect these differences and understand how private beliefs intersect with team dynamics, matchday routines and organisational procedures. Practical considerations include respecting dietary requirements, providing spaces for prayer or reflection, scheduling events and activities around religious holidays and ensuring that policies do not unintentionally disadvantage individuals based on their faith or beliefs.

If food is provided, sources, cooking procedures, ingredients and dietary options should be taken into consideration. When accommodating religious dietary requirements, options should be clearly labelled, and pork and beef-free alternatives should be offered. Ingredients like pork should be prepared in separate areas to avoid cross-contamination and, when possible, halal options should be made available. Non-alcoholic drink options should always be provided.

Creating an inclusive culture means acknowledging that belief systems – religious or otherwise – shape how people experience football, and ensuring that everyone feels respected and able to participate fully without feeling pressure to conform or hide their identity.

The aim of inclusion is not to promote any one belief over another, but to ensure a sense of dignity and belonging for people of all faiths and beliefs, including those with no religion.



The football context

On the pitch

Within the game, religion and beliefs should be considered with regard to several practical areas such as food and beverages, the scheduling and timing of activities, access to appropriate facilities (such as spaces for prayer or reflection) and clothing or dress codes.

Starting with food and beverages, dietary requirements need to be considered so that everyone involved in a game or event can eat the food provided. Meal timings might also need to be taken into account. In periods such as Ramadan, Muslim players or officials might not eat or drink until sundown, which should be accounted for when planning training or other activities.

It is important to engage performance and medical staff in how to best accommodate specific timings and dietary practices to keep all activities safe while respecting religious periods and requirements. Medical and performance teams should also be aware that some players may avoid certain ingredients present in supplements or medicines for religious or ethical reasons, and alternatives may need to be provided.

Some religions have fixed prayer times. To create an inclusive environment, players, team staff, referees and officials should be able to observe these prayer times with minimal impact on their participation in the football activities.

Religious needs should also be incorporated into infrastructure and facilities. This may include providing private shower booths, not only communal spaces, for individuals who, for religious reasons, do not wish to be unclothed in front of others. Dedicated rooms for prayer or reflection are also considered good practice.

When it comes to clothing and equipment, the most prominent discussions related to religion concern the wearing of headscarves or hijabs by Muslim women. While organisations may have separate policies or regulations in place, these items are generally allowed, provided they comply with the Laws of the Game.

Off the pitch

Organisations should have a good understanding of different religions and belief systems, and account for them within employment and volunteering protocols. For example, in relation to workplace holiday planning and employee events, prayer practices, food provisions and uniforms.

Public holidays are often the first thing we think about when considering religion and belief in the workplace. In many cases, these are based on religious holidays and are often dictated by the national or local government. It is important for football organisations to understand the local public holidays and the cultural or religious background of each day. This will support reviews into whether more inclusive public holiday structures can be implemented or, if this is not possible, it will provide the legislative reasoning to any such limitations.

We suggest that when planning events for staff and volunteers, organisations avoid referencing specific holidays and instead celebrate seasons. For example, throwing an end-of-year party instead of a Christmas party avoids suggesting that one religion and its holidays are the norm.

Appropriate and inclusive food and drink alternatives should be made available in workplaces and volunteering environments, to cater for religious dietary requirements, and any catering services at an office must provide clear information on both ingredients and preparation processes.

Some employees may wear religious symbols or garments. It is recommended that everyone be allowed to express their religion in this way, but as national legislation in this area will differ, each organisation needs to review their policies in accordance with their own local situation.

In the stands

Football organisations and stadium owners and operators should engage with their local communities and fan groups to identify any possible areas in which activities and facilities could be developed to better accommodate the religious needs of spectators and fans. These areas may include food preparation or spaces for prayer.



Clearly labelled inclusive food options helps supporters make safe choices when it comes to food and beverages. Similarly, providing a simple space for prayer or allowing access to one on request helps supporters feel comfortable and included. Where possible, basic washing facilities help those who observe ablution/ritual washing before prayer.

Clear communication in advance of events about available food options, prayer spaces and related facilities enables supporters to plan their visit and reduces reliance on ad hoc arrangements on matchday.

Religious head coverings and other clothing should be permitted unless they pose a genuine safety risk. Other religious items, such as rosary beads or kirpans (a small blade worn as part of a specific Sikh religious uniform), should be handled sensitively through established security processes and in line with national law and stadium safety rules. Stewards should be trained to balance safety with cultural understanding and be aware of the rules set out for the event.



Important considerations and good practices

★ Building religious literacy

Having a basic awareness of different belief systems helps to ensure respectful engagement and prevent assumptions. Understanding that religion and belief differ across society and football is important, as is recognising that even within the same religion, people's beliefs and practices differ. We do not need to be experts, but we should be willing to learn.

Resources

- The IFAB Laws of the Game

International institutions

- Council of Europe – European legal and human rights perspectives on religion and belief
- Equality and Human Rights Commission – religion or belief in workplace and organisational contexts
- Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights – definitions and guidance on freedom of religion or belief, including non-religious belief

Further readings

- Muslim footballers in Europe (identity and integration dynamics)
- Ramadan fasting knowledge and attitudes among elite footballers (London 2012)
- Sport as a Meaning-Making System: Insights from the Study of Religion
- Systematic review on Ramadan intermittent fasting and football performance
- The Beautiful Game on a Muslim Pitch: How Football and Religion Are Shaping Identity and Society

Checklist

The following checklist aims to provide a framework to evaluate the situation related to religion and beliefs within your organisation/team across all three key areas. Readers are encouraged to use it to reflect on work related o this topic.

Area	Question	Yes	No	n/a
All	Does your work take into consideration how this area intersects with other diversity topics?	☐	☐	☐
On the pitch	Are dietary requirements for players and officials accommodated (e.g. offering halal and vegetarian food and food with no pork or beef)?	☐	☐	☐
	Are the timings of training sessions and matches adjusted during fasting periods like Ramadan?	☐	☐	☐
	Are prayer times respected and accommodated within the schedule?	☐	☐	☐
	Are private prayer spaces available for players and officials?	☐	☐	☐
	Are shower facilities inclusive (e.g. separate booths for privacy)?	☐	☐	☐
	Is religious clothing (e.g. hijabs) permitted, provided it is compliant with equipment regulations?	☐	☐	☐
Off the pitch	Are public holidays reviewed for religious inclusivity?	☐	☐	☐
	Are staff events named inclusively (e.g. end-of-year party, not Christmas party)?	☐	☐	☐
	Are food options for staff and volunteers inclusive of religious dietary requirements?	☐	☐	☐
	Is religious expression through clothing and jewellery respected in the workplace?	☐	☐	☐
	Are the prayer practices of employees and volunteers accommodated?	☐	☐	☐
In the stands	Are food options for spectators inclusive of religious dietary requirements?	☐	☐	☐
	Are prayer spaces available for fans?	☐	☐	☐
	Are policies around religious clothing and items (e.g. kirpans) clear and inclusive, within legal limits?	☐	☐	☐
	Do you engage with local communities to understand their religious needs in the stadium environment?	☐	☐	☐



Chapter 06

Women and girls in football

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Created in collaboration with the Global Observatory for Gender Equality & Sport

06

Women and girls in football

Topic description

While the chapter on LGBTQI+ emphasised the need to look beyond the male and female binary and consider diverse identities, this section focuses specifically on equality and inclusion for women and girls.

In football, as in society, gender norms and assumptions can shape expectations about who should participate, how they should participate and which forms of participation are valued, supported and rewarded. Inclusive measures should work to challenge these assumptions and norms and encourage inclusion and equal opportunities.

Across football, there is a general narrative that differentiates between boys and girls and men and women, with the main message often being that football is a men's game, developed for men, by men.

This narrative has immense consequences for everyone involved and often leads to stereotyping and, in some cases, discrimination in the form of sexism.

This chapter will raise aspects related to the underrepresentation of women and girls in football. While it is accepted that approximately 50% of the world's population is female, participation levels among women and girls are lower across European football, from playing to the administration, and from coaching to fans.

Ensuring equal access and opportunities for women and girls is a cornerstone of making football truly welcoming for all.



Through strong strategic policies and an understanding of the differences between men and women and how these impact participation, we can create a more inclusive environment together.

The football context

On the pitch

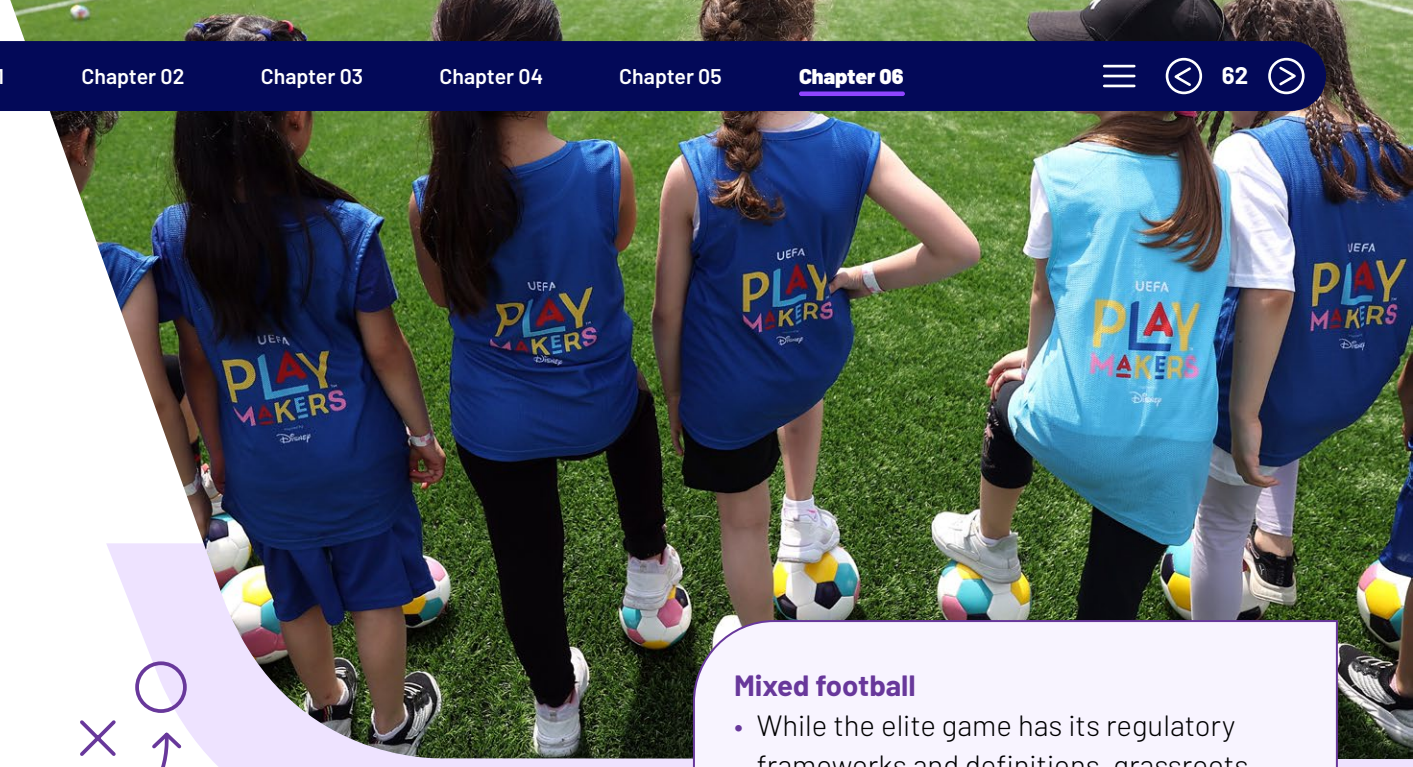
Measures aimed at increasing participation among women and girls within the game should focus on breaking down barriers related to gender stereotypes and emphasise the value of diversity on the pitch in general.

It is known that, at grassroots level, girls are significantly more likely than boys to discontinue football during adolescence due to:

- Body image concerns
- Peer pressure
- Limited competitive opportunities
- Hostile environments

For material on actively engaging players, coaches and team staff in discussions on sexism, see the UEFA OUTRAGED toolkit.

Ensuring that women and girls are able to access, play and be active in the game is important both for football and for society. Football offers major social, health and well-being benefits, and getting more women and girls involved will help to grow the game.



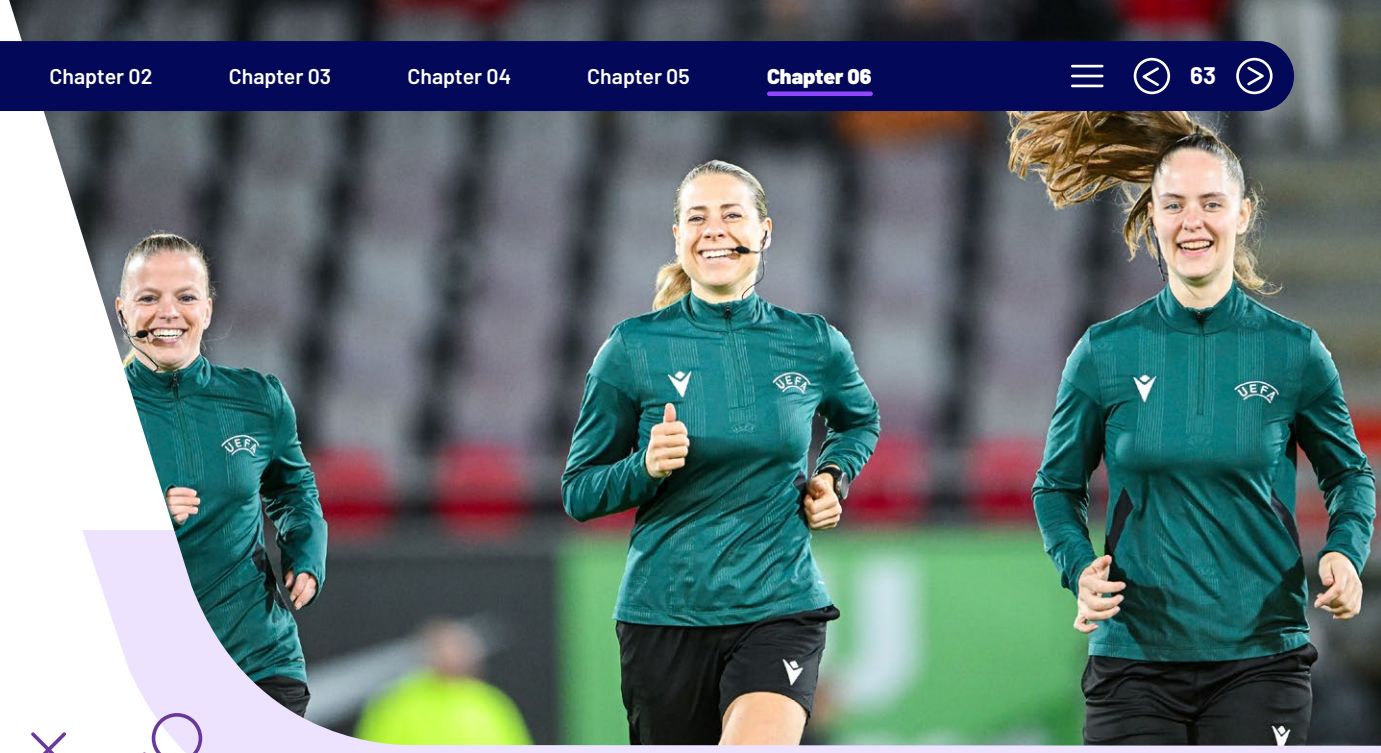


UEFA's strategic approach to women's football, which has a clear focus on increased participation, is outlined in the 2024–30 UEFA women's football strategy, Unstoppable.

Equality and inclusion measures to increase participation should consider, for example, access to training facilities, the distribution of funding, and messaging and communications. Centring these efforts around equality can strongly impact the feelings of respect and inclusion of all players within a club or national team, regardless of whether they play on the men's or the women's team.

Mixed football

- While the elite game has its regulatory frameworks and definitions, grassroots football offers the opportunity to play in mixed teams, which can connect boys and girls and men and women, through a shared love of the game.
- If managed in a structured way, ensuring equal playing times and respectful engagement, mixed team football at grassroots levels can provide valuable learning experiences for everyone involved, exposing players to different playing styles, challenging feminine and masculine stereotypes, promoting respect and helping to develop more inclusive attitudes across the game.
- Mixed football can also provide inclusive opportunities for non-binary and trans people to participate.



By ensuring that girls' and women's teams have adequate facilities and material, and a network of competent coaches, officials and referees, the game will continue to develop positively, both at grassroots and elite level.

National associations, governing bodies and governments can play vital roles in how the sport develops at national level by providing funding or other incentives to increase investment and engagement in girls' and women's football.

When it comes to coaching, it is important that coaches are trained specifically in how to coach women and girls, understanding how physical differences between male and female players can impact performance, fitness, development and injury risk-management strategies. The UEFA framework for coaching female players is a useful resource on this topic.

Women and girls should be involved not only as players, but also as referees, officials and coaches. Football organisations should engage girls and women in such positions and identify how and where actions can be taken to ensure that there are channels and programmes to promote and support women and girls (of a suitable age) in these roles.

Menstrual health

Football should provide a positive and supportive environment for players, coaches, referees and officials with regard to menstrual health. As the menstrual circle has different effects on the body and differs across individuals, it is important to understand aspects like physical pain or heavy bleeding, in relation to performance. This, while also challenging long-standing myths about menstruation and to make sure that menstrual health is normalised and considered across football activities.

Organisations should ideally include menstrual health as a topic in coaching qualification and athlete educational programmes.

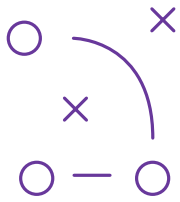
Other good practices include providing menstrual products for players, coaches and staff (e.g. pads, tampons, cups) and ensuring menstruation-friendly policies on uniforms and kit, changing rooms and toilet facilities. It is also important to emphasise rest, recovery, nutrition and training adaptations to cope with symptoms.

Reproductive health and pregnancy

Pregnant players, coaches and officials will, by nature, require specific considerations, extended leave and, possibly, dedicated support or additional training before returning to the pitch.

Organisations are encouraged to support these individuals by implementing clear and supportive parental leave policies and ensuring that employee contracts include provisions on pregnancy.

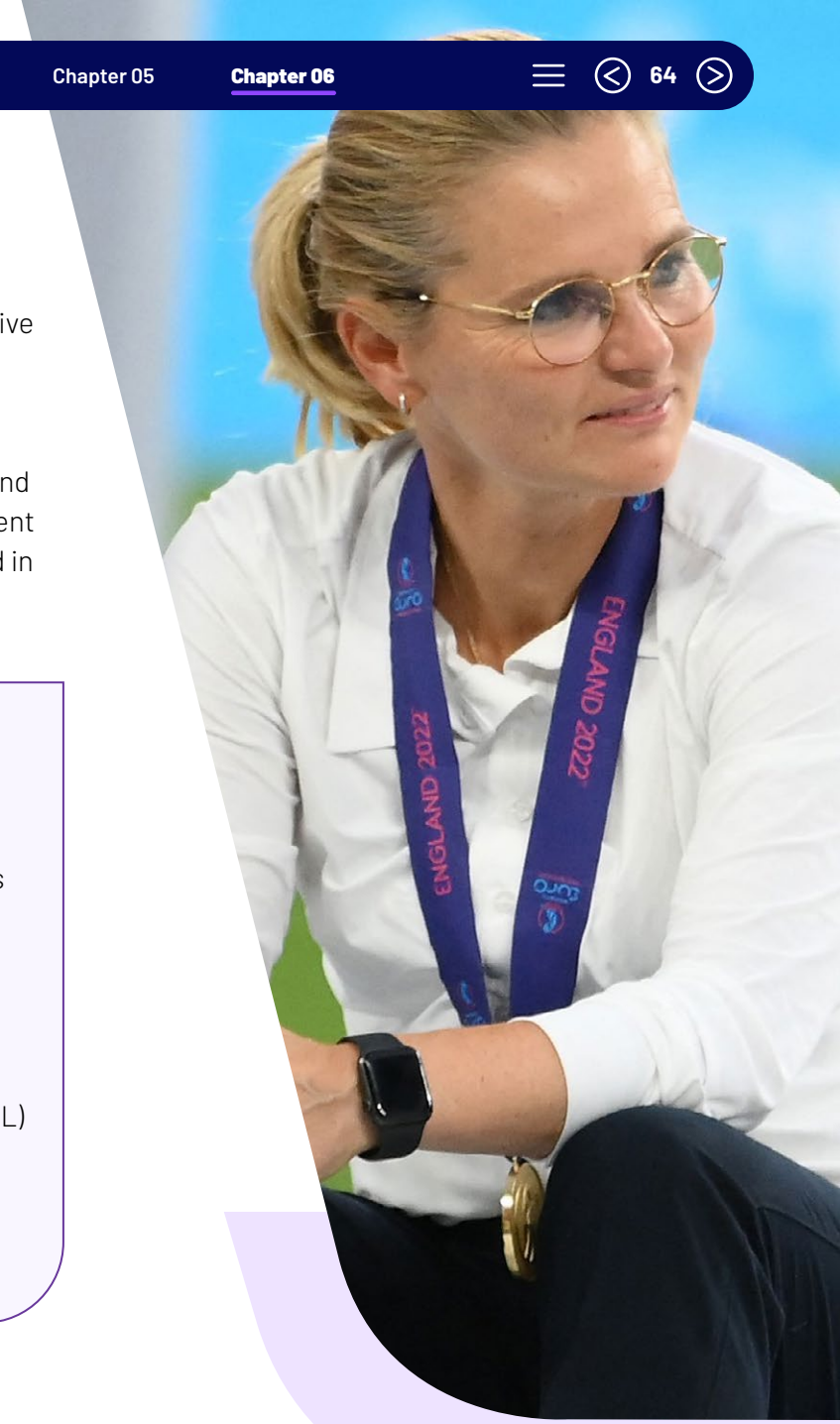
The physical demands of pregnancy, childbirth and breastfeeding have a direct impact on a person's body, and individuals will require sufficient rest, recovery time, and facilities such as breastfeeding rooms. It is important to consider the impact that insufficient support, such as, contract insecurity, inadequate parental leave provisions or limited return-to-play support or protocols can have. This could lead to people feeling pressured into hiding their pregnancy, which can have serious health implications, or delaying pregnancy, forcing women to choose between careers in football and becoming a parent, a choice that their male counterparts do not face.



It is important to keep in mind that reproductive health and the road to pregnancy are not the same for everybody, so this topic should be managed with high sensitivity given its personal and intimate nature. Other fertility and reproductive treatments, such as IVF treatment and egg freezing, should also be incorporated in work policies.

UEFA OWN IT

- In 2026, UEFA launched the UEFA OWN IT video series focusing on women's health in football.
- The series empowers female players and team staff with knowledge on key health topics, including physical activity during pregnancy and motherhood, menstrual health and anterior cruciate ligament (ACL) injury prevention strategies.
- The video series is accompanied by webinars and useful tools.



Off the pitch

Women must be given equal opportunities to participate in football administration. Respect, equality and inclusion should be embedded in recruitment processes and reflected in salaries, policies and language used.

While each organisation will have its own specific situations, aspects widely known to impact gender equality from an employment perspective are:

- Inclusive language and measures across HR policies and procedures
- Parental leave policies
- Equal pay for equal work

Recruitment and selection processes are critical entry points where bias can exclude qualified women or channel them into stereotypical female roles. To prevent this, organisations should consider implementing diverse selection panels, standardised interview protocols, anonymised CV screening where appropriate, clear job criteria and required qualifications, and active recruitment efforts that target diverse candidate pools.

Gender-neutral language

Gendered term(s)	Gender-neutral alternative
ballboy, ballgirl	ball kid
cameraman	camera operator
chairman, chairwoman	chair
down to ten men	down to ten (players)
groundsman	groundskeeper
mankind	humankind
manpower	human resources, personnel
policeman, policewoman	police officer
man in black	referee
spokesman	spokesperson
sportsman, sportswoman	sportsperson, athlete

Performance evaluations are another area in which gender bias frequently operates. Developing clear, measurable criteria for performance assessments, applying them consistently and training evaluators to recognise and counteract gender bias can help to address these patterns.

Across all of this, it is also important to understand the impact of gendered language and to implement gender-neutral language across the full employee life cycle, from application processes to exit-interviews.

Parental leave policies will always be highly dependent on national employment regulations and insurance coverage, but organisations are encouraged to offer more than the national minimum requirements and to push for more inclusive practices, by, for example, challenging stereotypes and offering fathers more similar parental leave rights and opportunities.

Equal pay for equal work

While equal pay audits take many factors into consideration, sex (typically limited to male and female) is usually the main focus of such projects. Most cases of unequal pay concern female employees being compensated less than their male counterparts for doing the same job.

Auditing salary data for men and women has, in many countries, become a legal requirement for organisations of a certain size, and is considered best practice in countries where it is not yet required by law.

This is a very important topic, and football organisations are encouraged to implement clear equal pay policies and, ideally, perform audits with external providers to review their payment and compensation structures. In many cases, such audits can be connected to a certification process, including monitoring within the certification period.

Other diversity characteristics should ideally also be considered across work related to equal pay. While audits and data analysis will be based on legally defined constructs such as age, sex and nationality, specific policies and procedures can be developed by each organisation to build inclusive cultures and attitudes and to ensure that the full diversity of the workforce can be recognised within the compensation policies. To this end, each organisation will need to review their national and local legislation to find out what data can be collected and what the legislative requirements are in relation to pay discrimination and audit requirements.

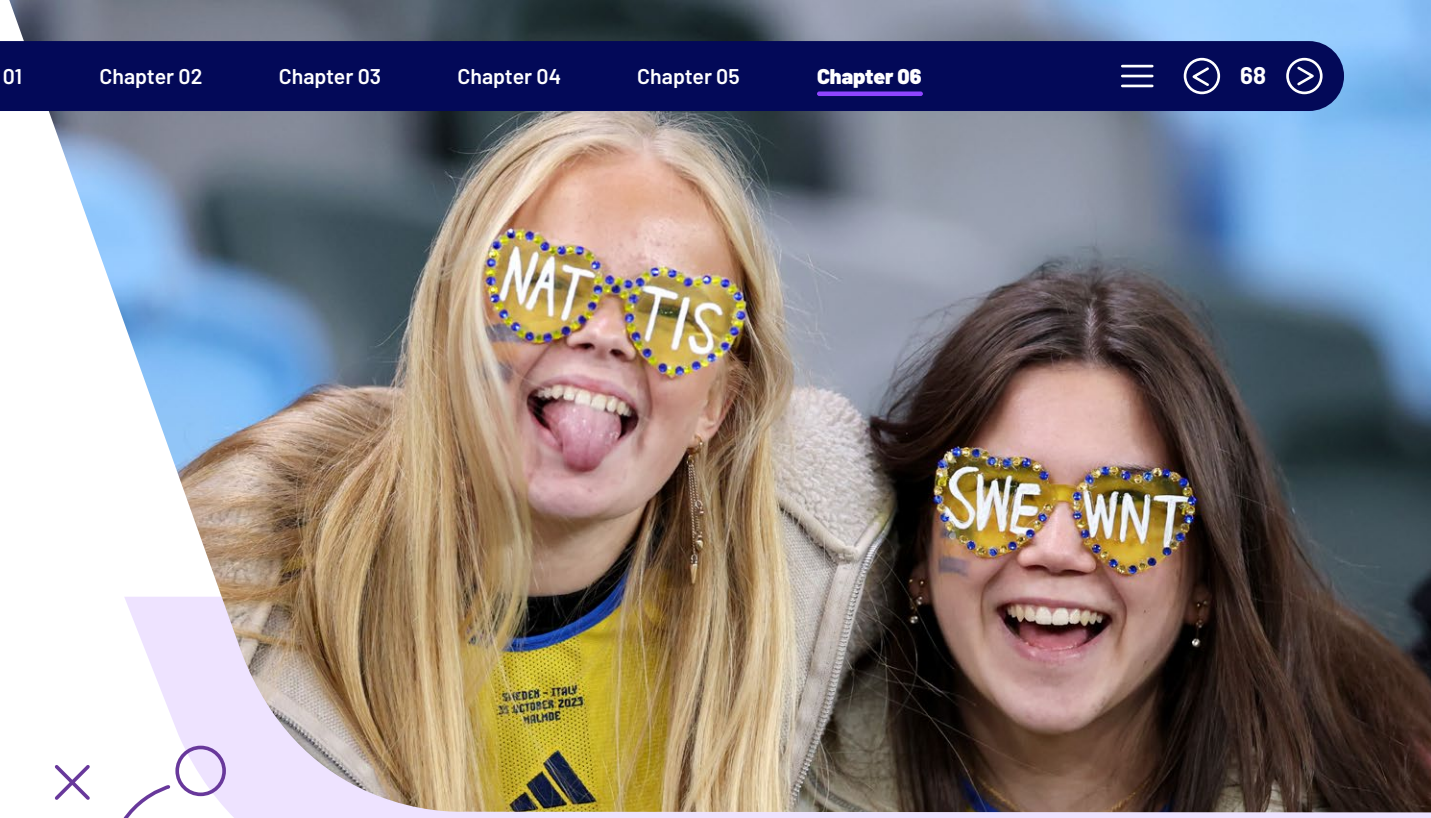
While it might be of certain interest to consider the gender wage gap – which calculates the median earning of the women (in a country or organisation) and identifies the difference between this and the median earning of the men – this does not relate to equal pay for equal work, but rather, pay disparities based on sex only. As the gender wage gap calculation does not take into account factors like position or tenure, it is unable to identify whether the difference relates to inequalities in compensation or a unequal representation in higher paying positions. As such, work on this topic should focus on ensuring equal pay for equal work.

There are a number of methodologies and providers of equal pay audits available, and each organisation should review their local landscape to identify which certification or audit is the most suitable for them.

While at first glance, it may seem as though only data points relating to compensation should be considered when assessing equal pay for equal work, a number of aspects feed into this area that relate to policies and procedures. It is therefore important to review policies, procedures and mechanisms in full, ensuring that within the employee life cycle, none contain restrictions or specifications that create inequalities based on diversity characteristics for employees at any stage.

The following checklist aims to provide football organisations with a brief overview of additional considerations to review in addition to performing an official salary audit for equal pay for equal work.

Equal pay policies and procedures	Yes	No
Salary and compensation		
Does your organisation have a salary and compensation policy?	☐	☐
– Does the policy include clear salary brackets for each hierarchical level of the organisation?	☐	☐
– Does the policy include a statement or commitment to equal pay for equal work?	☐	☐
– Does the policy define the criteria for salary increases?	☐	☐
– Does the policy define the criteria for bonuses?	☐	☐
Are there clear procedures for salary increases?	☐	☐
– Are these based on a structured and transparent performance evaluation system?	☐	☐
– Are people managers trained in the procedures for salary increases?	☐	☐
Are there clear procedures for bonuses?	☐	☐
– Are these based on a structured and transparent performance evaluation system?	☐	☐
– Are people managers trained in the procedures for bonuses?	☐	☐
Are additional forms of compensation offered to employees?	☐	☐
– Are these rewarded based on transparent criteria?	☐	☐
Do HR colleagues play an active role in all salary and compensation decisions?	☐	☐
Does your HR team report compensation data to the board/top management on a regular basis?	☐	☐
Additional equality aspects to consider		
Does your organisation offer part-time work without any limitations to development or promotion opportunities?	☐	☐
Does your organisation offer training and development opportunities?	☐	☐
– Are these offered to all employees?	☐	☐
– Are these based on transparent criteria?	☐	☐
Does your organisation offer parental leave?	☐	☐
– Is this offered to all staff?	☐	☐
– Is this offered for both birth and adoption?	☐	☐
– Does this account for diverse family compositions (same-sex couples, single parents, etc.)?	☐	☐
Does your organisation have clear promotion policies and procedures?	☐	☐
– Are these based on a structured and transparent performance evaluation system?	☐	☐
– Are people managers trained in the procedures for promotions?	☐	☐
Does your organisation offer reporting mechanisms for misconduct, harassment and discrimination?	☐	☐
– Do these mechanisms involve multiple options for reporting (e.g. several confidential advisors, internal and external resources, hotlines, platforms, in-person discussion)?	☐	☐



In the stands

When it comes to the inclusion of female fans and spectators, it is important that everyone feels like there is a place for them in the stands. Efforts to this end can include campaigns showcasing both male and female fans, but there are also more operational aspects to consider.

Bathroom provisions contribute to ensuring equal access for men and women at a game. Ensuring male and female bathrooms are provided across the venue and regularly cleaned and restocked is key. Requirements are clearly defined within the UEFA Stadium Infrastructure Regulations, and organisations are encouraged to ensure they are aware of national regulations related to this area. Good practice includes providing emergency sanitary products within the bathroom facilities.

An important aspect in ensuring that everyone feels respected and included is offering a choice in security checks – making sure that a female fan can have a female security officer perform their check, and a male fan can be searched by a male officer. This is a requirement outlined within the UEFA Safety and Security Regulations, and organisations are encouraged to also stay informed on any related national regulations.

Other aspects to consider include providing merchandise in a range of sizes and ensuring equal representation in fan engagement activities, e.g. giving boys and girls the opportunity to be player mascots.

Men, women, boys, girls - everyone should feel safe and welcome attending football events at all levels. To guarantee this, football organisations must invest in policies, frameworks and values that emphasise a welcoming and inclusive environment in the stands.

Such efforts could include:

- Code of conduct for ticket holders
- Diversity and inclusion training for staff and stewards
- Inclusion messages displayed ahead of and during the match
- Safeguarding mechanisms and reporting channels for people who see or experience discrimination or harassment

Important considerations and good practices

★ Media and language

It is important to clearly define policies and procedures and engage with media to ensure that language is not biased in relating one sex to specific traits, such as suggesting that men are strong and athletic, while women are sensitive and strategic. If you specify that women play in women's competitions, it is suggested that you also specify that men play in men's competitions, rather than separating the game into football and women's football. It is important to be proactive in the portrayal of those involved in the game, both for their well-being and to avoid enhancing stereotypes.

Organisations committed to gender equality should adopt inclusive language practices throughout all communications, both internal and external. This includes using gender-neutral terms where appropriate, avoiding assumptions about gender in job descriptions and recruitment materials, specifying gender when discussing both men's and women's competitions rather than treating one as the default, being attentive to the ways in which language can reinforce or challenge stereotypes about gendered attributes and capabilities, and actively challenging sexist language, jokes and comments that create hostile environments.

Job descriptions and recruitment materials deserve particular attention as they often contain subtle gendered language that can discourage women from applying or signal that an organisation does not value diversity.

Research has identified numerous ways in which job postings can be gendered, including through the use of stereotypically masculine or feminine adjectives.



Resources

UEFA resources

- UEFA framework for coaching female players
- UEFA Safety and Security Regulations
- UEFA Stadium Infrastructure Regulations
- UEFA Women's Football strategy – Unstoppable

Media coverage and representation

- A new age for media coverage of women's sport? An analysis of English media coverage of the 2015 FIFA Women's World Cup – Sociology
- Female athletes, women's sport, and the sport media commercial complex: Have we really 'come a long way, baby'? – Sport Management Review
- 'Half the game': Female audiences, engagement and exclusion in televised football and digital spaces – European Journal of Cultural Studies
- 'It's dude time!': A quarter century of excluding women's sports in televised news and highlight shows – Communication & Sport
- New rules for new times: Sportswomen and media representation in the third wave – Sex Roles
- Sportswomen in the German popular press: A study carried out in the context of the 2011 Women's Football World Cup – Soccer & Society

Resources

Leadership, employment and roles

- 'A strong man is direct and a direct woman is a bitch': Gendered discourses and their influence on employment roles in sport organizations – Journal of Sport Management
- 'A real witch's brew': The administrative obstacles and everyday experiences of becoming a certified referee – Soccer & Society
- Feeling second best: Elite women coaches' experiences – Sociology of Sport Journal
- Sport, women, and leadership: Results of a project on executives in German sports organizations – European Journal of Sport Science
- Underrepresentation of women in sport leadership: A review of research – Sport Management Review
- 'Women can't referee': Exploring the experiences of female football officials within UK football culture – Soccer & Society
- Women and women's sports in sport management and economics: a scoping review
- Gendered microaggressions towards the "only" women coaches in high-performance sport

Menstrual and reproductive health

- A new campaign aims to tackle period stigma to keep girls and women playing sports – The Conversation
- How the menstrual cycle and menstruation affect sporting performance: Experiences and perceptions of elite female rugby players – British Journal of Sports Medicine
- Sport, exercise and the menstrual cycle: Where is the research? – British Journal of Sports Medicine
- The effects of menstrual cycle phase on exercise performance in eumenorrheic women: A systematic review and meta-analysis – Sports Medicine
- "They Seem to Only Know About Bleeding and Cramps": Menstruation, Gendered Experiences, and Coach–Athlete Relationships – Women in Sport and Physical Activity Journal
- Elite athletes as mothers: Managing multiple identities – Sport Management Review
- Pregnancy and parenthood provisions in collegiate and professional sport – Women in Sport and Physical Activity Journal

Participation and culture

- 'Why can't girls play football?' Gender dynamics and the playground – Sport, Education and Society
- Gender, feminism and football studies – Soccer & Society
- Women's football studies: An integrative review – Sport, Business and Management: An International Journal
- Covid-19: Reflections on threat and uncertainty for the future of elite women's football in England – Managing Sport and Leisure
- Women's football Fandom and growing the 'beautiful'game
- Addressing gender inequalities in European football: Key dimensions and strategies

Checklist

The following checklist aims to provide a framework to evaluate the situation related to sex and gender within your organisation/team across all three key areas. Readers are encouraged to use it to reflect on work related to this topic.

Area	Question	Yes	No	n/a
All	Does your work take into consideration how this area intersects with other diversity topics?	☐	☐	☐
On the pitch	Are women and girls provided equal access to play and participate?	☐	☐	☐
	Are women represented as referees, officials and coaches?	☐	☐	☐
	Do you work with coaches, officials and referees to actively challenge gender stereotypes in your activities?	☐	☐	☐
	Do you consider aspects related to menstrual health across your activities?	☐	☐	☐
	Are supportive parental leave policies in place for players and officials?	☐	☐	☐
	Are contracts inclusive of pregnancy-related considerations?	☐	☐	☐
Off the pitch	Is equal pay for equal work implemented and regularly audited?	☐	☐	☐
	Are inclusive parental leave policies in place for all staff?	☐	☐	☐
	Is inclusive language used across HR policies and procedures?	☐	☐	☐
	Are recruitment and salary policies reviewed for gender bias?	☐	☐	☐
	Do you train and engage staff on gender equality?	☐	☐	☐
In the stands	Are policies in place to ensure the safety and inclusion of female fans and spectators?	☐	☐	☐
	Are campaigns used to promote gender equality?	☐	☐	☐
	Are channels available to report discrimination or harassment?	☐	☐	☐
	Is a code of conduct for ticket holders implemented?	☐	☐	☐
	Are staff and stewards trained in gender equality and inclusion?	☐	☐	☐



Final whistle

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Final whistle

While this toolkit aims to provide insight and concrete support to organisations to develop more inclusive football environments, each organisation will have its own local situation to consider, and what is an issue in one part of the European football landscape might not be a problem in another.

This toolkit should therefore not be seen as a tick-box exercise, but as a catalyst to prompt a full review of the specific situation of each football organisation.

While the toolkit has presented topics and considerations centred around three main areas, and six defined diversity topics, it is important to remember that across all of these, some aspects will be incremental for positive impact. These include:

- Developing **clear values around EDI** and ensuring that these are integrated in strategic outlines as well as in the culture and environment of international, national and local football organisations.
- Ensuring **community engagement** is seen as an integral part in the success of any EDI activities. Only by engaging the full football landscape can we aim to ensure everyone feels welcome in the game.
- Establishing structured and transparent **reporting mechanisms** to support EDI efforts. These will increase the sense of safety and security among minority groups and ensure that any incidents of discrimination or harassment are managed in a clear and consistent manner.

Football stakeholders are encouraged to engage with local and national organisations on the topics covered in this toolkit, as they will be able to support with national legislation, regional specifications and any additional considerations.



Glossary

Ablution/ritual washing	Washing certain parts of the body before prayer or religious practice. This usually requires access to water.
Accessible	Provision of a barrier-free environment and related changes in policies, procedures or the built environment itself to ensure that all individuals can benefit from and participate in all activities and events.
Anti-racism	Proactive actions and behaviours that challenge and prevent racism in all its forms, personal and structural.
Asexual	A person who experiences little or no sexual attraction to others; some asexual people experience emotional and/or romantic attraction, while others do not.
Belief	A legally recognised term that includes religious belief, philosophical belief and lack of belief. It covers the values, ethics and principles that guide how someone lives.
Belongingness	The state or feeling of belonging to a particular group.
Bias	Inclination or prejudice for or against one person or group, especially in a way considered to be unfair.
Bisexual	A person who feels emotional, affective and/or sexual attraction for more than one gender, whether their own and/or a different one.
Blind and partially sighted people	People who are either totally blind or have significantly limited or obscured vision. This does not include people who have a loss of vision that can be corrected by glasses or contact lenses.
Cisgender	A person whose gender identity aligns with the sex they were assigned at birth.
Colour-blind people	A person who has difficulty distinguishing between certain colours. This condition affects 1 in 12 men and 1 in 200 women.
Culture	The ideas, customs, traditions and social behaviours of a particular group or society.

Deaf and hard-of-hearing people	People who cannot hear at a functional level, with either total or significant loss of hearing. Most people do have some degree of hearing and will use aids such as cochlear implants or hearing aids to amplify sound.
Dietary observance	Food and drink practices linked to belief, such as avoiding pork, beef, alcohol, shellfish or specific preparation methods. Some people avoid ingredients for ethical reasons too.
Discrimination	The unjust or prejudicial treatment of different categories of people, especially on the grounds of ethnicity, age, sex or disability.
Diversity	The state of being diverse; variety.
Equality	The state of being equal, especially in status, rights or opportunities.
Equity	The quality of being fair and just, especially in a way that takes account of and seeks to address existing inequalities.
Ethnicity	The quality or fact of belonging to a population group or subgroup made up of people who share a common descent or cultural background.
Fasting	A period when someone chooses not to eat or drink for religious or spiritual reasons. Fasting looks different depending on the belief and the individual.
Gender expression	How a person presents their gender to the world, such as through appearance, behaviour or clothing. This can vary widely and does not necessarily align with societal expectations.
Gender identity	A person's internal sense of their gender. Some people identify as women or men, while others identify as non-binary or use different terms such as agender.
Gender-neutral facilities	Spaces (like toilets or changing rooms) that are not designated for a specific gender.

Glossary

Harassment	Aggressive pressure or intimidation.
Head coverings	Religious items worn on the head, including hijabs, turbans, kippot or patkas. These are permitted in football provided they meet safety requirements.
Heteronormativity	The assumption that heterosexuality is the default or norm, often leading to exclusion of LGBTQI+ identities.
Heterosexual	A man who is attracted to women or to a woman who is attracted to men.
Homosexual (gay or lesbian)	A person who experiences emotional, romantic and/or sexual attraction toward people of the same gender. • **Gay man** - a person identified as a man who feels emotional, affective and/or sexual attraction to other men. – **Gay** is also a generic term often used for homosexual (lesbian and gay) sexuality, and some women define themselves as gay rather than lesbian. • **Lesbian** - a person identified as a woman who feels emotional, affective and/or sexual attraction to other women.
Inclusion	The practice or policy of providing equal access to opportunities and resources for people who might otherwise be excluded or marginalised.
Inclusive language	Language that avoids bias, slang or expressions that discriminate against groups of people based on ethnicity, gender, ability, etc.
Intellectually disabled people	Includes people with Down's syndrome, fragile X syndrome and other related conditions that affect intellectual processes and cognitive functioning.
Intersectionality	The interconnected nature of social categorisations as they apply to a given individual or group, regarded as creating overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination or disadvantage.
Intersex	People who have innate variations of sex characteristic(s), including chromosomal, gonadal, anatomical, or hormonal, that vary from the societal and/or medical understanding(s) of typical female and male bodies.
LGBTQI+	An acronym for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, questioning/queer, intersex and others whose identities fall outside of cisgender and heterosexual norms.
Microaggressions	Indirect, subtle, or unintentional discrimination against members of a marginalised group.
Nationality	A legal relationship between an individual and a state, often linked to citizenship and its associated rights and responsibilities.
Neurodivergent people	Including, but not limited to, autistic people, people with dyslexia or dyspraxia and people with sensory processing disabilities.
Non-binary	A person whose gender identity does not fit exclusively within the categories of woman or man. Non-binary is considered a gender identity and therefore non-binary people are commonly considered trans people. Non-binary identities exist independently of a person's sex characteristics.
Pansexual	A person whose emotional, romantic and/or sexual attraction is not limited by sex or gender, and who may be attracted to people of any gender identity.
People of short stature	Typically, people who have a final adult height of 1.47m or less. This includes people with conditions such as dwarfism.
People with limited or reduced mobility	People who can walk but typically require the use of walking aids such as crutches, walking sticks or a rollator – also referred to as ambulant disabled people.
People with long-term health conditions	Includes people with non-visible disabilities, cancer, inflammatory bowel disease, diabetes, arthritis, albinism, heart conditions, endometriosis and stomas.

Glossary

People with mental health conditions	Includes people with anxiety, bipolar disorder, schizophrenia and post-traumatic stress disorder.
People with neurological conditions	Includes people with conditions such as epilepsy, dementia and Alzheimer's disease.
Prayer	A moment of reflection, meditation or worship. Some people pray at set times; others pray when they choose.
Prejudice	Dislike, hostility, or unjust behaviour deriving from preconceived and unfounded opinions.
Racialised identity	How people are categorised or treated based on appearance or perceived ethnicity, rather than biological fact.
Racism	Prejudice or discrimination directed at people based on racialised identity, skin colour or perceived ethnicity.
Religion	A system of faith that may include teachings, rituals, cultural traditions or ways of living. People practise their religion differently, even within the same faith.
Religious clothing	Items worn as part of a belief, such as hijabs, turbans, dastars, patkas, kippot, modest underlayers or religious jewellery.
Religious literacy	Basic understanding of different faiths and beliefs that helps people communicate respectfully, ask better questions and avoid assumptions.
Respect	Showing regard for the dignity, identity and rights of others through language, behaviour and action.
Sex	Refers to biological characteristics and is often recorded in legal documents. While frequently broken down into male and female, some people are born with sex characteristics that do not fit typical definitions (see: intersex).
Social model of disability	A framework for understanding disability in terms of the environmental limitations or barriers created by society. By removing these barriers, disabled people are able to express their independence and enjoy fair and equal opportunities to participate fully in society.
Socio-economic background	A person's social and economic circumstances, which influence access to opportunities and resources.
Stereotype	Oversimplified assumptions about individuals or groups that can lead to unfair treatment or expectations.
Transgender (sometimes shortened to trans)	A person whose gender identity does not align with the sex they were assigned at birth. Transgender people may or may not take steps to socially, legally or medically transition.
Wheelchair users	A person who typically uses a wheelchair, powerchair or mobility scooter.
Xenophobia	Fear or prejudice against people perceived as foreign or from different cultural or ethnic backgrounds.

Glossary

Glossary notes

While terms in the introduction of the document and the chapter specific on girls and women in football are taken from the Oxford Dictionary, other chapters have considered additional sources for their topic specific definitions. See specifications and resources for this per chapter below:

Disability

Terms relating to disability and accessibility are based on the glossary in the UEFA Accessibility Guidelines. Readers can access further accessibility terms within this document.

LGBTQI+

Terms within this topic are informed by various sources and have sometimes been combined or tweaked to give the best contextual definition for this toolkit. Definitions have been informed by:

- Council of Europe - Intersex Recommendation
- European Commission against Racism and Intolerance Glossary
- Stonewall list of LGBTQ+ Terms and Inclusive Definitions
- University of Valencia - Sport, inclusion and LGBTI diversity

Ethnicity, culture and racialised identity

Definitions within this chapter have been informed by publicly available guidance and reference material from recognised international and national bodies.

The definitions and interpretations used align with international and European human rights, equality and governance frameworks, including:

- UNESCO – culture, cultural diversity and cultural identity
- European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) – racism, discrimination and equality
- European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI)
- Equality and Human Rights Commission – protected characteristics

Nationality

This chapter has also been informed by publicly available guidance and reference material from recognised international and national bodies.

The definitions and interpretations used align with international and European human rights, equality and governance frameworks, including:

- Council of Europe – European Convention on Nationality
- United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees – refugees, stateless persons and nationality

Religion and belief

This chapter has also been informed by publicly available guidance and reference material from recognised international and national bodies.

The definitions and interpretations used align with international and European human rights, equality and governance frameworks, including:

- Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights – freedom of religion or belief
- Council of Europe – freedom of religion or belief
- Equality and Human Rights Commission – religion or belief in organisational contexts

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Date of publication
March 2026

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The document also received support and contributions by:
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We thank them all for their contribution to this toolkit.

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The material within this toolkit will be reviewed and revised when relevant, and the document might therefore change after its initial publication.