

# UEFA WALKING FOOTBALL TOOLKIT

FOR NATIONAL ASSOCIATIONS, LEAGUES, CLUBS AND LOCAL ORGANISATIONS

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# INTRODUCTION

**THE UEFA WALKING FOOTBALL TOOLKIT IS A RESOURCE FOR NATIONAL ASSOCIATIONS, LEAGUES, CLUBS AND OTHER LOCAL ORGANISATIONS TO ENHANCE THE HEALTH OF OLDER PEOPLE AND SUPPORT THE GROWTH OF FOOTBALL AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY MORE BROADLY.**

The toolkit offers fundamental information on walking football with links to two additional resources: one providing tools for recreational play and another for competitive play, with the Laws of the Game for any matches or competitions that are organised or affiliated with UEFA. To further promote walking football, the toolkit also includes a promotional video and a trailer in several languages.

We thank the national associations of England, the Faroe Islands, France, Gibraltar, Portugal, Poland and Sweden for working with us on this toolkit, providing valuable information and advice.

We are confident that by sharing this toolkit and involving more older people in football, we will better meet the needs of our stakeholders, supporting their engagement with their communities and using football as a platform for integration into civil society.

Michele Uva
*UEFA Director of Social and Environmental Sustainability*



# WALKING FOOTBALL
IN BRIEF

## WHAT
### is walking football?

Walking football is a version of association football whose rules have been modified to promote health and safety.





## WHO
### is walking football for?

Although walking football can be played by anyone, it is perfect for older people and people with mobility issues, who, regardless of their level of fitness or condition, want a moderate-intensity physical activity to keep them active and safe.

## WHY
### play walking football?

Regular physical activity is essential for good health. Walking football, with its many health, social and economic benefits, offers older people an effective way of staying active and improving their well-being.




**The World Health Organization (WHO) describes older people as being aged 60 and over.[1] While some variations in older people's health are genetic, most are caused by their physical and social environments. These environments, combined with the maintenance of healthy behaviours throughout life such as regular physical activity and a balanced diet, play an important role in the way individuals age.**

1. World Health Organization, 2022.

# FACTS AND FIGURES

**With life expectancy increasing due to better living conditions, advances in medicine and improved knowledge of healthy lifestyles, it is of paramount importance to prioritise the well-being of the older generation so they can take full advantage of the opportunities offered by a longer life.**

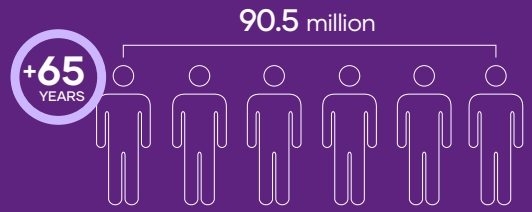
## 2030

By 2030, **1 in 6** people in the world will be aged 60 or over.[2]




## 2019

In 2019, there were 90.5 million people in the EU aged 65 and over.[3]






## 50%

less likely to suffer from chronic diseases

**Physically active people** have a **20–30%** reduced risk of premature death and are **50%** less likely to suffer from chronic diseases.[5]

## 2018




In 2018, **40%** of older women and **22%** of older men within the EU lived alone, spending most of their time at home, contributing to higher rates of **depression** and **loneliness.**[4]




A minimum of

## 150 minutes

of **moderate-intensity activity** throughout the week is recommended for adults aged 65 and over.[7]




With more than

## 9.4 hours a day

**spent doing non-physical activities,** people aged 60 and over have a predominantly sedentary lifestyle.[6]

2. World Health Organization, 2022.
3. Eurostat, 2020a.
4. Eurostat, 2020b.
5. World Health Organization, 2021.
6. Harvey et al., 2015.
7. World Health Organization, 2010.

# WHAT
## IS THE WALKING FOOTBALL TOOLKIT?

**UEFA's FootbALL programme aims to harness football as a catalyst to foster positive change in society, with a simple yet significant message: in football, everyone is welcome! With that in mind, this toolkit has been designed to help football associations, clubs and other local organisations effectively implement and foster both recreational and competitive walking football activities at local, national and international levels.**

#FOOTBALL
UEFA

### THIS TOOLKIT HAS BEEN CREATED AS A RESOURCE TO:

01. **Increase** the involvement and participation of older people in football activities

02. **Raise** awareness of the benefits of walking football

03. **Promote** walking football as a safe activity while providing best practice advice



# WHY
## HAS THE TOOLKIT BEEN CREATED?

**HEALTH AND WELL-BEING IS ONE OF THE SEVEN SOCIAL POLICIES IN THE UEFA FOOTBALL SUSTAINABILITY STRATEGY, STRENGTH THROUGH UNITY, WITH A VIEW TO EVER GREATER SOCIAL SUSTAINABILITY IN EUROPEAN FOOTBALL.**




The creation of this toolkit supports the 2030 ambition behind this policy – to "mobilise the football community to promote better health, active lifestyles and widen the engagement of players across age groups, particularly older people" – and the following specific targets:

01. Provide UEFA member associations with a dedicated plan for organising football activities for older people by 2024

02. Ensure that 30% of UEFA member associations organise football activities for older people by 2027

Walking football allows participants to maintain an active lifestyle in a fun, social setting. Recent research has highlighted the health benefits of walking football, especially for people who are overweight or have mobility issues, dementia, hypertension, cancer or type 2 diabetes.[8]

Studies have also identified significant improvements in social wellness, cardiovascular fitness, lower limb strength and balance, as well as reduced depression and anxiety.

UEFA recognises that sport, and football in particular, is an important tool for addressing and advocating for *healthy ageing*.[9] The aim is to improve the lives of older people, their families and their communities, which aligns with the objectives of the United Nations Decade for Healthy Ageing (2021–2030).[10]

Taking care of older people is not only a societal responsibility, but also a wise investment in our collective future. By expanding opportunities to participate in football, we are promoting active and healthy ageing, maintaining well-being, fostering social engagement, supporting independence in daily life, and enhancing overall satisfaction in social interactions. This perspective rejects the notion of older people as passive and dependent, instead highlighting their autonomy and active contributions to society.

8. Capela et al., 2023; Barbosa et al., 2021; Rekesh et al., 2020.
9. Defined by the WHO in its World Report on Ageing and Health as "the process of developing and maintaining the functional ability that enables well-being in older age".
10. United Nations, 2023.

# WHO
## IS THE TOOLKIT FOR?

**THIS TOOLKIT HAS BEEN DESIGNED TO PROVIDE NATIONAL ASSOCIATIONS, LEAGUES, CLUBS AND OTHER FOOTBALL ORGANISATIONS WITH THE RESOURCES AND TOOLS NEEDED TO DEVELOP WALKING FOOTBALL ACTIVITIES FOR OLDER PEOPLE.**

Whether you are a national governing body, a local club, a walking football coordinator or a facilitator, you have a vital role to play in encouraging active ageing, improving physical well-being and creating opportunities for older people to engage with their communities through walking football.

The goal of this toolkit is to increase older people's participation in physical activity by showcasing the benefits of walking football and offering resources for both recreational and competitive play. In providing this information, the toolkit supports football organisations in their efforts to promote the sport within their community, addressing both casual players through a health-oriented approach and those interested in competition.



# HOW
## TO USE THE TOOLKIT

**BROKEN DOWN INTO THREE MAIN SECTIONS, THE TOOLKIT PROVIDES A COMPREHENSIVE OVERVIEW OF WALKING FOOTBALL, INCLUDING FUNDAMENTAL KNOWLEDGE AND BEST PRACTICES.**

01.

### LAYING THE FOUNDATIONS

Providing all the necessary information on walking football, from its mandatory adaptations and principles to the many benefits of the game, and the medical aspects that need to be considered before, during and after walking football activities.

02.

### BUILDING THE FRAMEWORK

Indicating the roles of those involved, strategies for recruiting and retaining players, best practices and answers to frequently asked questions to support the implementation of walking football activities.

03.

### FROM THEORY TO PRACTICE

Providing concrete resources to kick-start both recreational and competitive walking football – such as the Laws of the Game, checklists and forms – to help national associations, leagues, clubs and other football organisations successfully implement both formats.

# SECTION 01

## LAYING THE FOUNDATIONS

MANDATORY ADAPTATIONS AND PRINCIPLES OF WALKING FOOTBALL

CHARACTERISTICS OF OLDER PEOPLE IN WALKING FOOTBALL ACTIVITIES

BENEFITS OF WALKING FOOTBALL

MEDICAL RECOMMENDATIONS



# MANDATORY ADAPTATIONS AND PRINCIPLES OF WALKING FOOTBALL

**The game is played according to an adapted version of the Laws of the Game. Although it is played worldwide, particularly in Europe, its development is influenced by local conditions and the preferences of the organisations offering playing opportunities.**

While flexibility is prioritised in recreational settings, some adaptations are mandatory as they define the very essence of walking football:

| MANDATORY ADAPTATIONS FOR WALKING FOOTBALL | | |
|---|---|---|
| **NUMBER** | **ADAPTATION** | **SPECIFICATION** |
| 1 | **No running** | No running with or without the ball. Players must walk and always have one foot on the ground. |
| 2 | **No physical contact** | In order to reduce the risk of injury, no physical contact is allowed (non-contact sport). |
| 3 | **No offside** | In order to simplify the game, no offside rules apply. |
| 4 | **No heading** | In order to reduce the risk of injury, no heading is allowed. |
| 5 | **Indirect free-kicks** | All free-kicks must be indirect, and opponents must be at least 3m away from the ball. |
| 6 | **Limited height of play** | The ball must not be played above crossbar height. |

Walking football is built on key principles that make the game a welcoming and enjoyable format for all participants:

## PRINCIPLES

### INCLUSIVITY
Everyone can participate regardless of their age and fitness.

### SAFETY
The safety of the players is paramount.

### COMMUNITY
Camaraderie and social interactions are crucial.

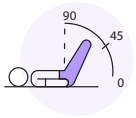
### FLEXIBILITY
It is important to accommodate local needs, different environments, and the facilities and equipment available.

### FAIR PLAY
Fair play is essential when playing walking football, even when there is no competition involved.

# CHARACTERISTICS OF OLDER PEOPLE
## IN WALKING FOOTBALL ACTIVITIES

**Walking football activities offer a unique approach to addressing the diverse needs of older people. These activities are designed to be responsive to the specific circumstances and needs of older participants, with an age-appropriate, player-centred approach. Considering the physical, social, emotional and interpersonal needs of the participants will ensure the sustainability of your initiative.**

### PHYSICAL NEEDS




Participants often experience diminished physical strength, flexibility, speed, endurance, balance and coordination due to ageing. These physiological changes also affect energy systems, impacting recovery time from activities, and increasing susceptibility to both acute and chronic injuries. With age, the risk of chronic diseases like hearing loss, osteoarthritis, cardiovascular diseases, diabetes and dementia increases. These health conditions necessitate a careful approach to physical activity.[11]

### SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL NEEDS



Ageing brings about significant psychosocial changes. Participants may face challenges related to commitment due to competing responsibilities (work, grandchildren or additional caring responsibilities), perceived vulnerability, motivation, reaction time, self-esteem, stress, loneliness, anxiety, depression and life changes.[12]

### INTERPERSONAL NEEDS



Participants often find value in the social aspects of walking football, including building new friendships and sharing experiences. The activities should also acknowledge and respect the wisdom and life experiences of older people.[13]



11. Hubball & Reddy, 2015; Hubball et al., 2022.
12. Hubball & Díaz-Cidoncha García, 2020a; Hubball & Díaz-Cidoncha García, 2021.
13. Hubball & Díaz-Cidoncha García, 2020a; Hubball & Díaz-Cidoncha García, 2020b.

# BENEFITS OF WALKING FOOTBALL

**PHYSICAL ACTIVITY HAS AN UNDENIABLY BENEFICIAL EFFECT ON PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH. WALKING FOOTBALL IS NO EXCEPTION, AND SEVERAL STUDIES HAVE ALREADY DEMONSTRATED THE POSITIVE EFFECTS ON OLDER PLAYERS.**

The many health, social and economic benefits of walking football for players and football organisations make it an excellent solution to various social issues. As a universally loved sport, football serves as a powerful tool for community engagement, bridging gaps and creating a more connected, healthier society.

> **"The idea is that this type of sport can replace some of the medicine they take. It is as simple as that!"**
>
> *André Coelho • Coach*

## BENEFITS FOR PLAYERS

### HEALTH BENEFITS[14]

Increasing physical activity by playing walking football can help:



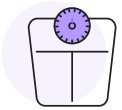
Improve heart health and reduce the risk of cardiovascular disease



Regulate blood circulation and boost the immune system



Improve mobility, postural balance and coordination



Control weight and reduce the risk of type 2 diabetes



Increase energy



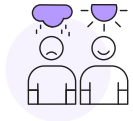
Strengthen muscles and bones and reduce the risk of osteoporosis



Improve breathing and maintain cognitive function



Reduce stress and anxiety



Improve mental health and decrease the risk of depression



Manage chronic diseases and reduce the need for medication

14. Harvey et al, 2015; World Health Organization, 2010; Barbosa, Brito, Costa et al., 2020; Barbosa et al., 2021; Barbosa et al., 2022; Hubball et al., 2022.

# BENEFITS OF WALKING FOOTBALL

> **"You come for football but you stay for the friendship."**
>
> *Derek Over • Player*

> **"It's not just the football. I think it's more the socialising, getting to know new people."**
>
> *Surjit Bajwa • Player*

**BENEFITS FOR PLAYERS**

## SOCIAL BENEFITS[15]

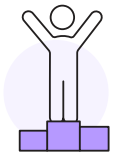
Taking part in walking football provides opportunities to socialise, which is essential for mental health and well-being, and can help:



Build social connections and a sense of community



Fight loneliness and social isolation



Foster a sense of purpose and achievement



Boost confidence and self-esteem



Increase involvement in activities off the pitch

## ECONOMIC BENEFITS[16]

Walking football, and the associated health and social benefits, can:



Reduce the need for medication and other treatments, thereby reducing the financial burden on the healthcare system.

> **"Because you're playing and enjoying yourself and getting wrapped up in the game, you don't always notice just how much exercise you're getting."**
>
> *Anne Fuller • Player*

15. Hawkley & Cacioppo, 2010; Taylor & Pringle, 2021; Barbosa et al., 2022.
16. Barbosa et al., 2022.

# BENEFITS
## OF WALKING FOOTBALL



### BENEFITS FOR FOOTBALL ORGANISATIONS

Walking football offers football organisations a fantastic chance to make a significant impact on both their communities and their operational success:




Enhancing the health and well-being of their communities, perfectly aligning with public health goals



Optimising the use of facilities during off-peak hours and providing the potential to host tournaments



Generating new revenue and resource opportunities through increased memberships and partnerships



Attracting new sponsors who are interested in supporting health and well-being initiatives for older people



Introducing new roles and volunteering possibilities within the organisation

> **"Walking football is a very interesting game. If people at my age can do it, so can others."**
>
> *Rita Lukšienė • Player*

# MEDICAL RECOMMENDATIONS

**"Everyone is a good candidate for walking football"**

*Zoran Bahtijarević*
UEFA Chief of Medical

Although walking football is a sport for all, particular care should be taken with older people, especially those at high risk of stroke or sudden cardiac arrest, as well as those at high risk of bone damage, especially osteoporosis. By adopting the following medical recommendations **before**, **during** and **after participation**, as well as **after any injury or illness**, player safety will be ensured.

## MINIMUM MEDICAL REQUIREMENTS FOR COMPETITIVE PLAY

- **Players, referees and coaches should be trained in cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR). See free UEFA training here.**
- **An automated external defibrillator (AED) and first-aid kit should be available close to the pitch. Players should all sign a health declaration (see Annex 1).**



# MEDICAL RECOMMENDATIONS

## BEFORE PARTICIPATION

Before taking part in any walking football activity, UEFA **recommends**:

01. Every player should follow medical advice.
02. New players should complete a health declaration including personal details, an emergency contact and details of any health issues and medication (if applicable). Injuries or medical conditions should be brought to the attention of the organiser. See Annex 1 - Health Declaration.
03. Every player should get trained in CPR (free UEFA training here).
04. Every player should warm up properly, drink water and use appropriate equipment.

## DURING PARTICIPATION

Pain is not to be taken lightly, especially chest pain, shortness of breath, dizziness and shoulder pain. During participation, UFEA **recommends**:

01. Adjust the intensity and complexity of the activities to the abilities of the players and always put their safety and enjoyment first. To help minimise the risk of injuries, consider separating players by fitness level.
02. Have frequent short breaks between activities to allow players to interact and, most importantly, to rest and stay hydrated.
03. Have a defibrillator available and within easy reach.
04. Make sure there is a telephone within easy reach to call the emergency services if necessary.

## AFTER PARTICIPATION

After participation, UEFA **recommends**:

01. Monitor and encourage players to voice any concerns or signs of discomfort such as chest, muscular or joint pain, fatigue or dizziness, and ensure that they have not sustained any injuries.
02. Remind players to consult their healthcare provider regularly and discuss the effects of activity, as it may help reduce the need for certain medications.
03. Remind players to cool down, drink water and, particularly those with certain chronic conditions (e.g. type 2 diabetes), have a snack.

## RETURN TO PLAY POST INJURY/ILLNESS

The return to play after an injury or illness is a crucial step. It is important not only to keep the player active, but also to maintain their social links with the team. UEFA **recommends**:

01. The player should remain under medical supervision during recovery and undergo a medical assessment before returning to play.
02. A return to play protocol or guideline should be developed to help injured players resume football activities. Progressive training exercises and pain monitoring can help ensure safety.
03. An injured or ill player should maintain links with the team by attending training and participating in after-training socials if possible. Other team members should contact the player, and any others who haven't attended for a while, to see how they are doing.

# SECTION 02

## BUILDING THE FRAMEWORK

KEY ROLES

RECRUITMENT OF PLAYERS

RETENTION OF PLAYERS

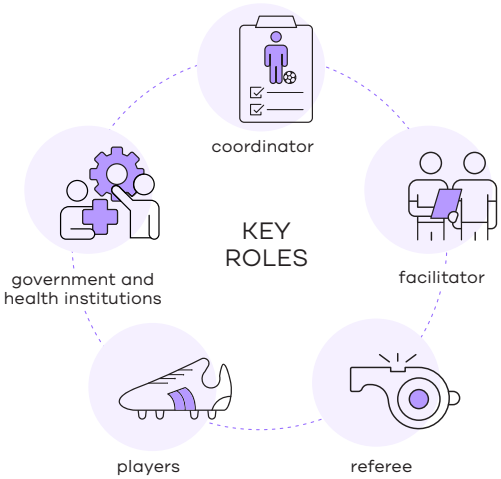
FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

BEST PRACTICES FROM EUROPEAN FOOTBALL



# KEY ROLES

The success of walking football activities relies on the collaboration of people in various key roles. From the walking football **coordinator**, who oversees planning, logistics and growth, to the **facilitator**, who leads sessions and engages players, each role contributes to a positive experience. The **referee** ensures fair play in competitive settings, while **players** are essential to activities and their long-term success. Finally, **government and health institutions** play a crucial role in promoting physical activity and supporting initiatives within the community.




## THE COORDINATOR

**The coordinator plays an important role in the success of walking football activities, overseeing planning, logistics, player engagement and growth.**

They are responsible for setting objectives, ensuring sessions are accessible and safe by being fully aware of the characteristics of older people and the medical recommendations, and managing the budget. By gathering players' feedback, evaluating performance and identifying opportunities for expansion, the coordinator ensures that the activities are effective, sustainable and tailored to the players' needs. Their work is essential in creating an environment in which older people can enjoy the social and health benefits of walking football, making them vital to the activities' success.



# KEY ROLES

## THE FACILITATOR



**Walking football leaders responsible for organising sessions are called facilitators.**

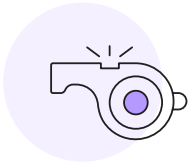
They may be trained coaches, volunteers or players themselves. There are no restrictions on the facilitator's background and no football-related qualifications are required. However, much like the players, they play a leading role in the implementation of activities and their long-term success.

Walking football facilitators must not only set up, deliver and manage sessions that are finely tuned to the players' needs, using a training pedagogy that focuses on age-appropriate learning; they must also recognise that beyond these logistical elements, the true measure of an activity's success is reflected in how they engage and resonate with the players on a personal level.

- The facilitator should ensure that sessions take place in a **safe environment** and in **safe conditions**. They should check that the floor is flat, that there are no objects scattered around, etc. The facilitator should also have a zero-tolerance attitude towards running and physical contact.
- The facilitator should be fully aware of the **characteristics of older people** in walking football activities and the **medical recommendations** to ensure their safety.
- The facilitator should be **motivating**, **enthusiastic** and foster a vibrant walking football community for older people, ensuring all players have a good time.
- The facilitator should be **communicative** and **encouraging**. Remember that the players may never have played football before and may be scared or shy.
- The facilitator should **actively promote participation** and ensure that everyone is involved, on and off the pitch.
- The facilitator should be **flexible** and **patient**. Remember walking football is a moderate-intensity activity and the players are primarily older people. Sessions should be adapted to the players' pace and capabilities, considering, for example, the duration of play and monitoring ball pressure.
- The facilitator should make sure everyone feels included and valued. **Camaraderie** and **team spirit** should be at the heart of all activities.
- The facilitator should show **empathy** and **interest** in the players.
- The facilitator should be **sensitive** to the players' needs and remember their particular state of health.
- The facilitator should be **inclusive** and encourage **mixed** teams to diversify the player base and create welcoming activities.

# KEY ROLES

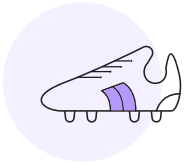
## THE REFEREE



**While the facilitator may act as a referee in a recreational setting, one or two designated referees must be appointed for any walking football competition.**

The referee plays an important role in ensuring that the match is played fairly and by the rules. They enforce the Laws of the Game, make decisions on fouls and misconduct, and manage the match from start to end. The referee's responsibilities include starting and stopping play, awarding indirect free-kicks, penalty kicks, yellow (sin bin) and red cards for offences such as running and physical contact, and making decisions on goals and penalties. By maintaining control and impartiality, the referee helps to ensure a safe, fair and enjoyable game for all involved.

## THE PLAYERS



**Of course, walking football activities cannot take place without people who take part.**

Their long-term involvement is essential for the sustainability and reputation of the initiative, helping to attract other participants and perhaps even external stakeholders to support the project.

## GOVERNMENT AND HEALTH INSTITUTIONS



**The role of government and health institutions is crucial in promoting physical activity and facilitating access.**

As we know, regular physical activity and exercise reduce the risk of health-related conditions, enhancing overall well-being and quality of life.

To achieve this, it is essential for public institutions to call upon partners to collaborate and support action. By developing campaigns, improving infrastructure and enhancing programmes within communities, a more favourable environment for physical activity can be created.

# RECRUITMENT
## OF PLAYERS

**ALTHOUGH IT DEPENDS ON THE LOCAL CONTEXT, THERE ARE MANY STRATEGIES TO RECRUIT WALKING FOOTBALL PLAYERS.**

### PROMOTE THE SPORT, ORGANISE ACTIVITIES AND USE INCENTIVES

- **Develop promotional materials that emphasise the benefits and the success stories**
  A marketing strategy highlighting the benefits and including testimonials can help attract players and partners.
- **Recruit ambassadors**
  Well-known personalities such as football legends can help promote activities.
- **Organise a 'come and try' session**
  Holding demonstration sessions where potential players can come and try the game without any obligation to sign up can help them see how enjoyable and beneficial walking football can be.
- **Organise an event**
  Host special walking football events or tournaments and organise meetings between municipalities and organisations running community activities.
- **Make use of football games**
  Make a special announcement at matches about walking football, inviting new players, or organise a walking football match during half-time.
- **Offer incentives**
  Offer incentives such as an invitation to a football match, a visit to the local football museum, a free medical check-up or goodies to attract players.



# RECRUITMENT
## OF PLAYERS

### LOOK FOR PARTNERSHIPS

**Football associations, clubs and sports organisations**
Other football associations, clubs or local football organisations might be interested in creating a joint programme and can introduce you to older players. Contact other football organisations for additional support, guidance and participation in tournaments should it be of interest.

**Medical institutions and health departments**
The many benefits of walking football are a powerful argument to attract medical institutions, health departments and patient groups. Health organisations such as retirement homes, senior centres and nursing homes might be interested in walking football activities in their area.

**Local government and communities**
Local councils and communities might provide support for initiatives that benefit residents.

**Insurance companies**
Insurance companies might be keen to support a health programme.

**Retired alumni organisations**
Retired alumni organisations are a good way to connect easily with potential players.

**Universities**
Students in medical and sports science faculties could show an interest in taking part in walking football activities while interacting with, and learning about the particularities of, older people.

### MAKE USE OF THE MEDIA AND WORD OF MOUTH

**Local media**
Local media such as newspapers, radio and TV can reach potential players. Consider the best time to share videos and testimonials of current players to generate interest.

**Social media**
Use the national association or local club's communication channels, such as its website, social media platforms and newsletters, to reach potential players.

**Flyers**
Place ads or flyers in senior centres, libraries, community centres and supermarkets.

**Word of mouth**
Encourage players to bring friends or family members to try walking football. Positive word of mouth can be a powerful recruitment tool.

# RETENTION
## OF PLAYERS



**ENGAGING PLAYERS OVER THE LONG TERM IS CRUCIAL TO THE SUSTAINABILITY OF ACTIVITIES. THERE ARE SEVERAL STRATEGIES TO HELP YOU ACHIEVE SUCCESS:**

### IN-SESSION

- **Offer** inclusive, fun-focused sessions.
- **Introduce** different game formats and experiment with various rules.
- **Schedule** sessions at convenient times, such as mornings, evenings or weekends, based on the group's preferences. Additionally, ensure the venue is easily accessible, with convenient transport options there and back.
- **Participate** in tournaments if your players are interested.

### OUT-OF-SESSION

- **Organise** social activities to help create a sense of community.
- **Keep** players informed and connected by regularly sharing team activities and updates.
- **Celebrate** milestones, successes and players' progress.
- **Offer** rewards, like certificates or medals.
- **Help** players set their own personal fitness or skills goals.
- **Invest** in team kits and equipment.

# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

**To support the development of walking football activities, below we answer the most common questions asked by football organisations and players.**

## FOOTBALL ORGANISATIONS

**Why offer walking football activities?**
- Walking football promotes physical activity, social interaction and inclusion, contributing positively to society and the local community. The laws of football revised into a safer and more secure form make it perfectly suited to older people and disabled people.

**Are there any age requirements?**
- Walking football is a sport for all, but there is value in tailoring it to specific groups. It is important to establish age categories to avoid mixing players in their 30s with those in their 60s, for example, ensuring a safe and enjoyable experience for everyone involved.

**What rules and regulations should we follow?**
- In recreational settings, rules and regulations should be based on the players' and facilitator's preferences. Select the format that is most suitable to ensuring safety and enjoyment.
- In competitive settings, UEFA recommends the UEFA Laws of the Game for Competitive Walking Football.

**How can we ensure inclusiveness and accessibility?**
- It is essential to anticipate the needs of all potential participants. Mixed teams should be promoted and actively encouraged. Doing so not only diversifies the player base but also creates a truly welcoming walking football activity.

**What training and qualifications do facilitators need?**
- Ensure that facilitators are trained in first aid and CPR and have the necessary skills to work with older people. See 'Key roles' in Section 2.

**How will we promote the activity and attract players?**
- By developing a marketing strategy, including promotional materials, social media outreach and partnerships with local organisations, for example. See 'Recruitment of players' in Section 2.

**What safety measures and first-aid protocols should we implement?**
- Have trained personnel or volunteers on-site during sessions. Train participants at least once in cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) and have a first-aid kit and defibrillator on hand.

**How will we monitor and evaluate the success of the activity?**
- Use evaluation tools such as the Player Feedback Form (see Annex 2) and attendance records to gauge the activity's effectiveness.

**How can we incorporate social activities and encourage interaction among older participants?**
- Plan for post-session socialising, group events and other activities that promote social connections.

# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

## PLAYERS

**What are the age requirements for walking football?**

- Walking football is for everyone. However, it is recommended that you play with players in your own age group.

**Do I need prior football experience to participate? What if I have never played football before?**

- No prior experience is required. Walking football welcomes players of all levels.

**What equipment will I need?**

- Players need comfortable sportswear, appropriate footwear, a water bottle and, if possible, shin guards.

**How do you ensure the safety of participants?**

- Safety is an absolute priority. Walking football is subject to specific rules, including a ban on running, to ensure safety. See 'Medical recommendations' in Section 1.

**Will there be opportunities for social interaction?**

- Absolutely. Walking football is not just about the game; it is about building friendships and socialising.

**What are the health benefits?**

- Walking football can help improve cardiovascular health, balance and coordination, not to mention social connections and your overall sense of well-being. See 'Benefits of walking football' in Section 1.

**Is walking football suitable for people with limited mobility?**

- Yes, walking football is designed to be fully inclusive. Adaptations are made to ensure everyone can participate.

# BEST PRACTICES
## FROM EUROPEAN FOOTBALL

**The following best practices and ideas, from national associations, regional associations and clubs across Europe, offer a host of strategies for developing successful walking football activities.**



## ENGLISH FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION AND ENGLISH CLUBS

### 01.

Annual first aid courses are organised, including training in how to use a defibrillator, the importance of everyone knowing where to find the nearest defibrillator, and a recommendation for walking football organisers to purchase one, given the vulnerability of the age group. Collecting emergency contact information is also deemed crucial, making it possible to contact family members in emergencies. Vigilance is required to spot any player showing changes in behaviour, appearing either calmer or more aggressive than usual, as this can be a sign of physical or mental health problems.

### 02.

Clubs are encouraged to select a ‘player of the day’ after each training session, a practice that is appreciated by players of all ages. The criteria for this recognition include skill, goalscoring, defensive actions, effort, persistence and attitude, among others. The recipient is awarded a trophy to proudly display at home for a week, to share with friends, children or grandchildren perhaps, before it is passed on to the next winner. Additionally, capturing this moment with a photo and sharing it on social media or the club’s website is recommended. To streamline communication, each team has established two WhatsApp groups: one for managers to share match updates, important announcements, etc., and another for general discussions, social events and health updates from team members.

# BEST PRACTICES
## FROM EUROPEAN FOOTBALL



## ENGLISH FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION AND ENGLISH CLUBS

### 03.

Find the right partner, like Age UK, with whom The FA has developed a dedicated walking football programme. Watch a video here.

### 04.

Sporting Memories sessions are organised for an hour before or after many walking football sessions. These can be for sharing memories, talking about the highlights of a player's career, sports quizzes, or looking at old photos or match programmes. The sessions help to strengthen the bonds of friendship. Injured players can also take part and stay connected during their convalescence.

### 05.

Organisers are advised to motivate players recovering from injuries to participate in sessions even before they are ready to play again. They can help set up the pitches, distribute bibs, keep time, officiate games, select the 'player of the day', help pack up equipment and join the social gathering afterwards. This approach helps keep everyone involved, particularly those facing lengthy recoveries. Reaching out with a phone call to players who have been absent for a long time is also recommended.

# BEST PRACTICES
## FROM EUROPEAN FOOTBALL



### ENGLISH FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION AND ENGLISH CLUBS

06.

Players are advised to listen to their bodies and stop if they feel any pain or unusual sensations. Fragile players and those suffering from specific illnesses, such as Parkinson's disease or dementia, need to be given more space and time to play the ball. A 3m exclusion zone is typically created to ensure they can enjoy and fully participate in the session.

07.

Walking football not only attracts more visitors to clubs and sports centres, it also encourages strong social bonds between participants. As friendships develop, clubs introduce additional activities such as table tennis, badminton, swimming and netball, further increasing attendance. Specialised groups are formed, offering diverse experiences such as golf, walking, attending football matches, gardening, quiz nights and music events. These varied activities encourage wider participation and create a dynamic social environment beyond the sport itself, increasing overall engagement and retention.

# BEST PRACTICES
## FROM EUROPEAN FOOTBALL



### 08.
### FAROE ISLANDS FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION

A physical therapist usually assists the first session to explain the differences in types of pain and to reassure the participants. As some participants do not engage in regular physical activity, they might confuse muscle pain with other more serious pain. This is also an opportunity to educate the participants on the importance of regular medical check-ups.

### FIFA 11+

### 09.
### FIFA 11+

The Swiss Accident Insurance Fund (SUVA) was one of the main collaborators in the development and promotion of the FIFA 11+ programme, an injury prevention programme developed by FIFA to reduce the risk of injuries among amateur football players.

### 10.
### FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION OF THE CZECH REPUBLIC

In line with its health and well-being objectives to provide football activities for older people, and with the help of the social and environmental sustainability funding available through the UEFA HatTrick programme, the Football Association of the Czech Republic organised the Czech Walking Football Championship 2024 with 7 tournaments in 4 regions of Czechia and a total of 14 teams.

# BEST PRACTICES
## FROM EUROPEAN FOOTBALL



## FRENCH FOOTBALL FEDERATION

### 11.

The French Football Federation promotes walking football as a recreational activity, providing clubs with material support, coach training programmes and accessible e-learning modules, and offering a special ‘health’ licence for older people, enabling them to participate in recreational activities (not competitions) without a medical certificate.

### 12.

The French Football Federation organised its first national walking football competition in 2024, open to all teams from U14 upwards. Clubs were evaluated based on two main criteria: match results (60%) and engagement (40%). The engagement criteria focused on team composition (bonus for mixed teams), team structure (bonus for the presence of a certified walking football coach) and team spirit (bonus for good player behaviour and sportsmanship).

# BEST PRACTICES
## FROM EUROPEAN FOOTBALL



### 13.
### HAMBURG FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION

The Hamburg Football Association launched Germany's first official walking football league.

### 14.
### JK TALLINNA KALEV, ESTONIA

The club's youth programme, announcements at top-division home matches and word of mouth have proven to be highly effective tools to recruit parents and grandparents for walking football activities, including an 87-year-old former professional JK Tallinna Kalev player from the 1930s! To ensure the programme's sustainability and attract more participants, it is important to keep the sessions interesting and varied.

# BEST PRACTICES
## FROM EUROPEAN FOOTBALL



### 15.
### LITHUANIAN FOOTBALL FEDERATION

To help participants feel at ease, particularly those who are disabled or who may never have played football before, walking football activities are sometimes organised using soft balls.

### 16.
### MALTA FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION

The #MyTime project, supported by UEFA's HatTrick funding, is a collaborative initiative by the Malta Football Association and the Maltese Ministry for Health and Active Ageing. It follows a multi-phase approach to engage older people in both physical activity and the community. The project builds trust through meetings in care homes, invites participants to football museums and matches, and bridges generational gaps by involving younger people as mentors. Finally, it introduces walking football as a way to improve physical fitness and encourage long-term involvement in football clubs. Find out more here.

# BEST PRACTICES
## FROM EUROPEAN FOOTBALL



### 17.
### ORKLA FK, NORWAY

Orkla's success in launching walking football is down to having created a fun and welcoming environment. By including participants of all ages and skill levels, adjusting the pace and promoting laughter and camaraderie, they have made the sport enjoyable and accessible. Starting small and overcoming early challenges, such as the recruitment of players, the club grew through word of mouth. Regular social activities, celebrating milestones and fostering gender inclusivity have strengthened their community.

### 18.
### PAIDE LINNAMEESKOND, ESTONIA

Paide started walking football activities in 2021 by reaching out to the local community centre, a gathering place for older people. The club then organised training sessions, where connections were also made with the disabled people's centre and the cancer association. The various groups train once a week throughout the year and rest during the summer.

# BEST PRACTICES
## FROM EUROPEAN FOOTBALL



### PORTUGUESE FOOTBALL FEDERATION

**19.**

The Portuguese Football Federation was a finalist in the 2021 UEFA Grow awards for its national emergency medical training programme, which teaches coaches, referees, players, managers and health professionals basic resuscitation and how to use AEDs. More than 5,000 participants have been certified on www.renata.pt, making football, futsal and walking football matches and training sessions safer all round.

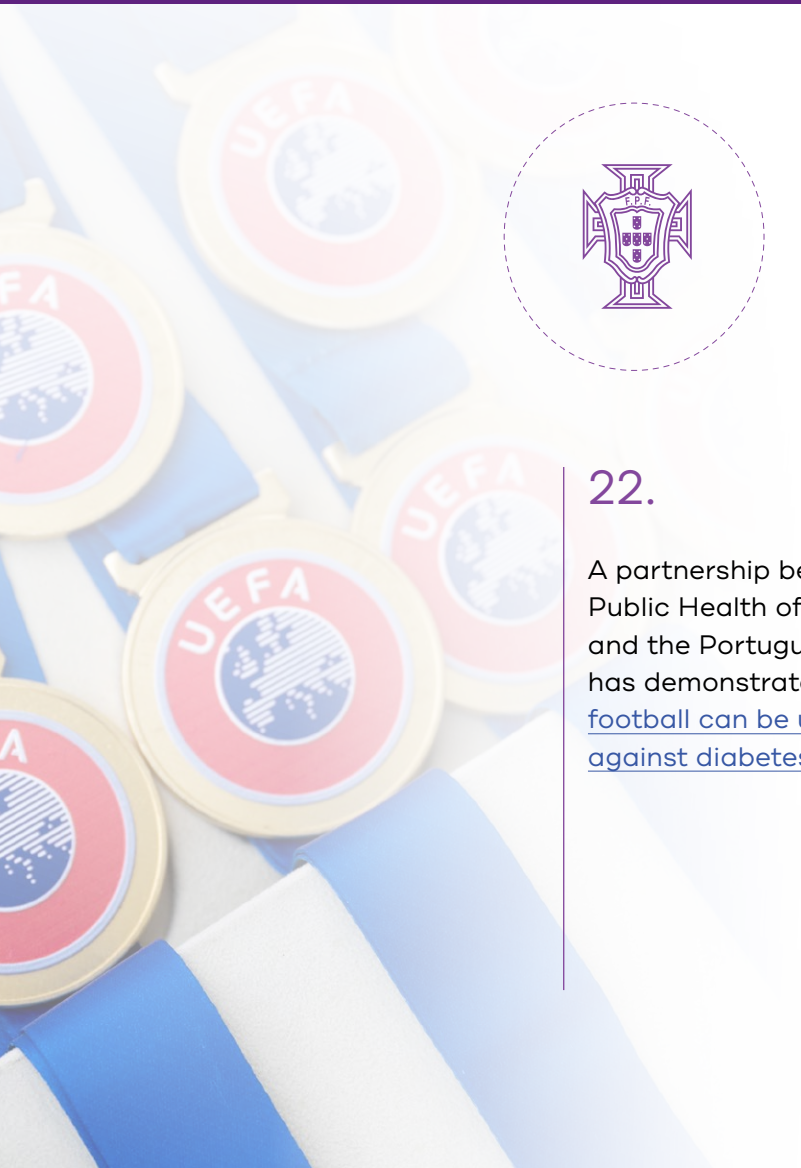
**20.**

A physiotherapist or nurse trained in emergency situations is present at all sessions to manage exercise-related injuries and adverse events that may occur.

**21.**

Want to know how much it costs to implement a community-based walking football programme for people with type 2 diabetes? Read about it here.

# BEST PRACTICES
## FROM EUROPEAN FOOTBALL



### PORTUGUESE FOOTBALL FEDERATION

22.

A partnership between the Institute of Public Health of the University of Porto and the Portuguese Football Federation has demonstrated the extent to which football can be used as a medicine against diabetes.

23.

The Portuguese Football Federation promotes walking football as a form of rehabilitation for prostate cancer patients. The PROSTATA_MOVE trial demonstrated that walking football is an effective and safe form of rehabilitation for prostate cancer patients. Participants showed improvements in cardiorespiratory fitness, muscle strength, balance and overall quality of life. Find out more here.

# BEST PRACTICES
## FROM EUROPEAN FOOTBALL



### 24.
### REMYRA IL, NORWAY

This Norwegian club highlights the importance of extending walking football beyond the physical activity by incorporating social elements like coffee and lunch after morning training sessions. This fosters camaraderie and keeps participants engaged by building bonds off the field. Increasing training frequency and participating in local tournaments further deepens the sense of commitment and community. Year-round activities, including tournaments and indoor winter training, ensure consistent engagement. Watch the video here.

### 25.
### SAN MARINO FOOTBALL FEDERATION

In collaboration with diabetes experts at San Marino Hospital, the San Marino Football Federation evaluated the benefits of walking football for people with type 2 diabetes. The participants were physically tested at the beginning and at the end of the project to demonstrate their progress.

# BEST PRACTICES
## FROM EUROPEAN FOOTBALL



### 26.
### SCOTTISH FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION

Football Memories is a project by the Scottish Football Association and Alzheimer Scotland using famous football photos to preserve memories and prompt conversations.

### 27.
### SWEDISH FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION

Recruitment campaigns are organised at local grocery stores, where volunteers take turns talking to everyone within the right age range about why and when to start walking football.

# SECTION 03

## FROM THEORY TO PRACTICE

**RECREATIONAL**
**WALKING FOOTBALL:** GUIDANCE

**COMPETITIVE**
**WALKING FOOTBALL:** LAWS OF THE GAME



# FROM THEORY
## TO PRACTICE

**THIS LAST SECTION MOVES ON FROM THEORETICAL GUIDANCE TO PRACTICAL TOOLS, PROPOSING TWO DISTINCT PATHS FOR IMPLEMENTING RECREATIONAL AND COMPETITIVE WALKING FOOTBALL SESSIONS.**

### **RECREATIONAL WALKING FOOTBALL:** GUIDANCE

**Recreational walking football** refers to walking football for the purpose of exercise, relaxation or pleasure, and includes both playing and teaching the sport. Flexibility is a priority, and activities should be tailored to local contexts, needs, resources, objectives and player abilities. Recreational Walking Football: Guidance features examples of how recreational walking football is played in different countries. It also provides checklists, session plans, exercises and forms to help organise the sessions. These materials are intended to inspire and offer recommendations, and are in no way mandatory.




### **COMPETITIVE WALKING FOOTBALL:** LAWS OF THE GAME

**Competitive walking football** requires a formal competition structure and involves matches designed to determine a winner. Anyone wishing to organise competitive (as opposed to recreational) walking football matches should consult the UEFA Laws of the Game for Competitive Walking Football, to ensure a safe and well-regulated competitive setting. These laws are mandatory for all matches played under the auspices of UEFA.



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# ANNEX 01

## HEALTH DECLARATION

Ensuring secure data collection is crucial to protect sensitive information and comply with legal standards. Each organisation should verify and apply their national regulations, and design their own system, forms and processes to protect individuals' privacy.



# HEALTH DECLARATION

## INSTRUCTION

Before engaging in any walking football activities, please get the go-ahead of your healthcare provider and complete this health declaration. The information you provide will help ensure your safety and well-being during sessions.

## PERSONAL INFORMATION

| | |
|---|---|
| Full name: | |
| Date of birth: | |
| Sex as stated in passport: | |
| Phone number: | |
| Emergency contact's name: | |
| Emergency contact's phone number: | |

## MEDICAL HISTORY

| | YES | NO | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Do you have any medical conditions or chronic illnesses (heart disease, diabetes, arthritis, etc.)? | ◯ | ◯ | If yes, please specify: |
| Are you currently taking any medication? | ◯ | ◯ | If yes, please list medications, dosages, and reasons: |
| Do you have any allergies, including medication allergies? | ◯ | ◯ | If yes, please specify: |
| Have you undergone any recent surgeries or medical procedures? | ◯ | ◯ | If yes, please describe and provide the date(s): |
| Have you experienced chest pain or discomfort during physical activity in the past? | ◯ | ◯ | If yes, please describe and provide the date(s): |

# HEALTH DECLARATION

| LIFESTYLE | YES | NO | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Do you smoke? | ◯ | ◯ | If yes, how many cigarettes do you smoke per day? | | | |
| Do you drink alcohol? | ◯ | ◯ | If yes, how often and in what quantities? | | | |
| How often do you engage in physical activity or exercise? | ◯ Daily | ◯ Weekly | ◯ Monthly | ◯ Rarely | ◯ Never | Please specify which activity or exercise: |

| EXERCISE GOALS AND PREFERENCES | |
|---|---|
| What are your goals for participating in exercise or physical activity? | |
| Do you have any exercise preferences or limitations? | |

**DECLARATION**

I, the undersigned, declare that the information provided in this form is accurate and complete to the best of my knowledge. I understand that it is my responsibility to inform the walking football coordinator or facilitator of any changes to my health status or medical conditions that may affect my ability to exercise safely.

DATE _____ SIGNATURE _____

**INFORMED CONSENT**

I acknowledge that I have read and understood the information provided in this form. I am aware of the risks associated with physical activity and exercise and voluntarily choose to participate.

DATE _____ SIGNATURE _____

# ANNEX 02

## PLAYER FEEDBACK FORM

Ensuring secure data collection is crucial to protect sensitive information and comply with legal standards. Each organisation should verify and apply their national regulations, and design their own system, forms and processes to protect individuals' privacy.



(PAGE 1 / 2)

# PLAYER FEEDBACK FORM

## INSTRUCTION

In order to monitor your progress and deliver the most appropriate sessions, please complete the form with your honest answers.

## PERSONAL INFORMATION

| | |
|---|---|
| Full name: | |
| Date of birth: | |
| Sex as stated in passport: | |
| Phone number: | |

## PHYSICAL HEALTH

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| How would you rate your physical health before starting walking football? | ◯ Very poor | ◯ Poor | ◯ Average | ◯ Good | ◯ Excellent |
| How would you rate your physical health now? | ◯ Very poor | ◯ Poor | ◯ Average | ◯ Good | ◯ Excellent |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Have you noticed any physical improvements since starting walking football? | ◯ Yes | ◯ No | If yes, please describe: |

## MENTAL HEALTH

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| How would you rate your mental well-being before starting walking football? | ◯ Very poor | ◯ Poor | ◯ Average | ◯ Good | ◯ Excellent |
| How would you rate your mental well-being now? | ◯ Very poor | ◯ Poor | ◯ Average | ◯ Good | ◯ Excellent |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Have you experienced any positive changes in your mood, social interactions or overall mental state since starting walking football? | ◯ Yes | ◯ No | If yes, please describe: |

# PLAYER FEEDBACK FORM

## GENERAL FEEDBACK

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| How satisfied are you with the walking football sessions? | ◯ Very unsatisfied | ◯ Unsatisfied | ◯ Neutral | ◯ Satisfied | ◯ Very satisfied |
| What do you enjoy most about the walking football sessions? | | | | | |
| When did you start attending walking football sessions? | | | | | |
| Are there any aspects of the walking football sessions that you believe could be improved? | ◯ Yes | ◯ No | Please provide details: | | |

## ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

| | |
|---|---|
| Please provide any additional feedback or comments you have about the walking football sessions and your personal experience of them. | |

Thank you for taking the time to complete this form.
Your feedback is invaluable to us and will help improve the programme for everyone involved.

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

**THIS TOOLKIT IS THE RESULT OF A COLLABORATION BETWEEN UEFA, SEVERAL OF ITS MEMBER ASSOCIATIONS AND SPECIALISTS IN THE FIELD OF WALKING FOOTBALL.**

**IN OCTOBER 2022, UEFA CREATED A WORKING GROUP TO GATHER INSIGHTS AND FEEDBACK FROM EXPERTS IN WALKING FOOTBALL, INCLUDING NATIONAL ASSOCIATIONS' SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY MANAGERS, GRASSROOTS MANAGERS, WALKING FOOTBALL COACHES, REFEREES, PLAYERS AND HEALTHCARE PROFESSIONALS.**

**Seven national associations** diverse in size, location and walking football experience were selected to be part of the working group, represented by:

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# UEFA WALKING FOOTBALL TOOLKIT

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