



WOMEN
DO NOT BELONG
IN FOOTBALL

BELIEVE IN YOURSELF. NOT IN WHAT THEY SAY

**WOMEN'S FOOTBALL
DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY**

2026. - 2030.





**HRVATSKI
NOGOMETNI
SAVEZ**
CROATIAN FOOTBALL FEDERATION



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youtube.com/@hns.family

✉ Ulica grada Vukovara 269 A, 10 000 Zagreb, Croatia

☎ +385 1 2361 555

@ info@hns.family

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HRVATSKI NOGOMETNI SAVEZ

CROATIAN FOOTBALL FEDERATION



The development of women's football is one of the strategic priorities of the Croatian Football Federation in the period ahead.

Football is the most popular sport in Croatia and its strength is reflected not only in results, but also in its accessibility, equality and social impact. With this Strategy, we clearly confirm that women's football is not an addition to the system, but its equal and integral part.

The Women's Football Development Strategy 2026-2030 represents a systematic, long-term and responsible approach to the development of all segments - from the base and infrastructure, through the competitive and selective system, to management, education and media visibility. I am particularly proud that the Strategy is entitled "Women do (~~not~~) belong in football". Croatian football must be a space in which every girl has the opportunity to dream, train, progress and achieve her full potential.

This Strategy is not just a plan for the development of sports. It is an investment in the future, in equal opportunities and in a society that recognizes the value of work, knowledge and dedication regardless of gender.

The Croatian Football Federation will continue to invest in infrastructure, training of professional staff, professionalization of the system and international cooperation through UEFA and FIFA programs, with a clear goal - to create a stable, competitive and sustainable women's football system.

I believe that through the joint work of clubs, federations, coaches, players and all stakeholders, we will achieve the goals we have set in this Strategy.

Women's football has its place in Croatian sport - and it is permanent.



Marijan Kustić

President of the Croatian Football Federation



The progress of women's football in Croatia in recent years clearly shows how much can be achieved when there is vision, continuity and concrete support from the system.

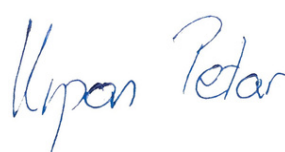
Led by President Marijan Kustić, the Croatian Football Federation has provided strong and clear support for the development of women's football, which has resulted in visible progress in all key segments - from organization and professional work, through the improvement of the competition system, to greater visibility and recognition of women's football in Croatian sport.

We are particularly pleased with the continued progress of the younger age categories, which have confirmed with their results, performances and developmental steps that Croatian women's football has quality, potential and a future at the international level.

An important contribution to this development was made by the Center's instructors, selectors of all age categories, as well as quality cooperation and daily communication with clubs, without whose joint engagement such progress would not have been possible.

This Strategy represents a continuation of such a thoughtful, responsible and systematic approach and I believe that it will further improve existing standards and open up space for even stronger development of women's football in the period ahead.

We have an important task ahead of us to continue to build a system together that will provide girls and young women in Croatia with even better conditions for training, competition and personal development, and bring new quality, stability and long-term perspective to Croatian women's football

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Krpan Petar". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Petar Krpan

Head of Development at the Croatian Football
Federation



WHY IS 2026 THE RIGHT MOMENT?

Women's football in Europe and around the world is experiencing a period of strong growth. UEFA's Women's Football Development Strategy 2024-2030 sets clear goals to increase the player base, professionalise leagues and strengthen international competitiveness.

*National associations that systematically approach the development of women's football are today creating an **advantage** that will be felt for decades.*

Croatia is currently at a moment in which:

- the number of girls participating in sport is continuously increasing;
- public and media interest in women's sport is becoming increasingly visible;
- society increasingly recognises the importance of equality and equal opportunities;
- demographic challenges require active inclusion of a wider base of children in sport.

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Women's football is no longer a marginal sports activity. It is becoming a developmental opportunity. At the same time, the Croatian women's football system has reached a phase of stabilised growth. There is a competitive structure, a representative vertical, and growing media visibility. However, without a strategic, coordinated, and long-term plan, there is a risk of stagnation and deepening regional disparities.

2026 therefore represents a natural point for:

- consolidation of the system
- professionalisation of management
- standardisation of league structures
- strengthening the selective process
- long-term identity building for women's football in Croatia.

THE STRATEGY "WOMEN DO (NOT) BELONG IN FOOTBALL" WAS NOT CREATED AS A REACTION TO A PROBLEM, BUT AS A RESPONSE TO AN OPPORTUNITY.





Marijan Kustić
President



Josip Tomaško
General Secretary



Petar Krpan
Head of Development



Anđelko Ivanjko
Head of Competitions



Božidar Miletić
Women's Football
Coordinator



Hrvoje Hrkač
Women's National Teams'
manager

REGIONAL INSTRUCTORS (Ž)

Helenna Hercigonja-Moulton
NS Zagreb

Tomislav Mužina
NS Sjever

Božidar Miletić
NS Split

Dunja Štokan
NS Rijeka

Branka Juhas
NS Osijek

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REALISTIC STATE OF WOMEN'S FOOTBALL IN CROATIA

Registered Players

Registered players (2026): 3,523.

Regional development remains uneven.

The largest concentration of players: Zagreb and its surroundings, Medimurje, part of Slavonia, and part of Dalmatia.

Weakest coverage: Lika, part of Dalmatia, certain counties without a continuous structure.

Key challenges:

- high dropout rate after the age of 18;
- lack of continuity in the transition from WU-19 to senior football;
- limited development conditions in smaller regions.

Regional differences

Center Zagreb – largest base, but high competition, club stability

Center North – organized – one club carrying the quality

Center Osijek – good tradition, stable base.

Center Rijeka – pronounced territorial difficulties (Istria, Lika), weak base

Center Split – growing interest

The development of women's football is not territorially uniform.

National Team system

Active national teams: WU-15, WU-16, WU-17, WU-19 and senior national team;

Diaspora camps (USA, Canada, Australia and others);

Biggest developmental gap: transition from junior to Senior football.

Media and marketing visibility

- increasing social media presence;
- increased interest during qualification cycles;
- limited presence of league matches in mainstream media;
- no long-term commercial model specifically for women's football.

Positive:

- Recognizable identity @hns.women
- Potential for a strong narrative through the campaign 'Women do (ne) belong in football'

Financial framework

- most clubs depend on HNS and local funding;
- the system is still not financially self-sustainable.
- **HNS co-finances clubs through applying for UEFA and FIFA programs, which represent an important development resource**

Challenge: The system is still not financially self-sustainable.



Professional Staff

The need for a greater number of quality coaches involved in women's football

Greater involvement of female specialist coaches (analysts and goalkeeping coaches) is needed in youth national teams

The club system currently depends on individuals rather than a systematic structure.

Competitive structure

Seniors

1. Women's League (Magenta League): 8 clubs
2. Women's League: 2 groups (A and B)

The system is stable, but:

there are pronounced differences in quality financial and organizational disparities some clubs operate on a volunteer basis

Younger age categories

WU-17 League: 10 clubs

WU-15 League: 10 clubs

WU-13: tournament model according to HNS centers

In addition, there are center leagues (Zagreb, Split, Rijeka, Osijek, North) with varying levels of organization and number of teams – WU15 and WU17

Challenges:

- unbalanced competition calendar – centers
- insufficient coverage in certain counties
- and lack of a clear transitional model to senior football



Petar Krpan
Head of Development



Božidar Miletić
Women's Football
Coordinator





CONCLUSION OF THE 2026 ANALYSIS

There is:

- a stable base (3,523 female players)
- a functional competition system
- a representative vertical
- growing visibility

But there still exist:

- territorial inequalities
- lack of professionalization

The need for a larger number of quality coaches involved in women's football

A gap in the transition WU-19 → WA

VISION FOR 2030.

By 2030, women's football in Croatia no longer questions whether it belongs in the sports arena. That question becomes unnecessary—because its place has been earned.

**Not through rhetoric.
Not through a campaign.
But through a system.**

Croatia in 2030 has a stable and competitive first league with eight strong clubs, a stable second league (either unified or in two groups), and a clear development pyramid below it. Every girl, whether she comes from Zagreb, Osijek, Split, Rijeka, Medimurje, or the smallest community, has access to organized football.

The number of registered players exceeds 4,000, and the system no longer depends solely on the enthusiasm of individuals, but on structure and organization.

WU-13 leagues exist in all centers, and the transition to senior football is clear.

The diaspora is systematically involved through a global scouting program, and the national teams are competitive. WU-17 and WU-19 regularly participate in the elite phases of qualifications.

The A national team is progressing in the FIFA rankings. Clubs have professional staff with licensed coaches.

The number of women in coaching and management structures is continuously increasing. Coach education is no longer a project – but a standard.

Women's football 2030 has a clear media presence, stable partners, and a recognizable identity.

@hns.women is not just a profile – but a platform.



The Playmakers program and school football are creating a new generation of girls who see football as a natural choice, not an exception.

**Women's football in 2030 is not an "add-on".
It is not a "project".
It is not an "alternative".**

It is an integral part of the Croatian football identity.

By 2030, we want a system in which every girl who wants to play football has the opportunity, support, and a clear development path – from the first training session to the national team jersey.

*Because its not that women do not belong in football.
Football belongs to women.*



GOALS UNTIL 2030.

Grassroots and participation

Starting point 2026: 3,523 players

Goal 2030: 4,000 players

By 2030, we want to:

- WU-13 league competition in all HNS centers
- Reduce the dropout rate after the age of 18 by at least 20%
- Include at least 50 primary schools in a structured women's football program
- Expand the UEFA Playmakers program to all counties through cooperation with the school system

Professional staff and coaches

By 2030 we want to:

- Increase the number of licensed female coaches by at least 30%
- Introduce a mentoring program for female coaches – based on UEFA principles through the HNS Academy
- A system of county instructors for women's football in all developed areas
- Regular training and an annual women's football seminar – at the county and central level

Selection system

- Digital development database for female players – Easy coach
- WU-13 and WU-14 camps in all centers
- Inter-county match system for girls
- Unique selection model at the level of the whole of Croatia

System sustainability

- Defined model for financing women's football
- Potential integration of women's teams into the system of first league clubs
- Long-term development fund for women's football

League structure

2030 competition system:

- 1st league – 8 clubs (quadruple round-robin)
- 2nd league – 8 clubs (unified – quadruple round-robin or in two groups) depending on the possibilities of the clubs at the time of the competition reorganization
- Two 3rd leagues – 6 clubs each depending on the possibilities of the clubs at the time of the competition reorganization
- Standardized league WUI5 and WUI7 – with modification to WUI6 and WUI8
- Systematic model of transition from younger age groups to seniors

Additional objectives:

- Minimum infrastructure standards for the 1st league
- Licensing criteria specific to women's football
- Financial and organizational stabilization of clubs

National team development

By 2030:

- Continuous placements of WU-17 and WU-19 in the elite qualification stages
- Progress of the A national team in the FIFA ranking
- Structured diaspora program (annual camp + inclusion of the diaspora selection in selective center finals)

Media and commercial coverage

By 2030:

- Increase digital reach
- Greater presence of league matches in national media
- At least one strategic commercial partner specifically related to women's football
- Standardized marketing of 1st league clubs





STRATEGIC PILLAR 1

GRASSROOTS AND EARLY DEVELOPMENT (6–13 godina)

1. STARTING POSITION 2026

- 3,523 registered players
- Uneven regional representation
- Limited national platform for WU-13 age
- Uneven regional structures
- Playmakers program present, but not in all counties
- High dropout rate after age 18

2. STRATEGIC GOAL BY 2030

- 4,000 registered female players
- Standardized WU-13 league competitions
- Reduction of regional differences
- Reduction of dropout rate by at least 20%

3. KEY PROGRAMS OF STEP 1

- U-13 GIRLS LEAGUE FINALS – NATIONAL PILOT (2026)
- UEFA PLAYMAKERS – NATIONAL EXPANSION
- WU-13 LEAGUES IN ALL CENTERS
- PLAYER RETENTION (Retention program)
- INFRASTRUCTURE AND EQUALITY OF CONDITIONS

Measurable indicators

- +15% registered female players
- 100% of centers with WU-13 league
- Annual national WU-13 finals
- 4,000+ girls participated in the Playmakers program (cumulative 2026–2030)
- Reduction of regional differences in the number of female players



KEY PROGRAMS – PILLAR 1



U-13 GIRLS LEAGUE FINALS – NACIONALNI PILOT (2026)

Regional phase

- Organization through league or tournament model (depending on geography)
- Defined minimum standards
- Systematic monitoring of instructors

National finals

- 12 clubs
- Format 8+1
- Development-oriented approach
- Possibility to include up to 5 unregistered players per club (with the consent of the home club)

Strategic importance:

- Increasing the player base
- Connecting regional systems
- Creating a unique national development platform

Goal by 2030:

- Growth in the number of participating clubs
- Standardization of regional competition criteria

UEFA PLAYMAKERS – NATIONAL EXPANSION

The program represents the fundamental entry channel for girls into the football system.

Goals by 2030:

- Implementation in all counties
- Expansion of the football school network within the program
- Systematic collaboration with primary schools and kindergartens
- Inclusion of at least 1,000 girls annually

Developmental vertical: Playmakers → WU-7 / WU-9 / WU-11 → selective system → national team

DEVELOPMENT OF WU-13 LEAGUE

Current situation: uneven development across regions

Goals:

- by 2028: a functional WU-13 league in every center
- by 2030: at least 8 clubs per center (where possible)

standardized competition calendar

- continuous coach education for development purposes

PLAYER RETENTION (RETENTION PROGRAM)

Key challenge: dropping out at the age of 18

Measures:

- Educational workshops
- Systematic psychological support
- Coordination of school and sports obligations

Goal: Reduction of dropouts by at least 20% (WU-18 / WU-19)

INFRASTRUCTURE AND EQUALITY OF CONDITIONS

- Defining minimum conditions for women's selections
- Ensuring equal availability of appointments
- Long-term: obligation of first-league clubs to develop women's selections





STRATEGIC PILLAR 2

COMPETITION PYRAMID 2026 – 2030.

STARTING POSITION 2026

- Women's Senior Leagues – more than the optimal number of clubs
- Uneven quality
- Financial and organizational differences among clubs
- Second level of competition without clear stability
- Dependence on the enthusiasm of individuals

STRATEGIC GOAL BY 2030

- Create a stable, competitive and sustainable competition pyramid:
- 1st Women's Senior league – 8 clubs
- 2nd Women's Senior league – 8 clubs (unified – four-round or in two groups) depending on the given capabilities of the clubs at the time of competition reorganization)
- 2 third leagues – 6 clubs each depending on the given capabilities of the clubs at the time of competition reorganization
- All levels four-round.

KEY PROGRAMS OF PILLAR 1

- DEVELOPMENTAL MODEL (EVOLUTIONARY TRANSITION)
- CONNECTION WITH YOUNGER AGES
- LICENSING AND STANDARDS
- FINANCIAL FRAMEWORK

Measurable indicators

- 8 stable clubs in the 1st league
- 8 stable clubs in the 2nd league – depending on the given possibilities of the clubs at the time of the competition reorganization
- 12 clubs in the 3rd level (2 x 6) – depending on the given possibilities of the clubs at the time of the competition reorganization
- 100% of the 1st league clubs with younger categories
- Reduction of the result disparities in the 1st league (fewer matches with a high goal difference)
- Increase in the average attendance of matches



KEY PROGRAMS – PILLAR 2



1. DEVELOPMENTAL MODEL (EVOLUTIONARY TRANSITION)

Phase 1 (2026–2028)

- Stabilization of the existing number of clubs
- Introduction of minimum infrastructure and organizational criteria
- Financial mapping of clubs

Phase 2 (2029–2030)

- Model stabilization
- Standardization of licensing
- Financial sustainability

STRUCTURE 2030.

1. Women's First League (8 clubs)

- Four-round (28 rounds)
- Professionalized minimum standard:
 - licensed trainer
 - fitness coach (or associate)
 - medical support
 - youth facility (at least 4 younger categories)
- Minimum infrastructure criteria
- Mandatory digital and media presence
- Goal: increase competitiveness and quality of matches.

2. Women's Second League (8 clubs)

- unified – four-round or in two groups, depending on the given capabilities of the clubs at the time of competition reorganization
- Uniform league
- Four-round
- Development platform
- Mandatory 3 younger categories
- Goal: A stable bridge between the 1st league and the regional base.

3. level – 2 regional leagues (6 clubs each)

- depending on the given capabilities of the clubs at the time of competition reorganization
- Territorially organized
- More flexible model
- Focus on development and inclusion of new clubs
- Mandatory 2 younger categories
- Goal: Geographical accessibility and cost reduction.

2. CONNECTION WITH YOUNG PEOPLE

- Standardized league WU-16
- Standardized league W-U18
- Clear vertical:
 - WU-13 → WU-15 → WU-16 → WU-18 → WA (national team)
- Emphasis on leagues HNS Centers

3. LICENSING AND STANDARDS

By 2030:

- Special licensing criteria for women's football
- The minimum budget threshold for the 1st league
- Obligation to develop younger categories
- Financial transparency
- Club development plan (4-year)

4. FINANCIAL FRAMEWORK (OBJECTIVE)

- Women's Football Co-financing Model
- Incentives for Clubs with Junior Categories
- Special Development Fund for Women's Football





STRATEGIC PILLAR 3

SELECTIVE AND DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM

1. BASELINE 2026

- WU-14 county selections operate within football centers.
- In some counties, due to the smaller number of players, inter-county teams are formed.
- County selections play a single league system (spring + autumn).
- After the county phase, center instructors form the WU14 center selection.
- At the final selection, the center's representative team for the Croatian Football Federation Selection Tournament (5 centers) is selected.

2. STRATEGIC GOAL BY 2030

The goal is not to change the model – but its:

- standardization
- professionalization
- expansion
- and digitalization

3. KEY PROGRAMS OF PILLAR 3

- EACH COUNTY – INDEPENDENT SELECTION
- STANDARDIZED INTERCOUNTY MODEL
- SELECTIVE TOURNAMENT – 6TH TEAM (DIASPORA)
- IMPROVEMENT OF THE FINAL TOURNAMENT
- DIGITAL DATABASE OF THE SELECTIVE SYSTEM

Measurable indicators

- 100% of counties have active WU-14 selection
- 6 teams at the final selection tournament
- 85% of national team players have gone through the structured WU-14 selection model
- Reducing injuries in the selection system
- Inter-county match system becomes the standard, not the exception





KEY PROGRAMS – PILLAR 3

EACH COUNTY – INDEPENDENT SELECTION

By 2030, the goal is:

- Each county within the center has its own independent WU-14 selection.
- Minimum standard: at least 25 registered selective players per county.

This:

- we are increasing the base
- we are increasing the responsibility of county associations
- we are strengthening local development

STANDARDIZED INTER-COUNTY MODEL

It is introduced:

- Mandatory minimum number of selective matches per year (e.g. 6–8)
- Uniform calendar at the HNS Center level
- Mandatory record keeping and individual player assessments

SELECTIVE TOURNAMENT – 6TH TEAM (DIASPORA)

From 2028 or at the latest in 2029:

The final selection tournament will feature:

- 5 nogometnih središta HNS-a
- 1 selekcija dijaspore

Diaspora model:

- Regional coordinators
- Annual diaspora camp
- Digital database of applications and monitoring

IMPROVEMENT OF THE FINAL TOURNAMENT

- Demonstration training sessions for coaches
- Education - lectures
- Analysis of the current state of women's football
- Guest lecturers

DIGITAL DATABASE OF THE SELECTIVE SYSTEM

By 2030:

- Every selective player has a development profile
- Record of minutes
- Records of selective camps
- Record of progress towards the national team
- Injury monitoring

The system must monitor development – not just select talent.





STRATEGIC PILLAR 3

**ADDITIONAL MEASURE EXTENSION OF THE DEVELOPMENT WINDOW
(WU15 → WU16 / WU17 → WU18)**

BASELINE 2026.

- There are WU-15, WU-16, WU-17 and WU-19 teams.
- There is no national WU-19 league.
- A large number of female players after WU-17 age enter senior football too early.
- In the age transition U WU-18 occurs:
 - increased abandonment,
 - physical and psychological unpreparedness,
 - loss of continuity of development.
- The system currently does not have enough "buffer zone" between WU-17 and WA.

STRATEGIC MEASURE 2026 – 2030.

EVOLUTIONARY MODEL OF AGE

Gradually adjust the development model:

WU-15 → development selection WU-16

WU-17 → development selection WU-18

GOAL:

To extend the development phase for one additional year within the selective system, so that female players get:

- additional physical maturation
- tactical stability
- psychological preparation
- reduced risk of giving up

REASONS FOR THIS ADJUSTMENT

- There is no stable WU-19 league
- A big gap between WU-17 and senior football
- Not enough high level matches for 17-18 year old girls
- The need for better preparation for the A national team
- This is a realistic, systematic reaction to the existing league structure.

OPERATING MODEL

Organize international development matches
Systematically monitor the transition to senior football.

Strategic goal until 2030.

- Reduce dropouts at the age of 18
- Increase the number of players who move from the WU-19 selection to the A national team
- To ensure a more stable transition from cadet football to senior football





STRATEGIC PILLAR 4

MANAGEMENT, ADMINISTRATIVE CAPACITIES AND PROFESSIONALIZATION OF THE SYSTEM

1. BASELINE 2026.

- 5 instructors for women's football at the central level
- There is no structured professional in all counties
- The administrative capacity of the clubs is uneven
- There is no specialized training program for administrators in women's football
- The system relies on individual enthusiasm

Conclusion:

- The professional foundation exists, but administrative and operational capacities have not been systematically built.

2. STRATEGIC GOAL BY 2030.

To improve a professional, vertically integrated and administratively competent system for managing women's football.

3. KEY PROGRAMS OF PILLAR 1

- NATIONAL CONFERENCE "WOMEN IN SOCCER"
- CAPACITY-BUILDING FOR ADMINISTRATORS PROGRAM
- EXPANSION OF THE INSTRUCTOR NETWORK TO THE COUNTY LEVEL
- GENDER BALANCE IN MANAGEMENT
- PHASE IMPLEMENTATION

Measurable indicators

- Stable management structure
- Professional clubs
- Stronger operational efficiency
- Uniform regional development
- Sustainable development model



KEY PROGRAMS – PILLAR 4



4.1. NATIONAL CONFERENCE "WOMEN IN FOOTBALL"

- The implementation of the Strategy begins with the organization of the annual national conference.
- Conference 2026 (St. Martin, 11–13.5.)
- Official presentation of the Strategy 2026–2030
- Gathering of clubs, centers, instructors and administration
- Educational modules for management and organization
- Networking of stakeholders
- Objective: The conference becomes an annual platform for evaluation, education and strategic guidance of the development of women's football.

4.2. CAPACITY-BUILDING FOR ADMINISTRATORS PROGRAM

- As part of the FIFA Women's Development Program, a national project for the education of administrative staff is being launched.

• Coverage:

- Club administrators
- County association secretariats
- Competition organizers
- Women's club operational staff

• Topics:

- Financial Management
- Match Organization
- Competition Standards
- Marketing Visibility
- Working with National Teams
- Creating Project Applications

• Goal by 2030:

- Every first-league club has an administratively qualified person
- Standardized minimum organizational criteria

4.3. EXPANSION OF THE INSTRUCTOR NETWORK TO THE COUNTY LEVEL

- Introduce the position: COUNTY COORDINATOR – INSTRUCTOR FOR WOMEN'S FOOTBALL
- New professional positions by 2030 – in counties with sufficiently developed women's football
- Minimum criteria:
 - UEFA B license
 - Active work experience in women's football
 - Annual work plan
 - Bixed annual report to the Croatian Football Federation
 - Participation in the national network
- Goal: Uniform implementation of the Strategy in all regions.

4.4. GENDER BALANCE IN MANAGEMENT

By 2030:

- At least 50% of county instructors are women
- Systematic education of female coaches and sports workers
- This is the operational implementation of the Strategy's message:
"Women (have) no place in football."

4.5. PHASE IMPLEMENTATION

- Conference and official launch of the Strategy
- Launch of the Capacity-Building Project
- Defining criteria for county instructors
- 2027 – 2028
- Expanding the network
- Standardization of minimum organizational criteria
- Evaluation of administrative efficiency
- 2029 – 2030
- Full vertical coverage
- Formalization in regulations
- Systematic professionalization





STRATEGIC PILLAR 5

VISIBILITY, IDENTITY AND SOCIAL IMPACT

1. BASELINE 2026.

- Women's football has limited media coverage
- Matches have low attendance
- Clubs lack professional marketing support
- There is no sustained national campaign
- Social stereotypes persist

At the same time::

- Interest among girls is growing
- National teams are gaining more attention
- There is a strong base of stories and role models
- Conclusion:
 - The potential exists, but it is not systematically exploited

2. STRATEGIC GOAL BY 2030.

Position women's football as:

- visible
- professional
- socially relevant
- equal part of Croatian football

3. KEY PROGRAMS OF PILLAR 1

- STRATEGY UNDER ONE NAME "WOMEN DO (NOT) BELONG IN FOOTBALL"
- NATIONAL CAMPAIGN 2026 – 2030.
- DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION
- MEDIA STRATEGY
- EVENTS AND COMMUNITY ACTIVATION
- DIASPORA AS A COMMUNICATION BRIDGE
- SOCIAL INFLUENCE

Measurable indicators

- Increase the number of followers of @hns.women by 100%
- Increase match attendance by 50%
- Increase media coverage by 50%
- Every representative action has a communication plan
- The campaign "Women do (not) belong in football" becomes a recognizable national slogan



KEY PROGRAMS – PILLAR 5



STRATEGY UNDER ONE NAME

“Women (do) not belong in football”

The name remains the official name of the Strategy 2026–2030. Why?

Because:

- provokes
- breaks stereotypes
- communicates change
- carries an identity
- A strategy is not just a document.

It is a social message.

NATIONAL CAMPAIGN 2026 – 2030.

The campaign becomes a long-term platform, not a one-time action.

- National team women as ambassadors
- Instructors and trainers as role models
- Digitalni storytelling
- Cooperation with the media
- Visibility in all competitions

Goal: each season has a thematic communication focus.

DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION

By 2030:

- Systematic content production for @hns.women
- Professional photo and video production of national teams
- Introduction of short formats (interviews, behind the scenes, educational content)
- Standardized visual identity for women's football

Goal: to unite communication between national teams, leagues and grassroots levels.

MEDIA STRATEGY

Measures:

- Increase amount of TV broadcasts
- At least one derby round with announcement and analysis (by an expert commentator for women's football)
- Systematic cooperation with national and local media
- Education of clubs about media communication

Goal by 2030: increase media coverage of women's football

EVENTS AND COMMUNITY ACTIVATION

- Mandatory media activities during national team matches
- Women's football days in schools
- Activation of parents and local communities

Goal: increase average match attendance.

DIASPORA AS A COMMUNICATION BRIDGE

- Promotion of successful female players of Croatian origin
- Media visibility of selective camps in the diaspora
- Digital connection through storytelling
- The diaspora is not just a selective resource.
- It is a communication potential.

SOCIAL IMPACT

The strategy is positioned as:

- equality tool
- girl empowerment tool
- platform for positive social change

Women's football is becoming a symbol of opportunity, not exception.



WOMEN'S FOOTBALL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY 2026. – 2030.

Women do (not) belong in football

Initial state

- 3523 registered players
- Multi-level league system with uneven competitiveness
- 5 women's football instructors in the centers
- Uneven administrative capacities of clubs
- Limited media visibility

The 2026–2030 strategy is based on an evolutionary model of development.

Vision 2030.

By 2030, Croatia will have:

- Stable and competitive league system
- At least 25% more registered players
- Professionalized management structure
- Uniform selective system
- National teams stable in higher levels of European qualifications

A recognizable national identity for women's football

Strategic pillars

Base and infrastructure

Development of grassroots programs, WU-13 leagues in all centers, strengthening working conditions in clubs, equal access to infrastructure.

League system

Goal by 2030:

- League – 8 clubs (four-round)
- Unique 2nd league – 8 clubs
- Two 3rd leagues with 6 clubs each
- Stabilization of competitiveness and quality

Selective and national team system

- Upgrading an existing model
- County selections in all counties
- Sixth center in selective tournaments – diaspora
- Development of WU15 → WU16 and WU17 → WU18 transition models
- Strengthening the transition to senior football

Management and professionalization

- National Conference "Women in Football"
- Capacity-Building project for administrators
- Introduction of county coordinators – instructors
- 50% of women in the instructor network by 2030.
- Professionalization of the structure within the HNS

Visibility and identity

- Long-term campaign "Women (do) not belong in football"
- Digital transformation
- Media strategy
- Community activation
- Diaspora as a communicative and selective potential

KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS (KPI) BY 2030.

VISIBILITY AND COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT – MEASURABLE KPIS BY 2030.

Digital presence

- Increase the number of followers of @hns.women by at least 100%
- Minimum of 200 original posts per year (national teams + league + grassroots)
- Minimum of 30 video content per year (interviews, behind the scenes, educational content)
- Standardized visual identity of all national teams and the 1st league

TV and media presence

- Minimum 20 broadcasts or streams of Women's First League matches per year
- At least 1 derby round per half-season with announcement and expert analysis
- Minimum 2 broadcasts of representative matches per year on national television (where possible)
- Increase of the total number of media announcements by 50% (monitoring through media analytics)

Marketing standard of the 1st league (mandatory minimum until 2028)

- Every 1st League club must have:
- Active social media (minimum 2 posts per week during the season)
 - Official announcement of each match
 - Announcement of results and photos after the match
 - Appointed person responsible for communication
 - Annual communication plan

Attendance

- Increase average attendance at 1st League matches by at least 50%
- Minimum 2 promotional activations per season (schools, community, family days)

Financial framework

The strategy is implemented through a combination of:

- National resources of HNS
- UEFA HatTrick program
- UEFA Playmakers
- FIFA Forward program
- FIFA Women's Development Programme
- Project applications and development funds

The financial model is based on:

- phased investment growth
- priority financing of infrastructure and education
- project sustainability

Women's football becomes an investment in development, not an expense.

ROADMAP 2026. – 2030.

Women do (not) belong in football

2026.



Presentation of the Strategy
Launch of the Capacity-Building Project
Start of implementation of county coordinators

2027.



Implementation of WU-13 leagues - new competition
Strengthening the selective model
Stabilization of digital strategy

2028.



Consolidation of the league system
Increasing the player base
Evaluation of medium-term goals

2029.



Stable structure in all centers
Growth in the competitiveness of the 1st league
Professionalization of administration and support staff

2030.



Strategy Evaluation
Defining a new development cycle 2031 - 2035

FINAL MESSAGE

*The 2026–2030 Strategy is not just a document for the
development of sports.*

It is a social change.

It is a systemic reform.

It is an investment in the future.

*“Women do (not) belong in football”
goes from being a provocation to a reality.*





**HRVATSKI
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CROATIAN FOOTBALL FEDERATION



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hns.family
twitter.com/hns_cff
facebook.com/cff.hns
instagram.com/hns_cff
youtube.com/@hns.family

✉ Ulica grada Vukovara 269 A, 10 000 Zagreb, Croatia ☎ +385 1 2361 555 @ info@hns.family

WOMEN ~~DO NOT~~ BELONG IN FOOTBALL

BELIEVE IN YOURSELF. NOT IN WHAT THEY SAY



WOMEN
~~DO NOT~~ BELONG
IN FOOTBALL

