UEFA GRASSROOTS FRAMEWORK

Laying the foundations today for a brighter tomorrow

UEFA GRASSROOTS PROGRAMME

MESSAGE FROM THE UEFA PRESIDENT

Dear friends of football,

While many recognise UEFA for its high-level club and national team tournaments, our dedication to football goes far beyond that.

It is our duty and responsibility to nurture our beautiful game and help it flourish at all levels in every corner of the continent. We are committed to promoting and growing the women's game. We are championing football's social and environmental responsibility. And with this framework, we are also consolidating our commitment to the grassroots game.

The development of the grassroots game holds a special place at UEFA. It is where our lifelong love for football begins: playing with friends in a safe environment guided by parents, teachers and coaches. Each of us cherishes those early lessons and the friendships formed in local clubs.

On behalf of UEFA, I sincerely thank all those who dedicate their time and knowledge to the grassroots game. Your devotion and ongoing efforts make a significant difference in shaping and developing this wonderful sport. Please continue to make a positive impact and contribute to the growth of these young people. Never forget that they are the future not only of football but of our world and society.

With sincere gratitude,

Aleksander Čeferin
UEFA President

MESSAGE FROM THE UEFA TECHNICAL DIRECTOR & CHIEF OF FOOTBALL

I was fortunate to have the opportunity to play football to the highest level but I have never forgotten my earliest experiences of playing with friends, or the coaches who supported me on my journey from street football to the World Cup finals.

Whatever their footballing prospects, we must ensure that everyone has the chance to play, learn and enjoy this great game, and that every child is able to do so in their local community. While football is now mainly played in organised settings in schools and clubs across much of Europe, we must keep the emphasis on fun, positive learning experiences, creativity and free play.

Football is not just a great game to play and enjoy; it also teaches us important social skills such as teamwork, leadership, communication and responsibility, which have helped me throughout my career and in all areas of life.

As the guardians of the game we have a responsibility to support and develop the coaches who in turn support the players, and to provide high-quality programmes and environments that foster a lifelong love of the game, as well as producing the stars and role models of tomorrow.

We recognise that each of our 55 member associations is different, with its own culture, challenges and priorities. This framework honours those differences and past achievements, while providing solid foundations on which to build an even better future for football in Europe, together.

Our support for developing the grassroots game goes beyond words. We will continue to provide the substantial financial support and resources it deserves.

Football should be for all, which is why we are committed to the continued development of the grassroots game.

Zvonimir Boban
UEFA Technical Director & Chief of Football

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I. INTRODUCTION

In its overall strategy, UEFA commits to giving continued strong support to the grassroots game, providing opportunities for players of all ages across society. UEFA also commits to further promoting child and youth protection policies to hold coaches and administrators to high standards and values.

The aim of this document is to provide a clear and coordinated picture of UEFA's grassroots vision and mission and to collate its priorities and objectives in a single grassroots framework.

For the avoidance of doubt, the following document applies equally to both men's and women's football, unless otherwise stated.

A. What is grassroots football?

Grassroots football is both non-professional and non-elite. It includes children's football, school football, disability football, football for veterans, walking football, football for homeless people and football for refugees. Grassroots football is football for all, irrespective of age, ability, ethnicity, nationality, religion, sex, sexual orientation or any other personal trait. Grassroots is the foundation for the player pathway; however, its focus is on developing opportunities to play for a love of the game.

Grassroots football represents the foundations of the game

B. Why is grassroots football important?

Besides fitness and social contact, football is a vehicle for education, personal development and mental health. It instils values such as teamwork, respect and leadership, benefiting individuals and society as a whole.

Elite and professional football is the tip of the iceberg; grassroots football represents the foundations of the game.

Strengthening those foundations and growing grassroots football is not only about increasing the number of players. It is also about improving the quality of football provision throughout Europe, to provide a better environment and a better experience for all involved.

For this reason, both UEFA and its member associations must continue to develop, implement and invest in strategies and initiatives that will safeguard the future of football.

C. What are the benefits for national associations and UEFA?

Solid grassroots foundations are vital to ensuring the long-term health and growth of the game. The benefits for national associations and UEFA are numerous:

1. Solid grassroots enable national associations to connect with regional and local communities, change perceptions, and build trust and positive relationships with stakeholders.
2. The more registered players and clubs a national association has, the more people it can reach and the greater a contribution it can make to those people and to society as a whole.
3. The more football contributes to society, the stronger the links its governing bodies have with NGOs and public authorities (locally, nationally and internationally), increasing the potential for positive societal impact.
4. The larger the pool of players, the more talent can be identified.
5. The larger the football community, the more customers the game has, now and in the future, thereby increasing the financial and social return on investment.

II. HOW UEFA SUPPORTS GRASSROOTS DEVELOPMENT

UEFA's support consists of six components that come together to play their own unique but complementary role in helping national associations to develop and support grassroots in their respective countries.

1. Charter

The charter is a legal document between UEFA and the member associations. It sets out minimum requirements that each association must evidence.

It must be signed by the association's general secretary, signifying the association's commitment to meeting the requirements of the charter and to raising standards in grassroots football.

The charter is a significant document as it demonstrates the political support of UEFA and its member associations for grassroots and is a requirement for accessing UEFA funding.

2. HatTrick

UEFA provides substantial annual HatTrick funding for each member association that is a signatory of the charter.

Associations can apply through the HatPro platform for funding to support their grassroots programmes. Applications must set out clear plans with objectives and measurable targets. Reports must be submitted on an annual basis and on completion of the plans.

3. Framework

The framework's priority areas of Players, Football Environment, Game and Workforce, along with their supporting list of enablers, help to provide national associations with a focus for development and delivery. The priority areas are broad and flexible, to allow associations to set their own priorities to meet their country's needs.

4. Self-evaluation

It is important that national associations evaluate and measure their programmes in terms of impact and achievement.

UEFA has therefore introduced a self-evaluation programme, which associations must participate in on a regular basis.

The self-evaluation is not a test, but an opportunity – with the support of UEFA – to reflect on, celebrate, challenge and prioritise the association's grassroots delivery and impact.

5. Grassroots mentors

The UEFA grassroots mentor team provides bespoke, ongoing, individual support for national associations to ensure that they can develop the grassroots game in line with their own priorities and needs.

Each relationship between mentor and national association will be unique, ensuring that the focus is on collaborative, personalised and authentic support.

6. Resources

UEFA has developed several guides to help national associations to develop and implement their grassroots programmes.

In addition, UEFA organises a programme of events and conferences where national associations come together to discuss ideas and share best practices.

There is also a dedicated grassroots community web page, and UEFA will continue to lead campaigns to help to raise the profile of grassroots development and the important role that national associations play in its delivery.

UEFA grassroots mentor team provides bespoke, ongoing, individual support for national associations

2. HatTrick

UEFA funding to support grassroots development

3. Framework

Sets out broad areas that provide focus but allow flexibility to meet national needs & priorities

1. Charter

Legal agreement
Minimum requirements
Raising standards
Signifies political support from UEFA & NA
Enables access to UEFA funding

4. Self-evaluation

Process that helps NA to review, celebrate, challenge & prioritise

6. Resources

UEFA Share, Conferences, Guidelines, web page, campaigns

5. Mentors

Bespoke ongoing, individualised, collaborative, focused & authentic support

III. SITUATION ANALYSIS

UEFA and its member associations have invested heavily in grassroots football over the past two decades. UEFA HatTrick funding alone will have made available approximately €175m to support the development of grassroots football by 2028. The significance of grassroots activities, at national association and UEFA level, is constantly growing, as is our awareness of the threats and opportunities that lie ahead.

€175m
to support the development of grassroots football by 2028

Modern lifestyles have led to a culture of inactivity that passes from parents to children. Academic pressure and the perceived low value of physical education in school have pushed sport down children's list of priorities. We see a huge drop-off in numbers as players reach their early teens, and an inability to reconnect with those former players in adulthood.

The appeal of individual sports has increased – and volunteering declined – as people seek greater flexibility to accommodate their busy lifestyles. Coupled with a lack of quality infrastructure and the prospect of legislation requiring the replacement of microplastics on artificial pitches, this presents obvious challenges to football organisations already struggling to maintain, let alone increase, participation rates.

On top of that come extraordinary external challenges such as the pandemic and political tensions across Europe, followed by waves of migration and a cost of living crisis that has impacted countless individuals, families, clubs and associations. And yet, despite the threats to grassroots clubs, there are also multiple new opportunities to be seized.

The women's game is the biggest growth market in the sport. UEFA and the national associations' support for football in schools has led to key partnerships with governments, education for teachers and bespoke planning in each country. Developing sustainable and inclusive grassroots clubs, re-building and educating a new generation of volunteers, and creating flexible playing formats that better accommodate players' needs are just a few more examples of the many areas of potential for grassroots football.

As a social tool that breaks down barriers, football has the power to bring people together and open up new opportunities for disabled players and other marginalised groups. Independent analysis has proved that football benefits health and well-being, and helps to reinforce individual character, inclusion and community. We can therefore be confident and proud that our sport will continue to have a positive impact on individuals and society as a whole.

Creation of sustainable and inclusive grassroots clubs and flexible playing formats

IV. VISION, MISSION AND VALUES

Vision:

Everybody, everywhere has the opportunity to play football in a safe, fun and positive environment.

Mission:

To maximise the number of registered players and organised football activities under the auspices of the national associations.

Values:

- Collaboration
- Empowerment
- Inclusion
- Innovation
- Responsibility

V. PRIORITIES AND OBJECTIVES

Priorities

Based on UEFA's overall strategy, the following areas have been identified as priorities to help to achieve the above vision and mission:

- Increasing the number of registered **players** through a player-centred approach
- Transforming **football environments** through facility development and programmes to develop safe football opportunities
- Ensuring that the **game** is accessible for all, with player pathways, flexible formats and appropriate competition structures
- Developing, supporting and providing education opportunities for the **workforce**

To achieve success, **enablers** need to be in place, including accurate data to support the development of the grassroots game.

Objectives

Several UEFA strategies[1] identify numerous measurable objectives to support the development of grassroots football. It should be noted that some of the objectives were set before the emergence of COVID-19, and we still do not know what the full impact of the pandemic will be. Below we have identified what we consider to be the main objectives for grassroots football across Europe and in all UEFA member associations, based on the above priorities.

Players: Increase participation[2] and retention through a player-centred approach

- Develop and implement high-quality programmes to meet the needs of existing and future players
- Establish targeted interventions for marginalised groups

Football environment: Enhance safe, inclusive and fun playing environments

- Have child and youth protection policies in place
- Deliver football in schools programmes
- Develop a grassroots club development programme
- Develop a facilities and infrastructure plan
- Consider environmental responsibilities and impact in all grassroots activities

Game: Develop flexible and inclusive playing formats

- Develop inclusive player pathways to meet the needs of everyone who wants to play the game
- Develop flexible formats to increase the number of players, retain more players and engage players, e.g. small-sided games, recreational games, football for veterans, futsal, walking football, pay-to-play
- Establish a plan for disability football
- Develop and evolve appropriate competition structures

[1] UEFA strategies: UEFA-wide; technical development; women's football; social & environmental sustainability.
[2] In line with the mission statement, participation refers to registered players and organised football activities under the auspices of the national associations.

Workforce: Increase and develop the grassroots workforce at national, regional and local level

- Develop and educate dedicated full-time grassroots staff at national and regional level to improve the quality of the planning, management, delivery and evaluation of grassroots football
- Increase the quality, quantity and diversity of the coaching workforce by establishing a grassroots coach education delivery plan
- Increase the quality, quantity and diversity of the refereeing workforce
- Promote and reward the role of volunteers, including through national grassroots awards
- Support and educate club officials, club leaders, parents and teachers
- Facilitate UEFA member associations' access to EU and other volunteering programmes, such as the European Solidarity Corps and Erasmus+ Sport

Enablers: Ensure national associations strategically plan, implement, resource and measure their grassroots plan as part of their overall strategy

- Improve the collection, accuracy and use of data insights to develop grassroots football
- Use research and insights to inform strategic decision-making
- Develop partnerships with key agencies to support the resourcing and delivery of the grassroots plan, e.g. national and regional governments, sponsors, leagues and NGOs
- Create digital tools to support football development
- Market and promote grassroots football, including its social impact, through internal and external communication

VI. IMPLEMENTATION

Achieving our vision and mission for grassroots football requires a truly collective effort. It is not something UEFA or its member associations can achieve alone. Our role is to influence, guide, facilitate and promote grassroots. The drivers of grassroots football are regional associations, clubs, schools and other recognised organisations.

The UEFA Grassroots Charter sets minimum standards

UEFA recognises that each of its 55 autonomous member associations has its own identity, culture and priorities and is at a different stage in their own development pathway. As such, each should have the ability and flexibility, in consultation with UEFA, to define the scope of grassroots football in their respective countries, i.e. what is considered non-professional and non-elite.

It is important for each national association to have freedom in relation to investments and priorities and to establish these in the association's grassroots plan, which should be part of the association's overall strategy. Associations should be able to put resources into the areas where they see the greatest opportunities for impact on the development and growth of the grassroots game.

This document provides national associations with a framework to define their focal points within the broad priority areas of players, football environment, game and workforce, together with all-important enablers.

It also recognises that grassroots football is a key contributor to the delivery of national associations' football and social responsibility aspirations, which benefits football and wider society.

UEFA has established a set of minimum standards for the development of grassroots football. All UEFA member associations are invited to commit to meeting these standards by signing the UEFA Grassroots Charter.

The charter identifies areas in which all national associations who sign the charter, together with their regional associations, should seek to provide resources and programmes in accordance with UEFA guidelines, to maximise opportunities for all. These areas are:

- **Football in schools**
- **Grassroots coach education**
- **Grassroots club development**
- **Child and youth protection**
- **Disability football**
- **Flexible formats and player pathways**

UEFA provides each signatory to the charter with a dedicated mentor to help the association to meet and maintain the standards of the charter. The UEFA grassroots mentors provide a bespoke service, helping each individual association to establish its optimum national grassroots plan, based on self-evaluation and its overall strategic plan.

In addition to the UEFA grassroots mentors, each national association also receives support from across UEFA in relation to girls' and women's football, coach development, referee development, football & social responsibility, strategic development, facilities & infrastructure, digital, marketing, insight and social return on investment.

The national associations are also supported by the HatTrick programme, through which earmarked funding is available to support grassroots projects in connection with the charter specifically and through a range of other incentive payments. Please refer to the latest HatTrick regulations for further information on available funding and requirements linked to it.

UEFA is constantly looking to identify other common needs and opportunities to facilitate and promote grassroots through research, education, best practices and tailor-made programmes such as UEFA Playmakers, UEFA's first pan-European girls' grassroots programme, which introduces football to girls aged five to eight through play, storytelling and the magic of Disney.

In addition, national associations can draw on education, research and knowledge sharing through the UEFA Grassroots Conference, UEFA Share grassroots seminars and an online grassroots community. UEFA also organises an annual Grassroots Week and grassroots awards to raise awareness of and reward national associations' efforts and successes.

VII. UEFA'S INTERNAL RESOURCES

UEFA's technical development unit, together with the UEFA Grassroots Football Panel, is responsible for the UEFA Grassroots Charter and the associated support provided to each UEFA member association.

The UEFA Grassroots Football Panel is composed of grassroots experts from the national associations

It collaborates closely with the other areas shown in the diagram below to provide an aligned service and holistic support to develop grassroots football.

The teams contributing to grassroots football at UEFA are decentralised but intertwined. With good communication and cooperation, they complement each other and enable UEFA to provide the full range of expertise and dedicated support its members need, all with a view to increasing registered player numbers and organised football activities under the auspices of the national associations.

Framework	Charter (tools and programmes)					
	Football in schools	**Grassroots coach education**	**Grassroots club development**	**Child and youth protection**	**Disability football**	**Flexible formats and player pathways**
Players	Enabling and encouraging more young people in a school setting to play football regularly and to create new links with clubs.	Increasing the number of well-educated coaches who are able to create an engaging and inclusive environment so that new and existing players of all abilities can engage, learn, develop and enjoy the game.	Developing clubs with a focus on giving everyone the opportunity to develop holistically and to play, enjoy and be part of football.	Developing a child and youth protection policy and tools for grassroots football stakeholders in order to keep children safe and encourage them and their parents to play and stay in football.	Developing access to regular local playing opportunities for disabled people through pan-disability football, football adapted to people with specific impairments or the integration of disabled people into mainstream football.	Using flexible formats and other interventions, for example UEFA Playmakers, to ensure football becomes more accessible. This includes the use of adapted games to support continued participation and targeted interventions to support marginalised groups.
Football environment	Increasing schools' and physical education teachers' knowledge, competence and confidence to deliver football activities.	Providing coach development programmes that educate coaches on how to create a positive, motivating environment and opportunities for grassroots players of all traits.	Developing inclusive clubs that play an active part in their local communities and contribute to the inclusion, well-being and fulfilment of their members and wider society.	Strengthening child and youth protection measures to provide a safe and positive playing environment for all.	Ensuring the delivery of football activities for disabled players through the creation of accessible and inclusive football opportunities.	Developing match formats to meet age-specific needs for boys and girls, which provide the best possible playing and learning environments. Ensuring support from educated coaches who allow the game to be the teacher and balance coach input with player autonomy.
Game	Promoting football as a social and educational tool by aligning and combining football activities with school curriculums, including the introduction of flexible formats and appropriate competition.	Promoting a holistic approach to coaching to enable players to experience the health, social and psychological benefits of the game. Developing coaches who understand player development and the importance of player pathways, as well as age-appropriate game and competition structures.	Supporting clubs in the development of a grassroots philosophy, player pathways and a flexible football provision to support the local football community.	Ensuring children and young people feel safe and protected and have a voice. Ensuring coaches know how to recognise and respond to safeguarding issues.	Providing playing opportunities for disabled players through the delivery of adapted, pan-disability or disability-specific football or integration into mainstream football.	Establishing playing formats and player pathways that ensure a modern and inclusive football provision is available to players of all abilities. Supporting increased participation, engagement and retention in connection with a national player development plan.
Workforce	Upskilling teachers, coaches, pupils and volunteers to create positive, inclusive, safe and fun football environments and to provide high-quality educational football lessons.	Increasing the number of qualified coaches and coach educators at grassroots level to meet the needs of the game and to provide a positive developmental experience that enhances both players' and coaches' enjoyment of football.	Developing and educating volunteers and staff on and off the field to build clubs' workforces in order to support their administration and activities.	Developing mandatory training for staff and volunteers to raise awareness of safeguarding issues and how to respond appropriately to concerns. Implementing recruitment policies, including background checks, in line with UEFA guidelines to protect children and young people from harm or abuse.	Developing coaches' and volunteers' knowledge, competence and confidence to support disabled players in order to increase access and opportunity.	Increasing coaches' awareness of the benefits of varied match formats, enabling both holistic player development and relevant game-related outcomes, as well as recruiting and educating referees to support the game formats and player pathways.
Enablers	Developing and maintaining key strategic partnerships.	Ensuring that resources are allocated to the recruitment and development of coaches to reflect and meet the needs of the game.	Establishing a club development network to ensure clear communication and information sharing, and to support national associations to develop club accreditation programmes.	Ensuring that national associations have a child safeguarding focal point and have child and youth protection policies in place.	Developing and maintaining key strategic partnerships and ensuring that disability football is embedded across all grassroots programmes.	Improving player registration to better capture and follow the players' journeys across varied and flexible formats and identify the need for flexible and appropriate pitches and facilities to best support player development plans.

VIII. SUMMARY

Players

Increase participation and retention through a player-centred approach

- High-quality programmes to meet the needs of existing and future players
- Targeted interventions for marginalised groups

Football environment

Enhance safe, inclusive and fun playing environments

- Child and youth protection
- Football in schools
- Club development
- Facility development
- Environmental responsibility

Game

Develop flexible & inclusive playing formats

- Player pathways
- Flexible formats
- Disability football
- Competition structures

Workforce

Increase and develop the grassroots workforce at national, regional and local level

- High-quality education to meet the needs of the game
- Promotion of volunteering
- Coach development

Enablers

Ensure the strategic planning, implementation, resourcing, and measurement of the grassroots plan is linked to the national association's strategy

UEFA