

**** Racism in European football: A deep-rooted problem ****

Chapter. Doidge, M. (2017). Racism and European Football. In: Nauright, J. & D. K. Wiggins (Eds). Routledge Handbook of Sport, Race and Ethnicity. Routledge

Link to the book: [Routledge Handbook of Sport, Race and Ethnicity - 1st Edition - John N](#)

Aim. Racism continues to be a significant issue in European football, extending far beyond isolated incidents of fan abuse. This book chapter by Mark Doidge (University of Brighton, England) aims to reflect on the issue drawing on a great variety of international sources.

Key findings. The review of existing research reveals how racism across Europe manifests in multiple forms. Overt abuse from fans, often fueled by far-right ideologies or intense rivalries, is one aspect. However, a more subtle, ‘organic’ racism also exists, stemming from a desire to define Us versus Them and can be expressed through prejudice against specific groups like Roma or Jewish people. Crucially, existing research highlights a lack of diversity in positions of power within football administration, and a tendency to downplay or deny the existence of systemic racism.

The chapter also addresses efforts to combat racism. Simply punishing individual offenders isn’t enough. More effective strategies involve actively engaging with fan groups – particularly those known as ‘ultras’ – to build trust and address the underlying causes of discrimination. Successful initiatives often see football clubs working directly with fans to promote understanding and inclusivity. Furthermore, anti-racism work needs to be broadened to encompass all forms of discrimination, including those based on gender, disability, and sexual orientation.

Overall, the chapter shows how football provides a platform for expressing belonging, but can also be used to exclude and marginalize. Political ideologies, including right-wing populism, can contribute to racist attitudes within fan cultures.

Limitations. The chapter relies on existing data and analyses, and primarily focuses on European football. This means the findings may not be universally applicable. However, the evidence clearly demonstrates that tackling racism in football requires a multifaceted approach that addresses both individual prejudice and the structural inequalities that perpetuate it.