



# RISING STARS

Albanian Football Association  
Women's Football Strategic Plan  
2023—2026



# INTRODUCTION

**At the Albanian Football Association, we constantly strive to make football a more inclusive game, and women's football is one of our top priorities in achieving this.**



Dear Members of the Football Community,

It is with great enthusiasm and commitment that I present this Women's Football Strategy, a pivotal roadmap for the growth and empowerment of women's football within our organisation and country. As we embark on this journey, we recognise the significance of fostering inclusivity, equality, and excellence in every aspect of the beautiful game.

This strategy reflects our dedication to advancing women's football on both the national and international stages. We aim to create a vibrant ecosystem that not only develops world-class athletes but also provides opportunities for leadership and engagement at all levels.

Through collaborative efforts with our Member Associations, stakeholders, and the global football community, we aspire to break barriers and set new standards for women's football. This strategy emphasises investment in grassroots development, enhancing competitions, and promoting gender equality within our footballing family.

As the President, I am proud to lead an organisation that champions diversity and embraces the immense potential of women's football. Together, let us work towards a future where every aspiring female footballer has the opportunity to shine and contribute to the legacy of our sport.

Thank you for your unwavering support as we embark on this transformative journey.

**ARMAND DUKA**  
PRESIDENT OF THE ALBANIAN FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION





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## SNAPSHOT SUMMARY

# KEY FACTS AND FIGURES

## TEAM

**2010** Women's National Team established 

World Cup appearances **0-0** European Championships appearances

**73** A team FIFA ranking

A team average age **23**

## COACHES

2021/22 coach breakdown

LICENSE LEVEL	NUMBER
UEFA PRO	1
UEFA A	4
UEFA B	54
UEFA C	22
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>81</b>

**6**

COURSES

**81**

GRADUATES

## EVENTS

**5** Matches played each week in 2021/22

**2** National championships held each year

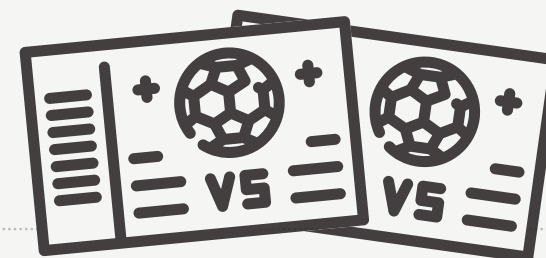
Number of teams taking part in 2021/22

TEAM	NUMBER
A teams	10
WU16 teams	12
School teams	67
Regional WU14	35
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>124</b>

Football Tournaments For U11, U13, U14, U16 in 2021/22

**3** Amateur inter-regional championships held each year for ages 13-15

**7** Secondary school championships held each year for ages 12-14



**2,000+**

Players involved in 2021/22

**1,200**<sup>+300</sup>

Participants in school programmes



# OFFICIALS



2

BOARD  
MEMBERS

1

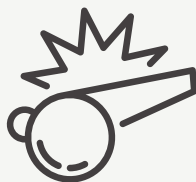
COMMITTEE

1

COMMITTEE  
MEMBER

6

Matches refereed at  
international level at FIFA  
and UEFA tournaments



# SUPPORTERS



1,000

First League  
attendance

2,000

National team  
match attendance



# WOMEN'S CLUBS, IN NUMBERS

**10** Number of women's clubs

**2,000+** Total registered players in 2021/22

**1,230** Total registered youth players in 2021/22

**55** Number of clubs

**55** Women's Football club members of FSHF









# VISION, MISSION, AND VALUES

## VISION

To create welcoming and accessible environments where women and girls can enjoy football and fulfil their potential.

## MISSION

To ensure our game is accommodating and enjoyable for all women and girls wanting to engage with football across Albania.

## VALUES

Trust, Professionalism, Respect, Passion,  
Unity, Progress.





# STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

This strategy will build the women's game from the ground up, growing women's football in an authentic and organic way.

That said, we will also focus on the top of the pyramid, securing engagement with the women's game at the elite level in terms of Elite Championship clubs and the level of opportunities provided.

**Our approach to developing women's football in Albania will focus on the following four key areas.**







# PARTICIPATION

**There were over 2,000 registered female players playing football in Albania in 2022.**

The Albanian Football Association, in cooperation with FIFA and UEFA, is exploring every opportunity to increase this number, as well as the number of female coaches, officials, and administrators. Through this, we also want to develop a strong relationship with all stakeholders engaged in women's football.

## **KEY GOAL:**

**Double the number of registered female players from 2,000 to 4,000 by 2026.**



## OBJECTIVES AND ACTIONS

**Foster a welcoming, friendly women's football environment in which female players and fans can have fun and be part of an inclusive community**

- Launch the new 'Mothers at Football Day' by 2025
- Double the number of registered female players from 2,000 to 4,000 by 2026
- Increase the number of referees across the women's game from 21 to 24 by 2026
- Increase the number of administrators supporting the delivery of the women's game from 5 to 25 by 2026

**Deliver programmes and initiatives to increase access to girls' football across the country**

- Run 4 girls' football festivals per year
- Run 2 participation programmes per year for girls aged 7–11 at schools and non-gender specific clubs
- Deliver the UEFA/Disney Playmakers programme for girls aged 5–8 in a minimum of 50 schools by 2025
- Establish 30 new women's school football teams to reach 100 total at U12 and U14 across 8 regions by 2026
- Establish 60 U–13, U–14 regional amateur teams across 8 regions by 2026
- Develop and launch a digital club finder, allowing fresh players to find club environments from 2025

**Work with partner organizations and stakeholders to increase the number of women and girls playing football**

- Create 116 new links with schools by 2025
- Create 10 new links with women's community organizations by 2024
- Ensure 10 % of all schools are delivering the UEFA/Disney Playmakers programme by 2026
- Produce an annual FSHF women's and girls' football environment report, identifying locations that provide appropriate facilities at grassroots, professional and international standards, together with levels of utilization by Q3 of each year
- Develop and communicate the annual FSHF women's and girls' football environment assessment framework by Q3 of each year
- Establish 100 girls' U12 – U14 school football teams and embed 40 structured links with local clubs by 2026
- Create 40 new links with local authorities by 2026
- Create 4 new links with religious organizations by 2026
- Sign a Memorandum of Understanding with 40 local authorities and facility providers to ensure that women's football is considered in future infrastructure projects by 2026



# TALENT PATHWAY & NATIONAL TEAMS:

There are currently ten teams in Albania that participate in the Women's Elite Championship, which runs in a simple round-robin format.

At present, the number one priority for the Elite Championship is to increase its competitiveness, which is why this strategy lays out the steps to a comprehensive reform in this area – namely through developing and supporting women's clubs in all operational aspects.

## KEY GOAL:

Fully embed a national women's and girls' talent scouting programme that builds on the current men's programme by 2025.





## OBJECTIVES AND ACTIONS

**Evolve our approach to talent development to produce quality performances on the pitch**

- Aspire to keep hold of League B status in the UEFA Women's Nations League throughout the strategy period
- Qualify for League A at the WU-19 level in 2025
- Qualify for League A at the WU-17 level in 2025
- Improve the ranking of the women's national team from 73 to 53 by 2026.
- Work with UEFA and FIFA to explore the feasibility of the FSHF hosting a high-profile international women's football tournament by 2027
- Create a centralized training methodology and philosophy for women's and girls' football and start implementing / piloting it with clubs and on a regional level by 2026
- Work with stakeholders across Albania to design and launch a women's and girls' club assessment framework by 2026
- Fully embed a national women's and girls' talent scouting programme by 2026
- Establish medical and health programmes for national team female players by 2026
- Collect and analyse medical data on all national team female football players for the sake of injury prevention, playing conditions and female biological characteristics by 2026

**Refresh the current league formats at national and local level to create a more competitive game**

- Undertake an annual audit of all women's and girls' competitions to examine frequency of play, suitability of playing formats, levels of competitiveness and contributions to player/club development by Q3 of each year
- Restructure the Elite Championship to have 8 teams, with 21 matches across 3 stages by 2026
- Establish a WU-17 league, with 16 teams across 2 groups by 2025
- First women's leagues established by 2026
- 2 championships established at U17 and U15 levels by 2026

**Enhance the Elite Championship's brand and partnership opportunities to encourage more partners to invest in the women's game**

- Secure a title sponsor for the Elite Championship by 2026
- Ensure all Elite Championship matches are played in Category 4 stadiums by 2026
- Explore the feasibility and impact of updating Elite Championship regulations so matches are played at the best possible times by 2025
- Ensure more than 1 women's team qualifies for the UEFA Women's Champions League by 2026

# EDUCATION & LICENSING

We will enhance the on-the-pitch experience of the women's game by educating our women's football workforce to provide playing and training environments of the highest quality.

We will also leverage club licensing to increase the number of women's clubs and the support they receive, although this support will be dependent on clubs implementing new licensing requirements.

## KEY GOAL:

Establish a women's team in all 10 Elite Championship male clubs at senior, U17, U15 levels by 2026.





## OBJECTIVES AND ACTIONS

**Deliver an array of educational courses and training programmes to coaches, officials, administrators in the women's game**

- Ensure that all FSHF female registered players can take the UEFA C coaching course for free by 2026
- Ensure that all women that have played in the Elite Championship in the past 5 years can take the UEFA B coaching course for free by 2026
- Ensure that all women holding a UEFA B License and that have played for the National Team A in the past 5 years can take the UEFA A coaching course for free by 2026
- Through a refreshed philosophy and methodology, deliver 2 new coaching courses to 50 coaches per year at the grassroots level to emphasise recreational play over elite competition
- Host at least 1 national conference for women in football per year, to include teachers, coaches, national team staff, officials, representatives from the Ministry of Education and the University of Sports by 2025
- Deliver 2 training courses for female coaches and physical trainers per year
- Deliver 2 training courses for female referees per year
- Deliver 1 training course for female support staff per year
- Deliver 1 training course for female massage therapists per year
- Launch the 'Training Talented Women in Football' project by 2026
- Provide a scholarship of up to €10,000 per year financial support to women and ex-national teams players in coaching and education by 2025
- Run 1 educational and awareness raising programme for players and other football professionals involved in women's football per year

**Increase the number of qualified female coaches, officials, administrators in the women's game**

- At least 2 female UEFA Pro License Coaches by 2026
- At least 10 female UEFA A License Coaches by 2026
- At least 80 female UEFA B License Coaches by 2026
- At least 1 female coach on each women's national team at senior, U19, U17, U16 level by 2024
- At least 1 female coach at each women's club at senior, U17, U15 club levels by 2024
- At least 24 female referees at the national level by 2026
- Increase the number of FIFA Assistant Referees from 4 to 6 by 2026

**Work with clubs to develop the women's game and establish new women's teams and operational standards**

- Modify club licensing to ensure that all Elite Championship clubs have a senior women's team and at least 2 women's youth teams by 2026
- The creation of women's teams to be incentivised up to €25,000 per year through changes to club licensing for Elite Championship clubs by 2026
- All Elite Championship clubs to have produced a strategic plan for the development of women's football by 2026
- 100% of players must have a signed contract in accordance with FIFA approved player status with their respective clubs by 2026

# MARKETING, VISIBILITY & PERCEPTION:

**Bringing more women and girls into football will require a multi-faceted approach.**

We know that cultural opposition to women's and girls' football is most often due to a lack of information, therefore we must have education and promotion of the women's game as a top priority. Alongside this, we will elevate the commercial value of elite women's football by generating further income through greater partnerships and relations to secure a sustainable future for the women's game.





## OBJECTIVES AND ACTIONS

**Work with partner organizations and key stakeholders to create a coordinated effort to raising awareness of women's football**

- Work with the Albanian national public television network to begin broadcasting women's matches at least twice per week by 2026
- Work with FSHF staff and club staff to ensure that women's football is being mentioned in any public appearances such as TV interviews by 2024
- Work with 6 influencers per year to promote women's national team matches
- Ensure all women's top league matches are streamed online via YouTube every week by 2026
- Secure a national broadcast agreement for the Women's Albania Cup by 2026

**Increase the visibility and improve the perception of the women's game through a variety of public campaigns and promotional initiatives**

- At least 1 WU-16 Championship match to be broadcasted on social networks per year by 2024
- Stage an annual women's A team celebrity/charity football match from 2026
- Assign a high-profile ex-player to become the women's national team ambassador, leading on promotional campaigns by 2025
- Create and launch a new PR strategy for women's football by 2025
- Establish and launch inspirational brand identities for women's national teams by 2025
- Establish and launch inspirational brand identities for women's leagues and cup competitions by 2026
- Deliver at least 2 targeted women's football marketing campaigns across all communication channels per year
- Produce 12 social media 'lifestyle' posts on women's national team players per year
- Launch a new promotional campaign aimed at encouraging family and friends to come and watch games by 2025
- Launch a new promotional campaign aimed at educating parents on the benefits of football by 2026
- Launch a new promotional campaign aimed at encouraging fathers to support their daughters in football by 2026
- Increase the use of female playing, coaching, and referee imagery within all FSHF promotional activity by 2026
- Identify and promote international research which demonstrates the positive physical and social impact of female sports participation by 2025
- Ensure there is always at least 1 woman on the FSHF Executive Committee

**Support women's players to be their own advocates**

- Run 2 workshops per year for female players on securing sponsorship and brand deals
- Provide media training to national A team players to support their development as national role models and influencers by 2025
- Develop and launch a programme to celebrate outstanding women's players, offering them the chance to participate in promotional tours of academies, clubs, schools, media, etc., to promote and advocate women's football by 2025

# CONCLUSION

**The objectives, actions and KPIs that make up this strategy are the result of the dedication and passion of our staff, stakeholders, fans, and everyone who continues to drive forward women's football in Albania.**

While we are incredibly proud of this achievement, we also know that this is just the beginning. Now that we have this plan, we need to come together to make this strategy a reality. If you have read this strategy through, then I hope you feel as inspired and as hopeful as we do for the future of women's football in Albania, because that future is bright and that future will soon be here.

The implementation of this strategy will be led by the Albanian Football Association and will be delivered in parallel with the implementation of the general strategy, in which the commitment to create this women's strategy was originally made. We acknowledge that a lot can change between now and the end of this strategy, and that a lot has already changed in the time between the general strategy being written and the women's strategy being written.

For this reason, we will take a pragmatic approach to implementation that will allow us to be flexible and adjust actions and KPIs to adapt to changing contexts. That said, we will always be guided by our vision, mission and values, which will ensure we are constantly moving towards improving the women's game in Albania, with the people that make it special at the centre of everything we do.







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