

MICHAEL VAN PRAAG

FOOTBALL FOR EVERYONE



SUMMARY OF THE PROGRAMME



1. DEVELOPMENT OF FOOTBALL

- A. World Cup
- B. Youth development
- C. Arbitrage

2. SUPPORT

- A. Regional centres
- B. Finance

3. NORMALISATION

- A. FIFA Back to basics

1. DEVELOPMENT OF FOOTBALL



SUMMARY

World Cup

As of 2026, the number of countries participating in the World Cup will be extended from 32 to 40. Besides guaranteeing the placement of the host country, the reigning world champion will also have the right to defend its title. In addition, each confederation will permanently be given an extra ticket. A ticket will also be available for a second organising country if there is one – this is an option which I explicitly wish to mention. If there is no second organising country, the last available places will be decided in playoffs. In the current system, there is a right to ‘half’ tickets. I would like to talk to the presidents of the confederations about developing a proper and fair system.

If everyone agrees, we can also look at extending the number of participating countries for the 2022 World Cup.

The importance of youth training – train the trainer

FIFA is going back to basics. Young people are the future, which is why I want to invest worldwide in training youth trainers to reinforce the foundations of our sport. An international training academy will ensure that youth trainers of football associations will be trained and certified to maintain, develop and transfer knowledge, so that talent all over the world is given a chance.

Heads of national youth training programmes should be given a much more prominent position in the football pyramid. I also want to work with the confederations towards creating an international standard for the certification of youth training programmes and towards awarding an annual prize for the best international youth training programme

Arbitrage

Referees are essential to football. FIFA has high standards for its referees, but at the same time training and coaching is fragmented over the various confederations. Under my presidency, a central referees’ academy will be established, which will set and promote a world standard. FIFA wants to invest in exchange programmes – mainly during the training phase – and support the activities of football associations and confederations.

Furthermore, we owe it to our referees and supporters to apply technical innovations in the sport more widely, but only where this is feasible in sporting, technical and financial terms. FIFA cannot and is unwilling to do this alone. Under my presidency, however, the organisation will endeavour to lead the way to make change possible, by setting up a development fund project, for example.

2. SUPPORT



BEKNOPT

Regional centres

The world football association must invest in the game. In close cooperation with the confederations, FIFA will provide as much support to football in the regions as possible. FIFA will go out into the world, rather than wait for the world to come to Zürich. That is why I want to set up 6 to 8 so-called regional FIFA embassies in consultation with the confederations within the next 4 years. Every continent has the right to at least 1 regional support centre where our expertise can be made accessible in partnership with the confederations and shared with the people who work so hard for this great sport every day of their lives. Individual football associations will also be able to benefit by taking part in the activities of the embassy, which is financially supported by FIFA.

Finance

FIFA needs to get back to its roots. This applies to its spending too – we will start investing primarily in football again. That is why I want to make the following three things happen in the next four years:

1. Football association funding will increase from \$250,000 to \$1,000,000 per year.
2. A separate budget will be set aside for improvements in the infrastructure of the football associations which need it.
3. The prize money for participants of the World Cup and Confederations Cup will be increased. At the same time, we will reduce the costs for participants, because FIFA plans to buy and organise its own accommodation and sporting facilities. I feel that participating countries should bear less financial risk. To achieve this, we will create a better insurance module for players, not just during the World Cup but also for the U20 and U18 qualifiers and tournaments.

These three promises are backed by a substantiated and solid financial plan. I know from experience that it would not be realistic to promise more than this. If I did, it would financially undermine FIFA, which would not be in the interests of the football associations.

3. NORMALISATION



BEKNOPT

FIFA Back to basics

FIFA needs to go back to basics; it needs to go back to acting normally. FIFA is all too familiar with the term normalisation. When a football association finds itself in trouble, often in political difficulties, FIFA sets up a normalisation committee to resolve the situation. As president of the organisation, I want to chair a “normalisation committee for FIFA” in the next four years. This will be a transition period for the generation which succeeds me in 2019. I want to introduce normalisation processes in two areas:

1. Governance:

- A. the governance structure of FIFA needs to become more professional and more effective. As president, I will set up a so-called ‘presidents’ board’, with the presidents of all the confederations. This board will help take decisions on important matters and in doing so, give FIFA and its structure its credibility back;
- B. the current situation in which the executive committee has 25 members plus 2 co-opted members is the maximum in my view;
- C. transparency in the decision-making process: under my leadership, the ExCo (executive committee) will publish and explain decisions after every meeting.

2. Transparency:

- A. to start with, I will publish my own remuneration;
- B. in addition, I will publish all of FIFA’s spending and ensure it is transparent;
- C. I will stipulate in my contract that I will only hold the position of president of FIFA for a single four-year term – a transition period for the next generation.

PROGRAMME



1. DEVELOPMENT OF FOOTBALL

- A. World Cup
- B. Youth development
- C. Arbitrage

2. SUPPORT

- A. Regional centres
- B. Finance

3. NORMALISATION

- A. FIFA Back to basics

4. WHAT DOES VAN PRAAG THINK OF...

- A. Sepp Blatter
- B. Women's football
- C. Artificial turf
- D. Match fixing
- E. FIFA Ranking
- F. Human rights
- G. Football for everyone
- H. Equal opportunities in coaching, as well as in the boardroom
- I. Garcia report
- J. Players' / club autonomy
- K. Solidarity in the football world
- L. Football agents and youth player transfers

5. MICHAEL VAN PRAAG

1. DEVELOPMENT OF FOOTBALL



Expansion of the World Cup

As of 2026, the number of countries participating in the World Cup will be extended from 32 to 40. Besides a guaranteed ticket for the host country, the reigning world champion will be given the right to defend its title. In addition, each confederation will permanently be given an extra ticket. A ticket will also be available for a second organising country if there is one – this is an option which I explicitly wish to mention. If there is no second organising country, the last available places will be decided in playoffs. In the current system, there is a right to 'half' tickets. I would like to talk to the presidents of the confederations about developing a proper and fair system.

If everyone agrees, we can also consider extending the number of participating countries for the 2022 World Cup.

Details

The development of football throughout the world would be better served by a larger World Cup competition, with proportionally more countries from outside Europe (and South America). When FIFA was founded in 1904, it was precisely for that reason - to boost the popularity and speed up the development of the game. So this step is just as logical as it is necessary. To be more specific, this means that the number of participants will be extended by 8 places to a total of 40. The world champion will be given the right to defend its title and each confederation will be permanently given 1 extra ticket. The last ticket will be available for a second organising country if there is one – this is an option I explicitly wish to mention. If this is not the case, this ticket will be decided in the playoffs.

If everyone agrees, we can also consider extending the number of participating countries for the 2022 World Cup.

Furthermore, FIFA will be more involved in allocating host cities and the distances participants have to travel to play matches. It cannot be right that some countries have to travel thousands of kilometres for a match in the group stage, whereas another country hardly has to travel at all. This is not just unreasonable in sporting and financial terms, it also makes it almost impossible for fans to support their teams. In addition, this kind of inefficient planning also has an impact on nature and the environment, which is not acceptable in the present day.

Finally, the potential World Cup legacy will carry more weight in the BID procedure. We do not want to build any more white elephants and awarding the competition must be accompanied by long-lasting objectives.

1. DEVELOPMENT OF FOOTBALL



Youth development (youth trainers' academy)

FIFA is going back to basics. Young people are the future, which is why I want to invest worldwide in training youth trainers to reinforce the foundations of our sport. An international training academy will ensure that youth trainers of football associations are trained and certified to maintain, develop and transfer knowledge to ensure that talent all over the world is given a chance.

Heads of national youth training programmes should be given a much more prominent position in the football pyramid. I also want to work with the confederations towards establishing an international standard for the certification of youth training programmes and towards awarding an annual prize for the best international youth training programme.

Arbitrage (international referees' academy)

Referees are essential to football. FIFA has high standards for its referees, but at the same time training and coaching is fragmented over the various confederations. Under my presidency, a central referees' academy will be established, which will set and promote a world standard. FIFA wants to invest in exchange programmes – mainly in the training phase – and support the activities of football associations and confederations.

Furthermore, we owe it to our referees and supporters to apply technical innovations in the sport more widely, but only where this is feasible in sporting, technical and financial terms. FIFA cannot and is unwilling to do this alone. Under my presidency, however, it will endeavour to lead the way to make change possible, by setting up a development fund project, for example.

Details

Besides a special referees' academy, we also want to make the arbitrage of matches easier. With all the cameras present in the stadiums and the faster pace of the football matches themselves, it is impossible to expect the 'men in black' to see everything. Using technology will not change the game.

Progress and innovation are nothing to be afraid of. They should inspire us to continue working towards a fairer and more accessible sport. In doing so, we should also listen to the wishes of the fans, trainers and players.

1. DEVELOPMENT OF FOOTBALL



In large stadiums, it is impossible to explain that everyone, except the referee, can see on a smartphone or tablet whether a ball was over the line, a goal was offside, or whether there was handball in the penalty area. We owe it to our referees and fans to apply technology more widely in the sport, but only where this is technically and financially feasible. We want to see FIFA playing a leading role and at least introducing technology into qualifiers and final tournaments. The video referee contributes to a fairer competition and is an important addition to counteract unavoidable human errors. Above all else, it will strengthen the position of our referees.

2. SUPPORT



Regional centres

The world football association must invest in the game. In close cooperation with the confederations, FIFA will provide as much support to football in the regions as possible. FIFA will go out into the world, rather than wait for the world to come to Zürich. That is why I want to set up 6 to 8 so-called regional FIFA embassies in consultation with the confederations within the next 4 years. Every continent has the right to at least 1 regional support centre where our expertise can be made accessible in partnership with the confederations and shared with the people who work so hard for this great sport every day of their lives. Individual football associations will also be able to benefit by taking part in the activities of the embassy, which is financially supported by FIFA.

Details

We must encourage football associations to share their knowledge. This will be good for the development of the sport.

FIFA should be more than just a collection of individual football associations. The countries are in charge. FIFA should facilitate the wishes of these countries, whilst being a service centre to help the countries realise their sporting dreams. FIFA should serve the countries and act accordingly. In close cooperation with the confederations, we want to respond to any request made by a national football association within 24 hours. Its experience and expertise should be provided to the countries and confederations as a service.

Finance

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2. SUPPORT



These three promises are backed by a substantiated and solid financial plan. I know from experience that it would not be realistic to promise more than this. If I did, it would financially undermine FIFA, which would not be in the interests of the football associations.

FIFA earns a lot of money and it also spends money easily. FIFA should invest in football, not in expensive management, gifts and promotional films costing millions. That is why the money must be distributed differently. FIFA should not just spend money on the GOAL project, it should also invest in more countries which need the money. In Africa, Asia and Oceania, football is still developing rapidly. However, there is not enough support from FIFA. We will change that.

FIFA must also be a reliable partner. So any promises which have been made to countries will be fulfilled. In the future, the costs of FIFA will also be drastically reduced, while investment in football will increase. Staff and management costs can be lowered substantially, as can the soaring costs of the organisation of world championships. The organisation must be aware that every penny it spends comes out of someone else's pocket.

I will never allow extravagantly expensive films or promotion videos to be made for FIFA – like last year's film which cost an astounding 20 million euros. Our calling card, our promotional campaign will be the beautiful game all over the world. We are football. And you do not need expensive promotional films or overrated glossies when you have such a great product.

The infrastructural support we give football associations will give a massive boost to the game in many upcoming football countries. As soon after taking office as possible, I want to draw up a top 50 football associations needing support.

At the same time, the top 40 football countries will benefit from a certain amount of profit after taking part in the World Cup. We will achieve this by removing many of the middlemen and constructions and by working towards a situation in which FIFA facilitates the accommodation and travel arrangements of participating football associations during tournaments. We will also set a maximum on the price of hotel rooms during the BID procedures.

The players' bonus for clubs will be increased in the period 2015-2019. This will also apply to the players' insurance arranged by FIFA.

Finally, I would like to say that we will apply international accounting standards.

3. NORMALISATION



FIFA Back to basics

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- C. I will stipulate in my contract that I will only hold the position of president of FIFA for four years – a transition period for the next generation.

Details

When you hold ethical standards high, you must allow others to examine whether you apply the same standards to yourself. Situations like those we saw in 2014 in which reports criticising our standards were censored are reprehensible and unacceptable. What authority do we have when we bury our heads in the sand like ostriches at the first sign of internal criticism? A culture of secrecy does not reflect my view of FIFA.

The same openness should be the guiding principle when it comes to the sources of FIFA’s income and its internal and external expenditure. If anyone studies the annual accounts of our football association, they should immediately see where the money goes. Our annual reports must be more detailed and legible.

3. NORMALISATION



Increased transparency also means that budgets within FIFA must be published, including the remuneration of the president himself. Once you are afraid to reveal how much salary you earn, you will have difficulty justifying it.

Transparency also means that you must be able to hold people to account. The executive committee represents us as football associations. You should therefore also be able to check what they have done. For this reason, the minutes of meetings should be published and sent to the members, at the very least.

Ultimately, everybody all over the world must be able to see what we are doing. After all, we have the best job in the world: working for football. We will start by always live streaming all our press conferences via the FIFA website.

By establishing a “presidents’ board”, I want to look at the requirements we set for our executives. For example whether someone must hold active office in their own football association in order to sit on the ExCo. And whether or not it is desirable to introduce a maximum age or maximum number of terms in office. I have my own ideas on the matter, but I do not want to impose my will. I want to discuss this matter with the six presidents of the confederations and see how we can create a credible structure.

4. WHAT DOES VAN PRAAG THINK OF...



Sepp Blatter

As president of FIFA, I would like to see my predecessor Sepp Blatter stay on as 'active honorary president'. In this capacity, Mr Blatter can build on his legacy for the football world: The Sepp Blatter Foundation, a foundation which helps disadvantaged children all over the world.

Women's football

FIFA has achieved a lot in recent years. The world football association deserves a great deal of praise, particularly for its work for and attention to women's football. I will continue the good work.

Artificial turf

In my opinion, whether or not matches should be played on artificial turf is a matter for individual competitions to decide. The possibilities already exist; football associations can decide for themselves. I will explore whether the costs attached to certification can be reduced. People can expect FIFA to monitor the development of artificial turf and to continue setting high standards.

Match fixing

Big business means that a lot of money can also be made on the periphery of the sport. Recently the Netherlands was also shaken by reports on match fixing and the manipulation of competition results by gambling syndicates. Match fixing is a disease at the root of our sport. If the outcome of a match has already been determined before the kick-off, supporters – both in the stadium and viewers at home – might as well find something better to do. There is no place for match fixers in our sport. FIFA should play a leading coordinating role to combat and eradicate match fixing, so that it is nipped in the bud.

FIFA Ranking

The FIFA ranking system is also ready for an overhaul. Fans currently see shifts in the ranking which no one with any common sense understands. I want to lead the way in the next four years to make this ranking clearer, fairer and more transparent.

Human rights

There should be more attention to human rights in FIFA's statutes. I stand for a world football association which applies the highest ethical and moral standards. This means that FIFA itself must set a good example, as well as ensuring that these standards play a key role in the awarding of large tournaments.

Football for everyone

Football for everyone, both on and off the pitch, has been one of my key priorities for many years. In my opinion, football is a great game for everyone and the world of football can be used to act as a catalyst for change in the fight against discrimination.

4. WHAT DOES VAN PRAAG THINK OF...



Equal opportunities in coaching, as well as in the boardroom

My goal is to increase the representation of women at the highest executive and operational levels. In addition, we will take steps to combat discrimination in coaching and in management positions at the highest level in football. I want to roll out the principle of 'football for everyone' worldwide.

Garcia report

When you hold ethical standards high, you must allow others to examine whether you apply the same standards to yourself. Situations like those we saw in 2014 in which reports criticising our standards were censored are reprehensible and unacceptable. What authority do we have when we bury our heads in the sand like ostriches at the first sign of internal criticism? One of my first deeds as president of FIFA will be to ensure the much-discussed Garcia report is made public. A culture of secrecy does not reflect my view of FIFA.

Players' / club autonomy

Clubs and players must be independent. It is both in their own interests and in the interests of the competition. Therefore financial constructions which have the sole purpose of making a profit should be discontinued. However, there are constructions that do contribute to the development of clubs, players and training programmes. In these cases, financial constructions must be possible, providing they adhere to strict conditions with regard to the autonomy of players and clubs.

Solidarity in the football world

The rich clubs have the most money to spend, while poorer clubs are fighting to keep their heads above water. This applies at both club and national level. You can compare it to the familiar debate concerning the Champions League and the Europa League. Clubs want to see more money in the competition in which they themselves are taking part.

It is true that, compared to the old days, there is more money in African, Asian and South American football. However, the gap between their competition and European football is becoming wider and wider. This is partly due to the fact that young talent is whisked away by the big money before they are even old enough to take a driving test. This is made worse by the way in which television and sponsor money is distributed. I want to start talking to representatives from all the football associations about how we can tackle this problem, how we can demonstrate more solidarity with each other. I believe we can all benefit from smaller differences in the world of football and that this will be good for football in general.

4. WHAT DOES VAN PRAAG THINK OF...



Football agents and youth player transfers

We also need to work towards better regulation with regard to football agents and youth player transfers. It is good that footballers are represented by someone who has their best interests at heart, so that players can focus on the sport. However, agents are increasingly coming between the player and the club or they are trading underage children in ways that are sometimes inhumane. For this reason, I propose a quality trademark for football agents. Not to get in the way of their work, but to give fair agents room to do their jobs without being overtaken left, right and centre by unscrupulous agents and to guarantee that they have the know-how they need.

All too often our football stars are regarded as mere commodities. Nowadays there are football agents and investment companies which own – or partly own – players. Obviously players have contracts with their employer with obligations, but the whole idea that there are people who own footballers is hideous. Under my leadership, FIFA will do everything it can to limit the power of football agents and investors. I also want to do what I can to put an end to the practice of dragging young talent from one top club to the next. It is debateable whether that it is in the interest of a young footballer to be exported to the other side of the world at the age of 13, only to end up in an academy with 50 other young talented players. Incidentally, it is cheaper for top clubs to bring 50 of these young lads into the large Europe competitions than it would be to buy 2 or 3 of them when they are 23. But is it in the interest of the development of the young footballer and the club which has invested in them for so many years? I do not think so and I will do all I can to limit this practice of dragging children away from their homes.

5. MICHAEL VAN PRAAG



President of the Royal Netherlands Football Association (KNVB) and UEFA executive committee member

Michael van Praag was born in Amsterdam on 28 September 1947. Having been a KNVB referee for 16 years, he then became a member of the referees' committee and the commission of inquiry for what was then Amsterdam district of the KNVB.

As managing director of a retail chain with many outlets in airports in various continents, he travelled all over the world and came into contact with many different cultures.

Michael van Praag had the honour of being chairman of AFC Ajax for thirteen years. For three of these years, he was also a member of the KNVB Professional Football Board. Under his chairmanship, Ajax won several major trophies at home and abroad, but the highlight of his career at Ajax was winning the Champions League in 1995.

In 1995, Michael van Praag also joined O'Neill's Board of Directors. Three years later, he became president.

Following his tenure at Ajax, he was asked to become chairman of the Board of Directors at the Dutch Premier League (Eredivisie) by the company Eredivisie CV. He fulfilled this position between 2003 and 2008. As such, he was also member of the Supervisory Board for the KNVB's executive. In addition, Mr Van Praag was a board member of the More than Football Foundation (Stichting Meer dan Voetbal), a foundation set up by professional football organisations, which focused on bringing forces together for a better society.

On 27 August 2008, Michael van Praag was elected president of the Royal Netherlands Football Association (KNVB), succeeding Jeu Sprengers who died earlier that year.

From 1998 until the present day, Michael van Praag has been active within UEFA. In the years around the turn of the millennium, he was a member of the Taskforce 2000. At the beginning of the noughties, he was a member of the Club Competitions Committee for two years and he later chaired the Stadium & Security Committee, which meant he was often a match delegate during this three-year period.

5. MICHAEL VAN PRAAG



Since being elected onto the UEFA Executive Committee in 2009, he has also acted as chairman of the Club Competitions Committee and vice-chairman of the HatTrick Committee. In January 2013, he joined the TEAM Marketing board on behalf of UEFA. In addition, he represents UEFA in Brussels as chairman of the European Task Force.

Michael Van Praag lives with his wife and daughter in the Dutch town of Aerdenhout. In his free time, he plays piano, drums, vibraphone and tuba. He currently also owns a theatre production company.

1963–1979	KNVB referee
1980–2006	Managing director and owner of an international Airport Duty Free retail chain
1989–2003	Chairman of AFC Ajax Amsterdam
1995–1998	Commissioner on the Board of Directors at O’Neill Shoes Europe
1998–2007	President of O’Neill Europe
1998–2001	Member of UEFA Taskforce 2000
2000–2002	Member of UEFA Club Competitions Committee
2003–2008	Chairman of the Board of Directors for the Dutch Premier League at Eredivisie CV
2003–2008	Member of the Royal Netherlands Football Association (KNVB) Supervisory Board
2003–2008	Member of the Royal Netherlands Football Association (KNVB) executive
2004–2007	Chairman of the UEFA Stadium & Security Committee and Match Delegate
2008–today	President of the Royal Netherlands Football Association (KNVB)
2009–today	UEFA Executive Committee
2009–today	Chairman of the UEFA Club Competitions Committee
2009–today	Vice chairman of the UEFA HatTrick Committee
2012–today	Board member of the Johan Cruyff Foundation
2013–today	TEAM Marketing board member
2013–today	Chairman of the UEFA European Task Force



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