UEFA Referee Convention

Convention on Referee Education and Organisation

2026

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Preamble

Considering the need to:

a. promote the role of match officials and refereeing specialists in football at both international and national levels;

b. improve the quality of match officials and refereeing specialists at all levels of the game by establishing specific rules to standardise and enhance their status and education, as well as the way that refereeing is organised within the various UEFA member associations;

c. define the legal and professional status of match officials and ensure that the refereeing bodies within UEFA member associations remain uninfluenced by other entities, such as governments, leagues, clubs, media outlets or other organisations not sanctioned by the UEFA member associations;

d. recognise the essential role of match officials and refereeing specialists in upholding ethical standards and the values of fair play and protecting the players and the game;

e. maintain and improve the standards of refereeing from grassroots level upwards;

f. recognise UEFA member associations' responsibility for appointing reliable and suitably qualified match officials and refereeing specialists for their competitions and education or development programmes;

g. ensure that match officials, referee observers and refereeing specialists enjoy fair and equal treatment with regard to disciplinary measures, opportunities for promotion and appointments;

h. uphold the values of integrity, personal responsibility and transparency, with zero tolerance for racism or any other form of hate, discrimination or harassment;

i. reinforce the role of match officials in protecting the integrity of matches and competitions, fighting match-fixing and abstaining from participating in betting or similar activities relating to football and futsal matches.

UEFA and the UEFA member associations that are parties to the present convention have agreed the following.

Article 1 Definitions

For the purposes of the present convention, the following definitions apply:

a. Assistant video assistant referee (AVAR): current or former referee or assistant referee appointed to assist the VAR.

b. Category: grade of match official, referee observer or instructor that determines the level at which they operate.

c. Coach: former match official with thorough, up-to-date knowledge of the Laws of the Game, good spoken and written communication skills and good psychological and management skills, who is responsible for helping match officials to maximise their potential and development.

d. Elite: category of match official or referee observer officiating or observing in the highest leagues on the territory of a UEFA member association.

e. Fast-track promotion: unusually rapid promotion – potentially in mid-season – based on excellent performance, a playing background, previous experience gained nationally or internationally, etc.

f. Grassroots: category of match official or referee observer officiating or observing at school, youth or amateur levels on the territory of a UEFA member association. Grassroots football refers to all levels of the sport except professional and elite football.

g. HatPro: section of TIME, UEFA's online platform used for exchanging information, developed to enable UEFA member associations to centralise, align and manage all aspects of the HatTrick programme via a single-entry point. HatPro allows UEFA member associations to submit application forms for HatTrick subprogrammes, including the UEFA Referee Convention, to the UEFA administration.

h. Instructor: referee technical instructor, a former match official with thorough, up-to-date knowledge of the Laws of the Game and the VAR protocol, good spoken and written communication skills, and good psychological and management skills, who is able to support the learning processes of current match officials, observers and other instructors through the use of modern learning technologies, thereby improving their performance both on and off the field of play.

i. Laws of the Game: the IFAB Laws of the Game and the FIFA Futsal Laws of the Game jointly considered.

j. Match official: any match official referred to in the IFAB Laws of the Game or the FIFA Futsal Laws of the Game, i.e. in men's football, women's football or futsal.

k. Mentor: former match official who supports the learning process of a talented new match official by establishing a one-to-one relationship based on trust and mutual understanding that helps that person to capitalise on learning

opportunities, thereby improving their performance both on and off the field of play.

l. Panel: list or group of people authorised to perform a specific role, such as match officials, referee observers, instructors or mentors.

m. Referee observer: former match official appointed by their national association to assess the performances of match officials.

n. Refereeing specialist: person with at least five years' active experience in one or more of the following roles: match official, referee observer, instructor or mentor.

o. RIDE: Referee Instructors Development Excellence – a course for UEFA member associations' instructors.

p. Talents and mentors programme: programme within the referee development structure of each UEFA member association in place at all levels of the game. It pairs talented referees with experienced coaches and mentors who guide, encourage and support them to develop, improve their skills and achieve their potential.

q. Talented match official: match official who, by receiving structured mentoring or gaining fast-track promotion, has demonstrated the ability or potential to officiate at a higher level, depending on the needs of the UEFA member associations.

r. UEFA Referee Convention Panel: UEFA expert panel composed of experienced refereeing specialists who monitor the implementation of the UEFA Referee Convention and ensure that the UEFA member associations maintain the minimum standards defined therein.

s. UEFA Referee Convention specialist: member of the UEFA Referee Convention Panel who is an experienced refereeing specialist and who supports the UEFA member associations in maintaining the minimum standards defined in the UEFA Referee Convention. They provide advice, information, support and guidance on a continual basis. In addition, the specialist's work involves addressing any current challenges in refereeing within the countries for which they are responsible. They conduct regular visits and the re-evaluation visits for each four-year cycle, as required by the UEFA Referee Convention.

t. Video assistant referee (VAR): current or former referee appointed to assist the referee by communicating information from replay footage only in relation to clear and obvious errors or serious missed incidents in any of the reviewable categories, as set out in the IFAB Laws of the Game and the VAR protocol.

u. VAR protocol: regulation issued by the IFAB on when and how VAR technology must be used.

Article 2 Scope

The present convention describes the rights and duties of UEFA and the UEFA member associations that are parties to the convention regarding the education and organisation of match officials and refereeing specialists.

Article 3 Aims

The present convention aims to:

a. guarantee a uniform level of ability for match officials and refereeing specialists by setting minimum standards for a comprehensive set of education and development programmes from grassroots to professional football;

b. continuously improve the quality and status of match officials and refereeing specialists using appropriate methodologies, tools and measures;

c. establish a refereeing body within each UEFA member association that is not controlled or influenced by other entities such as the government, leagues, clubs, media outlets or other organisations not sanctioned by the UEFA member association;

d. provide a framework for the legal and professional status of match officials in UEFA member associations.

Article 4 Admission to the convention

1 Every UEFA member association may submit a written application to the UEFA administration to become a party to the present convention at any time.

2 In doing so, it must demonstrate its commitment to and quality of referee education and organisation.

3 The UEFA administration verifies that the application is complete and submits it to the UEFA Referee Convention Panel.

4 The UEFA Referee Convention Panel assesses the application and tasks one of its members with ensuring that the applicant meets the minimum convention standards, by setting objectives, providing information and advice and conducting regular visits.

5 The UEFA administration gives the UEFA Referee Convention Panel and the UEFA Referees Committee regular reports on the applicant's progress.

6 Once the UEFA Referee Convention Panel has observed that the applicant has met the minimum standards, it submits a report to the UEFA Referees Committee recommending that the applicant be admitted.

7 The UEFA Referees Committee considers the report prepared by the UEFA Referee Convention Panel and either submits it to the UEFA Executive Committee for

approval or returns it to the UEFA administration, pointing to areas where improvements are required.

8 Once the UEFA Executive Committee has given its approval, the convention can be signed by representatives of the applicant and UEFA.

Article 5 Rights and duties of the parties to the present convention

1 On signing the present convention, a UEFA member association agrees to adhere to the provisions laid down in the convention and its annexes.

2 It shall:

a. handle its own refereeing matters in accordance with the minimum standards defined in the annexes to the present convention;

b. agree to be regularly assessed by UEFA to ensure that these standards are maintained;

c. undertake to inform UEFA promptly and in writing of any changes to its own referee education or organisation and to provide a monthly overview of domestic appointments and recruitment and retention figures;

d. conduct an annual review to ensure that nepotism and other conflicts of interest are avoided;

e. establish principles governing the appointment of match officials and observers;

f. do its utmost to ensure the proper safeguarding of minors;

g. ensure equal treatment of match officials, referee observers and other refereeing specialists, without any discrimination on account of politics, gender, religion, race or any other reason.

Article 6 Rights and duties of UEFA

1 UEFA undertakes to help UEFA member associations that are parties to the present convention and those in the admission procedure to meet and maintain the minimum standards defined in the annexes to the convention, by means of advice, training, other appropriate support and regular assessments.

2 UEFA undertakes to provide financial support to the UEFA member associations party to the present convention, in accordance with the provisions of the UEFA HatTrick Regulations and Annex C to the present convention.

3 UEFA reserves the right to withhold incentive payments if the minimum standards of the present convention are not met, in accordance with the provisions of the UEFA HatTrick Regulations.

Article 7 Withdrawal

Each UEFA member association party to the present convention has the right to withdraw from the convention at any time by informing the UEFA administration in writing.

Article 8 Annexes

Annexes to the present convention form an integral part thereof.

Article 9 Applicable law and disputes

1 The present convention is subject to Swiss law.

2 The parties to the present convention agree that any dispute that arises from the implementation of the convention that cannot be settled amicably shall be submitted to the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS) in Lausanne, Switzerland, in accordance with the UEFA Statutes, including for provisional or super-provisional measures, to the explicit exclusion of any state court.

Article 10 Languages

1 The present convention exists in English, French and German.

2 In the event of any discrepancy between the different versions of the present convention, the English version prevails.

3 Any masculine or feminine grammatical forms used to refer to people in the different language versions of these regulations are used for readability only and should be understood to cover people of all genders, except where clear from the context.

Article 11 Adoption

1 The present convention was adopted by the UEFA Executive Committee at its meeting on 11 February 2026 and is open for signature by all UEFA member associations as of this date.

2 The present convention fully replaces the previous UEFA Referee Convention and will enter into force for each UEFA member association on the date it is signed by both UEFA and the association concerned.

3 The previous UEFA Referee Convention continues to apply to UEFA member associations that have signed it until the present convention enters into force for them.

Annex A - Refereeing structure and organisation

National referees committee

A.1 Introduction

UEFA member associations party to the present convention must set up a national referees committee that reports to the national executive committee.

The referees committee must be an integral part of the national association's structure and be given exclusive responsibility for all matters related to refereeing in the national association's territory, with full independence from other entities such as the government, leagues, clubs, media outlets and other organisations not sanctioned by the national association. As the national referees committee is responsible for all refereeing matters at all levels, it should have clear links with the national association's refereeing department.

A.2 Composition

At least 80% of the members of the national referees committee must be refereeing specialists.

Up to 20% of the members may be other experts with relevant knowledge and experience that is of benefit to the work of the committee.

To avoid any potential conflicts of interest, it should not be possible to work in the national association's refereeing department and be a member of the referees committee at the same time.

The term of office of committee members must be defined in the UEFA member association's statutes and should be the same as for members of the executive committee.

Expertise in regional referees committees should be fully utilised by the national referees committee. The composition and, where applicable, duties of the national referees committee should also be replicated at regional level to the extent possible, considering the size of the country and other constraints.

Wherever possible, representatives of women's football and futsal must be included in national and regional referees committees.

A.3 Responsibilities and duties

The duties and responsibilities of the national referees committee should be defined by the national association's executive committee, and full responsibility should be given to the national referees committee for all matters relating to refereeing, including the national association's refereeing structure, organisation, strategies and programmes for all levels of the game, including futsal and women's football, in accordance with the present convention, FIFA's Regulations on the Organisation of Refereeing in FIFA Member Associations and the rules and regulations of the national association.

The national referees committee is, in particular, responsible for recruiting and retaining grassroots and elite match officials, referee observers and other refereeing specialists, and for ensuring their education, training, development and physical and mental welfare.

Each member of the national referees committee should take responsibility for at least one of the above sectors. At grassroots level, responsibility for panels, match appointments, promotion and relegation may be delegated to a regional referees committee, where appropriate.

The national referees committee should meet at least quarterly. Meetings may be conducted by conference call or other means, provided that all participants can communicate clearly with one another.

The national referees committee has the following duties:

a. Draft regulations governing refereeing within its national association, have them approved by the executive committee and send a copy of the approved regulations to the UEFA Referee Convention Panel;

b. Attend any executive committee meetings dealing with refereeing matters in an advisory capacity;

c. Inform the UEFA Referee Convention Panel and the UEFA administration of any changes to the composition of the committee or its refereeing department, or amendments to its refereeing regulations;

d. Approve the annual refereeing budget prepared by the refereeing department and submit it to the executive committee for final approval;

e. Ensure that the annual refereeing budget is recorded accurately and uploaded to the HatPro platform on TIME according to the deadlines set out in the UEFA HatTrick Programme Guidelines;

f. Annually approve panels of match officials, referee observers and instructors and classify them in appropriate categories based on their experience, performance and successful completion of the necessary programmes and tests;

g. Establish a structured talents and mentors programme that operates at all levels of the domestic game, with enough coaches and mentors;

h. Approve applicants for mentoring programmes;

i. Adopt an overarching strategic education and development plan with SMART (specific, measurable, attainable, relevant and time-bound) objectives, key performance indicators, an appropriate budget and support services;

j. Ensure that the required education and training is completed by all match officials, instructors, referee observers and mentors, and that the required

fitness levels are achieved by match officials at all levels, which includes all requirements regarding heart-rate monitors;

k. Allocate match officials and referee observers to matches for all competitions organised at all levels under the auspices of the national association;

l. Send domestic appointments of all FIFA match officials to their UEFA Referee Convention specialist and the UEFA administration on a monthly basis;

m. Promote and relegate match officials, referee observers and instructors using a performance-based system, with clear evaluation criteria, regular assessments and defined targets to ensure continuous development and accountability;

n. Nominate candidates for FIFA's international list;

o. Nominate candidates for UEFA's referee observer list;

p. Implement a constant referee observer quality-control process;

q. Ensure, in cooperation with the refereeing department and the integrity officer(s), that education and awareness-raising activities relating to match-fixing, betting and similar activities and corruption are organised for match officials and that all relevant information is communicated to everyone involved in refereeing throughout the country;

r. Nominate participants for UEFA refereeing courses;

s. Take all necessary steps to safeguard minors, including specific training for match officials involved in youth football, especially mentors;

t. Conduct annual compliance reviews and prevent conflicts of interest;

u. Implement mental health and well-being support programmes;

v. Approve and supervise pilot projects on referee development (e.g. the use of artificial intelligence, new teaching methods, hybrid observation models) and report any results to UEFA.

Panels

A.4 Referee panels

A.4.1 Formation of panels and categories

UEFA member associations party to the present convention must maintain separate panels of elite and grassroots match officials. Within these panels, match officials should be split into categories based on their experience, with the number of categories depending on the size and needs of the association and its competitions. Match officials should work their way through the various categories by means of a promotion and relegation system. Identifying talented match officials should be an ongoing part of this process.

A.4.2 Selection, promotion and relegation

The reasons for selection/non-selection and promotion/relegation must be kept confidential within the referees committee and the refereeing department.

In all cases, the criteria should be performance, personality, availability, development, administrative factors and successful completion of written or digital examinations and fitness tests. Average referee observer scores must not be the sole criterion. There should be opportunities for fast-track promotion, particularly for talented match officials who have successfully completed a mentoring programme.

A.4.3 Elite panels

The number of people on the elite match official panel should be decided by the referees committee based on the needs of the relevant elite competitions, both professional and semi-professional.

A minimum of two people must be responsible for each match official appointment. Match officials and observers must not be appointed by the same people. The referees committee should have ultimate responsibility for such matters.

The number of elite referees should be such that they can be appointed for a minimum of 40% of matchdays in the top league.

If necessary, the referees committee may set up a subcommittee with responsibility for appointments.

A.4.4 Grassroots panels

Grassroots match official panels should be set up for each region. The number of match officials on these local panels should be decided by the regional referees committees in accordance with the needs of the local competitions and in consultation with the grassroots referees managers. The maximum number of match officials per panel should be determined by the number of games in the relevant competitions and their geographical spread.

Local grassroots match appointments officers should be designated by the regional referees committees. If necessary, a subcommittee may be set up to assist with this task.

If a national association does not have a regional referees committee, the national referees committee retains overall responsibility.

A.4.5 Expenses

Match officials must be reimbursed for out-of-pocket expenses (including food, transport and accommodation, if needed) they incur when officiating at matches, in accordance with the category of the match in question. At elite level, all expenses must be reimbursed by the national association by bank transfer.

A.5 Referee observer panels

A.5.1 Formation of panels and categories

Referee observers are tasked with evaluating and grading match officials' performances on the field of play and providing feedback.

UEFA member associations party to the present convention must maintain separate panels of elite and grassroots referee observers. Within these panels, referee observers should be split into categories based on their experience, with the number of categories depending on the size and needs of the association and its competitions. Observers should work their way through the various categories by means of a promotion and relegation system.

A.5.2 Selection, promotion and relegation

The reasons for selection/non-selection and promotion/relegation must be kept confidential within the referees committee and the refereeing department.

In all cases, the criteria should be performance, personality, IT skills, availability, development, administrative factors and successful completion of the relevant written or digital tests on the Laws of the Game and, if applicable, the VAR protocol. There should be opportunities for fast-track promotion. All referee observers must be given the opportunity to progress to elite level by means of additional training and quality assessments.

A minimum of two people should be responsible for each referee observer appointment.

A.5.3 Elite and grassroots referee observer panels

The number of people on the elite referee observer panel should be decided by the national referees committee and based on the needs of the relevant elite competitions, both professional and semi-professional.

The number of people on the local grassroots referee observer panel should be decided by the regional referees committees in accordance with the needs of the local competitions.

At all levels, the maximum number of referee observers on each panel should be determined by the number of games in the relevant competitions and their geographical spread.

A.5.4 Expenses

Referee observers must be reimbursed for out-of-pocket expenses (including transport, food and accommodation, if needed) they incur when observing at matches, in accordance with the category of the match in question. At elite level, all expenses must be reimbursed by the national association by bank transfer.

A.5.5 Reports and marking system

Referee observers are encouraged to use the UEFA observer marking system to assess the match officials they observe. They must conduct an oral debriefing with the match officials after the match and then produce a written report.

Referee observers' reports must be kept confidential within the referees committee and the refereeing department.

Quality control is an important process regarding referee observers. In the context of this quality control, if the referees committee has reason to question a referee observer's written comments or marking, it may ask them to review their assessment.

A.6 Match appointments

Officiating as match officials and referee observers is a fundamental part of professional development and their appointments must be under the responsibility of the national and regional referees committees in conjunction with the refereeing department.

Match officials and referee observers should only be appointed to matches that correspond to their level of ability and experience according to a development process tailored to the individual's needs.

It is strictly forbidden to use a procedure such as a ballot, draw or lottery for appointing match officials or referee observers. If computer software or artificial intelligence is to be used in the appointment process, the relevant regulations and framework must be clearly set by the national or regional referees committee. Likewise, the final decision to approve a candidate must remain with the national referees committee.

Match officials must have passed suitable medical, fitness and technical tests, all of which should be gauged by qualified professionals and the national association's referees committee and refereeing department.

All appointments should be based on performance, personality, availability, development, administrative factors and successful completion of the relevant written or digital examinations and fitness tests. Average referee observer scores must not be the sole criterion.

Match officials and referee observers should be appointed in good time before the match, allowing adequate time for preparation, unless under duly justified exceptional circumstances.

Responsibility for the appointment of match officials must be shared between at least two members of the referees committee, based on principles defined by the committee.

Responsibility for the appointment of referee observers must be shared between at least two different members of the referees committee, based on principles defined by the committee.

The recommended best practice is that these two groups of match appointers work independently of each other to ensure their autonomy and to ensure they have no influence over each other's roles and responsibilities.

Any exceptions to these requirements must be agreed in advance by UEFA through the UEFA Referee Convention specialist responsible for the country in question.

If necessary, the referees committee may set up two subcommittees with responsibility for match appointments.

Any information relating to match appointments/non-appointments must be kept confidential within the referees committee and the refereeing department.

Regional referees committees should designate appointments officers for local grassroots panels. If necessary, a subcommittee could be set up to assist with this. If a national association does not have a regional referees committee, the national referees committee retains overall responsibility but may delegate this task to regional grassroots leagues.

A.7 Instructor, coach and mentor panels

A.7.1 Formation of panels

UEFA member associations party to the present convention must maintain national panels of instructors, coaches and mentors to ensure a sufficient number of trained instructors for seminars and adequate numbers of coaches and mentors for mentoring programmes. These individuals must receive adequate, standardised teaching materials and training and undergo regular assessment.

They must be good teachers, able to set and explain specific tasks and objectives for match officials, and help the match officials to achieve them. They should be able to clearly impart knowledge and know-how using a variety of teaching methods, including audiovisual aids, while being open to new ideas and challenging current refereeing practices.

Profiles for mentors, instructors and coaches can be found in Annex D.

National associations should pay all instructors, coaches and mentors a fee for their work.

National refereeing department

A.8 Introduction

UEFA member associations party to the present convention must set up a dedicated refereeing department that forms an integral part of their administration.

A.9 Composition

The refereeing department must comprise at least one refereeing manager, who must be a refereeing specialist.

The refereeing manager must work full-time to coordinate all refereeing matters within the association.

In addition, dedicated administrative and specialist support must be part of or available to the refereeing department to assist with the duties outlined below.

The size of the refereeing department and the amount of support available to it should be proportionate to the size and refereeing needs of the national association. In all cases, however, it must be sufficient to meet the minimum standards of this convention and fulfil the duties set out below.

A.10 Refereeing department duties

a. Implement the decisions of the national referees committee;

b. Assist the national referees committee (and regional referees committees) with the administration and development of refereeing within the national association;

c. Liaise with and advise the national referees committee on all refereeing matters, including those specifically related to the present convention;

d. Propose, design, coordinate and deliver all referee education and development programmes, in cooperation with the relevant members of the specialist support team;

e. Prepare and maintain a detailed refereeing budget and expenditure record in accordance with Annex C to the present convention for approval by the national referees committee;

f. Send UEFA the approved detailed refereeing budget and expenditure record at the start and end of each financial year, clearly indicating the sources and uses of all funds;

g. Be represented at all relevant FIFA/UEFA courses on education and administration;

h. Update and maintain the information required by UEFA in the HatPro platform on TIME and gather other data as required;

i. Ensure, in cooperation with the national referees committee, that education and awareness-raising activities relating to match-fixing, betting and similar activities and corruption are organised for match officials at least annually and that all relevant information is shared with everyone involved in refereeing throughout the country;

j. Ensure match officials and mentors undergo child safeguarding training, particularly where they are in contact with minors;

k. Implement and maintain a secure, centrally managed system for the storage and archiving of all information relating to referees. This system must ensure that any such data – including assessments, match reports, appointments, development records and career history – remains in the control of the national association and is not retained on personal devices or unmanaged platforms;

l. Ensure that the current UEFA Medical Regulations are fully respected, including regarding the medical examinations of match officials.

A.11 Specialist support team

Dedicated support must be available to the refereeing department. The extent to which such support is an integral part of the department may depend on the size and refereeing needs of the national association, but it must, as a minimum, encompass the roles described below.

Anyone performing one of these roles should provide a professional service and receive financial compensation.

a. Referee recruitment and retention officer

   A referee recruitment and retention officer is required to manage the national association's referee recruitment and retention programmes. See Annex D.

b. Mentoring coordinator

   A mentoring coordinator is required to work closely with the referee recruitment and retention officer and the national instructor on mentoring programmes. See Annex D.

c. Grassroots referees manager

   A grassroots referees manager is required to manage all grassroots match officials' activities and operations, including their education and development. See Annex D.

d. Elite referees manager

   An elite referees manager is required to manage all elite match officials' activities and operations, including their education and development. See Annex D.

e. Referee observer manager

   A referee observer manager is required to manage all referee observers' activities and operations, including their education and development. See Annex D.

f. National instructor

   A national instructor is required to lead all activities and operations relating to education and development programmes. See Annex D.

g. National referee fitness coach

   A national referee fitness coach is required to lead all fitness programmes for match officials at national level. This person should be contracted to the national association. See Annex D.

The national referee fitness coach is also responsible for all match officials involved in competitive football, if there is no one in charge of this in the various regions.

It should be noted that the national referee fitness coach must not be an active referee in the two highest categories.

A.12 Health and performance monitoring

National associations must abide by the following regarding heart-rate monitors, irrespective of whether a GPS tracking system is used:

a. Top-division match officials: heart-rate monitors must be paid for by the national association.

b. Second-tier match officials: a minimum of 50% of the cost must be paid by the national association.

c. Talented match officials officiating at the highest national level and showing the potential to officiate at international level: a minimum of 50% of the cost must be paid by the national association.

Heart-rate monitor data, when used properly by the national referee fitness coach, sports scientists or medical staff, can assist in monitoring the quality of training and match preparation. However, a sustainable approach must be taken when acting on data concerning injury prevention, training quality and health-related measurements (such as body composition) in order to safeguard an individual's long-term development as a referee.

The aim is to educate and develop national referee fitness coaches who can safely and effectively improve performance by focusing on referee health, fitness and well-being.

Annex B - Education and development

The following programmes must be incorporated into the overarching strategic education and development plan adopted by the national referees committee and must include training on modern technologies such as the VAR system. Part of the annual refereeing budget should also be dedicated to mental health and well-being support initiatives.

Everyone involved in the education, training and development of elite and grassroots match officials, referee observers, instructors, coaches and mentors must undergo formal structured training themselves at least once a year.

In all of the following programmes, appropriate information, materials and expertise must cascade down through the organisation, with content relevant to the various different levels at which match officials and refereeing specialists operate.

UEFA encourages the sharing of experience and best practices in referee education and development. Any new ideas and materials can be shared through the UEFA Referee Convention Panel.

During seminars, instructors and coaches should stick to their allocated time slots and stay on topic, but encourage questions and dialogue, actively listen to their audience and give them time to reflect.

It is important for them to offer feedback and support and encourage the practical application of the knowledge and know-how imparted. They should organise group work, provide as many learning opportunities as possible and help the match officials to capitalise on those opportunities.

B.1 Instructor education programme

B.1.1 Introductory course

All new instructors must complete an introductory course, at which they will be provided with the necessary teaching materials. Introductory courses should cover:

a. Principles of learning and teaching and how to actively involve participants
b. Modern methodologies and the use of online platforms and similar sources of educational materials
c. Feedback and evaluation methods
d. Practical exercises and required outcomes
e. Communication and facilitation skills

B.1.2 Seminars

The introductory course should be followed by regular seminars, which should be held at least annually.

The content for each seminar must be provided by the refereeing department through its national instructors. It should include the latest information from RIDE courses,

updates on any changes to the Laws of the Game or their application, and any new guidance, equipment or materials provided by the national association.

These regular seminars should also provide a platform for networking and enable instructors to discuss ideas, feedback and practices.

B.2 Referee recruitment programme

A dedicated referee recruitment programme is required to increase the number of qualified match officials entering the game, to satisfy the ever-increasing demand for football and futsal.

To determine the number of new match officials required to achieve the optimal ratio of one referee for every two teams, the current situation must be analysed in conjunction with the regional referees committees and the local leagues.

Consideration should be given to the level of football (including the duration of the game) and the number of games per day. Factors such as location should also be taken into account when reviewing the number of referees required for each game.

IT systems should be used to manage all the databases that are required to determine the number of match officials needed. Attention should also be paid to the desired referee profile.

The results of this analysis should be entered into the database held by the national refereeing department, and suitable campaigns, such as recruitment schemes targeting former players and coaches, should be designed and cascaded down through the organisation at both national and regional levels,

Both the analysis and the campaigns should be reviewed annually.

B.3 Referee retention programme

A dedicated referee retention programme is just as important as the recruitment programme, its aim being to retain and develop existing panels of qualified match officials at all levels of the game.

The referee retention programme must include referee welfare support initiatives and suitable peer-led support and offer flexibility in the referee pathway to retain diverse profiles, in order to maximise the number of referees in the development pathway.

National associations should collect exit interview data to identify and address common reasons for match officials leaving refereeing and develop appropriate countermeasures.

A coaching system must be developed for new match officials, with continuous training provided to all.

Attention must also be paid to the need for individual development and evaluation on a case-by-case basis.

All match officials must be given support and people to contact, as well as regular meetings and other networking opportunities.

The retention programme should also incorporate innovative ways to keep match officials in the game, such as incentive schemes.

B.4 Grassroots referee education programme

B.4.1 Introductory course

An introductory course lasting at least 15 hours must be organised for all new grassroots match officials.

This introductory course must include practical and theory exercises on the Laws of the Game, a presentation of the role and duties of match officials, plus a written examination and an appropriate fitness assessment.

B.4.2 Seminars

In addition to completing an introductory course, all grassroots match officials should attend seminars at least three times a year to retain their licence or equivalent.

Topics covered should include match incidents, the identification of fouls, FIFA/UEFA directives and interpretations of the Laws of the Game. RIDE materials should be used where relevant, together with clips from domestic matches.

One of those seminars must include a written examination on the Laws of the Game and an appropriate fitness assessment, and there should also be sessions on child safeguarding and integrity.

B.4.3 Fitness tests

The national grading system should be used to assess the fitness of grassroots match officials, in line with the level of football at which they officiate.

B.5 Mentoring programmes

B.5.1 Introduction

Mentoring programmes are designed to provide specialist education, training and development for particularly talented match officials identified as having the potential to officiate at the highest level in both the men's and women's game.

Associations should also implement clear criteria and mechanisms for fast-track promotion based on performance, attitude and potential. Wherever numbers allow, separate women's mentoring programmes should be run. Where this is not possible, male and female match officials should take part in the same programmes.

Mentoring programmes should be organised at both elite and grassroots level. Depending on the size of the country, programmes can be local, regional or national in scope.

B.5.2 Programme content

Mentoring programmes should be run in two-year cycles. During this period, participants should attend specially designed practical and theory seminars run by the

national association, while at the same time receiving one-to-one support and assistance from their mentors.

Both prior to and during the programme, participants should be set SMART (specific, measurable, attainable, relevant and time-bound) objectives for the short, medium and long term, which should then be regularly reviewed and assessed.

They should spend no more than two years in any mentoring programme (grassroots or elite).

New mentors must be given training to ensure they are well equipped to perform their role in the programme.

B.5.3 Seminars

Seminars organised as part of mentoring programmes should include an introduction to the programme itself, as well as modules on the following topics:

a. Laws of the Game
b. Professionalism and ethics
c. Psychology of refereeing
d. Tactical thinking for referees
e. Body language
f. Physical fitness
g. Match management
h. Awareness of poor sporting conduct
i. Advantage situations
j. Management of competition area
k. Safeguarding of minors
l. Integrity and anti-match-fixing
m. VAR decision-making (if relevant for the level at which the talented match official is officiating)
n. Leadership development
o. Social media
p. Nutrition and diet

In addition to seminars, the mentoring of talented match officials should encompass coaching, assessments and individual development plans. This should include practical on-field exercises (match scenarios) and match performance reviews (video analysis) and should incorporate official competition matches. Dedicated seminars and mentoring should be organised for assistant referees.

B.5.4 Mentors

Mentors should be former or active match officials who are able to support the learning process of a talented new match official by establishing a one-to-one relationship based on trust and mutual understanding. Such relationships help match officials capitalise on learning opportunities, thereby improving their performance both on and off the field of play.

B.5.5 Seminars for mentors

Former or active match officials who are new to mentoring should be taught the key principles of adult learning.

In addition, regular seminars and refresher courses should be organised for mentors, looking at (i) how to support the learning process by establishing a one-to-one relationship based on trust; (ii) how to establish mutual understanding; (iii) how to help talented match officials to capitalise on learning opportunities, and (iv) how to improve attitudes, behaviour and performance.

B.6 Elite referee education programme

B.6.1 Seminars

Seminars for elite referees must be held both pre-season and during the season, regionally or nationally, at least every two months, i.e. there should be a minimum of six per year. If there is no equivalent programme for elite assistant referees, they should be included in these elite referee seminars.

The topics covered at seminars should include match incidents, the identification of fouls, FIFA/UEFA directives, interpretations of the Laws of the Game and VAR technology. RIDE materials should be used, together with clips from the top domestic league.

Assistance should also be provided on topics such as nutrition, media training, mental preparation, medical check-ups, English language tuition, psychological support, tactical awareness and any other relevant aspects.

B.6.2 UEFA fitness tests

Elite match officials must complete a minimum of two UEFA single-double-single fitness tests per season. The results of all fitness tests must be saved by the refereeing departments of the national associations and made available upon request to the UEFA refereeing department and/or the UEFA referee fitness coach coordinator. If any FIFA match official fails a fitness test, the result must be communicated to UEFA directly and within 36 hours of the fitness test taking place.

B.6.3 Joint seminars with elite referee observers

Elite observers must attend at least two of the elite referee seminars held each year. In addition to those joint seminars, all new guidelines that are given to match officials at other times must also be given to elite referee observers.

B.7 Referee observer education programme

B.7.1 Introductory course

All new referee observers must complete an introductory course, including a test on the Laws of the Game.

B.7.2 Seminars

The introductory course should be followed by regular seminars held at least annually, either nationally or regionally.

The main topics to be covered in referee observer seminars are:

a. Principles of learning and teaching
b. Feedback and evaluation methods
c. Practical exercises and required outcomes
d. Communication and facilitation skills
e. Management skills
f. Report writing

The seminars should also involve written and video tests on the Laws of the Game.

Elite referee observers should attend the same number of seminars as grassroots referee observers and be given additional ongoing training.

Annex C - Financial support

C.1 HatTrick incentive payments

An annual incentive payment of €100,000 is allocated to each UEFA member association that is party to the present convention, as long as it continues to implement and apply the convention and comply with the relevant minimum standards.

UEFA member associations that have applied to become parties to the present convention may submit requests for financial support during the admission procedure on the basis of projects or equipment that are needed to allow them to meet the minimum standards of the convention. Such financial requests cannot exceed €100,000 per UEFA season and must be approved by UEFA.

Any financial support received by an applicant in the same UEFA financial year as it signs the present convention will be deducted from the annual incentive payment allocated to the UEFA member association in that year as a party to the convention. Any amount received as reallocated funding under the UEFA HatTrick Regulations will not be deducted.

C.2 Budget and expenditure records

Each UEFA member association that is party to the present convention must submit a detailed refereeing budget and expenditure record to the UEFA administration at the start and end of each financial year.

That budget must be sufficient to cover the cost of the administration and development of refereeing activities and operations, dedicated refereeing staff within the association and the requirements of the present convention.

The budget must be comprehensive and detail any funding designated for refereeing, including UEFA HatTrick funding, and must be uploaded in HatPro using the application form according to the deadlines given for incentive payments in the HatTrick Programme Guidelines. The expenditure record must be submitted no more than two months after the financial year ends, if it was not included in the application form submitted at the end of September. All figures must be provided in the local currency and converted into euros. These documents must be signed by the chair of the national referees committee and the general secretary or CEO of the national association.

Each UEFA member association that is party to the present convention must also maintain separate accounting records detailing all UEFA incentive payments and other financial support received and showing how all such funds have been used. These records must be made available to UEFA on request.

All UEFA incentive payments and other financial support earmarked for refereeing must be invested exclusively in referee education and development.

Annex D - Profiles and duties

D.1 Referee recruitment and retention officer

a. Design, organise and conduct national and regional recruitment campaigns cascaded down through the organisation all the way to grassroots level;

b. Ensure that the national association runs enough well-designed and well-delivered recruitment and retention programmes at national and regional levels according to the needs of the national association;

c. Work closely with the national instructor to ensure that a suitable number of instructors are available to run introductory courses for all match officials;

d. Liaise with appointments officers to ensure that appropriate matches are allocated to novice match officials;

e. Identify talented new match officials and propose candidates for mentoring programmes to the national referees committee through the mentoring coordinator;

f. Maintain an accurate central database of all relevant refereeing information.

D.2 Elite referees manager

a. Organise education and development programmes for elite match officials, in cooperation with the national instructor;

b. Serve as a point of contact for all elite match officials and provide support as required case by case;

c. Supervise the provision of sports science expertise, psychological, physical and tactical training and analysis, nutritional and medical advice, media training and, if necessary, English language tuition for all elite match officials;

d. Work closely with the national referees committee to appoint match officials.

D.3 Grassroots referees manager

a. Organise education and development programmes for grassroots match officials conducted by the regional instructors in conjunction with the national instructor;

b. Work closely with the referee recruitment and retention officer and the mentoring coordinator;

c. Serve as a point of contact for all regional grassroots managers and provide any support required;

d. Liaise with regional referees committees regarding grassroots referee panels and ensure that the national referees committee is informed accordingly.

D.4 Talented match official

a. Nominated by the mentoring coordinator and approved by the relevant referees committee;
b. Receive positive assessments of and feedback on their performance in matches from official observers;
c. Minimum of two years' active refereeing experience at regional level;
d. Thorough knowledge of the Laws of the Game, as demonstrated in a written entrance test;
e. Successful results in video testing, English language test, etc.;
f. Proven ability to manage all administrative duties;
g. Fitness test for the next category of match officials passed successfully.

D.5 Match official in a mentoring programme

a. Attend all seminars and participate fully in the programme's activities and exercises;
b. Follow the specific fitness training programme provided by the national fitness instructor;
c. Behave in a responsible and attentive manner at all times;
d. Respond promptly and in full to all correspondence relating to their refereeing activities;
e. Successfully complete all continual written examinations and fitness tests and maintain appropriate match performance standards;
f. Speak, at least, conversational English and have adequate written English skills if in a programme at national level.

D.6 Referee coach

a. Appropriate experience as a match official, ideally at a higher level;
b. Very good knowledge of the Laws of the Game;
c. Very good spoken communication skills;
d. Very good psychological skills;
e. Very good active listening and facilitation skills;
f. Very good match analysis skills;
g. Strong teaching skills, incorporating praise, encouragement, practical advice and practical solutions;
h. Good understanding of football tactics and playing styles;
i. Suitable technical training and development skills;
j. Ability to use TV/video footage to coach match officials;

k. Willingness to attend training/education seminars organised by the national association;

l. Able to cooperate with the fitness coach to organise integrated training sessions that combine physical objectives with video-based decision-making and responsible for providing feedback on technical and disciplinary decisions at these sessions.

D.7 National referee fitness coach

a. Good understanding of the physical demands that football and futsal matches place on match officials;

b. Up-to-date theoretical knowledge of how to apply modern fitness training methods to refereeing, e.g. from a background in fitness training and coaching;

c. Ability to organise a range of specific training sessions for match officials that address the necessary fitness objectives;

d. Ability to identify and help those whose fitness is inadequate, by providing specific and individualised training programmes;

e. Ability to use refereeing knowledge to design integrated training sessions that combine physical objectives with video-based decision-making;

f. Ability to use heart-rate data to monitor the training of match officials and provide individualised monthly feedback;

g. Ability to organise FIFA's fitness test at least once a season and UEFA's fitness test three times throughout the season in accordance with UEFA guidelines;

h. Skills necessary to analyse fitness test results and provide relevant feedback;

i. Ability to use heart-rate data to monitor the fitness of match officials;

j. Ability to work with UEFA's monitoring platforms;

k. Ability to attend RIDE courses and willingness to participate actively;

l. Open-minded approach and willingness to work with and learn from other coaches;

m. Good spoken and written English in order to play an active part in the UEFA network;

n. Carry out physical evaluations of match officials;

o. Produce weekly training programmes for match officials;

p. Inform the UEFA referee fitness coach coordinator and the UEFA administration of any concerns regarding the fitness of UEFA match officials;

q. Ensure that the results of all fitness tests conducted by the national association are saved by the refereeing department and make them

available upon request to the UEFA refereeing department or the UEFA referee fitness coach coordinator;

r. Communicate to UEFA directly and within 36 hours of the fitness test taking place if any FIFA match official fails a test;

s. Liaise with RIDE fitness instructors regarding the results of fitness tests organised at national level for elite match officials;

t. Cooperate with UEFA referee fitness coaches to coordinate weekly training plans, supply training advice, provide injury-prevention exercises, give test instructions, give presentations and produce training resources;

u. Monitor the training of referees appointed for a UEFA final tournament, in cooperation with the UEFA referee fitness coach coordinator;

v. Conduct FIFA's fitness test roughly one month prior to UEFA courses and tournaments;

w. Conduct injury-prevention screening for referees in the two highest categories (ideally twice a year) and provide individual feedback;

x. Manage a network of referee fitness coaches at the national association, which will involve:

   i. meeting at least once a year to provide valuable information regarding match officials' fitness training;

   ii. providing those coaches with detailed training plans;

   iii. maintaining a national database on the fitness of young and promising match officials, in cooperation with the national referees committee;

   iv. providing the national referees committee with the information needed to help develop refereeing in the various regions of the country.

D.8 Elite referee observer

a. Appropriate experience as a former referee or assistant referee;

b. Very good knowledge of the Laws of the Game;

c. Very good knowledge of specific observer guidelines;

d. Good observational skills;

e. Good understanding of football tactics and playing styles;

f. Very good analytical skills for elite matches;

g. Able to identify the skills, strengths and weaknesses of all members of the referee team;

h. Strong oral and written communication skills;

i. Good psychological skills;

j. Good teaching skills, incorporating praise, encouragement, practical advice and practical solutions;

k. Ability to use TV/video footage to coach match officials;
l. Ability to use electronic referee reports and any platforms provided by the national association;
m. Attend training/education seminars organised by the national association;
n. Very good results in video assessments;
o. Regularly available to the national association for elite match appointments.

D.9 Grassroots referee observer

a. Appropriate active experience as a referee or assistant referee;
b. Good knowledge of the Laws of the Game;
c. Very good knowledge of specific observer guidelines;
d. Good observational skills;
e. Good match analysis skills;
f. Good oral and written communication skills;
g. Good psychological skills;
h. Good teaching skills, incorporating praise, encouragement, practical advice and practical solutions;
i. Ability to use electronic referee reports and any platforms provided by the national association;
j. Attend training/education seminars organised by the national association;
k. Good results in video assessments;
l. Regularly available to the national association for match appointments.

D.10 Referee observer manager

a. Organise education and development programmes for referee observers, in cooperation with the national instructor;
b. Serve as a point of contact for all referee observers and provide support as required case by case;
c. Ability to work closely with the national referees committee to appoint observers;
d. Ability to work closely with the national referees committee to evaluate the quality of all referee observers.

D.11 Talent and mentor coordinator

a. Organise, design and deliver mentoring programmes at all levels in the organisation;
b. Act as a central point of contact and reference for information on talented match officials;

c. Liaise with the referee recruitment and retention officer to propose candidates for mentoring programmes to the national referees committee;

d. Liaise with instructors to organise seminars for talented match officials and mentors, in cooperation with the national instructor;

e. Liaise with the national fitness coach to provide suitable guidelines and support;

f. Monitor the progress of talented individuals as they go through the various mentoring programmes (grassroots and elite), in cooperation with the national referees committee.

D.12 Mentor

a. Positive communicator;

b. Active listener and facilitator;

c. Friendly and approachable manner;

d. Sufficient refereeing experience to offer credible feedback;

e. Good observational skills;

f. Thorough and up-to-date knowledge of the Laws of the Game;

g. Establish a one-to-one relationship based on trust with the talented match official to whom they are assigned;

h. Guide, coach, encourage and support the mentee to help them develop the necessary skills and techniques;

i. Work on mutually identified and agreed development areas within the agreed time frame;

j. Help the mentee to capitalise on learning opportunities;

k. Help the mentee to maintain a positive attitude and appropriate behaviour;

l. Improve the mentee's performance and help them to achieve their full potential;

m. Work closely with the relevant referees committee and the talent and mentor coordinator.

D.13 National instructor

a. Work closely with the refereeing department on the design, coordination and delivery of all education and development programmes;

b. Propose instructors to the national referees committee and advise on categories of instructors;

c. Supervise networks of regional instructors, coaches and mentors, provide them with training and share information at least once a year;

d. Catalogue all clips from domestic matches that are used in education and development programmes;

e. Attend RIDE courses and similar education programmes.

D.14 Technical instructor

a. Appropriate experience as a match official;

b. Very good knowledge of the Laws of the Game;

c. Very good oral and communication skills;

d. Very good psychological skills;

e. Good active listening and facilitation skills;

f. Very good teaching skills, including classroom management, modern presentation skills and student-based learning.

D.15 VAR manager

a. Responsible for managing and implementing the VAR programme;

b. Continually review and improve VAR processes and their implementation;

c. Play a lead role in training, instructing and coaching;

d. Ability to work closely with the national referees committee to appoint VARs and AVARs, as well as VAR and AVAR observers, if applicable;

e. Work closely with the national referees committee and all relevant stakeholders to improve VAR technology;

f. Provide a suitable level of coaching and guidance to match officials;

g. Work closely with VAR and AVAR observers, if applicable, and oversee the assessment of VARs' and AVARs' performances using appropriate criteria;

h. Monitor the activities and performances of VARs and AVARs to provide feedback and coaching as required;

i. Monitor the key matchday functions within the video operations room;

j. Develop and provide training programmes to facilitate the certification of new referees, VARs and AVARs;

k. Develop and provide ongoing development programmes and training sessions for certified referees, VARs and AVARs;

l. Attend UEFA courses and similar educational programmes;

m. Maintain accurate records of all VAR-related data, including VAR training, appointments, number and duration of interventions and checks, accuracy and decision-making.;

n. Produce performance reports relating to the VAR and AVAR after each game.

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