



**STRATEGY AND
OPERATIONAL
FRAMEWORK FOR
THE SUPPRESSION
OF RACISM AND
ALL FORMS OF
DISCRIMINATION**





OBITELJ

FAMILY

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PART I

STRATEGIC, SOCIAL AND NORMATIVE FRAMEWORK

I. FOOTBALL AS A SOCIAL INSTITUTION AND A SPACE OF RESPONSIBILITY

Football in the Republic of Croatia represents one of the most powerful social platforms. Its influence extends beyond the boundaries of the playing field. Football shapes collective emotions, produces symbolic narratives, strengthens a sense of belonging and, particularly in moments of major competitive success, acts as a strong integrative factor of national identity. In such a context, football is not a neutral space. It reflects society, but at the same time actively shapes it.

Precisely because of this dual function, the responsibility of football institutions goes beyond the organization of competitions. The Croatian Football Federation (hereinafter: HNS) holds not only a regulatory but also a broader social responsibility. When hate speech, discrimination, or the systemic marginalization of certain groups is tolerated within the football environment, a social pattern is implicitly legitimized that extends beyond the stadium. Conversely, when football institutions respond clearly, consistently, and systematically, they establish standards that resonate within the wider social context.

Discrimination in football is not an isolated incident. It can manifest in various forms: racist chanting from the stands, offensive banners, sexist comments directed at female referees or players, homophobic remarks in locker rooms, the marginalization of children with migrant backgrounds, or online threats directed at players. Each of these forms has its own specific dynamics, but they share a common effect: the erosion of individual dignity and the destabilization of trust in the system.

The Strategy is based on the premise that discrimination cannot be effectively suppressed solely through repressive measures. Punishment without education produces only a temporary effect with limited duration, but does not change structural patterns of behavior. Therefore, the Strategy is founded on an integrated model: prevention, education, clearly defined operational protocols, and transparent sanctioning.

II. ANALYTICAL REVIEW OF THE UEFA OUTRAGED PROJECT AND ITS METHODOLOGICAL APPLICATION

The UEFA OUTRAGED project represents one of the most significant European initiatives in the field of combating discrimination in football. Its strength lies not only in institutional support, but in its methodological approach. The project combined three core elements:

Personal testimonies of top-level professionals.

Educational modules tailored to different target groups.

A structured dialogue framework that encourages reflection and responsibility.

The first element – personal testimonies – had a strong emotional impact. Players and coaches spoke about experiences that left a profound mark on their careers and mental health. In this way, discrimination took on a human dimension. It was no longer an abstract concept, but a concrete experience of humiliation, isolation, and insecurity.

The second element – educational modules – demonstrated that the issue must be addressed in a differentiated manner. Parents, coaches, and players do not approach the topic of discrimination from the same position. Each group carries specific responsibilities and possesses a different capacity for influence.

The third element – structured dialogue – showed that cultural change requires open conversation. Participants in the educational process were not passive recipients of information, but active contributors to discussion. It is precisely this participatory methodology that enabled both personal and collective ownership of responsibility.

Through this Strategy, the Croatian Football Federation (HNS) adopts the key methodological principles of the OUTRAGED project, while adapting them to the Croatian context. Croatian football faces specific challenges: a strong supporter culture, periodic political and national tensions, and a digital environment that often escapes institutional control. Therefore, the application of the model is necessarily conditioned by these concrete circumstances.

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III. SOCIAL AND HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF CROATIAN FOOTBALL

Every strategy must be grounded in the actual social context. Croatian football is characterized by:

- strong regional identities of clubs,
- pronounced supporter passion,
- high media exposure,
- a strong symbolic connection between the national team and national identity.

In such an environment, emotions are intense. The intensity of emotions is not inherently negative; it is an integral part of sport. However, when emotions cross the line and evolve into hate speech or discrimination, the integrity of sporting competition is undermined.

The historical context further complicates the situation. Certain forms of verbal abuse carry symbolic weight that extends beyond the moment of the match. In such cases, the response of institutions must be measured, but also clear and unequivocal.

The Strategy for 2026 therefore does not ignore the social context; rather, it recognizes it as a key component in planning preventive and operational measures.

IV. EMPIRICAL PATTERNS OF DISCRIMINATORY SUPPORTER BEHAVIOR IN THE HNL

For the purpose of designing effective and proportionate measures to combat racism and discrimination, it is necessary to rely on empirical data regarding actual supporter behavior patterns. The analysis of disciplinary decisions and official incident reports across multiple HNL seasons shows that discriminatory supporter behavior is not an isolated or sporadic occurrence, but a recognizable and recurring pattern within certain supporter contexts.

This chapter does not rely solely on the formal legal classification of individual incidents, but instead focuses on the content and impact of supporter behavior. This enables a realistic assessment of risk and the development of measures that correspond to actual patterns, rather than merely legal labels.

The data clearly show that discriminatory behavior in the HNL predominantly manifests through collective verbal patterns—mass chanting, shouting, and organized singing—while banners and other visual forms are less frequent, but normatively and symbolically highly relevant.

IV.1. Dominant Patterns of Discriminatory Expression

Collective Chanting as the Primary Phenomenon

The most common form of discriminatory behavior is mass and repeated chanting of content with racial, ethnic, national, regional, or ideological connotations. These are ritualized patterns that, in certain supporter environments, have become part of the repertoire and are transmitted over time.

Among the most frequently recorded chants and songs are:

- “Gypsy, Gypsy”
- “Referee, Gypsy”
- “Kill, kill, kill the Purger (person from Zagreb)”
- “Kill, kill the ‘Tovar’”
- “Crush, crush the Zagreber”
- “Gypsies from Kvarner”
- “I hate Dinamo, that Serbian name”
- “Filthy Rijeka, stinking city...”
- “From Vežica to Lovran, it’s full of Muslims...”
- the chant “For the homeland” with the response “Ready”

These expressions share several common characteristics:

- ethnic or racial labeling of the opponent,
- dehumanization and implicit or explicit calls to violence,
- regional identity-based stigmatization,
- use of discriminatory language as a universal insult,
- ideologically charged references with historically sensitive connotations.

Particular normative weight is attached to the chant “For the homeland – Ready,” whose use is associated with totalitarian and discriminatory ideologies. Its appearance in the context of sporting competition represents a serious reputational and societal risk for football as a public platform and requires an unequivocal institutional response.

Discrimination Toward Referees and the Phenomenon of Monkey Chants

A significant number of incidents relate to chants directed at referees, particularly “Gypsy, Gypsy” or “Referee, Gypsy.” Although such chants often stem from dissatisfaction with refereeing decisions, their content remains racist and degrading.

In certain seasons, monkey chants directed at players have also been recorded. Such behavior, even when not always formally classified under specific regulatory provisions, constitutes a form of collective racial harassment.

Monkey chanting has a strong symbolic and psychological impact, especially when directed at an individual on the field, turning the public space of the stadium into a space of public humiliation.

These forms of behavior illustrate how racist language is often instrumentalized as an expression of frustration or rivalry, thereby blurring the line between supporter passion and prohibited conduct.

Banners and Pre-Articulated Messages

Banners and other visual forms of discriminatory expression are less frequent, but normatively particularly significant. Unlike spontaneous chanting, banners imply prior preparation, conscious articulation of a message, and intent to publicly present discriminatory content.

Such cases indicate a higher level of organization and ideological articulation and therefore require preventive mechanisms that include control over the entry of materials, timely intervention, and clearly defined protocols for the removal of inappropriate content.

IV.2. Distribution of Risk and Club Responsibility

The analysis shows that discriminatory incidents are most frequently recorded among clubs with large and organized supporter bases, although such behavior has also been observed among other clubs in certain seasons.

This pattern does not indicate an individualized problem of a specific club, but rather a broader cultural phenomenon in which the collective identity of supporter groups is often constructed through antagonism and the stigmatization of opponents.

The system of strict liability means that clubs bear responsibility for the behavior of their supporters, regardless of whether individual perpetrators are identified. Responsibility is thus transferred to the level of organizational risk management and preventive action.

IV.3. Structural Characteristics of the Problem

Empirical analysis allows for the identification of several fundamental characteristics of discriminatory supporter behavior in the HNL:

- it is a collective rather than an isolated individual phenomenon;
- patterns are repetitive and adaptable to specific circumstances;
- verbal forms dominate over visual ones;

- discriminatory expressions are often normalized as part of supporter tradition;
- ideologically and historically burdened symbols occasionally appear in the sporting context.

These characteristics confirm that the issue is not only disciplinary, but also cultural in nature. Individual sanctions do not alter patterns that are deeply embedded in supporter discourse.

IV.4. Strategic Implications

Patterns of discriminatory supporter behavior provide a solid analytical foundation for the development of strategic measures. Several key conclusions follow:

- a purely repressive approach is insufficient for long-term change;
- established verbal patterns require targeted preventive and educational interventions;
- ideologically and historically compromised symbols require unequivocal institutional condemnation;
- clubs must develop proactive mechanisms for managing supporter behavior;
- public communication by the HNS must be clear, consistent, and normatively robust.

This chapter therefore serves as the empirical basis for defining the objectives, measures, and institutional mechanisms that follow in the remainder of the Strategy.

V. ANALYSIS OF INTERNATIONAL DISCIPLINARY MEASURES RELATED TO RACISM AND DISCRIMINATION IN NATIONAL TEAM FOOTBALL (2021–2025)

During the observed period, the Croatian Football Federation (HNS) faced a total of twenty disciplinary decisions issued by international football governing bodies due to supporter behavior at matches of the Croatian senior national team. The majority of these decisions related to standard safety and organizational incidents—use of pyrotechnics, throwing objects onto the pitch, blocking access routes, pitch invasions, or general disturbances of order and discipline. The total financial amount of all sanctions imposed during the observed period reached EUR 801,250, representing a significant financial burden, but also a clear message from international authorities regarding the standards expected in the organization and control of supporter behavior at national team matches.

Within this overall set of sanctions, particular attention must be given to decisions explicitly related to racism and discrimination. There were five such decisions, meaning that racist or discriminatory incidents account for one quarter of all sanctioned cases. However, their true significance becomes evident when considering the financial dimension: sanctions imposed for racism and discrimination during the observed period amount to a total of EUR 225,000. This represents approximately 38% of the total financial

burden of all sanctions. In other words, although fewer in number, incidents of a racist or discriminatory nature generate a disproportionately large share of the overall financial consequences.

This ratio is not coincidental. It reflects a clear regulatory policy of FIFA and UEFA, under which racism and discrimination are treated as qualitatively more severe forms of supporter misconduct compared to, for example, the use of pyrotechnics. While flares or the throwing of objects primarily constitute safety issues, racism and discrimination strike at the core values of football as a global platform of equality and inclusion. Sanctioning such behavior therefore goes beyond the technical issue of maintaining order in the stadium and enters the domain of protecting the integrity of competition and the reputation of football as a social institution.

An additional dimension is provided by the fact that sanctions in the area of racism and discrimination were not limited to financial penalties. Structural measures were also regularly imposed, such as partial stadium closures for subsequent matches and obligations to invest in anti-discrimination action plans. These decisions clearly indicate a shift from a purely repressive model toward a model of institutional correction. International bodies thereby signal that financial penalties alone are insufficient, and that federations are expected to demonstrate measurable and verifiable changes in practice, including preventive programs, education, and active risk management of discriminatory behavior. Collectively, these measures generate substantial material and reputational damage for the Croatian Football Federation and, by extension, for the Republic of Croatia.

From a strategic perspective, the figure of EUR 225,000 in sanctions related to racism and discrimination carries multiple implications. First, it confirms that this is a real and materially tangible risk, rather than an abstract reputational issue. Second, it demonstrates that international governing bodies apply a stricter sanctioning regime in cases involving discriminatory incidents. Third, it implies that repeated occurrences may lead to progressively more severe measures, including stadium closures or other restrictive interventions that directly affect match organization and revenue streams.

The analysis therefore confirms that racism and discrimination in the context of national team football constitute a specific category of regulatory risk—one that is simultaneously financial, operational, and reputational. Compared to other forms of supporter misconduct, their relative financial weight clearly demonstrates that the international football community treats such behavior as a priority issue.

For the purposes of this Strategy, these findings provide a strong empirical basis for positioning the fight against racism and discrimination as a core component of integrity management. This is not only a matter of safeguarding fundamental values and the dignity of participants, but also of managing risks that have direct financial and organizational consequences for the Croatian Football Federation. Accordingly, the Strategy must be

based on the premise that the prevention of discriminatory behavior is as important as stadium safety management, as the consequences of its absence are disproportionately large relative to the frequency of incidents.

In this sense, the empirical analysis of sanctions imposed on the senior national team represents not merely a retrospective review, but also a compelling argument for a proactive and systematic approach: strengthening preventive mechanisms, educating supporters, establishing clear communication standards of zero tolerance, and maintaining continuous cooperation with international bodies. Only such an approach can sustainably reduce financial and reputational burdens and ensure that national team football remains a space of sporting competition rather than a platform for discriminatory behavior.

VI. LEGAL FRAMEWORK AND COMPLIANCE

The fight against racism and discrimination in football does not rest on declarative statements of values, but on a firmly structured normative framework that binds both the state and sports organizations. The Croatian Football Federation (HNS), as an autonomous sports organization, operates within a multi-layered legal system: the constitutional principle of equality, general anti-discrimination legislation, criminal law protection of fundamental social values, specific security legislation governing sports competitions, and its own disciplinary system. The strategic document presented here does not constitute a parallel normative system, but rather an instrument for operationalizing existing legal standards within the specific context of football competition.

VI.1. Anti-Discrimination Law as the Foundation of Normative Obligation

The Anti-Discrimination Act establishes the normative foundation for understanding racism and discrimination in sport. Its purpose is not exclusively repressive; it affirms equality as an active principle of the social order. In this sense, sport—including football—becomes a domain in which equality is not presumed, but must be institutionally ensured.

The particular importance of this law for football lies in its broad conceptual framework. Discrimination is not limited to overt and direct differentiation, but also encompasses more subtle forms such as indirect discrimination, harassment, and incitement to discrimination. In the context of the stadium, harassment—defined as the creation of a hostile and degrading environment through racist chanting or symbolism—represents a paradigmatic violation of dignity. Racism is thus understood not merely as an individual insult, but as collectively produced exclusion.

The procedural architecture of the law further underscores the seriousness of this obligation. The rule on the reversal of the burden of proof in civil proceedings reflects the legislator's recognition of the structural asymmetry between the victim and the institution.

For the HNS and its member clubs, this means that protection against discrimination cannot be merely formal; it must be documented, demonstrable, and systematically implemented. In this regard, the Strategy represents an organizational response to a normative obligation that already exists within positive law.

VI.2. Criminal Law Protection: Social Condemnation of Hate

The Criminal Code establishes the highest level of legal response to racism and discrimination. Within this framework, particular importance is given to the concept of hate crime. When a criminal offence is committed out of hatred toward a person on the basis of their racial, national, ethnic, religious, or other identity, the law recognizes the heightened social danger of such a motive. This is not merely a violation of an individual, but a message directed at the entire community to which that person belongs. The stadium, as a highly symbolic and media-visible space, amplifies such messages and increases their destabilizing social effect.

An even more direct connection to sporting events is found in the criminal offence of public incitement to violence and hatred under Article 325 of the Criminal Code. Any public incitement to violence or hatred against a group or its members based on protected characteristics is criminalized. Importantly, the law does not require that violence actually occur; the act of public incitement alone is sufficient. This shifts criminal law intervention into the preventive sphere, before hatred escalates into physical violence.

In the context of football, this provision encompasses chants, banners, symbols, as well as digital communication associated with matches. The HNS Strategy must therefore be designed to enable the timely identification of situations that exceed the threshold of disciplinary misconduct and enter the domain of criminal liability. This affirms the principle of zero tolerance not as a rhetorical device, but as alignment with the criminal legal order of the Republic of Croatia.

VI.3. Special Security Regime for Sports Competitions

The Act on the Prevention of Disorder at Sports Competitions serves as a normative bridge between general criminal law and the specific dynamics of the stadium environment. Article 4 explicitly prohibits the introduction and display of banners, flags, or other items

that express or incite hatred or violence on racial, national, regional, or religious grounds, as well as the chanting of songs or messages of similar content.

This provision carries significant symbolic weight: the legislator acknowledges that symbols, slogans, and rituals are integral to supporter culture, while clearly drawing the line where such expressions become instruments of discrimination and incitement to hatred. Racism is thereby qualified as unlawful conduct of spectators, regardless of whether physical violence occurs.

For the HNS Strategy, this means that security mechanisms—from entry controls to public address announcements and the removal of inappropriate content—cannot be treated as discretionary organizational choices, but as the implementation of a legal mandate. In this sense, football organizations act as an extension of the legal order within the specific space of sporting competition.

VI.4. HNS Safety and Security Regulations: Institutionalization of Response

Within the autonomous normative system of the HNS, the 2022 Safety and Security Regulations operationalize legal obligations and translate them into concrete procedures. Racism is not treated as a marginal issue, but as a high-level security incident, particularly when it assumes a mass and continuous character.

Article 55 of the Regulations explicitly imposes the obligation to prevent racist behavior and prescribes intervention in cases involving racist banners or other forms of provocative conduct. Normative prohibitions are thus translated into a clear hierarchy of responsibilities for organizers, security services, and the police.

The integration of UEFA's Ten-Point Plan further aligns national practice with international standards and embeds the framework within the broader European regulatory context. The Strategy therefore relies not only on domestic law, but also on transnational standards of sporting integrity.

VI.5. HNS Disciplinary Regulations: Autonomy of Sporting Sanctions

The HNS Disciplinary Regulations represent an autonomous mechanism for the normative protection against racism. Article 87 explicitly prohibits public insult and discrimination on racial grounds, including words, actions, symbols, and ideological expressions that convey prejudice. Racism is thereby positioned as a violation of the fundamental principles of football organization.

Particular importance is attached to symbols recognized in international catalogues of prohibited signs, ensuring normative precision and legal predictability.

The possibility of match interruption and the imposition of sporting sanctions, including forfeiture, confirms that the protection of dignity and equality is an integral part of the integrity of competition, rather than an external addition to sporting results.

Systemic Coherence of the Legal Framework

The system for protecting against racism and discrimination in Croatian football is not fragmented, but layered and interconnected. Anti-discrimination law establishes the value foundation, criminal law defines the boundary of social condemnation, security legislation regulates conduct within the stadium, and autonomous sports law ensures swift and context-specific responses within the competition system.

The HNS Strategy does not introduce new rules, but ensures the consistent, systematic, and transparent implementation of existing norms. Its strategic role is to transform normative prohibitions into an institutional culture—one in which the stadium is not a space for tolerating hatred, but for affirming equality and the dignity of all participants in the game of football.

VII. DEFINITION OF STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

The Strategy establishes four key objectives:

1. To establish a functional institutional system for monitoring and response.
2. To implement comprehensive education for key stakeholders.
3. To introduce transparent and rapid operational protocols.
4. To strengthen public communication and trust in the system.

Each objective will be accompanied by measurable indicators, to be defined in the final section of the document.

VIII. PRINCIPLES OF IMPLEMENTATION

1. Consistency

The Strategy will be applied uniformly at all levels of competition, regardless of the status of a club or individual.

2. Proportionality

Sanctions and measures will be proportionate to the severity of the incident, while also taking into account the context and any recurrence of violations.

3. Transparency

The public will be informed in a timely manner about the initiation and outcomes of proceedings.

4. Inclusiveness

Clubs, coaches, parents, and players will be involved in the implementation process through education and dialogue.

IX. STRATEGIC VISION FOR FURTHER DEVELOPMENT

The objective is to establish a foundation that will enable:

- long-term cultural change,
- a stable system of prevention,
- continuous improvement of operational mechanisms.

X. SYSTEM OF INSTITUTIONAL IMPLEMENTATION

Equality and Integrity Commission – Operational Structure

The Equality and Integrity Commission functions as the central coordinating body. Its role is not only advisory, but also analytical and preventive.

X.1. Organizational Structure

The Commission consists of:

- a Chair (appointed by the HNS Executive Board),
- a legal expert in anti-discrimination law,
- a sports psychologist,
- a representative of professional clubs,
- a representative of amateur football,
- a digital security expert.

Administrative support is provided by the HNS General Secretariat.

X.2. Functional Units of Work

The work of the Commission in 2026 is organized through three functional units:

- **Analytical Unit** – processes data, monitors trends, and identifies risk patterns.

- **Educational Unit** – coordinates the development and implementation of educational modules.
- **Operational-Advisory Unit** – provides recommendations to the Disciplinary Commission and proposes preventive interventions.

X.3. Work Cycle

Each reported case follows this cycle:

1. Registration and categorization.
2. Assessment of severity (low, medium, high risk).
3. Recommendation of measures (educational, disciplinary, preventive).
4. Monitoring of implementation.

This ensures that no case remains without an institutional response.

XI. CLUB MECHANISMS AND INTERNAL ACCOUNTABILITY

1. Club Integrity Officer – Operational Role

The Club Integrity Officer becomes a key figure at the club level. The role is operational and preventive, not merely administrative.

In 2026, each professional club must:

- formally appoint an officer,
- ensure direct access to club management and the sporting director,
- define an annual activity plan.

XI.1. Concrete Work Plan of the Officer

During 2026, the officer must:

- organize at least two educational sessions for youth categories,
- conduct at least one workshop for parents,
- hold an internal meeting with the senior team on discrimination,
- submit semi-annual reports to the HNS.

XI.2. Internal Club Procedures

In the event of an incident within the locker room (e.g., a homophobic remark exceeding acceptable boundaries), the officer must:

- speak with the involved players,
- inform the coach,
- organize additional education if necessary,
- document the case and notify the HNS if the incident is more serious.

XII. EDUCATIONAL MODELS – STRUCTURED AND SCENARIO-BASED APPROACH

1. Coach Education – Detailed Content

Coach education is organized in HNS regional centers. The program lasts eight hours and includes:

Module 1 – Understanding Discrimination in Sport

Analysis of real cases from domestic and international practice, with discussion on the effectiveness of responses.

Module 2 – Simulation Scenarios

Example scenario:

During a youth match, a parent directs racist abuse at an opposing player. The coach must decide:

- whether to ignore the situation,
- whether to stop the match,
- how to protect the player.

Coaches work in groups to develop responses and compare them with recommended protocols.

Module 3 – Communication and Media Interaction

Coaches learn how to communicate after incidents, avoid relativization, and clearly condemn discrimination without escalation.

Education for Younger Age Groups (10–14)

Workshops are based on interactive methods.

Example activity:

Children receive scenario cards (e.g., “A player is mocked because of their origin”) and discuss emotions and possible responses.

The goal is not moralizing, but developing empathy and the ability to recognize injustice.

Education for Older Age Groups (15–18)

Focus is placed on peer responsibility. The concept of the “passive bystander” is analyzed, emphasizing how silence can sustain unacceptable behavior.

Education of Referees

The effective implementation of operational protocols in cases of discriminatory behavior largely depends on the competence and preparedness of referees. Referees represent the key operational level, as they are the only officials with immediate authority to act during a match.

The HNS will establish a structured education program covering:

- recognition of discriminatory behavior,
- application of the three-stage response model (warning, temporary suspension, match abandonment),
- communication with match delegates, organizers, and security services.

Additional focus will be placed on:

- understanding institutional responsibility,
- documentation of incidents,
- use of digital reporting systems.

Education will be delivered through seminars, licensing programs, and professional development, combining theory, case studies, and scenario simulations.

XIII. OPERATIONAL PROTOCOLS OF ACTION

1. Reporting System – Technical and Procedural Description

A digital platform enables:

- anonymous and identified reporting,
- uploading of evidence (video, photographs),
- tracking of case status.

Each report is automatically categorized by incident type, accelerating initial processing.

2. Match-Time Procedures – Three-Stage Model

The model is applied consistently:

Stage 1 – Warning

The referee stops play and a clear announcement is made via the public address system.

Stage 2 – Temporary Suspension

Players withdraw to the sidelines; the delegate documents the situation.

Stage 3 – Match Abandonment

If the behavior continues, the match is abandoned and disciplinary proceedings are initiated.

Each step must be recorded in the official match report.

XIV. CRISIS MANAGEMENT AND REPUTATIONAL RISK

1. Rapid Institutional Response

In the event of a serious incident (e.g., an international match involving racist chanting), the HNS activates a crisis team.

The crisis team consists of:

- the President of the HNS or an authorized representative,
- the spokesperson,
- a legal advisor,
- a representative of the Commission.

An official statement is issued within 24 hours.

2. Management of International Consequences

If the incident has international implications (UEFA, FIFA), the HNS promptly submits a preliminary report and emphasizes the measures undertaken. This demonstrates proactivity and reduces reputational risk.

3. Psychological Support for Victims

If a player or official is directly affected by an incident, the HNS, in cooperation with the club, provides psychological support and legal counseling.

XV. PREVENTIVE AND EDUCATIONAL MEASURES

The “Raspucavanje” Project – A Football-Theatre Approach to Combating Discrimination

The “Raspucavanje” project represents an innovative football-theatre program and preventive campaign implemented by the Croatian Football Federation in cooperation with the artistic organization Lutkarsko kazalište Lutonjica Tutorko.

This initiative, presented at the end of 2023, includes a theatre performance aimed at primary school children, thematically inspired by a dramatic moment in Croatian football history—the quarter-final of the FIFA World Cup in Qatar and Croatia’s victory over Brazil.

However, the essence of the project does not lie in sporting memory alone, but in its pedagogical and social message. Through dialogue, narrative, and characters, the performance introduces children to themes of acceptance of diversity, tolerance, and inclusion, with a particular focus on recognizing and combating racism, discrimination, and stereotypes.

The performance addresses social misconceptions that often develop at an early age and may later influence interpersonal relationships. Using the symbolism of a football match and children’s experiences, it illustrates the consequences of ethnic, national, gender, or other stereotypes, while encouraging critical thinking and empathy among young audiences.

The project is promoted as a preventive campaign, aiming to connect sport and culture as platforms for promoting positive social values. The involvement of well-known Croatian footballers (through video messages or in person) further reinforces the message of inclusion and support for combating discriminatory attitudes.

The premiere was held at the Trešnjevka Cultural Centre, with the participation of representatives of the HNS, the cultural sector, and other relevant stakeholders, and the performance is now organized in primary schools across Croatia.

Through this program, the HNS leverages the power of sport and storytelling to influence children during their formative years, integrating football themes with key social issues. The “Raspucavanje” initiative is therefore not merely a cultural project, but an educational instrument within the broader framework of preventing racism and discrimination, fully aligned with the Federation’s strategic objectives in the areas of equality, inclusion, and non-violence.

The Theatre Play “Luka” – A Value-Based Narrative Through the Biography of an Athlete

The theatre play “Luka,” dedicated to the life and career of Croatian footballer Luka Modrić, represents another example of linking football, culture, and social education to promote positive values.

The project is based on a biographical narrative—from growing up in wartime conditions, through perseverance despite adversity, to professional and personal development—using sport as a medium for conveying universal messages of resilience, hard work, humility, and respect.

The performance is primarily aimed at children and young people, using theatrical expression to present the life story of one of Croatia's most successful athletes as a model of character development, self-discipline, and responsibility. The focus is not solely on sporting success, but on values—the ability to overcome prejudice, face challenges, and maintain personal integrity under pressure.

Within the context of the strategy to combat racism and discrimination, the play “Luka” has both preventive and formative functions. Modrić's biography, which includes experiences of displacement, marginalization, and vulnerability, provides a basis for discussions on empathy, inclusion, and respect for diversity. Football is thus presented not merely as a competitive sport, but as a social platform shaping the attitudes and values of younger generations.

By incorporating such cultural-educational initiatives into its broader framework, the Croatian Football Federation affirms that combating racism and discrimination is not based solely on sanctions and normative mechanisms, but also on the active promotion of positive role models. The play “Luka” thus becomes part of the preventive infrastructure—a mechanism of early education and value formation that reduces the long-term risk of discriminatory behavior in both sport and society.

XVI. PREVENTIVE WORK WITH SUPPORTER GROUPS

The Strategy envisages the organization of an annual forum with representatives of supporter groups.

The forum has three objectives:

- to enable open dialogue on key issues,
- to define minimum standards of conduct,
- to agree on joint campaigns.

The emphasis is on partnership, accompanied by a clear message that violations of rules carry consequences.

XVII. ORGANIZATIONAL MODEL OF IMPLEMENTATION

1. Operational Management of the Strategy

The implementation of the Strategy in 2026 requires a clearly defined hierarchy of responsibilities and a precise allocation of tasks. In order to avoid formal but non-operational implementation, the HNS establishes a governance model comprising three levels:

- **Strategic level** – the HNS Executive Board: adopts the Strategy, oversees its implementation, and reviews the annual report.
- **Coordinating level** – the Equality and Integrity Commission: manages implementation operationally, analyzes data, and provides recommendations.
- **Implementation level** – clubs, coaches, delegates, and club integrity officers: responsible for the day-to-day application of measures.

To ensure system effectiveness, a **quarterly reporting cycle** is introduced in 2026. Every three months, the Commission submits a concise operational report to the Executive Board, including:

- number of reports received,
- types of incidents,
- status of proceedings,
- identified risks.

This ensures continuous oversight rather than reliance on annual retrospective review.

2. Regional Coordination

Given the territorial structure of Croatian football, regional football associations play an important role in implementation. During 2026, the HNS will organize regional coordination meetings with the objectives of:

- harmonizing practices,
- exchanging experiences,
- identifying specific regional challenges.

Regional associations are required to appoint a contact person for communication with the HNS Commission.

XVIII. FINANCIAL FRAMEWORK AND SUSTAINABILITY OF IMPLEMENTATION

1. Rationalized Budget for 2026

The Strategy for 2026 has been designed in accordance with the realistic budgetary capacities of the HNS. The total estimated cost of implementation amounts to approximately **60,000**, distributed across the following categories:

- **Educational programs (20,000 EUR)**
Covers the development of materials, engagement of educators, organization of regional workshops, and logistical costs, with an emphasis on quality and efficiency.
- **Digital platform and IT maintenance (20,000 EUR)**
Includes development and maintenance of the reporting system, security upgrades, and technical support.
- **Commission operations and administrative support (10,000 EUR)**
Covers expert fees, administrative assistance, and analytical tools.
- **Communication campaign (8,000 EUR)**
Includes production of video materials, visual design, and media distribution.
- **Evaluation and contingency costs (2,000 EUR)**
Allocated for data analysis, external evaluation, and unforeseen interventions.

2. Sources of Funding

Funding is secured through:

- the regular HNS budget,
- UEFA development funds,
- applications to EU funding programs,
- partnerships and sponsorship agreements.

XIX. COMMUNICATION STRATEGY AND PUBLIC PERCEPTION

Communication in the field of combating racism and discrimination is neither an auxiliary activity nor a reactive measure. It is an integral component of institutional risk management and a key mechanism for building trust. In football—where emotions are intense and media exposure is high—the manner of communication is as important as the measures themselves.

Every institutional decision carries a communication dimension. The absence of a clear response, the relativization of issues, or inconsistency in public discourse may result in long-term reputational damage. Conversely, timely, well-reasoned, and normatively firm communication reinforces the seriousness of a zero-tolerance policy. The

communication strategy is therefore not separate from operational measures, but represents their public articulation.

The primary objective of communication is to reinforce the perception of the Croatian Football Federation as an institution that responds consistently and without exception to racism and discrimination. Communication must be proactive rather than purely defensive. Its role is to shape attitudes, not merely to respond to criticism.

Accordingly, communication policy is structured around three levels of action:

- **prevention** – continuous promotion of respect and equality,
- **transparency** – clear and timely communication on proceedings,
- **international credibility** – alignment with UEFA and FIFA regulatory expectations.

Effective communication requires an understanding of different audiences. Supporters must clearly understand that discriminatory behavior is not part of supporter culture, but a deviation from it. At the same time, communication must avoid creating a perception of collective guilt, distinguishing between the majority who comply with the rules and the minority who violate them.

For players and coaches, communication has an empowering function. As public figures and role models, their statements significantly influence social attitudes. Clubs are approached as partners, but with clear emphasis on organizational responsibility. The media are recognized as key intermediaries, making timely and accurate information essential for responsible reporting.

Communication with international bodies must be formal, documented, and evidence-based. Every serious incident requires a structured report demonstrating measures taken and preventive actions implemented. This reflects institutional seriousness and reduces regulatory pressure.

Value-Based Communication Narrative

The communication strategy must be grounded in a stable value-based narrative. At its core is the principle that respect is an integral part of the game, and that the integrity of competition includes the protection of the dignity of all participants. Racism and discrimination must not be portrayed as inevitable by-products of sport, but as behaviors fundamentally incompatible with its core values.

Consistent repetition of clear messages shapes public perception over time. Communication thus becomes a tool of cultural change, not merely a mechanism of institutional defense.

Stadium and Digital Communication

The stadium is not only a venue for competition, but also a highly symbolic public space. Visual messaging, public address announcements, and in-match campaigns serve a preventive function by reminding spectators of acceptable standards of behavior. Communication in this environment must be concise, clear, and normatively unambiguous.

The digital environment requires a distinct approach. Social media platforms have the capacity to rapidly amplify incidents and shape public opinion within a very short timeframe.

Crisis Communication as a Governance Mechanism

In the event of a serious incident, a structured crisis communication model is activated. The first step is a rapid internal assessment of facts and risk level. This is followed by an official statement that must be clear, without relativization and without delay. Communication then continues through updates on the progress and outcome of proceedings.

Balancing speed and accuracy is essential for maintaining credibility. Premature statements without verified facts may create additional risks, while a lack of response may generate a perception of tolerance. Institutional reactions must therefore be timely and grounded in verified information.

Long-Term Reputation and Measurability of Impact

Communication is not a one-time campaign, but an ongoing process. The long-term objective is to build a reputation of an organization that acts preventively, responds consistently, and invests in education. Such a reputation reduces the likelihood of repeated incidents and strengthens public trust.

The effectiveness of the communication strategy is evaluated through analysis of media coverage, public perception, the speed of institutional response, and the reduction of recurring communication crises of the same type. Communication thus becomes an integral part of the system of measurable performance indicators of the Strategy.

XX. KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS (KPIs)

To ensure measurable outcomes of the Strategy, the following indicators are defined for 2026:

- 100% of professional clubs have appointed a Club Integrity Officer.
- 90% of licensed coaches have completed the education program.
- Initial processing time for reports reduced to a maximum of 72 hours.
- All reported incidents receive a formal response.
- At least 75% of education participants rate the program as useful.

Qualitative indicators include:

- players' perception of safety,
- reduction of repeated incidents within the same clubs,
- positive media perception of institutional responses.

XXI. EVALUATION AND REVIEW OF THE STRATEGY

At the end of 2026, the Commission will prepare a comprehensive evaluation report, including:

- statistical analysis of incidents,
- analysis of the effectiveness of sanctions,
- review of educational activities,
- recommendations for 2027.

If necessary, an external expert will be engaged to conduct an independent evaluation in order to ensure objectivity.

XXII. ANNEXES – OPERATIONAL FLOWS

Annex A – Incident Reporting Flow

1. Submission of a report via the digital platform.
2. Automatic confirmation of receipt.
3. Preliminary analysis (within 72 hours).
4. Club response (within 7 days).
5. Recommendation of the Commission.
6. Decision of the Disciplinary Commission.
7. Publication of the decision.

Annex B – Match-Time Procedures

1. Identification of the incident.
2. Notification of the referee.
3. Public address warning.
4. Temporary suspension (if necessary).
5. Match abandonment (if behavior continues).
6. Delegate's report.

Annex C – Role of the Club Integrity Officer

- Organization of educational activities.
- Recording of reports.
- Cooperation with the HNS.
- Regular reporting.

OBITELJ

FAMILY



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