

****Diversity in European Football Leadership: A Concerning Lack of Representation****

Report. Van Sterkenburg, J., Cremers, R., Longas Luque, C., Van Lienden, A. & Elling, A. (2023). *The Governance Index Report. Levels of gender and ethnic/racial representation in leadership positions in European football*. Erasmus University Rotterdam/Mulier Institute/Fare Network

Link. [3.Governance-Index-Report-FINAL.pdf](#)

Aim. European football, while a globally diverse sport on the pitch, suffers from a significant lack of diversity in its leadership. This research examined data from 14 European countries between 2020 and 2022 to explore racial and gender diversity in senior governance, operational, and coaching roles in men's and women's football.

Methods. 'Country experts' analyzed the positions within national football federations, league associations, and professional clubs, in 14 European countries, as well as within UEFA. They categorized individuals by gender and race/ethnicity. Findings were then shared with the main coordinating research team who summarized findings in the report.

Key findings. The study reveals that key decision-making and management roles are overwhelmingly held by White men. Across all areas of football leadership – governance, operations, and coaching – White men comprise between 87% and 94% of positions. Representation of ethnic minorities is consistently below 5%, and ethnic minority women are almost entirely absent. While White women have some presence in governance and operations, they are notably absent from men's coaching staff. The study highlights that this lack of diversity isn't necessarily due to a shortage of qualified women and minoritized candidates. Instead, it points to deeply ingrained patterns of recruitment based on existing networks – often dominated by White men – and a lack of awareness regarding systemic biases. There's a tendency to perceive minoritized candidates as lacking experience, while simultaneously denying them opportunities to gain it, and resistance to proactive measures like quotas or targets. This matters because diverse leadership teams are more likely to make inclusive decisions, foster innovation, and better represent the communities they serve. A lack of diversity perpetuates inequalities and limits the potential of the sport.

Limitations. The study relies on a specific definition of 'ethnic minority', which can be open to interpretation and may not fully capture the complexity of individuals' backgrounds. The research also focused on a relatively limited number of roles within football organizations, and a selection of nations, which means findings may not be fully representative of all European countries.