

# Executive Summary

## *Introduction*

Football has often been compared to a mirror of society, but this metaphor is misleading. Rather than reflecting society as it is, it offers to individuals and groups a form of expression for their hopes and dreams. Football has the ability to transcend differences of age, gender, culture, religion, and socio-economic. The broad diversity of backgrounds of football players represents tangible illustration of equal opportunity and meritocracy. The sport itself has team solidarity, fair play and mutual respect among members and for opponents ingrained within its rules and practices.

Yet, this sport called the 'beautiful game' imbeds a paradox. Football is also a game that may vaguely resemble a simulacrum of war, where two teams face each other in a struggle with the noisy and emphatic support of the spectators. Based on the logic of this game partisanship, antagonism between 'them' and 'us', are essential. This setting naturally produces a desire by supporters to intimidate the other side by encouraging their team and demonstrating, often exuberantly, through their words and actions both confidence and superiority. When the 'us' and 'them' opposition turns into symbolic exclusion of others, language of disparagement and insult based on racism or discrimination, or even physical confrontation, the 'beautiful game' is debased.

The existence of racism and discrimination in football is not a secret, but it is a shame on the game. Although much is already being done, both observers and experts feel too many problems persist and measures to tackle them have not been effective enough.

This report was commissioned by UNESCO within the framework of UNESCO's partnership with Juventus FC. It focuses on discrimination and racism in professional football and to some extent the amateur clubs that funnel into the leagues. It provides an overview of the historic and theoretical background. It reports on the state of affairs on the ground. It summarizes what has been done and is being done to mitigate racism and discrimination in domestic and international football, how the effects of these actions may be evaluated, and which new avenues for further, complementary action are promising. The report is based on a literature review, desk research, regional reports from the Unesco network and a field survey among a purposive sample of experts and actors in a number of countries.

The report has a somewhat European focus, in its sources and examples. Europe has a unique position in the world of football, with its leading competitions, championships and clubs. It is the region where racism and discrimination in football has been most intensively researched. A number of civil society organisations from Europe have played a pioneering role in the fight against racism and discrimination in football. Moreover, the pressure that comes with the money invested in and generated by western European football, as well as its exposure in the media, has also made clubs, federations and UEFA particularly sensitive to the negative impact that discrimination can have on the game and its image, within Europe and worldwide. Europe must therefore occupy a central role in a study of the fight against discrimination in professional football and in determined policies to mitigate racism and discrimination related to football wherever they occur.

The examples of incidents of discrimination and racism, as well as of existing measures to combat them have been selected to be as wide-ranging as possible. The authors do not, however, claim the report to be a comprehensive listing. Similarly, the examples of best

practice have been collected through extensive reading and contacts, but must be looked at as an overview rather than as a directory. They are chosen by the authors to illustrate types of actions and institutions with the potential for greatest impact.

The report also does not deal with the methods of allocation of resources to football, with issues of employment, or with womens' football. While these are significant topics on which concerns can be expressed, the necessary focus of a report of this type means that they are alluded to without being treated in depth.

### *Background and inventory*

Racism and discrimination are not new phenomena in football. Discrimination in the selection of players has existed from the origins of the game, but many observers consider that the 1970's constitute a climax. During the 1990's, professional football reinvented itself. Nowadays, multiethnic teams have become the norm, especially in Europe.

Since the beginning of the twenty-first century, we have seen significant change. As awareness of racism and discrimination and measures to mitigate them have made progress in society at large, this awareness has also increased within the football community. Racism has been tackled by both bottom-up and top-down initiatives. Multiculturalism is valued in the sport and the stands, and ethnic exclusion is a regrettable abnormality. There is progressive awareness of the variety of forms that discrimination can take, and there is a strong consensus among stakeholders that football needs to deal effectively with racism and discrimination in order to remain the powerful tool of social inclusion and integration that it has always been.

The report draws on a taxonomy of racism that distinguishes between 'impulsive', 'instrumental', and 'institutional' racism, using it to diagnose the range and severity of problems. It provides a list of some of the most widely-reported incidents over the last two years, both at the 2014 World Cup in Brazil and at club football matches during the same period. These demonstrate that racist chants and actions are widely viewed as unacceptable and increasingly reported.

There is an overview describing some of the leading organizations in Europe that are active in monitoring problems and raising awareness. The overview makes it clear that although incidents of racism rightly attract attention and opprobrium, such incidents are not great in number compared to the volume of football matches in a year or a specific competition.

A purposive survey was carried out among more than forty experts on football. Most of them agreed that there is still a significant problem, although respondents differed in their assessment of its magnitude depending on their nationality or their professional role. Racism and sexism are the common and prominent themes when bad behaviour occurs, while issues related to disability are seen to be more of a technical problem to be solved. Many respondents considered that leagues and clubs alike battle racism and discrimination while at the same time attempting to downplay the phenomenon, to 'trivialise' it.

Diagnosis of the causes begins with some of the unique characteristics of football: high visibility that provides a sounding board for groups seeking a public outlet for racist and discriminatory attitudes; strong traditions of 'high permissiveness' and 'low inhibition' among fans; the 'high degree of organized fan culture that functions as an amplifier of rivalries'; and the traditionally 'masculine' stadium environment whose mores of sexism seem to persist to a certain extent even though the fan demography is changing.

No majority view emerged among interviewees on the interplay between professional and amateur football concerning racist and discriminatory behaviour such as offensive chanting, banners, and so on. Some felt the problems and issues are not different in amateur football (including youth), as behaviours and attitudes from professional games irrigate all pitches. Others felt that the lack of media presence in amateur games limits bad behaviour because there is no amplifier through press reporting. Still others felt that public scrutiny, 'gentrification' and 'intellectualisation' have limited open displays of racism and discrimination at all levels. However, discriminatory incidents may also be under-reported at amateur level.

### *Legal frameworks*

Measures to mitigate racism and discrimination in football fit into two broad categories: the fight against violence in general in sport, and attempts to abolish discrimination in society. They are tackled with a wide range of normative and legal provisions, from international conventions to national laws. At the international level, there is ample guidance in the form of conventions, recommendations and legal instruments from the United Nations, UNESCO, the European Union and the Council of Europe. National legislations of Italy, France, the UK, Belgium, Spain, Brazil, Germany, Hungary and Uruguay provide examples of the breadth and strength of specific legal measures that can be brought to bear on violent, racist and discriminatory intent and behaviour.

The legal tools available to combat both physical and symbolic violence are broadly adequate in many countries, according to the survey. They include:

- Relevant international agreements;
- Laws specifically banning racism and discrimination or making these an aggravating factor in sentencing for another crime;
- Administrative or judicial banning orders, travel bans and related reporting to police stations for those previously convicted of violent or discriminatory conduct;
- Laws criminalising discriminatory behaviour in the context of sport ;
- Laws targeted at increasing inclusion and diversity;
- *Ad hoc* institutions to monitor violence and discrimination in the context of sport, or specifically football.

The most significant innovation over recent years has been the introduction and widespread use of banning orders and related measures. Their ostensible purpose is deterrence. Nonetheless, banning orders are also punitive, since they deprive supporters of the right to attend sporting events in the name of prevention. Furthermore, the widespread use of non-judicial sanctions, which implies substituting administrative actions for the justice system to some extent, is questioned by some scholars and experts. In addition, the experts surveyed were particularly critical concerning the slow or inadequate implementation of laws relating to racism and discrimination as they apply to football.

### *Institutional stakeholders and their actions*

The institutional actors who are actively involved in monitoring and mitigating racist and discriminatory behaviour are varied, and not always interdependent or coordinated. There is

FIFA with the World Cup and Women's World Cup. There are continental confederations, national associations, and professional leagues. There is the International Olympic Committee, with its own prerogatives and priorities. There is the Court of Arbitration for Sport that may be called upon to issue decisions, which although non-binding are usually accepted. Several European or international NGOs such as FARE or CAFE act as observatories and activists to fight discrimination and achieve inclusion. A number of national NGOs (in Brazil, England, and France, for example) use media and/or links with other organizations to raise consciousness and participate in anti-discrimination campaigns.

Sports organizations can and do take strong punitive measures such as imposing fines on individual offenders, reporting offenders to judicial authorities, excluding individual or group offenders from stadiums immediately or subsequent to offense, closing stadiums partially or completely during games, or sporting punishment such as deducting points and/or excluding or relegating teams.

In addition to punitive measures, both prevention and education are important elements of the overall picture. Campaigns are the main preventive tool of the football world as such, but opinions vary on their effectiveness. Education is a tool that can be used on several fronts: training for professionals who can reach out and mentor practitioners and the public, education of the general public, education and involvement of the media, and school-based education. Guidance materials such as those produced in the UK can serve multiple purposes and should be more extensively used.

### *Obstacles and barriers*

There is widely-shared disappointment that despite significant progress a certain threshold seems to have been reached and that 'residual' discrimination appears to be difficult to eliminate. In order to understand the stubborn persistence of racism and discrimination in football, one needs to take an interdisciplinary look at how the origins and practice of football relate to societal transformations over time and at the perceived legitimacy of those who are charged with battling unacceptable practice.

The first analytical perspective is on the logic of the game itself. By drawing on the civilizational theory developed by Norbert Elias, football can be understood as one of the ways to civilize archaic war instincts and to satisfy social needs that civilisation has only covered up but not eradicated from the human psyche. In this perspective, football possesses a 'cathartic' function that accounts for the persistent need for aggressive degradation of the opponent and the resort to verbal violence with the aim of destabilising the adversary by all means available.

The anthropological analysis of football developed by Christian Bromberger reveals the power of partisanship and the 'language of partisan rivalry' that is firmly rooted in the binary nature of football oppositions and inseparable from the particular space of the football stadium, where otherwise prohibited emotions and offensive language are central to the construction of group solidarity and cohesion.

The mechanisms and practice of verbal denigration are dissected through analysis of the concepts of 'insult' and 'politeness' based on findings from socio-linguistics. Rhetorical figures of metaphor and hyperbole, which play an important role in discrimination against 'others', are perfectly applicable in the football stadium, particularly with respect to the 'cathartic relief' that they provide.

Dysphemism (a word that means ‘an offensive expression’) is another concept brought to bear on understanding how individuals and groups use language to ‘disparage, humiliate, and degrade’. At the same time, the so-called ‘Middle-Class Politeness Criterion’, a kind of default setting of what is appropriate in language use, is permanently redefined by the mainstream of society. It explains, for instance, increasing sensitivity to racist and discriminatory remarks in all spheres of society, including football. If one wants to change the language habits and traditions in the football stadium, it is vital to understand the mechanisms and effects (as well as the pitfalls) of ‘political correctness’.

Finally, a significant obstacle in the fight against racism and discrimination in football is the declining institutional legitimacy of the main international actors. While both FIFA and UEFA actually have a positive record on this front and are at the origin of credible policy and innovative initiatives, surveys show that both suffer from low trust in their sincerity and leadership.

An overview of recent initiatives is provided and their limits discussed. Particular emphasis is laid on the ineffectiveness and inappropriateness of collective sanctions. More attention needs to be paid to increasing accusations of racism and discrimination as facile rhetorical weapons in public debate, abetted on occasion by elements of the media.

### *Findings and recommendations*

Football is not solely a social activity, whose supporters need to be educated. It also possesses attributes of a powerful educational tool. Its popularity, its accessibility and its simplicity turn each football pitch and stadium into a potential classroom for civic education.

Many actors in the field of football are aware of this and want to make the best possible use of football’s potential in order to help achieve social change. A series of good practices are described as inspiration and examples of how this can be done effectively.

- In England, fighting discrimination in the sport is integrated across clubs and a dedicated NGO (Kick It Out). Guidance documents, campaigns, and audit of progress are all shared.
- France has developed a cross-sectoral mid-term development plan for women’s football that involves all levels, functions and stakeholders.
- In Italy there is legal provision for replacing a punishment related to racism or discrimination by confirmed commitment to change through a campaign or civic work by the perpetrators.
- Italy, Spain and Brazil each have an official monitoring authority for incidents of discrimination and racism.
- Germany has a range of mechanisms, such as a yearly award for outstanding commitment to tolerance, education measures for coaches, integration guidelines for clubs to include asylum seekers, reports on progress and support to specific projects or initiatives.

In conclusion, the report recommends the following:

- Building on lessons learned from the success of political correctness in influencing change of use of vocabulary. No other instrument is more efficient than self-regulation by the supporters themselves. Learning from the history of political

correctness can help create a context in which 'self-censorship' changes linguistic habits and traditions in the football stadium

- Limiting sanctions of fans and other actors to individuals. Collective sanctions are ethically wrong, highly controversial and counterproductive. Identifying and sanctioning individual perpetrators is feasible by way of contemporary technology and close collaboration with authorities. Charity work may be preferred over fines as sanctions.
- Taking the education imperative seriously. There is consensus on the essential role of education in the combat against racism and discrimination. Local initiatives by individual clubs and civil society organisations are useful and effective. In addition to challenging the use of racism and discrimination as part of the fan experience, broader humanistic education should provide alternative models to the current ultra-competitive model of sport.
- Developing a sustainable concept of 'civic brand management'. As fully-fledged corporate entities, professional clubs must be more aware of the 'corporate social responsibility' that comes with increased economic power. Committing to a longer-term vision and sustainability of efforts could come from a visionary group of clubs by introduction of a 'quality label' that would involve brand ambassadors and supporter groups.

The report concludes with a few *ad hoc* suggestions from the interviewees, and some recommendations from the authors to clubs, leagues and federations. Among other things, they call on actors to consider supporters as allies in the fight against racism and discrimination, to include in their reflection actors from outside the direct stakeholder group of football, and to benefit more from academic research studies which are undertaken in the field of corporate social responsibility.