

Football in Albania

Football is the most popular sport in Albania, both at a participatory and spectator level.^{[1][2]} The sport is governed by the Football Association of Albania (FSHF) (Albanian: *Federata Shqiptare e Futbollit*).

History of football in Albania

Football arrived in Albania at the beginning of the 20th century. The first recorded match was between students at a Christian mission in Shkodër. The game increased in popularity and by 1919 the first club, KS Vllaznia Shkodër, had been founded. In 1920 SK Tirana was founded. Other towns and cities followed suit and on 6 June 1930 the Football Association of Albania (FSHF) was established. The association became a member of football's governing body FIFA in 1932, and joined the European governing body UEFA in 1954 as a founding member.

A domestic championship began in 1930 with 6 teams. KF Tirana were the inaugural winners. They, together with such sides are KS Dinamo Tirana, Vllaznia Shkodër and FK Partizani, have continued to dominate the Albanian scene until the present day. The years following World War II saw a new political order, with the introduction of a communist system which had a positive impact as far as the game's appeal was concerned. Football was used as popular entertainment. Its infrastructure grew stronger as the game was organized and developed in state enterprises, schools, villages and towns. New institutional clubs were founded such as Partizani Tirana (1946) and Dinamo Tirana (1950) (governed respectively by the Ministry of Defence and the Ministry of Internal Affairs).^[3] Until 1990 they were privileged in relation to the other clubs as they were able to get players from other teams.

From 1991, there were crucial political and economic changes that had a tremendous effect on the nation, as the centralized economy and political system came to an end. The result for the country's footballers was an opportunity to play their trade on foreign fields. Neighbouring Greece and the Balkan states were popular destinations for players who were good enough to go abroad.

League and Cup system

The Albanian league is split into 4 divisions. The Albanian Superliga (Albanian: *Kategoria Superiore*) was formed in 1930. In 1998 it took its current name and is the highest level of Albanian Football. It currently comprises 10 teams. The Superliga displaced the First Division (Albanian: *Kategoria e Parë*) as the top division, and this is now Albanian Football's second tier. Below this is Second Division (Albanian: *Kategoria e Dytë*), which is divided geographically into A & B.

The winners of the league are entitled to compete in the UEFA Champions League at the First qualifying round stage. The runners-up are entitled to compete in the UEFA Europa League, also at the First qualifying round stage. KF Tirana hold the record for Albanian league titles, with 24.

Football in Albania	
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The <u>Arena Kombëtare</u> during inauguration match between Albania and France	
Country	Albania
Governing body	<u>Albanian Football Association</u>
National team(s)	<u>Men's national team</u>
National competitions	
<u>Albanian Supercup</u>	
Club competitions	
<u>Kategoria Superiore</u>	
International competitions	
<u>Champions League</u>	
<u>Europa League</u>	
<u>Europa Conference League</u>	
<u>Super Cup</u>	
<u>FIFA Club World Cup</u>	
<u>FIFA World Cup</u> (National Team)	
<u>European Championship</u> (National Team)	
<u>UEFA Nations League</u> (National Team)	

Level	League(s)/Division(s)
1	<u>Kategoria Superiore</u> <i>10 clubs</i>
	↓↑ 2-3 clubs
2	<u>Kategoria e Parë</u> <i>12 clubs</i>
	↓↑ 2-4 clubs
3	<u>Kategoria e Dytë</u> <i>23 clubs + 3 Reserve teams divided in 2 series of 13 clubs</i>
	↓ 2-3 clubs ↑ 2-3 clubs
4	<u>Kategoria e Tretë</u> <i>8 clubs</i>

Cup competitions

The Albanian Football Cup (Albanian: *Kupa e Shqipërisë*), which is the country's main knockout cup competition, was established in 1939. The winners are entitled to compete in the UEFA Europa League, at the First qualifying round stage. The most successful team in this competition, KF Partizani Tirana, has won the cup 15 times.

The **Albanian Supercup**, which started in 1989, is a single match played at the beginning of the season between the winners of the Superliga and the Albanian Cup. The most successful team in this competition, KF Tirana, has won 9 times.

Albanian football clubs in European competitions

Albanian football clubs have a long history in European football. The most successful clubs in the past were KF Tirana and Flamurtari FC as well as FK Partizani Tirana. In recent history KF Skënderbeu Korçë were quite successful in the UEFA Europa League.

European Cup / UEFA Champions League

The first Albanian club to enter the European Cup was FK Partizani Tirana in 1962-63 playing in the first round against Norrköping losing out after two legs despite drawing at home with 1–1 in the second leg.^[4] The following year, Partizani won their first-ever match in the European Cup 1963-64 in the first leg against Plovdiv through a goal from Kolec Kraja. In the second leg away from home, Partizani nearly qualified for the second round but lost 1-3 despite a goal from Panajot Pano.^[5] One year later in 1964–65 Partizani Tirana faced 1. FC Köln from Germany in the preliminary round. The Albanians surprised the Germans and held a 0–0 draw at home.^[6] In the second leg in Cologne Partizani Tirana lost the match 0–2.

KF Tirana first entered the European Football scene in 1969-70. After losing the first leg against Belgian team Standard Liège 0–3 away from home, they drew at home 1–1 thanks to a late goal from Josif Kazanxhi.

In the following year, KF Tirana faced Eredivisie team AFC Ajax in the 1970–71 European Cup in the first round. Tirana drew Ajax 2–2 after losing 0–2 at home. The Albanians equalized the game thanks to goals from Josif Kazanxhi and Ceco.^[7] Tirana faced Ajax in the second leg at the Olympisch Stadion in Amsterdam. Ajax won the game 2–0 and went on to win the Cup.^[8]



KF Tirana (Sept. 1970) before facing Ajax Amsterdam

KF Vllaznia Shkodër debuted at the European Cup 1978–79 facing FK Austria Wien in the first round. Vllaznia beat Austria in the first leg 2–0 with goals from Medin Zhega and Shyqyri Ballgjini.^[9] In the following match, Vllaznia had good chances to qualify as the first Albanian football club in the round of 16. The hopes were dashed for Vllaznia as they lost with 4–1 away in Wien.^[10]

Partizani Tirana qualified for the Cup for the fourth time in 1979–80 and beat Celtic 1–0 in the first match with a header from Agim Murati in the 35th minute.^[11] Celtic turned things around and beat Partizani 4–1 despite an own goal in the Celtic Park in Glasgow.^[12]

Two years later in the 1981–82 European Cup, Partizani Tirana faced Austria Wien in the first round. Partizani lost the first leg away match 1–3.^[13] The Albanians played the second leg at home in the Qemal Stafa Stadium and won 1–0. Haxhi Ballgjini scored the goal for Partizani in the 31st minute. Partizani needed to score two goals to qualify into the second round, and they were eliminated from the competition despite the victory.^[14]

The historical 1980's in the European cup for the Albanian Football clubs

The following year at the 1982–83 European Cup KF Tirana faced Linfield F.C. in the first round. The teams played the first leg in Tirana. Tirana won the match 1–0 with a goal from Agustin Kola.^[15] In the second leg match, Tirana faced Linfield at Windsor Park in Belfast. Arben Minga scored in the 28th minute, but Linfield scored two quick goals in the final minutes of the match. Despite the 2–1 away loss, KF Tirana qualified as the first Albanian football club in history for the round of 16 in the European Cup.^[16] The team would have played against Dynamo Kyiv in the round of 16, but Tirana did not participate.^[17]

After several years without success for Albania, KF Tirana competed for the sixth time in history at the European Cup in 1988–89.^[18] The team faced the Hamrun Spartans from Malta in the first round. In the first leg, they played away from home at National Stadium in Ta' Qali. KF Tirana started with a goal from Anesti Stoja in the 5th minute, but Hamrun scored two goals to win the match 2–1.^[19] In the second leg, Tirana defeated the Spartans 2–0 to qualify for the round of 16.^[20]

In the first leg of the round of 16, Tirana faced IFK Göteborg at home and lost the match 0–3.^[21] Tirana defeated Göteborg 1–0 in the second leg at Ullevi stadium but did not qualify for the quarter-finals.

In the following European Cup in 1989–90, KF Tirana faced Maltese team Sliema Wanderers F.C. in the first round. The first leg was played away from home in the National Stadium. The Albanians lost 0–1. KF Tirana won the second leg game 5–0 with goals from Agustin Kola, Bardhi, Hodja, and Florian Riza to advance to the round of 16 for the third time in the club's history.^[22]

In the round of 16, KF Tirana faced Bundesliga team FC Bayern Munich from Germany. In the first leg at the Olympiastadion in Munich, KF Tirana lost 3–1.^[23] In the second match, Tirana faced Bayern at home and lost 0–3.^[24]

UEFA Cup / UEFA Europa League

Albania did not compete in the UEFA Cup as much as they did in the UEFA Cup Winners' Cup or in the European Cup, despite Albania's success in the late '80s. Flamutari Vlora^[25] and, in recent years, KF Skënderbeu Korçë have been the most successful Albanian teams in the UEFA Cup.

Dinamo Tirana became the first Albanian football team to debut in the UEFA Cup during the 1981–82 competition. In the first round, they faced Carl Zeiss Jena from East Germany.^[26] In the first leg, Dinamo faced the opposition at home at Selman Stërmasi Stadium, winning 1–0 with a goal from Vasillaq Zëri.^[27] Dinamo Tirana had to travel to Jena to face Carl Zeiss at Ernst-Abbe-Sportfeld in the second leg. The Albanians lost 4–0 and failed to qualify for the second round.

In the 1985–86 UEFA Cup Dinamo Tirana faced the Hamrun Spartans from Malta. In the first leg, Dinamo defeated the Spartans 1–0 at home with a goal from Eduard Abazi. Dinamo drew the away game in the second leg 0–0 to qualify as the first Albanian football club in the second round. In the second round, Dinamo Tirana faced Portuguese side Sporting Lisabon. In the first leg, Tirana held a 0–0 draw at home. Away from home at José Alvalade Stadium in Lisbon, Tirana lost 0–1 and was knocked out of the competition.^[28]

Flamurtari Vlorë debuted at the UEFA Cup 1986–87. They faced FC Barcelona in the first round.^[29] The teams played the first leg at the Flamurtari Stadium. Flamutari put themselves in front with a goal from Vasil Ruci^[30] in the 68 minute. Barcelona equalized in the 88th minute to secure a 1–1 draw in Vlorë. In the second leg, Flamutari traveled to Spain to face Barcelona at Camp Nou. The game ended in a 0–0 draw. Barcelona advanced and knocked Flamutari out of the competition due to the away rule.^[31]

Flamutari qualified for a second consecutive UEFA Cup in 1987–88. Flamutari faced in the first round Yugoslavian side Partizan Belgrad. Flamutari won the first leg match at home 2–0 through an own goal and a goal from Roland Iljadh^[32]^[33] The teams played the second leg at Partizan Stadium in Belgrade. The situation was tense between the Albanians and Serbians, due to the political unrest in Kosovo. Partizan led the match 2–0 until Sokol Kushta scored to clinch a 2–1 result and advance Flamutari to the second round for the first time in the history for Albania in the UEFA Cup.^[34]^[35]^[36]^[37]

Flamutari Vlorë faced East German side Wismut Aue in the second round. Flamutari lost the first leg match at the Otto-Grotewohl-Stadion in Aue 1–0. They won the second leg match at home 2–0 with goals from Rapo Taho and Vasil Ruci to become the first Albanian team to qualify for the round of 16 in the UEFA Cup. They also became the first Albanian side to beat two clubs in a UEFA competition after two rounds were played.^[38]^[39]

Flamutari faced FC Barcelona for the second time in their history in the third round at the Camp Nou. Flamutari was down 1–0 at halftime, but three quick goals in the second half put Barca up 4–0. Vasil Ruci scored a penalty kick to bring the final score to 4–1. In the following leg, Flamutari defeated Barca 1–0 in the fully crowded Flamurtari Stadium in Vlorë with a goal from Sokol Kushta. Despite the win, Flamutari did not qualify for the quarterfinals.^[40] As of May 2022, Flamutari's 1987–88 UEFA Cup performance was the most successful result for Albania in a UEFA competition.^[41]^[42]^[43]

UEFA Cup Winners' Cup

Several Albanian football clubs, including KF Besa Kavajë, KF Tirana, and KF Vllaznia Shkodër have participated in the UEFA Cup Winners' Cup.

Albania's debut at the competition came in 1968-69 when FK Partizani Tirana faced Italian side Torino F.C. In the first leg, Partizani Tirana defeated Torino at home.^[44] In the second leg, the Albanians lost 3–1 away and failed to advance to the quarterfinals. Torino advanced directly to the quarterfinals after the match.^[45]

In the 1970–71 European Cup Winners' Cup, Partizani Tirana faced Swedish team Åtvidabergs FF in the preliminary round in the Koppavallen. Partizani drew the away match 1–1. In the following leg at home, the Albanians won 2–0 with goals from Panajot Pano and Ramazan Rragami.^[46] The round was the first time Partizani advanced in a UEFA competition after drawing in the first leg.^[44]

At the following 1971–72 European Cup Winners' Cup, Dinamo Tirana debuted against Austrian side Austria Wien. Dinamo held a 1–1 draw at home with a penalty goal from Iljaz Çeço.^[47] At the following game at the Praterstadion in Vienna, the Albanians lost 1–0 and failed to advance to the round of sixteen.^[48]

In the following 1972-73 UEFA Cup Winners' season, KF Besa Kavajë debuted in the first round against Fremad Amager from Denmark. The Albanians drew away from home 1–1 and secured a 0–0 draw at home to become the first Albanian club to advance to the round of sixteen at the competition.^[49]

The Albanians faced Scottish side Hibernian in the round of sixteen. In the first leg away, Besa lost 7–1 despite a goal from M.Kariqi. In the following leg at the Besa Stadium, the Albanians failed to make up the six goal deficit and were knocked out of the competition, drawing 1–1 with a goal from K.Paglia.^[50]

After some years in which Albania couldn't take place at this competition, they would return several years later in 1980-81 in which FK Partizani Tirana, faced Malmö from Sweden. In the first round. Despite a close match they would lose the first leg with 1–0 away. Notably they drew their home leg with 0–0, still not enough to qualify further.^[51]

Two years later in the 1982-83 edition Dinamo Tirana faced in the first round Aberdeen F.C. from Scotland. In the first leg they would lose close with 1–0 despite playing a good match. At the second leg they couldn't overcome a 0–0 in Tirana and so left the competition once again in the first round.^[52] Notable fact Aberdeen would than go on and eventually win the competition that particular year, after winning against Real Madrid in the finals.^[53]

In the 1983-84 edition 17 Nëntori Tirana would made their debut, at this competition. Their first tie was against Swedish side Hammarby. Away from home they couldn't compete against the opponent, as they faced a staggering defeat in the Söderstadion with 4–0 in the end. Despite losing the first match, in the second leg they, improved on their performance. Winning at home with 2–1 thanks to goals from Arben Vila and Sulejman Memaj. Securing Albania their first win after more than 10 years, in this competition.^[54]

The history of the Albania national football team

Pre war history of Albania

Founded on 6 June 1930, Albania had to wait 16 years to play its first international match, which was against Yugoslavia in 1946. In 1932, Albania had already joined FIFA (during the congress 12–16 June) and in 1954 it was one of the founding members of UEFA. Albania was invited to play in the 1934 World Cup, but did not take part due to logistical problems.

Champion of the Balkans in 1946

The early years oversaw a notably successful Balkan Cup in the 1946 campaign. Albania won the cup after overcoming Yugoslavia on level points but a better goal difference. The final match ended in a 1–0 win against Romania. Four days earlier, Albania had already beaten Bulgaria 3–1. Albania wasn't expected to participate, but the withdrawal of Greece from the tournament offered Albania a chance to join in the re-established post-war cup.^[55]



2007 postage stamp of Albania dedicated to the Albania squad that won the 1946 Balkan Cup

Between the best 16 Teams in Europe at the UEFA Euro 1964

Albania qualified for the first time in their history at the UEFA Euro 1964 in Spain, for its first-ever major men's national football Tournament. Albania faced Greece in the first round. They wouldn't participate as Greece withdrew and Albania being given a walkover and advancing so to the Round of 16 in this Tournament.^[56] In the Round of 16 the Albanians would face Denmark. In the first leg they lost out with 4–0 away from home. Despite their win at the second leg in Tirana, through an early goal from Panajot Pano. Albania couldn't progress to the quarterfinals. At the end of this tournament Albania ranked 9th.^[57] It was the only time Albania was between the best 16 teams of Europe.^[58]

1964–72 Albania participating in Football at the Summer Olympics qualifying tournaments

Albania would participate for the first time in their history at the 1964 Summer Olympics in the men's qualification tournament. In which the Albanians faced Bulgaria in the preliminary round. Albania would lose both matches close with 0–1 against the Bulgarians, missing out on the next stage.^[59] Albania then participate for the second and last time in their Football history at the 1972 Summer Olympics held in Munich. In the Men's European Qualifiers they would face Romania in the play-off stage. In the first leg they lost with 2–1 away from home despite an equalizer scored by Medin Zhega in the 55th Minute of this match. At the second leg Albania faced the Romanians in the Qemal Stafa Stadium in

Tirana. The Albanians started the match well as Panajot Pano puts Albania in front in the 29th minute but once again they couldn't held on to the result. As Romania scored further two goals in the end, to beat Albania once more with 1–2 this time around.^[60]

Albania's historical 1986 FIFA World Cup qualification

Albania would face in this qualification Belgium, Poland and their rivals Greece. In the first match they faced Belgium in Brussels. The Albanians lost with 3–1 despite the equalizer from Bedri Omuri in the 71st minute. Albania would face away from home against Poland in the Stadion Stali Mielec. They drew the result through goals from Bedri Omuri and even the leading goal from Agustin Kola with 2-1 but at the end Poland scored again. Albania missing out on their first win, in this qualification. After that Albania famously beat Belgium at home with 2–0 in the Qemal Stafa Stadium. The goals were scored by Mirel Josa and Arben Minga securing Albania their first and only win in this qualification.^{[20][61]} As Albania loss their next two games against Greece away with 2-0 and against Poland at home close with 0–1. Missing out close to qualify for the 1986 FIFA World Cup. In their last match they faced Greece at home in Tirana. They go in front by a goal from Bedri Omuri but they couldn't hold on as Greece equalized the result in the 54th minute. At the end playing a 1–1 draw.^[62] Despite finishing their campaign with four points in the third place. Albania came close to qualify as they nearly beat every opponent in this group. It was their most successful FIFA World Cup qualification in the history of Albania.

Albania's turn around in results between 2004 and 2006

After a poor start in which Albania would draw at home against Switzerland with 1–1 by a goal from Edvin Murati but lost in the next match away against Russia with 4–1 despite an earlier equalizer scored by Klodian Duro Albania sacked their manager Giuseppe Dossena^[63] and replaced him with German Hans-Peter Briegel for the following match.^[64] against Russia in the Loro Boriçi Stadium in Shkodër. In which the Albanians won 3-1 through goals from Altin Rraklli, Altin Lala and Igli Tare to secure Hans-Peter Briegel in his debut match, as a manager, his maiden win for Albania.^{[65][66]} He led Albania to an undefeated run at home matches by drawing against Republic of Ireland 0–0 and beating in the last match Georgia 3–1 by goals from Besnik Hasi, Igli Tare and striker Alban Bushi. Despite the good results, Albania finished the group in the penultimate spot with eight points. Away, Albania could not score any points, but managed to score 4 goals. Missing close out on the Playoffs stage by six points.

Two months after Greece beat Portugal to win the European Championship, Albania defeated Greece 2–1 at home by two quick goals from Edvin Murati and Adrian Aliaj, denting the Greeks' possibility to qualify. The Albanians led the table for the first time in a qualification after this match.^{[67][68]} Albania went on to disappoint by losing to Georgia away and Denmark at home, before returning to winning ways by beating Kazakhstan 0–1 with a goal from Alban Bushi. Then, Albania played Ukraine, Turkey, and Greece, losing all three matches. Later Albania beat Georgia 3–2 by two goals from Igli Tare and one from Ervin Skela as well as beating Kazakhstan with 2–1 by goals from Florian Myrtaj and striker Erjon Bogdani. The last positive result for Albania in this qualification would be a 2–2 away draw with Ukraine where Bogdani scored two goals. At the end, Albania got 13 points, and four wins in their best result then. They surpassed for the first time in their history two nations in the qualifying standings.^[69]

World Cup 2014 qualifying

Albania started the qualifiers well, notably defeating Cyprus with 3–1 by goals from Armando Sadiku, Edgar Çani and Erjon Bogdani as well as beating Slovenia at home with 1–0 by a goal from Odise Roshi.^[70] which was followed by an unprecedented away win at Norway in Oslo after a stunning goal from Hamdi Salihi.^{[71][72]} Albania would also draw against Norway at home despite leading the match with a goal from Valdet Rama , this match ending in a 1–1 draw.^[73] The team was at one point 2nd with 6 matches played and 4 to spare, but failed to be successful in the last four, losing away in Slovenia and Iceland,^{[74][75]} as well at home against Switzerland,^[76] and drawing in Cyprus.^[77] With De Biasi, the Albania national team reached an unprecedented high number of players, who although are ethnically Albanian, were not born in Albania, but either in Kosovo, or outside of Kosovo, while hailing from Kosovo Albania parents. In 2011–13, 14 Albanians of Kosovo origin were either part of the start-up team, or had received recent call-ups.^[78]

UEFA Euro 2016 qualification

The qualifying draw took place on 23 February 2014. Albania was drawn in Group I along with [Portugal](#), [Denmark](#), [Serbia](#), and [Armenia](#). Qualifying matches started in September 2014. Albania started the qualifiers with a historic result as they beat group favourites Portugal 1–0 away thanks to a goal from [Bekim Balaj](#).^[79] In the second match against Denmark at the newly renovated [Elbasan Arena](#), Albania was in the lead until the 82nd minute where Lasse Vibe equalized, with the match ending 1–1. In the next game against Serbia at Partizan Stadium, the match was abandoned in 42nd minute after several on and off the field incidents. Despite the violence by Serbia's hooligans against Albania at Partizan Stadium, Serbia was awarded the 3–0 victory after the decision by UEFA.^[80] The decision was appealed by both Serbia and Albania,^{[81][82]} but the decision was upheld by UEFA.^[83] Both associations then filed further appeals to the Court of Arbitration for Sport,^[84] and on 10 July 2015 the Court of Arbitration for Sport rejected the appeal filed by the Serbian FA, and upholds in part the appeal filed by the Albanian FA, meaning the match is deemed to have been forfeited by Serbia with 0–3 and they are still deducted three points.^[85]

In the fourth match against Armenia at home, Albania were behind from the 4th minute after an own goal from [Mërgim Mavraj](#), but Mavraj equalized in the 77th minute with a powerful header. Four minutes later [Shkëlzen Gashi](#) scored the winner, putting Albania in the 2nd position along with Denmark with 10 points.^[86] It was the first time that Albania ended the first part of the qualifiers in the second spot. Albania made history again by beating one-time world champions and UEFA Euro 2016 hosts [France](#) at the [Elbasan Arena](#) in the "Group I" friendly match.^[87] After a draw against Denmark, Albania clinched at least a play-off place. Despite losing to Portugal and Serbia, Albania defeated Armenia 3–0 in [Yerevan](#) and qualified for [UEFA Euro 2016](#),^[88] for its first appearance at a major men's football tournament after 50 years.

Albania at the UEFA Euro 2016

Albania qualified for the [UEFA Euro 2016](#) held in France. They were drawn in a strong group with the host France, Switzerland and Romania. In their second ever campaign Albania started his first Groupstage Match against [Switzerland](#). Despite being 0-1 down after an unlucky conceded goal from F.Schär in the 5th minute. Albania did play a strong match even though with 10 men because [Lorik Cana](#) got a red card for holding the ball with his hand in the 36th minute. Albania did everything in the second half and had 6 minutes before the end an amazing chance to equalize in the closing stage of the match, to get a deserved draw but [Shkelzen Gashi](#) missed a sitter in front off the goal. Despite that the Albanian team was praised by the football community for their strong performance.^[89] Albania would play against [France](#) in their second group game. Until the end Albania hold in Marseille a strong 0–0 draw but in the end Albania conceded two goals from [Antoine Griezmann](#) and [Dimitri Payet](#) to lose in the end with 2–0. Albania would face in their last Groupstage match [Romania](#). Albania would win this match with 0–1 by a beautiful header scored by [Armando Sadiku](#) in the 43rd minute. In the second half Albania defended the result and secured their first win after 50 years in a [UEFA European Championship](#) in their history. However, the team finished last among the third-placed teams and didn't progress beyond the group stage.^[90]

In 2020, Albania won for the first time a group by finishing first in group 4 of [UEFA Nations League C](#). Albania also won a spot for the play-offs of 2022 World Cup and was promoted in [UEFA Nations League B](#).

Honours of Albania

- **[Balkan Cup](#):**
 - **Champions** (1): 1946
- **[Malta International Football Tournament](#):**
 - **Champions** (1): 2000^[91]
- **[UEFA Nations League](#)**
 - **Promotion** (1): [2020–21 UEFA Nations League C](#)

Albania national under-21 football team

- [UEFA European Under-21 Championship](#)
 - **Quarterfinals** (1): in [1984](#)

- Balkan Youth Championship
 - **Winners** (2): 1978, 1981

Albanian Football clubs in Europe

KF Tirana

- UEFA Champions League
 - **Round of Sixteen** (3): in 1982-83,1988-89 and in 1989-90

Flamutari Vlora

- UEFA Cup
 - **Round of Sixteen** (1): in 1987-88

Partizani Tirana

- Balkan Cup
 - **Winners** (1): in 1970

Youth football in Albania

Balkan Youth Championship

Albania Under-21 participated in the Balkan Youth Championship as a successor to the Under-23 team, in the 1976–78 and 1981 competitions, winning both with finals against Romania and Bulgaria. Notably in 1978, the second leg of the final match against Romania was characterized by a large Albania's win 7–1, which is the largest win ever recorded by Albania U-21.^[92]

1984 UEFA European Under-21 Football Championship

Albania Under-21s have managed to qualify only once in their history, and that came in the year of 1984 when they managed to qualify for the 1984 UEFA European Under-21 Football Championship, although they were competing for the first time in such tournament. They were drawn in a very tough group which included the West Germany, Turkey and Austria. The historic event was the first time any Albanian squad qualified for a Europe or World Championship, and is only the fifth time any Albanian squad qualified for the major championships. To this day the team that qualified for 1984 UEFA European Under-21 Football Championship are still regarded as the most successful team in Albanian football history. Albania U21 managed to qualify without losing a single game and managing two very good draws against one of the biggest and best footballing nations, West Germany.

Albania played the quarter-finals against Italy, against which it lost twice 0–1, and 0–1, in Albania and Italy respectively.^[93]

Albania under-19 football team

Than the Albania national under-18 football team were able to participate for the first time ever in the 1982 UEFA European Under-18 Championship after beating Cyprus 4–2 on aggregate in the Playoffs.^[94] in the Groupstage they faced in Group D: Scotland, Netherlands, and Turkey. Albania couldn't qualify after losing their first two matches against Scotland and the Netherlands, they secure one point against turkey in the last Groupstage match respectively. Their best result so far in their U19/18 history.^[95]

In the following 1983 UEFA European Under-18 Championship Albania came close to qualify once more but they lost the Playoff Round against Bulgaria with 4–1 despite the close win in the second leg.^[96]

Albania under-17 football team

The Albania national under-17 football team debut participating came at the 1994 UEFA European Under-16 Championship in Ireland. In which Albania secured only one draw against Belarus. Losing close before to Austria and to Spain as well.^[97]

After more than thirty years without an participation the Under 17 of Albania will host the 2025 UEFA European Under-17 Championship, who will be held in Tirana.^[98]

Albanian footballers

In the past Albania produced players such as Loro Boriçi who captained the Albania national football team, as well as Panajot Pano, Naim Kryeziu and Riza Lushta.

Naim Kryeziu started his long football career in SK Tirana where he played for six seasons winning four Kategoria Superiore between 1934 and 1939 as well as one Albanian Cup title in 1938-39.^[99] After 1939 he was noted by an Italian sports professor who suggested him to play for AS Roma. He then played for Roma between 1939 and 1947 scoring 27 goals and winning with them the 1941–42 Serie A title. His biggest achievement in his football career.^[100] Being the first Albanian footballer to win a Serie A title. He later would play successfully for S.S.C. Napoli scoring in five seasons 39 goals for the Gli Azzurris. Before retiring his footballing career in 1954. He scored 68 goals in the Seria A and is still even to this day one of the most successful Albanian footballers in the football history in Europe.

He later started a coaching career, serving also as AS Roma head coach for a short time during the 1963–64 season as a replacement for Alfredo Foni.^[101] he would coach A.S. Roma once more between 1970 and 1973 in his career.

Riza Lushta is a well known footballer in Albania and Italy. He started his football career in KF Tirana where he won the Kategoria Superiore four times in six seasons, he played with. He would then play for Seria A side S.S.C. Bari for the upcoming season. Where he scored three times in sixteen matches.^[102] His performances with Bari attracted the interest of Juventus Turin who he joined in 1940 after just one year with Bari. He would play for the Old Lady for five seasons. His most successful season came in the 1941–42 Serie A where he scored 15 goals for Juve being the highest foreigner goalscorer in the Seria in that particular season. Lushta made history as he won with Juventus Turin the 1941–42 Coppa Italia. Where he is known for his hattrick he scored against A.C. Milan in the second leg of the finals.^{[103][104]} Riza Lushta would be the first Albanian footballer to be a record goalscorer in the Coppa Italia with 8 goals in 6 matches.

Loro mostly played for Partizani Tirana in his footballing career, winning with them three times the Kategoria Superiore as well with Albania the 1946 Balkan Cup in home soil. He had a short spell in Italy with Lazio Rome where he scored three goals being the first Albanian footballer to play abroad in the Seria A.^[105]

Panajot Pano is a well known football player in Albania. He spend most of his career with Partizani Tirana. Where he played for 15 years between 1960 and 1975 scoring 136 goals for them. He won with them the Albanian Superliga four times as well as winning the Albanian cup six times and one Balkans Cup title in 1970^[106] his only international title with Partizani Tirana. He played for Albania 24 times between 1963 and 1973 where he is known for his goal against Denmark in the 1964 European Nations' Cup round of 16 second leg securing Albania's first ever win in a tournament.^[107]

Due to his skills and abilities, Pano earned the nickname "The little Puskás" by sports commentators.^[108] He is also well remembered by world known players such as Franz Beckenbauer, Willi Schulz as well as Fenerbahçe president of Albanian descent Myslym Bey praising him as a talented striker comparing him to Pele and Eusébio.^[109]

In November 2003 he was selected as the Golden Player by the Football Association of Albania as their most outstanding player of the past 50 years.^[109]

On 6 March 2009, Pano received the Honor of the Nation Decoration from the President of Albania, Bamir Topi.^[112] This was the first time in the history of Albania that a footballer was honored with the Honor of the Nation order.^[113]



Loro Boriçi captained the team in winning the 1946 Balkan Cup.

In recent history Albania produced top talented players such as Lorik Cana he played for Paris Saint-Germain F.C. which who he won the Coupe de France in 2003–04 as well playing for their rivals Olympique de Marseille. He also played for Seria A side S.S. Lazio which who he won the 2012–13 Coppa Italia.^[114] Lorik Cana is the most capped player in the History off Albania with 93 games in total. He competed with Albania at the UEFA Euro 2016 held in France. Playing two out of their three matches in the Groupstage. After that he retired as a professional football player.^[115]

The most famous player at the moment is Thomas Strakosha, goalkeeper for Lazio in the Serie A winning with them two Coppa Italia in 2012–13 and 2018–19. He has won also two times the Supercoppa Italiana in 2017 and 2019 both against Juventus Turin. Elseid Hysaj who played in the past for S.S.C. Napoli which he won with them the Coppa Italia in 2019–20.^[118] He is playing right now for Lazio Rome. Berat Djimsiti is playing for Atalanta B.C.

"If Panajot Pano doesn't remember me, I remember him."

—Franz Beckenbauer, 1990^{[110][111]}

Supporters

Tifozat Kuq e Zi (English: **Red and Black Fans**, also known as the **Albania National Football Team Supporters Club**) is a non-profit football supporters' association for the Albania national football team and various national team sportive activities.^{[119][120]} It was founded on 25 December 2003.^[119] In cooperation with FSHF, it organises trips for football fans to visit games, and develops and sells merchandise to support itself and fund sporting related projects.

Tifozat Kuq e Zi stands firm in the political view that Albanians should share only one national team and have continuous aspirations to join in one state (Një Komb, Një Kombëtare), i.e. unification of Albania, Kosovo, etc.^{[121][122]} In this sense, TKZ is joined by different supporters' associations throughout Albanian-speaking regions mainly in Kosovo (Shqiponjat of Peja, Kuqezinjet e Jakoves of Gjakova, Plisat of Prishtina, Torcida of Mitrovica, etc.), North Macedonia (Ballistët of Tetovë, Illirët of Kumanovë, Shvercerat of Shkupi, etc.) and in Albania itself (Ultras Guerrills of Partizani Tirana, Tirona Fanatics of KF Tirana, Vllaznit Ultras of Vllaznia Shkodër, Ujqërit e Deborës of Skënderbeu Korçë, Shqiponjat of KF Besa Pejë and many other different Albanian fans).^[119]

The ongoing dispute between the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports and the Football Association of Albania has been seen as a political intrusion by FIFA and UEFA, which led to the banning of Albania from international sportive activities. FSHF president Armand Duka is highly unwanted by the TKZ who have numerously asked for his resignation believing he is responsible for internal corruption in the Albanian Football Association.^{[123][124][125][126]}

The TKZ have been praised by many different football players and managers, whom were not just Albanian. One example is with Switzerland's former coach, Ottmar Hitzfeld, who was astonished by how many Albanian fans turned up and how enthusiastic they were in 2014 FIFA World Cup qualifying match between Switzerland and Albania where the Swiss won 2–0 thanks to goals from Gökhan Inler and Kosovo-born Xherdan Shaqiri. He didn't believe that there was 12,000 Albanian fans in the stands which was more than how many Swiss fans turned up for the game. He stated that "Albanian fans are fantastic and the most



Lorik Cana is the most capped player in the history of the national team with 93 caps; he overtook Altin Lala in 2014 and is seen by many as the symbol of Albanians and the national team.^{[116][117]}



A choreography of Tifozat Kuq e Zi in the national team's first match at Elbasan Arena against Denmark in October 2014.

passionate fans I have ever seen".^[127] During that campaign, TKZ attended all games Albania played apart from a match against Cyprus in Nicosia and were also large in numbers in the away games to Slovenia in Maribor and Norway in Oslo.^{[128][129][130]}

See also

- Sports in Albania
- Albanian Football Association

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External links

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Retrieved from "https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Football_in_Albania&oldid=1194393911"

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Football in Bosnia and Herzegovina

Association football is the most popular sport in Bosnia and Herzegovina since after gaining independence from Yugoslavia in 1991, in 1995 they played their first international game against Albania, but they made the debut at the 2014 FIFA World Cup in Brazil, their first ever appearance in the tournament.

It is governed by the Football Association of Bosnia and Herzegovina governing body in country, the national team has never qualified for the UEFA European Championship after failing at the play-offs by three teams. The football governing body has the Premier League of Bosnia and Herzegovina and also the Bosnia and Herzegovina Football Cup. The teams also make the European international competitions like UEFA Champions League, UEFA Europa League and also the new UEFA Europa Conference League tournament.

National team of Bosnia and Herzegovina

The team has only qualified for a major international tournament once as an independent nation, reaching the 2014 FIFA World Cup.^{[2][3]} It is yet to qualify for a UEFA European Championship, coming closest by losing to Portugal in the play-offs for UEFA Euro 2012.^{[4][5][6][7]}

Bosnia's home ground is Bilino Polje Stadium in the city of Zenica. The national team's first international victory as a FIFA member came against 1994 FIFA World Cup runners-up Italy on 6 November 1996.^{[8][9][10]} The national team's highest FIFA World Ranking was 13th in August 2013.^{[11][12]} October 2013 FIFA World Rankings, used to seed qualified teams in the 2014 FIFA World Cup Final Draw, placed Bosnia and Herzegovina as the highest ranked team of all former Yugoslav Republics for the first time in history. In the past years, the national side finished twice among the top three best movers in FIFA World Ranking of the year. In their first game at their first World Cup, centre-forward Vedad Ibišević scored Bosnia's first ever goal at a major tournament in the country's history in a 1–2 loss to two-time World Cup winning opposition Argentina.

History of club competitions

The game reached Bosnia and Herzegovina at the start of the 20th century, with Sarajevo (in 1903)^[13] and Mostar (in 1905)^[14] being the first cities to embrace it. Banja Luka, Tuzla, Zenica and Bihać were next along with numerous smaller towns as the sport spread. The country was under Austro-Hungarian rule when official competition began in 1908, though these activities were on a small scale within each territory.^[15] At the outbreak of World War I, there were four clubs in Sarajevo; SAŠK, Slavija, Đerzelez (also known as *Sarajevski*),^[16] and Makabi Sarajevo (also known as *Barkohba*)^[17] and approximately 20 outside the capital. The creation of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia post 1918 brought an increase in the number of leagues, and soon a domestic national championship was organised. The Yugoslav football league system was based in numerous subassociations which served as competitions which determined the local representants of the subassociations in the national final stage, the Yugoslav championship. In 1920, the Sarajevo football subassociation was founded which

Football in Bosnia and Herzegovina	
Country	Bosnia and Herzegovina
Governing body	Football Association of Bosnia and Herzegovina
National team(s)	men's national team
First played	1903
National competitions	
FIFA World Cup	
UEFA European Championship	
UEFA Nations League	
Club competitions	
List	[show]
<div><div><div>▪ League</div><div>Premijer Liga</div></div><div><div>▪ Cups</div><div>Bosnia and Herzegovina Football Cup</div></div></div>	
International competitions	
FIFA Club World Cup	
UEFA Champions League	
UEFA Europa League	
UEFA Europa Conference League	
UEFA Super Cup	

included besides Sarajevo and its outskirts, also most of eastern Bosnia and western Serbia. The Banja Luka football subassociation included most of the western Bosnia and an area usually known as Krajina, while the Podrinje region surrounding city of Bijeljina was part of the provincial leagues of the Belgrade football subassociation. The unified Yugoslav championship ran until the start of Second World War with 1939/40 season having been the last to have been completed. In this period 3 clubs from modern-day territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina managed to qualify for the final stages of the Yugoslav championships, SAŠK and Slavija, both from Sarajevo, and Krajišnik from Banja Luka. Many local players became targets of dominating teams and had successful careers such as Florijan Matekalo, Petar Manola, Milan Rajlić, Stanko Zagorac, Aleksandar Mastela or Branko Stanković.



Vedad Ibišević scored Bosnia's first ever FIFA World Cup goal in a 2–1 loss to Argentina.^[1]

The Football Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina was founded after the Second World War, as the subdivision of the Yugoslav Football Association. The new communist authorities abolished the former league sistem and disbanded numerous clubs while created others. The era from 1945 till 1992 can be marked by the emergence of a highly competitive and quality league, characterized by the appearance of a chrorical "Big 4" contenders for the title (Red Star, Patizan, Hajduk and Dinamo Zagreb) but with a particularity that highlights Bosnian football which is that their clubs were always present in the First League and FK Sarajevo, and Željezničar even won championships and created one of the most intense outsiders derbies at time, the Sarajevo derby.






Bilino Polje the stadium of the Bosnia national football team

Club football

Bosnia and Herzegovina's best sides at the time of former Yugoslavia were Sarajevo, Željezničar (Sarajevo) and Velež (Mostar) which played in the Yugoslavian first league, second league and cup competitions with moderate success, while its best players with the likes of Vahid Halilhodžić, Safet Sušić, Josip Katalinski, Faruk Hadžibegić, Ivica Osim, Asim Ferhatović, Blaž Slišković, Mehmed Baždarević, Dušan Bajević and many others were chosen to represent SFR Yugoslavia national football team.^[18]

Other notable clubs that participate in Premier League of Bosnia and Herzegovina are HŠK Zrinjski Mostar, NK Čelik Zenica, NK Široki Brijeg, FK Sloboda Tuzla, as well as FK Borac Banja Luka.

Football stadiums in Bosnia and Herzegovina

Image	Stadium	Capacity	Opened	City / Town	Home team	UEFA Rank.
	<u>Stadion Asim Ferhatović-Hase</u>	37,500	1947	<u>Sarajevo</u>	<u>FK Sarajevo</u>	UEFA ★★★★
	<u>Stadion Bilino Polje</u>	15,600	1972	<u>Zenica</u>	<u>NK Čelik and Bosnia and Herzegovina</u>	UEFA ★★★★
	<u>Stadion Grbavica</u>	13,146	1953	<u>Sarajevo</u>	<u>FK Željezničar and Bosnia and Herzegovina</u>	UEFA ★★★★

Fans

Ultras are common there with the biggest names as Manijaci the supporter group of Željeznicar, Horde zla The supporter group of FK Sarajevo and the BHFanaticos the supporter group of the national side.

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Football in Bulgaria

Football (Bulgarian: футбол, *futbol*) is the most popular sport in **Bulgaria**. It was introduced in 1893–1894 by Swiss gymnastics teachers invited to the country. A football (initially called рѣтнитоп, *ritnitop*, "kickball") match was first played in Varna's High School for Boys in 1894, where it was introduced by Georges de Regibus, and the game was brought to Sofia by Charles Champaud the following year. The rules of the game were published in Bulgarian by Swiss teachers in the *Uchilishten pregled* magazine in 1897, and football continued to gain popularity in the early 20th century. Among the founders of the Turkish team Galatasaray in 1905 was the Bulgarian Lycée de Galatasaray student Blagoy Balakchiev, and the first Bulgarian club, *Futbol Klub*, was established in Sofia in 1909 on the initiative of Sava Kirov. *Botev Plovdiv* was founded in 1912, *Slavia Sofia* in 1913, and *Levski Sofia* in 1914.

The Bulgaria national football team debuted on 21 May 1924 in a 1924 Summer Olympics qualifier, losing 0–6 to Austria in Vienna. What is today CSKA Sofia was established on 5 May 1948. In the 1950s and 1960s Bulgarian football achieved its biggest Olympic success, being third in the 1956 Summer Olympics in Melbourne and second in the 1968 Summer Olympics in Mexico City, also finishing fifth in Euro 1968. In 1962, Bulgaria first qualified for a FIFA World Cup tournament, in total of seven participations to date. In the 1986 FIFA World Cup, Bulgaria did reach the round of 16. Then, in the 1994 FIFA World Cup, came Bulgaria's biggest World Cup success, the fourth place, the elimination of reigning world champions Germany and Hristo Stoichkov's top goalscorer prize.^{[1][2][3]} Bulgaria is also three times European champion in under-19, three times Balkan champion, and three times Balkan Youth champion. The titles won by the national team make Bulgaria one of the best performing nations in European football competitions.

Bulgarian football competitions

- Championships:
 - Top division: First League - 14 teams
 - Second division: Second League - 16 teams
 - Third division: Third League - 4 groups with 12-18 teams each
 - Fourth division: Regional Groups - divided by region
- Cup: Bulgarian Cup
- Super Cup: Bulgarian Super Cup
- AFL Cup: Cup of Bulgarian Amateur Football League

Crime and corruption

Football in Bulgaria	
	
Vasil Levski National Stadium	
Country	Bulgaria
Governing body	Bulgarian Football Union
National team(s)	Bulgaria national football team
First played	1894
National competitions	
FIFA World Cup	
UEFA European Championship	
UEFA Nations League	
Club competitions	
League	
First League	
Second League	
Cups	
Bulgarian Cup	
Bulgarian Super Cup	
International competitions	
UEFA Champions League	
UEFA Europa League	
UEFA Europa Conference League	
UEFA Super Cup	
FIFA Club World Cup	

Between 2003 and 2013, 15 club presidents or previous owners of Bulgarian top league clubs were murdered. A leaked US diplomatic cable of 2010 claimed that since the end of Communism, allegations of illegal gambling, match fixing, money laundering, and tax evasion abound in Bulgarian football, which has become a symbol of organised crime's corrupt influence on important institutions.^{[4][5][6]}

See also

- List of football clubs in Bulgaria
- List of football stadiums in Bulgaria
- Bulgaria national football team
- Bulgaria national under-21 football team
- Bulgaria national under-19 football team
- Bulgarian Football Union
- Bulgarian Footballer of the Year
- Bulgarian Professional Football League

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Football in Greece

Football is the most popular sport in Greece, followed by basketball.

History of Greek football

The Ancient Greeks are known to have played many ball games, some of which involved the use of the feet. The Roman game *harpastum* is believed to have been adapted from a Greek team game known as "ἐπίσκυρος" (*Episkyros*)^{[1][2]} or "φαίνινδα" (*phaininda*),^[3] which is mentioned by a Greek playwright, Antiphanes (388–311 BC) and later referred to by the Christian theologian Clement of Alexandria (c.150-c.215 AD). These games appear to have resembled rugby football.^{[4][5][6][7][8]}

In the modern era, however, association football was introduced to the Greeks by expatriate British communities and military personnel. The first Greek football teams were created as part of long-established athletic and gymnastic clubs in the major port cities of Athens and Thessaloniki, as well as among the large Greek communities of the Ottoman Empire, such as Constantinople and Smyrna, in the early 1900s. After the Asia Minor Disaster of 1922 which resulted in a large resettlement of Greeks from Turkey to Greece, several clubs, such as Panionios and Apollon Smyrnis, were transplanted, while many athletes of other clubs, like Pera, formed new organizations in their new home (e.g. AEK, PAOK).

League system

The first league of professional football in Greece was officially established as the Panhellenic Championship in 1927. The league ran until 1959, when it was replaced by the Alpha Ethniki which ran until 2006 when it was then replaced by Superleague Greece. According to FIFPro, an organization that represents professional players, nearly 70 percent of players complained in a 2011 survey of problems with not being paid.^[9]

Superleague Greece is the top-flight professional football division within Greece. The league contains 14 clubs, with the winners of the league becoming the Champions of Greece. The team with the most national championships is Olympiacos, who have won 47 times - 13 Super League titles, 19 Alpha Ethniki titles and 15 Panhellenic Championships.^[10] Two other P.O.K. clubs also dominate the history of Greek football; Panathinaikos with 20 titles and AEK Athens with 13 titles.^[10]

Cup competitions

Football in Greece	
Country	Greece
Governing body	<u>Hellenic Football Federation</u>
National team(s)	<u>Greece</u>
First played	1906 (Unofficial) <div>1927–1928 (Official)</div>
Clubs	about 2,500
National competitions	
<u>Greek Cup</u>	
<u>Greek Amateur Cup</u>	
<u>Greek Super Cup</u>	
<u>Greek League Cup</u> (defunct)	
Club competitions	
<u>Superleague 1</u>	
<u>Superleague 2</u>	
<u>Football League</u> (defunct)	
<u>Gamma Ethniki</u>	
<u>Delta Ethniki</u> (defunct)	
<u>Local championships</u>	
International competitions	
<u>Champions League</u>	
<u>Europa League</u>	
<u>Conference League</u>	
<u>UEFA Super Cup</u>	
<u>FIFA Club World Cup</u>	
<u>FIFA World Cup</u> (national team)	
<u>UEFA European Championship</u> (national team)	
<u>UEFA Nations League</u> (national team)	
Audience records	
Single match	<u>Olympiacos F.C.</u> <div>vs. <u>Hamburger SV</u></div> <div>3 November 1982</div> <div><u>Athens Olympic Stadium</u></div>

There is currently one major cup competition in Greek football, the Greek Cup. It includes clubs from every division of football in Greece. Until 2008, another major cup competition was the Greek Super Cup, an annual game held between the winner of the Greek Super League and Greek Cup.

International

UEFA competitions

Club sides may qualify to play in European tournaments under the jurisdiction of UEFA. The champions of Super League qualify for the group stage of the following season's UEFA Champions' League. The teams finishing in second to fifth position qualify for a round-robin playoff, the winner of which will enter the Champions League at the Third Qualifying Round. The other three teams will qualify for the following season's UEFA Europa League, at the Play-off, Third Qualifying or Second Qualifying Round stage, dependent on their performance in the national level playoff. The winner of the Greek Cup also qualifies for the Europa League. If this club has already qualified for a UEFA competition then the place is given to the runners-up.

The only Greek team to have reached the final of a UEFA competition is Panathinaikos, who were European Cup runners-up in 1970–71.

National team

The Greek national team's first match came on April 7, 1929, in a 1–4 loss to Italy. Greece have qualified for the FIFA World Cup three times, in 1994, in 2010 and in 2014. Greece have qualified for the European Championship four times, their first in 1980, their second in 2004, their third in 2008 and their fourth in 2012. 2004 was their most successful run as they became champions by defeating hosts Portugal in the finals.

Women's football



Ancient Greek Episkyros player balancing the ball. Depiction on an Attic Lekythos.



The Karaiskakis Stadium during a 2009–10 UEFA Champions League fixture against Arsenal



The team of Panathinaikos against Ajax in the 1971 European Cup Final.

A national league for women has existed since 1987. Now known as the Greek football women A Division, it was started in 1987 as the Pan-Hellenic Championship. In recent years PAOK have dominated the league.

Greek footballers

Records

Professional seasons in Greek football



Angelos Charisteas scoring Greece's winning goal in the UEFA Euro 2004 Final.

1950s:	<u>1959–60</u>									
1960s:	<u>1960–61</u>	<u>1961–62</u>	<u>1962–63</u>	<u>1963–64</u>	<u>1964–65</u>	<u>1965–66</u>	<u>1966–67</u>	<u>1967–68</u>	<u>1968–69</u>	<u>1969–70</u>
1970s:	<u>1970–71</u>	<u>1971–72</u>	<u>1972–73</u>	<u>1973–74</u>	<u>1974–75</u>	<u>1975–76</u>	<u>1976–77</u>	<u>1977–78</u>	<u>1978–79</u>	<u>1979–80</u>
1980s:	<u>1980–81</u>	<u>1981–82</u>	<u>1982–83</u>	<u>1983–84</u>	<u>1984–85</u>	<u>1985–86</u>	<u>1986–87</u>	<u>1987–88</u>	<u>1988–89</u>	<u>1989–90</u>
1990s:	<u>1990–91</u>	<u>1991–92</u>	<u>1992–93</u>	<u>1993–94</u>	<u>1994–95</u>	<u>1995–96</u>	<u>1996–97</u>	<u>1997–98</u>	<u>1998–99</u>	<u>1999–00</u>
2000s:	<u>2000–01</u>	<u>2001–02</u>	<u>2002–03</u>	<u>2003–04</u>	<u>2004–05</u>	<u>2005–06</u>	<u>2006–07</u>	<u>2007–08</u>	<u>2008–09</u>	<u>2009–10</u>
2010s:	<u>2010–11</u>	<u>2011–12</u>	<u>2012–13</u>	<u>2013–14</u>	<u>2014–15</u>	<u>2015–16</u>	<u>2016–17</u>	<u>2017–18</u>	<u>2018–19</u>	<u>2019–20</u>
2020s:	<u>2020–21</u>	<u>2021–22</u>	<u>2022–23</u>							

See also

-
- Episkyros
- Greek football clubs in European competitions
- List of football stadiums in Greece
- Sport in Greece

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Football in Kosovo

Football in Kosovo is governed by the [Football Federation of Kosovo](#), which was created in 1946, as a branch of the Yugoslav Football Association. Prishtina, is the club from Kosovo with most participations in the [Yugoslav First League](#). Football is the most popular sport in Kosovo.

The [Football Superleague of Kosovo](#) is the top division of football in Kosovo. The division was set up in 1945 as a regional league within the [Yugoslav football league system](#).

In 2008, [Kosovo](#) declared its independence from [Serbia](#). Until 2016, membership in [UEFA](#) and [FIFA](#) had been denied due to Kosovo's disputed recognition as an independent state. However, Kosovo was also not a member of the [NF Board](#), which represents non-FIFA territories, including unrepresented cultural groups and unrecognized states. Some football clubs, especially from [North Kosovo](#), refuse to enter the Republic of Kosovo's institutions and continue to be part of the Football Association of Serbia. On 3 May 2016, Kosovo became the 55th member of UEFA after a 28-24 vote in their favour, and on 13 May 2016, Kosovo gained FIFA membership after a 141-23 vote in their favour.

History

The first football match ever played in Kosovo took place in [Prizren](#) in 1912 between two Austro-Hungarian teams.^[1]

The first football clubs in Kosovo were formed after the First World War and they competed in the [Belgrade Football Subassociation](#) provincial leagues within the Yugoslav football league system.

During the [Second World War](#), Yugoslavia was invaded by [Axis](#) powers, and most of Kosovo became part of German- Italian-dominated [Albanian Kingdom](#). Several city teams from Kosovo played during the war in the [Albanian championship](#). Two Kosovar Albanian players made headlines in Italian Serie A, [Riza Lushta](#) and [Naim Kryeziu](#).^[2]

In 1945, Kosovo was reintegrated into Serbia and Yugoslavia. Football Federation of Kosovo was founded in 1946 and in 1948 was co-founder of ex-FF of Yugoslavia with equal rights and duties until 1991. FC Prishtina and KF Trepça made it to the [Yugoslav First League](#). In 1992 SFR Yugoslavia became FR Yugoslavia. In that period, all Albanian football players abandoned the Yugoslavian league and were part of the Independent League of Kosovo (1991) and first played match was Flamurtari - Prishtina(13 September 1991). First goal of Independent league was scored by Eroll Salihu, actually General Secretary of FFK.

During this Yugoslav period most of the best players from Kosovo, regardless if Serb or Albanian, usually continued their career in stronger Yugoslav clubs. Examples are Gorani [Fahrudin Jusufi](#) (European vice-champion in 1966 with [Partizan](#)), Albanians [Xhevat Prekazi](#), [Fadil Vokrri](#), [Isa Sadriu](#), [Agim Cana](#), [Ardian Kozniku](#) and [Kujtim Shala](#), Serbs [Stevan Stojanović](#) (goalkeeper of Red Star Belgrade when they won the European and world club title in 1991), [Goran Đorović](#), [Marko Perović](#), [Darko Spalević](#), [Nenad Vanić](#), [Milan Biševac](#), [Miloš Krasić](#) and others. While all Kosovar Serbian and most Kosovar Albanian players represented Yugoslavia internationally, some opted to represent [Albania](#), like [Besnik Hasi](#) or [Mehmet Dragusha](#).

Three football players that were born in Kosovo ([Milutin Šoškić](#), [Fahrudin Jusufi](#), [Vladimir Durković](#)) were part of the Yugoslavia national football team, who won the gold medal at the [1960 Summer Olympics](#) and the silver medal at the [1960 European Championship](#)

After the Kosovo War in 1999, most Kosovar Albanian players opted for emigration and represented either the countries they emigrated in, or Albania. Some of them are Arjan Beqaj, Etrit Berisha, Lorik Cana, Debatik Curri, Armend Dallku, Besnik Hasi for Albania, Mehmet and Perparim Hetemaj, Njazi and Shefki Kuqi for Finland, Fatos Beqiraj, Jovan Tanasijević for Montenegro, Ardian Gashi for Norway, Emir Bajrami and Ertan Fejzullahu for Sweden, Valon Behrami, Albert Bunjaku, Milaim Rama, Xherdan Shaqiri and Granit Xhaka for Switzerland

The Kosovo national football team was formed in the early 1990s and has played a number of friendly games. From 2014 to 2016, they played a number of matches recognised by FIFA, and from 2016 on, official FIFA matches. Their first competitive game was a 1-1 draw away to Finland in a World Cup qualifier.

League system (2020–21)

Men's

Level	Leagues/Divisions			
1	<u>Kosovo Superleague</u> (10 clubs)			
2	<u>Kosovo First League – Group A</u> (10 clubs)		<u>Kosovo First League – Group B</u> (10 clubs)	
3	<u>Kosovo Second League</u> (16 clubs)			
4	<u>Kosovo Third League – Group A</u> (16 clubs)		<u>Kosovo Third League – Group B</u> (18 clubs)	
	Dukagjini Plain's Group A (8 clubs)	Kosovo Plain's Group A (8 clubs)	Dukagjini Plain's Group B (10 clubs)	Kosovo Plain's Group B (8 clubs)

Women's

Level	Leagues/Divisions
1	<u>Kosovo Superleague</u> (Various by season, currently 8)
2	<u>Kosovo First League</u> (Various by season, currently 5)

Kosovar footballers

There are several ethnic Albanians from Kosovo who have played, or are playing, football for other national teams. Lorik Cana, who last played for French side Nantes, and represented Albania national football team. Valon Behrami is a Kosovo-born Swiss international who plays for Udinese Calcio. Shefki Kuqi, who last played for Premier League side Newcastle United, is a naturalized citizen of Finland. Xhevat Prekazi, best known for his career with Turkish side Galatasaray S.K., is naturalized as a citizen of Turkey. Xherdan Shaqiri is an ethnic Albanians born in Kosovo who plays for the Swiss national team and Premier League side Liverpool, Granit Xhaka is a Switzerland-born footballer who plays for the Swiss national team and Premier League side Arsenal, originally from Kosovo of Albanian descent.



The "Fadil Vokrri" Stadium, the biggest stadium in Pristina

The most famous player in women's football from Kosovo is the former German international Fatmire Alushi, who last played for French side Paris Saint-Germain, she is married to Enis Alushi, a former Kosovo international.

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Football in Montenegro

Montenegro was independent from the late middle ages until 1918, when it declared its union with Serbia and, subsequently, became part of various incarnations of Yugoslavia and the state union of Serbia and Montenegro. During this time, **football in Montenegro** was part of the wider Yugoslavian structures. As a result of the Montenegrin independence referendum held on May 21, 2006, Montenegro declared independence two weeks later, on June 3, and formed its own football association.^{[1][2]}

History

Pre-2006

Football in Montenegro, as part of Yugoslavia, was organised first by the Football Association of Yugoslavia, founded in 1919 and renamed the Football Association of Serbia and Montenegro in 2003. Yugoslavia, later Serbia and Montenegro, was one of the leading countries in European football. They twice reached the semi-finals of the World Cup (in 1930 and 1962) and twice finished runners-up in the European Championships (in 1960 and 1968). The first player from Montenegro to play in a World Cup was Milovan Jakšić who was the Yugoslav goalkeeper at 1930 World Cup. Ever since, Montenegrins were usually well represented in the Yugoslav and Serbia and Montenegro teams, some as Dragoljub Brnović, Dejan Savićević and Predrag Mijatović, became among the most prominent Yugoslav players of all time.

Initially, in the period between the two world wars, football in Yugoslavia was organised regionally. Each region had its own football subassociation which was responsible for organising its own league system which would organise the club in league competitions separated by vertically organised leagues. The top league would be formed by the best clubs within the subassociation and the winner would qualify to the Yugoslav championship where it will met with the winners of all the other subassociations. There was no Montenegro at that time, but the territory of today Montenegro was included in a slightly enlarged Zeta banovina which besides today Montenegro also included the coast of Dubrovnik including the Pelješac peninsula, Eastern Herzegovina, Raška region of today Serbia, and Western parts of Kosovo and Metohija.

The Zeta banovina had its football subassociation formed in March 1931 in Cetinje, thus becoming known as the Cetinje Football Subassociation. Since that year the Cetinje subassociation formed its league system and would organise competition regularly as the rest of Yugoslav subassociations.^[3]

The Cetinje subassociation top league was marked by the rivalry between the two major clubs, SK Crnogorac from Cetinje, and SK Balšić from Podgorica.^[4] Before the Second World War Crnogorac was the only Montenegrin club to play in the final stage of Yugoslav Championship, and it was only in one occasion, in the 1935–36 edition which was played in a cup system.

Football in Montenegro	
Country	Montenegro
Governing body	<div>Football Association of Montenegro</div>
National team(s)	<div>men's national team</div>
International competitions	
<div>Champions League</div> <div>Europa League</div> <div>Europa Conference League</div> <div>Super Cup</div> <div>FIFA Club World Cup</div> <div>FIFA World Cup (National Team)</div> <div>European Championship (National Team)</div> <div>UEFA Nations League (National Team)</div>	

Later, after 1945, the best Montenegrin clubs usually played in the Yugoslav First League. The Montenegrin Republic League was the highest league played on a Montenegrin level. It formed part of the third or fourth (depending on exact period) tier of football in Yugoslavia. The Montenegrin First League was formed in 2004 as local second tier, and after Montenegrin independence, in 2006, it became country's top level.

2006 FIFA World Cup

Following Montenegro's independence in June 2006, the Serbia team was seen as the successors to the Serbia and Montenegro team. However, at the 2006 FIFA World Cup, held in the latter half of June and in July 2006, Serbia and Montenegro continued to play, representing the two independent states of Serbia and Montenegro. Despite an impressive record in qualification for the tournament, the team struggled in a tough first round group and were eliminated having won no games, conceded ten goals and scored just two. After the tournament, the team disbanded and was replaced by Serbia.

Post-independence

The Football Association of Montenegro had been in existent as a sub-federation since March 1931, but applied for independent membership of FIFA and UEFA on June 30, 2006. Full membership of UEFA was given in January 2007. Meanwhile, the association had continued to run the Montenegrin First League as the new country's premier football competition. The winners of this will enter European competition in 2007. The new national team was organised and its debut fixture was against Hungary in Podgorica on 24 March 2007. The Montenegrin side won the match 2–1.

Domestic competitions

Exclusively domestic competition started in Montenegro when Cetinje Football Subassociation started its regular league championship in 1931.^[3]

Nowadays, the top-tier football competition in Montenegro is the Montenegrin First League. It is at the top of a pyramid of three leagues, of which the lowest, the Montenegrin Third League, is split into three regional competitions (North, Central, South). Since 2007, the champions of the Montenegrin First League enter the qualification for the UEFA Champions League; the runners-up and third-placed team will enter the UEFA Europa League, same as a Montenegrin Cup winner.

Main Cup competition is Montenegrin Cup. Lower-tier teams are playing in the Montenegrin Regional Cups, which have three divisions.

Women's competitions are existing since 2008. Top-tier competition is Montenegrin Women's League, whose champion is playing in qualification for UEFA Women's Champions League. Another competition is Montenegrin Cup (women).

League system

Men's football

Level	League(s)/Division(s)
1	<u>Telekom 1.CFL</u> <i>10 clubs</i>
	↓↑ 1-3 clubs
2	<u>Druga Liga</u> <i>10 clubs</i>
	↓↑ 2 clubs
3	<u>Montenegrin Third League</u> <i>29 clubs</i>

Women's football

Level	League(s)/Division(s)
1	<u>Montenegrin Women's League</u> <i>8 clubs</i>

Futsal

Level	League(s)/Division(s)
1	<u>Montenegrin Futsal First League</u> <i>10 clubs</i>

Cup Competitions

- [Montenegrin Cup](#)
- [Montenegrin Regional Cups](#)
- [Montenegrin Cup \(women\)](#)

National team

The [Montenegro national team](#) played its first match in [Podgorica](#) on March 24, 2007, when they beat [Hungary](#) 2–1.^[5] Its home stadium is [Podgorica city stadium](#) and its coach is Montenegrin footballer [Zoran Filipović](#). Montenegro are members of UEFA and play in a red kit with yellow trim. After independence in June 2006, Montenegro was still represented by the [Serbia and Montenegro team](#) which had qualified for the [2006 FIFA World Cup](#). Serbia and Montenegro's final game in this tournament, a 3–2 defeat against [Ivory Coast](#) was the final game for the unified side.

The unofficial, debut Montenegro national team match was on 18 May 1939. The controversy involves the meaning or designaton of *national team*. The team of Montenegrin players that travelled to Yugoslav (Serbia) capital [Belgrade](#) by mid May 1939, which was formed of players from [Podgorica](#), [Tivat](#), [Kotor](#) and [Cetinje](#), corresponded to what was the first attempt to gather the best Montenegrin players in one team and play against an adversary. The team was not known as *Montenegro*, or anything of the kind, but was the selection of the best players of the Cetinje subassociation. Other subassociations within Yugoslavia had this tradition of selecting their best players to form a team which would be the subassociation selection, longly established, but in the Cetinje subassociation case, this was the first time, and since, the Cetinje subassociation corresponded to Zeta banovina, which in turn corresponded to both, historical and modern Montenegro, this team was from the beginning considered as the Montenegro's best selection of players, thus, unofficially, the Montenegro national team. They travelled to Belgrade to play against the strong [Bekgrade subassocuation team](#), and the game was to be a prelude to great FIFA-sponsored game between [Yugoslavia](#) and [England](#). First Cetinje versus Belgrade subassociations and then the Yugoslavia versus England games were to be played at the BSK stadium, which at time had a capacity of 30.000 spectators and was the biggest and most modern in the Balkans (after Second World War and reconstruction it became the [Partizan Stadium](#)).^[6]

That year, the [Football Association of Yugoslavia](#) was celebrating its 20th birthday, and the decision to mark the occasion with an exhibition game with none less them the cradle of modern football, England, cost Yugoslav FA the nothing modest value of 240.000 Yugoslav Dinars at time. The decision for the prelude of the game to be a match between Belgrade and Cetinje subassociations was mostly merith of [Đuro Čejović](#), at time president of the Cetinje subassociation and already in process of becoming the Minister of Sports in the cabinet of [Dragiša Cvetković](#), a nomination that became official slightly less than a month after the event.^[6]

The organization of the Belgrade vs Cetinje game was delegated to Cetinje subassociation secretary, Milan Bokan, and his assistant, Vlada Mitrović, while the technicalities were the responsibility of 33-year old Milan Becić, who already had a playing experience besides local Podgorica and Cetinje, also abroad, having played for [Montpellier](#) and [CA Paris](#). As they had time to prepare it, the game was filled with proud and prestige on behalve of Montenegrins, and Čejović provided 60.000 Dinars which at that time was a considerable amount, to select and properly prepare the cetinje subassociation team to present as highest quality football as possible. The selected players gathered at April 25 in [Tivat](#) where the 3-weeks preparations begin. Tivat was a logical choice as it was at time the only pitch with proper dimensions and had all other commodities such as showers.^[6]

At the beginning 27 players were selected, they were members of Cetinje teams Sloga and Crnogorac, then Podgorica teams Balšić and Crna Gora, Arsenal from Tivat, Jugosloven from Kotor, Leotar from Trebinje and Hercegovac from Bileća. Accused by authorities of gathering youth with Communist ideals, players from [Budućnost](#) or [Lovćen](#) were ignored. The first games of this team were the preparation games against [Dubrovnik](#) and the combined team of Kotor and Tivat.^[6]

As typical, media was divided and there was skepticism. The journal "Zeta" wrote that the important was not to be humiliated, specially because the game meant so much for all Montenegrins, from homeland, as much as the many living in Belgrade. Meantime, media from Belgrade, as case of [Pravda](#), were calling the attention that

football in the provinces as Montenegro has improved substantially and has been being worth much more attention for some time.^[6]

At the day of the game, the stadium was full since morning and included even extravagances such as groups of cyclists which came from Skopje on their bikes in 3 days. At 15 hours in front of a 30.000 spectators, Montenegrin team entered the field. It was formed by Ikontije Nakić, Vlado Božović, Vlado Mugoša, Vojo Mugoša, Asim Đurđević, (Jovan?) Kruška, Rogović, Jovičević, Klemen, Arsić and – Karlo Marks. The ticket for only the Montenegrins against Belgrade game was 100 Dinars. When the game started the general impression was that they played with a lot a sacrifice and gambled risking good technical skills, however, at the end the result was a 2:6 defeat. But the general impression was good as potential was seen. As comfort, they could watch the game Yugoslavia against England, which Yugoslavia bravely won 2:1.^[6]

See also

- Montenegro national football team
- Montenegrin Football Championship (1922-1940)
- Montenegrin clubs in Yugoslav football competitions (1946–2006)
- Football Association of Montenegro

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Football in North Macedonia

Football is the most popular sport in North Macedonia.^{[1][2]} The country became a member of FIFA in 1994.

The national team has made a few remarkable results in qualifiers for the European Championship as well as the World Cup. The most sensational result was probably the 2–2 draw away against England (October 2002). Two years later the Netherlands were held to a 2–2 draw at home (October 2004). The away-game the following year in Amsterdam also ended with a draw (0–0). On October 7, 2006, once again England was held to a draw in Manchester. On November 17, 2007, North Macedonia beat the group winners, Croatia, 2–0.

Format

The governing body of football in North Macedonia is the Football Federation of North Macedonia. It oversees the organization of:

- Leagues:
 - Macedonian First Football League
 - Macedonian Second Football League
 - Macedonian Third Football League
 - Macedonian Municipal Football Leagues
- Cup tournaments:
 - Macedonian Football Cup
 - Macedonian Football Super Cup
- National teams:
 - North Macedonia national football team
 - North Macedonia national under-21 football team
 - North Macedonia national under-19 football team
 - North Macedonia national under-17 football team
 - North Macedonia women's national football team

Note: the aforementioned competitions are for men if not stated differently. Women's football exists but is much less developed or popular.

Teams

By far the most popular clubs in the country are Vardar (Skopje), Rabotnichki (Skopje), Shkëndija (Tetovo), Pelister (Bitola) and Pobeda (Prilep).

History

The beginnings of football in North Macedonia date back to the early 20th century in the then Ottoman Empire, with the first recorded match taking place in Skopje in April 1909. At that place was erected a monument in the form of soccer ball weighing about 250 pounds, because it was the first official soccer match played on the territory of North Macedonia. The monument was erected here in 1979.^[3]

After the First World War, the region had become part of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes (renamed to Yugoslavia in 1929). A match was played in Skopje on April 20, 1919. It was the selection of the English army composed of the best players among the recruits, against Napredok of Skopje, Napredok would win the match by the score of 2-0. Since 1920, the clubs from the current territory of the Republic of North Macedonia had competed in the Yugoslav league system. First they were part of the Belgrade Football Subassociation (1920–1927), and later, in 1927, a separate Skoplje Football Subassociation was formed. The creation of the later made it considerably easier for Macedonian clubs to access Yugoslav First League since the Subassocion leagues functioned as qualifying leagues for the Yugoslav national championship and they avoided the clubs from Belgrade. Gragjanski Skopje became usual participant during the late 1930s in the Yugoslav top tier. By the late 1930s and early 1940s the league system was changed, and Macedonian clubs competed within the Serbian league.

In 1941, as a result of the Second World War, most of Vardar Macedonia was administered by the Kingdom of Bulgaria. The football clubs and leagues were restructured and incorporated into the Bulgarian league system. From 1941 until 1944, the strongest clubs from the region competed in the Bulgarian Championship. During that time, the selection of Macedonian clubs played against the selection of the German army, and played matches against Bulgaria. During this period, several players from Vardar Macedonia represented the Bulgaria national team.

In 1945, at the end of the Second World War, the region was reincorporated into Yugoslavia, and SR Macedonia was established as one of the 6 constituent socialist republics of SFR Yugoslavia. The best Macedonian clubs usually competed in the Federal leagues, First and Second Yugoslav leagues, while the Macedonian Republic League was formed to serve as qualifying league for the federal ones. In 1945, after the Second World War, a section of the Association of Sports in Skopje with Gustav Vlahov as president, was created. Finally on 14 August 1949, the Macedonian Football

Football in North Macedonia	
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Country	 North Macedonia
Governing body	<u>Football Federation of North Macedonia</u>
National team(s)	 North Macedonia
First played	1909
National competitions	
<div><div><div></div><div><u>FIFA World Cup</u></div></div><div><div></div><div><u>UEFA European Championship</u></div></div><div><div></div><div><u>UEFA Nations League</u></div></div></div>	
Club competitions	
List	<div><div><div></div><div>League</div></div><div><div></div><div>1. <u>MFL</u></div></div><div><div></div><div>2. <u>MFL</u></div></div><div><div></div><div>3. <u>MFL</u></div></div><div><div></div><div>4. <u>MFL</u></div></div><div><div></div><div>Cups:</div></div><div><div></div><div><u>Macedonian Football Cup</u></div></div><div><div></div><div><u>Macedonian Super Cup</u></div></div></div>
International competitions	
<div><div><div></div><div><u>FIFA Club World Cup</u></div></div><div><div></div><div><u>UEFA Champions League</u></div></div><div><div></div><div><u>UEFA Europa League</u></div></div><div><div></div><div><u>UEFA Europa Conference League</u></div></div><div><div></div><div><u>UEFA Super Cup</u></div></div></div>	

Association was formed and was part of the Football Association of Yugoslavia until 1991, when North Macedonia declared independence. The first president of the Football Federation of Macedonia was Ljubisav Ivanov - Dzingo. The best Macedonian players were part of the Yugoslav national team.

In 1991, North Macedonia became an independent sovereign nation as the Republic of Macedonia which would change to the Republic of North Macedonia in 2019. Macedonian clubs abandoned the Yugoslav football league system and created their own league system. The first championship in North Macedonia was organized in the season 1992/93, in which 18 teams participated. Vardar from Skopje was the first champion without a lost match. They would also win the first ever Macedonian Cup. In 1994, North Macedonia became a member of FIFA and UEFA after the break-up of SFR Yugoslavia. In 1995, for the first time Macedonian clubs participated in European Cup matches. As champions, FK Vardar played in the UEFA Cup against Hungarian side Békéscsaba and lost 1–2 on aggregate. FK Sileks played in the UEFA Cup Winners' Cup, eliminating Vác Samsung in the first qualifying round before losing to Borussia Mönchengladbach in the next round.

The national team began its football journey with a 4–1 win against Slovenia in a friendly on 13 October 1993 under coach Andon Dončevski. They went on to win their next two friendlies against Slovenia and Estonia before suffering their first loss against Turkey on 31 August 1994 (before this they lost to Club Atlético Peñarol 0–4 in Montevideo in February 1994). The inaugural North Macedonia side featured Darko Pančev, who won the European Champions League with Red Star Belgrade in 1991 and also played for Internazionale in Italy. The Euro 96 Qualifiers was the first major qualifying tournament that North Macedonia participated in as an independent nation and they were grouped with Spain, Denmark, Belgium, Cyprus, and Armenia. In their opening game, which was also their first ever official match, North Macedonia was drawn against the reigning European Champions Denmark. The game was played at the City Stadium in Skopje on 7 September 1994 and it finished 1–1 (the first goal was scored by Mitko Stojkovski) with North Macedonia leading for most of the game after scoring in the fourth minute. Since then, North Macedonia has been participating in all FIFA and UEFA sanctioned qualifying tournaments.

In 2016, the national U-21 team qualified for the final tournament of 2017 UEFA European Under-21 Championship after finishing first in qualification group 3 behind France, Iceland, Ukraine, Scotland and Northern Ireland. That was the first time that the any national football team of North Macedonia qualified for a major tournament.^[4] In 2017, North Macedonia's capital Skopje were host the 2017 UEFA Super Cup between Real Madrid and Manchester United. Also, in that year, Vardar advanced to the group stage of the UEFA Europa League, after winning over two matches against Turkish giants Fenerbahçe in the play-off round, marking the first time that any Macedonian club qualified for the group stage of any European competition.^[5]

League system

As of the 2023/24 season. Leagues that have not been held in successive seasons have been marked as *inactive*.



Goran Pandev is a five-time Macedonian player of the year who has spent most of his career in Italy

Level	League(s)/Division(s)				
1	1. MFL <i>12 clubs</i>				
2	2. MFL <i>16 clubs</i>				
3	3. MFL North <i>14 clubs</i>	3. MFL South <i>11 clubs</i>	3. MFL East <i>9 clubs</i>	3. MFL West <i>8 clubs</i>	3. MFL Southwest <i>9 clubs</i>
4	4. MFL North Groups: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 4.MFL Skopje 4.MFL Kisela Voda 4.MFL Gazi Baba 4.MFL Kumanovo 4.MFL Lipkovo <i>(inactive)</i> 4.MFL¹ Kratovo <i>(inactive)</i> 	4. MFL South Groups: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 4.MFL Prilep 4.MFL Veles 4.MFL Kavadarci 4.MFL Negotino 	4. MFL East Groups: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 4.MFL Kochani 4.MFL Valandovo 4.MFL Vinica <i>(inactive)</i> 4.MFL Shtip <i>(inactive)</i> 4.MFL Sveti Nikole <i>(inactive)</i> 4.MFL Probishtip <i>(inactive)</i> 4.MFL Strumica <i>(inactive)</i> 4.MFL Radovish <i>(inactive)</i> 4.MFL Gevgelija <i>(inactive)</i> 	4. MFL West Groups: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 4.MFL Tetovo 4.MFL Kichevo 4.MFL Gostivar <i>(inactive)</i> 	4. MFL Southwest Groups: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 4.MFL Bitola 4.MFL Ohrid 4.MFL Struga 4.MFL Resen <i>(inactive)</i> 4.MFL Demir Hisar <i>(inactive)</i> 4.MFL Makedonski Brod <i>(inactive)</i>
5	5.MFL <i>Only Bitola, Kumanovo and Prilep host 5.MFL Leagues.</i>				

¹ Teams from Kratovo and Kriva Palanka usually get grouped together.

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External links

- Macedonian Football (<http://www.macedonianfootball.com/>) (in English)
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Retrieved from "https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Football_in_North_Macedonia&oldid=1180180071"

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Football in Romania

Football is the most popular sport in Romania.^[1] The Romanian Football Federation (Romanian: *Federația Română de Fotbal* or FRF), a member of UEFA, is the sport's national governing body.

History


The pre-war period

The Bucharest architect Gheorghe Radu Stănculescu discovered in a document from the archives of the British Navy that English sailors were playing football in the Danube area in 1865. This detail emerges from a document from the archives of the British Navy. It is a report by the commander of the military ship HMS "Cockatrice", marine lieutenant Gillson, addressed to Admiral Lord Paget, commander of the Mediterranean Fleet of the "Royal Navy". In his report dated January 26, 1866 (see facsimiles), Lieutenant Gillson disclosed that he had ordered "the vessel's usual anchorage to be changed to another place, where she was now exposed to the breezes, and near which was a field which served as an excellent recreation ground for cricket, quoits and football".

Another article from the press of the time from 1888 mentioned that in Arad, "a group of young people was hitting the ball". In 1890, the dentist Iuliu Weiner brought to Arad - from London, where he had studied in England - the first rules of the game written on paper, as well as the first "real" soccer ball on the territory of today's Romania. (Until then, the balls were "improvised"). Weiner promotes the new game, demonstrating its practice on the field in front of the current Arada high school no. 1.

On June 25, 1899, in Timișoara, the first football match on the current territory of Romania was organized on the Velocitas field, between students of the 6th and 7th grades of the Piarist High School, under the leadership of Professor Karl Müller. This was the first football match that respected the rules of the game from that period, although football had been played in Bucharest since 1885, in the area of the "Bolta Rece" restaurant (in the area where the Arc de Triomphe is located today). On April 26, 1902, in Timișoara, young people from the Iosefin neighborhood founded the Timișoara Football Club, later the Timișoara Athletic Club. It was the first exclusive football club founded on today's territory of Romania. But the first interclub football match took place on August 20, 1902, on the field at Pădurea Verde, in front of 100 spectators. FC Timișoara lost to Reuniunea de Sport Lugoj with a score of 2-3.

In Cluj, as early as 1875, sports tournaments of the city's multi-sport clubs were organized. Football was not allowed within the city limits, so the games took place on the meadow to the east (today Nicolae Titulescu Boulevard). Since 1900, football matches have also taken place within

Football in Romania	
	
Arena Națională in the capital Bucharest, used by FCSB and also the Romania national football team	
Country	Romania
Governing body	Romanian Football Federation
National team(s)	Men's national team
First played	1909
National competitions	
FIFA World Cup	
UEFA European Championship	
UEFA Nations League	
Club competitions	
List	[show]
League:	
Liga I	
Liga II	
Liga III	
Liga IV	
Cups:	
Cupa României	
Supercupa României	
International competitions	
FIFA Club World Cup	
UEFA Champions League	
UEFA Europa League	
UEFA Europa Conference League	
UEFA Super Cup	

these events, with the winners receiving silver medals and the finalists bronze. From the 1907-1908 season , the first official matches on the territory of our country took place in Cluj, within the second Hungarian league, followed the following season in Arad.

The first official football match in the Kingdom of Romania was played in 1907 near Kiseleff Street, Bucharest on an improvised pitch. The Romanians just watched. The competitors were English and German, employed in the textile or oil industry in Bucharest, Ploiesti or Câmpina. The chronicle of that game, published in the extraordinary magazine "From the world of sports", is considered a birth certificate for Romanian football.

The first domestic football competition was the ASAR Cup (Association of Athletic Societies of Romania), founded in October 1909. It included three clubs: Colentina and Olimpia from Bucharest (which won the title), and United from Ploiesti .

The interwar period

The first national championship Division A with all the reunited territories was in the 1921-22 season, and the most successful Romanian teams from the interwar period are Venus Bucharest , with seven titles, Chinezul Timișoara with six (consecutive) titles and Ripensia Timișoara with four. Since 1934, the Romanian Cup has also been held, the first winner being Ripensia Timișoara. Also in that season, the B division was established, followed two years later by the C division. In 1930 and 1934, the Romanian national team participated in the world championships.

At the end of the 30s, the Romanian teams make their debut in the European cups, a resounding victory achieved by Ripensia defeating AC Milan 3-0.

The post-war period

After the war, teams like UTA Arad , FC Argeș Pitești and the University of Craiova win the championship and qualify for the upper stages of European competitions.

The most famous football club in Romania is Steaua București , which in 1986 was the first team from Eastern Europe and the only one from Romania to win the European Champions Cup . Also, in 1989 he played another European Champions Cup final. It is the club with the most titles, 25, and the most Romanian Cups , 21. Steaua also managed to equal the performance of Chinese Timișoara, winning the title 6 times in a row between 1992-98.

Stele's rivals, Dinamo Bucharest , won 18 titles and 13 cups, and played a semi-final of the European Champions Cup in 1984, and in 1990 the semi -final of the UEFA Cup Winners' Cup .

Under the management of Walter Zenga , Steaua qualified for the UEFA Cup groups in the 2004–05 season, with Zenga qualifying a Romanian team in the "European Spring" for the first time since 1993 (when Steaua also reached the quarter-finals of the Cup Winners' Cup). Since 2006, League I is composed of 18 teams, of which the last 4 are relegated. This year the championship changed its name from Division A to League I. In the 2005-2006 season , Steaua București and Rapid Bucharest reached the quarter-finals of the 2006 UEFA Cup. Steaua reached the semi-finals of the UEFA Cup, being eliminated on the edge of Middlesbrough FC and qualified three times in a row in the groups of the Champions League. Among the outstanding matches in the League are those with Dynamo Kyiv , score 4-1 and with Lyon, 1-1.

At the start of the 2006–07 season , the competition was forced to change its name from Division A to League I due to a trademark dispute over the name. In the new format, Dinamo Bucharest won its 18th title in history, 16th in a row for teams from Bucharest. CFR Cluj opened the way for a decade of dominance in the province, teams like Unirea Urziceni , Oțelul Galați , Astra Giurgiu or Viitorul Constanța won the title for the first time in history. Unirea Urziceni accumulated 8 points, a record for Romania in the league groups. CFR Cluj was the most prolific club in the last two decades, winning 8 championships, 4 cups and 2 super cups. CFR Cluj also produced

some records, 10 points in the Champions League groups, 12 points in the Europa League groups and 10 points in the Conference League groups and a premiere, it was the first club from the province to win the Romanian Super Cup.

Among the most important players in the domestic championship in recent history are Ionel Danciulescu with the most appearances (515) and Eric de Oliveira foreign player with the most goals scored in League I (66).

National championship

Professional league football began in Romania as Divizia A in 1909. The name of the top-flight league was changed to Liga I before the 2006–07 season. Currently, domestic play is organized in a four tier league system comprising Liga I, Liga II, Liga III, and various county leagues.^[2]

SuperLiga României

The country's top-flight division is SuperLiga României. The league contains 16 teams, with the champion going into the first qualify round in the UEFA Champions League. The runner-up starts in the second qualify round in the UEFA Conference League, where the 3rd also enters the first qualify round. Steaua București (FCSB))is the most successful club in the history of Liga I, having won 23 league championships and being runner-up 12 times. Dinamo București is the only other club with sustained success in Liga I, having won 18 titles. The two clubs at the bottom of the league table are relegated to Liga II and the 13th and 14th placed teams plays in the relegation playoffs against the 3rd and 4th placed teams from Liga II.

Lower divisions

Liga II is the second division on the Romanian football pyramid and it has 20 teams. The first and second place teams are promoted while the third and fourth placed teams will have to play a play-off with the teams that finished 13th respectively 14th in Liga I.After the regular season, the top six teams advance to the promotion group, while the other 14 are allocated to two groups of seven, specifically termed the relegation groups. The team finishing 7th and 6th in these relegation groups faces relegation to the third division,while the teams that have finished 5th in each group participate in a playoff to determine who stays clear of relegation.^[3]

Liga III contains 100 teams.In Phase I, there's a regular season with 10 series, each consisting of 10 teams playing home and away matches, totaling 18 rounds or 18 matches for each team. Phase II is named the championship part, where each series features a play-off among the top four and a play-out among the remaining six teams.After Phase II concludes, we move to the final part of the championship. In Phase III, only the top two teams from the play-offs, totaling 20 teams, will participate. Two promotion rounds will take place.After Phase II concludes, we move to the final part of the championship. In Phase III, only the top two teams from the play-offs, totaling 20 teams, will participate. Two promotion rounds will take place.The five winners of the final round will earn promotion to the Liga II.

Cup competitions

In addition to league, there are three major cup competitions: the Cupa României, open to all Romanian professional football clubs, the Supercupa României, which matches the champions of Liga I and the winners of the Cupa României, and the Cupa Ligii(defunct). In case the same team achieves the double by winning both the Liga I and Cupa României, the Supercupa is disputed between that club and the league's runner-up.

Qualification for European competitions

Competition	Round	Who Qualifies ^[4]
<u>UEFA Champions League</u>	First Qualifying Round	<u>Liga I</u> Champion
<u>UEFA Europa Conference League</u>	Second Qualifying Round	Winner of the <u>Cupa României</u>
	Second Qualifying Round	<u>Liga I</u> Runner-up
	Second Qualifying Round	<u>Liga I</u> Third placed club

Romania national football team

The Romania national football team played its first match in 1922 and is one of only four national teams to have taken part in the first three World Cups, the other three being Brazil, France, and Belgium. Overall, they have played in seven World Cups, most recently in 1998. They have also competed in four European Championships, most recently in 2016. The team's most successful period was in the 1990s when, led by Gheorghe Hagi, they reached the quarterfinals of the 1994 World Cup. They also reached the last 16 of the 1998 World Cup, and the quarter-finals of Euro 2000.

World Cup squads

- 1930 FIFA World Cup
- 1934 FIFA World Cup
- 1938 FIFA World Cup
- 1970 FIFA World Cup
- 1990 FIFA World Cup
- 1994 FIFA World Cup
- 1998 FIFA World Cup

European Champions squads

- UEFA Euro 1984
- UEFA Euro 1996
- UEFA Euro 2000
- UEFA Euro 2008
- UEFA Euro 2016

Domestic football

Many old, traditional teams in the first division have experienced financial difficulties, eventually leading to relegation and even dissolution, such as Politehnica Timișoara, Universitatea Cluj, Universitatea Craiova, Rapid București, Petrolul Ploiești, FC Brașov, FC Argeș, Oțelul Galați, Ceahlăul Piatra Neamț, Politehnica Iași and Pandurii Târgu Jiu. They were replaced by teams with less tradition in the first level of the Romanian league system, such as Botoșani, Concordia Chiajna, Dunărea Călărași, Hermannstadt Sibiu, Juventus București, Viitorul Constanța, Sepsi Sfântu Gheorghe or Voluntari.

Dissolved traditional teams were usually re-founded by supporters' associations or by municipalities. The fact that they bore similar names and colors to the original teams made neutral fans call them "clones".^[5] Some of these teams later re-gained the record and official name of the original ones.

The country's most successful team, Steaua București, also lost the right to use its name (and logo) and changed it to FCSB.

A number of modern stadiums have been built in the country, with the most notable examples being Arena Națională, Cluj Arena, Ilie Oană Stadium, Stadionul Ion Oblemenco, Stadionul Tudor Vladimirescu and Stadionul Francisc von Neuman.^[6]

Largest Romanian football stadiums

Overall rank	Stadium	Capacity	City	Club	Open
1	<u>Arena Națională</u>	55,634	<u>Bucharest</u>	Romania national Football team, FCSB	2011
2	<u>Stadionul Dan Păltinișanu</u>	32,972	<u>Timișoara</u>	<u>ASU Politehnica Timișoara</u> , <u>Ripensia Timișoara</u>	1960
3	<u>Stadionul Iftimie Iliei</u>	32,700	<u>Medgidia</u>	<u>CS Medgidia</u>	1983
4	<u>Stadionul Steaua</u>	31,254	<u>Bucharest</u>	<u>Steaua București</u>	2021
5	<u>Stadionul Ion Oblemenco</u>	30,983	<u>Craiova</u>	FC U Craiova 1948 , Universitatea Craiova	2017
6	<u>Cluj Arena</u>	30,201	<u>Cluj-Napoca</u>	Universitatea Cluj	2011

See also

- Romanian Professional Football League
- Sport in Romania
- Match fixing in Romanian football
- Romanian Football Federation
- Romania national football team
- Romania national football team players
- Romania national under-21 football team
- Romania national under-19 football team
- Romania national under-17 football team
- Romania women's national football team
- Romanian football league system
- List of football stadiums in Romania

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Football in Serbia

Football is the most popular sport **in Serbia**. The Football Association of Serbia (*FSS*) is the national governing body and is responsible for overseeing all aspects of the game of football in the country, both professional and amateur. The association organizes the professional Serbian Superliga (top tier) and is responsible for appointing the management of the men's, women's, and youth national football teams in Serbia. The association also organizes the Serbian First League (second) and Serbian League (third), operating the top 3 leagues.

The FSS is also responsible for organizing the Serbian Cup, the country's league cup competition. It has been played from the end of the 19th century and there were a number of very successful Serbian football players and coaches throughout history.

One of Serbia's top football clubs Red Star Belgrade has won the prestigious European Champions Cup in 1991 and has also won the Intercontinental Cup the same year.^[1] Its local rival Partizan Belgrade was the first Southeast and Eastern European football club to reach the European Champions Cup final, when it did so in 1966. The most successful and popular teams are Red Star and Partizan from Belgrade as well as Vojvodina from Novi Sad. An important role also played OFK Belgrade and Radnički Niš in the history of the Serbian football

History

Kingdom of Serbia

Football first came to Serbia in the spring of 1896 when a Jewish student, Hugo Buli, after he had returned from his studies in Germany, brought the first football from Berlin to Belgrade. He brought the ball to his friends from the Belgrade gymnastics society Soko, and founded the first football section in Southeast Europe on 12 May.^[2]

The inaugural meeting of the First Serbian Football Society (*Prvo srpsko društvo za igranje loptom*) took place on 1 May 1899, at the restaurant *Trgovačka kafana*, at initiative of Hugo Buli, and with support of Andra Nikolić, who was then Minister of Foreign Affairs in the Kingdom of Serbia. Feti Bey, the Turkish consul in Belgrade, was elected as President, and the lawyer Mihailo Živadinović as the Vice-President. In spring 1899, the first football field was built in the Topčider neighbourhood of Belgrade, and the first match was played in May that year between two teams of the members of the football society.^[2]

Most of the first Serbian football clubs were multi-sports societies which included football sections. The first football club was founded in Subotica in 1898, the Szabadkai Sport Egylet (Sport Club Szabad), among the then fans better known simply as "Sport", within which was formed a football section in 1898 on the initiative of player and enthusiast Zoltán Wagner.^[3]

Football in Serbia	
<div></div>	
Home stadium of club <u>Red Star Belgrade</u>	
Country	Serbia
Governing body	<u>Football Association of Serbia</u>
National team(s)	<u>Serbia national football team</u>
First played	1896
Registered players	120,194
Clubs	2,770
National competitions	
<u>FIFA World Cup</u>	
<u>UEFA European Championship</u>	
<u>UEFA Nations League</u>	
Club competitions	
League	
<u>Serbian SuperLiga</u>	
<u>Serbian First League</u>	
Cups	
<u>Serbian Cup</u>	
International competitions	
<u>FIFA Club World Cup</u>	
<u>UEFA Champions League</u>	
<u>UEFA Europa League</u>	
<u>UEFA Conference League</u>	
<u>UEFA Super Cup</u>	

Another club was founded in Subotica on May 3, 1901, the Sports Athletic Club Bačka. More than two years later, on 14 September 1903, the football club Šumadija was founded in Kragujevac. The Subotica clubs were older, but at the time of the foundation of Sport and Bačka, the city of Subotica was part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, while Kragujevac was on the territory of the then kingdom of Serbia. Being still active, Bačka is the oldest club in nowadays Serbia. Just following the foundation of Šumadija, Soko was founded in Belgrade, and thus became the first football club from the capital city. Since then several other clubs were formed such as Srpski mač in 1906, BSK in 1911 and SK Velika Srbija (later renamed to SK Jugoslavija) in 1913.^[4]

In spring 1914, the Serbian Olympic Committee organised the first ever trophy to be played among the best football clubs of the Kingdom of Serbia. It was played in a single-round robin system, and in the final held in Belgrade it was won by Velika Srbija.^[5] This seemed to be a promising start of an organised football tournament to be held regularly, however later that same year the Austro-Hungarian Empire declared war against Serbia in what will be the beginning of the First World War and the halt of all recreational and sports activities in Serbia.

Kingdom of Yugoslavia

At the end of the First World War the boundaries in the region were changed and the Serbian state was part of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, later in 1929 renamed into Kingdom of Yugoslavia.^[6] The Yugoslav Football Association (*Jugoslovenski nogometni savez*) was founded at a meeting in Zagreb, on 18 April 1919. The founding assembly was presided Danilo Stojanović, popularly known as *Čika Dača*, important because he was the founder of several football clubs such as Šumadija, BSK and others.

In 1919 the Belgrade Football Subassociation formed the first league tournament that started being held regularly since its inaugural season in 1919–20. The first Yugoslav state championship was launched in 1923. The championships were played until 1940, and in this period the best Serbian clubs won seven state championship titles: BSK five and SK Jugoslavija two. The interruption of the championship occurred due to disagreements between the sub-associations, which culminated in 1929 when the YFA Assembly was dissolved. The differences were resolved in February 1930, after three months of crisis. An extraordinary Assembly was convened, and it took place in Zagreb on 16 May 1930. It was voted that the association's headquarters be moved to the state capital, Belgrade, and that the name of the association would be changed into Yugoslav Football Association (*Fudbalski savez Jugoslavije*). BSK, along with HŠK Građanski, dominated the state scene until the beginning of World War II.

This period was marked by the mass popularization of football. The national league was dominated by clubs from Belgrade and Zagreb, but within Belgrade major rivalry was created between BSK and Jugoslavija (Reds and Blues respectively) creating what will be the Eternal derby of that period. The rivalry expanded throughout the country, more intensely in Serb populated areas but in others as well, dividing citizens between Reds and Blues. Best league players became real media stars, and some became real heartbreakers among the female population, as was Bane Sekulić.^[7]

The year of 1935 marked the professionalization of football in Yugoslavia, with the replacement of amateur status to the professional one, and the introduction of contracts for players.^[8]

On the assembly of the Yugoslav Football Association held on October 1, 1939, a decision was made to rename the FA into Serbian Football Association, after earlier that year the FA's of Croatia and Slovenia were formed, and the delegates of Ljubljana, Osijek, Split and Zagreb subassociations decided to abandon the Yugoslav Football Association.^[9]

Socialist Yugoslavia

The end of the war was the beginning of the reconstruction, and the devastated football grounds and stadiums, as well as the football clubs needed to be restored.^[10] On 25 February 1945, the football club Metalac was founded, later its name was changed into BSK, and then into OFK Beograd, as successor to the tradition of the

pre-war Beogradski Sport Klub (BSK). The Red Star Belgrade was formed on 4 March 1945, and Partizan Belgrade on 4 October of the same year. Some clubs were disbanded by the new socialist authorities, many on the ideological basis, for being considered too cosmopolitan and representative of the abolished monarchy, such as Jugoslavija or Jedinstvo Beograd, and some had simply disappeared due to man loss and long inactivity during the war. Some clubs were initially disbanded but shortly after, restored, the BASK case being the most evident, while a few top league clubs had continued their activity, as Vojvodina Novi Sad, RFK Novi Sad, Mačva Šabac and Radnički Kragujevac.

Contemporary period

After the dissolution of Yugoslavia, and the separation of Montenegro, on 26 June 2006, the Football Association of Serbia was admitted to the membership of FIFA and UEFA, as legal successor to all the previous national associations whose part it was. By this the world and European federations have acknowledged the continuity of football in the territory of Serbia, and the decisive role of Serbia in creating the history of the game in Western Balkans since the end of the 19th century. In recent years, many top Serbian players such as Dejan Stanković, Nemanja Vidić and Branislav Ivanović have gone on to forge successful careers in top European leagues. The U-21 team were runners-up at the 2007 UEFA Under-21 Championship having lost to the Netherlands in the final. As well, Serbia won the U-20 World Cup in 2015 in New Zealand.

Competitions

The governing body of football in Serbia is the Football Association of Serbia. It oversees the organization of:

- Leagues:
 - Serbian SuperLiga — **first league**
 - Serbian First League — **second league**
 - Serbian League (4 groups) — **third league**
 - Serbian League Belgrade
 - Serbian League East
 - Serbian League Vojvodina
 - Serbian League West
 - Serbian Zone League (10 groups) — **fourth league**
 - Belgrade Zone League
 - Banat Zone League
 - Bačka Zone League
 - Novi Sad-Syrmia Zone League
 - Drina Zone League
 - Dunav Zone league
 - Morava Zone League
 - Zone League East
 - Zone League South
 - Zone League West
 - Serbian District League (31 leagues) — **fifth league**
 - Serbian Intermunicipal League (52 leagues) — **sixth league**
 - Serbian Municipal League (57 leagues) — **seventh league**
 - Serbian Municipal Second League (6 leagues) — **eighth league**
- Cup tournaments:
 - Serbian Cup

- National teams:
 - [Serbia national football team](#)
 - [Serbia national under-21 football team](#)
 - [Serbia national under-19 football team](#)
 - [Serbia national under-17 football team](#)

Note: the aforementioned competitions are for men if not stated differently. Women's football exists but is much less developed or popular.


Teams

By far the two most popular clubs in the country are [Partizan](#) and [Crvena zvezda](#), both from [Belgrade](#).

Player of the Year

The [Serbian Footballer of the Year](#) award is an annual award given from the [Football Association of Serbia](#) to the best player of the year.

+20,000-capacity football stadiums in Serbia

Image	Stadium	Seating capacity	City	Home team	Notes
	Rajko Mitić Stadium	55,568 ^[11]	Belgrade	Crvena Zvezda	UEFA Category 4 stadium
	Partizan Stadium	29,775 ^[12]	Belgrade	Partizan Belgrade	UEFA Category 3 stadium

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Football in Slovenia

Football in Slovenia is governed by the Football Association of Slovenia (Slovene: *Nogometna zveza Slovenije*). Slovenia has been participating in international football as an independent country since 1991, when the country gained independence from SFR Yugoslavia. The Slovenia national football team has qualified for four major tournaments (UEFA Euro 2000, 2002 FIFA World Cup, 2010 FIFA World Cup, and UEFA Euro 2024).^[1]

The three biggest clubs in Slovenia are Maribor, Mura and Olimpija.^[2]

History

Since being part of Austria-Hungary, football came to the territories that are today part of Slovenia in the late 19th century from Vienna. The first football club was founded in 1900 by the German minority in Ljubljana, the Laibacher Sportverein.^[3] They were soon followed by the Hungarian minority in Lendava (Nafta in 1903) and the German minority in Celje (Athletik SK in 1906).^[4] The game soon spread among Slovenian high school students, who formed their own teams in most of Slovenia's major cities, most notable being Hermes in Ljubljana and Jugoslavija in Gorizia. In 1911, the first Slovenian citizens football club, Ilirija, was founded in Ljubljana, followed by Slovan two years later.^[4]

After the end of World War I and the creation of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, later renamed to Yugoslavia, the Yugoslav Football Association was formed, which was divided in regional subassociations. Football clubs Ilirija, Slovan and German teams from Maribor founded the Ljubljana Football Subassociation in 1920, which is the forerunner of today's Football Association of Slovenia. Ljubljana Subassociation covered the territory of Slovenia and was responsible for organizing the football activities within its territory. They formed the Slovenian national team, which played its first game against France in 1921.^[5] At club level they formed a league system with several levels which started being played in 1920. The Ljubljana Subssociation first league champions played along the champions of the other Yugoslav subassociations in the Yugoslav Championship. The most successful teams were Ilirija with twelve subassociation titles, followed by I. SSK Maribor with three titles, and Primorje, SK Ljubljana and Železničar Maribor with two each. Stanko Tavčar was the first Slovenian footballer to play for the Yugoslavia national team.^[6] Most of the competitions were suspended in 1941 due to outbreak of World War II.

In SFR Yugoslavia, the majority of Slovenian clubs played in the Yugoslav football league system, while the Slovenian national team continued playing as a regional amateur selection. The first post-war champions, Nafta, competed in the Yugoslav top division in the 1946–47 season, an achievement that was later repeated only by Olimpija and Maribor. Olimpija was the most successful Slovenian team in the period; they played 22 seasons in the Yugoslav top flight, reached the Yugoslav Cup final in 1970, and also competed in European competitions on three occasions. Most Slovenian clubs usually played in the third-tier Slovenian Republic League, where the most successful teams were Maribor and Ljubljana with five titles each. During the 1945–1990 period, only a handful of Slovenian players managed to get into the Yugoslavia national team, with Branko Oblak, Srečko Katanec and Danilo Popivoda being the famous three.

Football in Slovenia	
Country	 Slovenia
Governing body	 Football Association of Slovenia
National team(s)	 men's national team
First played	1991
National competitions	
Slovenian Cup	
Club competitions	
Slovenian PrvaLiga	
Slovenian Second League	
Slovenian Third League	
International competitions	
Champions League	
Europa League	
Europa Conference League	
FIFA World Cup (national team)	
European Championship (national team)	
UEFA Nations League (national team)	

After Slovenia's independence in 1991, national league and cup competitions were formed on the basis of the old republic structures, with the first Slovenian PrvaLiga season therefore including 21 teams. In the same year, SR Slovenia regional selection reformed as the Slovenian national football team and played their first official match in 1992 against Estonia.^[7]

League system



SK Ilirija squad, which won the first Slovenian regional championship in 1920.

Level	Division								
1	Slovenian PrvaLiga 10 clubs – 1 or 2 relegations								
2	Slovenian Second League 16 clubs – 1 or 2 promotions, 2 relegations								
3	Slovenian Third League								
	West 14 clubs – 1 promotion				East 14 clubs – 1 promotion				
Slovenian Intercommunal Leagues									
4	MNZ Koper	MNZ Nova Gorica	MNZG-Kranj	MNZ Ljubljana	MNZ Celje	MNZ Maribor	MNZ Ptuj	MNZ Lendava	MNZ Murska Sobota
	Littoral League		Upper Carniola League	Ljubljana Regional League	Intercommunal League	1. MNZ League	Super League	Pomurska League	
5	N/A			MNZ League	N/A	2. MNZ League	1. Class	MNL Lendava	1. MNL
6	N/A					N/A	2. Class	N/A	N/A

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■

Football in Turkey

Football is the most popular sport in **Turkey**, followed by basketball, tracing its roots to the Ottoman Empire.^[1] The first matches were played in Ottoman Salonica in 1875. The sport was introduced by English residents.^[2] The Turkish football league system comprises five professional leagues, one of which is dedicated to female athletes.

History

League system

Süper Lig

The Süper Lig (Super League) is the top division in Turkey since 1959. The league contains 18 clubs. The champions used to receive an automatic berth in the group stage of the European Champions League until the 2020/2021 season. Galatasaray, Fenerbahçe, Beşiktaş, and Trabzonspor are the most successful Turkish clubs that participate in the competition, having won the most titles so far. Galatasaray have won the highest number of Süper Lig trophies (the club won more Süper Lig and Turkish Cup trophies than any other team).

The league ushered in clubs from all over Turkey to compete with each other. Currently, clubs finishing in the top four places in the league enter qualifying rounds of European competitions, and the winners of the Turkish Cup, if not one of the top four, are also given a spot. The three teams with the fewest points each season are relegated to the TFF First League.

The top two teams are nominated for the UEFA Champions League while the 3rd and 4th placed clubs are nominated for the UEFA Europa League.


Reserve leagues

Clubs in the Turkish football league system do not have reserve teams with the exception of Gençlerbirliği and Altınordu. Hacettepe SK is the reserve side of Gençlerbirliği, and Nigde Anadolu FK is of Altınordu. Other clubs have U21 and U18 teams which compete outside the main league system.

Amateur football

Below the four professional leagues in Turkish football are amateur leagues. Amateur football clubs include:

- Seniors' First Amateur League: 2145 clubs

Football in Turkey	
	
Atatürk Olympic Stadium has capacity of 74,753 spectators.	
Country	Turkey
Governing body	TFF
National team(s)	Turkey
First played	1898
National competitions	
Leagues	
Men's:	
<u>Süper Lig</u>	
<u>TFF First League</u>	
<u>TFF Second League</u>	
<u>TFF Third League</u>	
Women's:	
<u>Women's Super League</u>	
<u>Women's First League</u>	
<u>Women's Second League</u>	
<u>Women's Third League</u>	
Cups	
<u>Turkish Cup</u>	
<u>Turkish Super Cup</u>	
International competitions	
Club	
<u>FIFA Club World Cup</u>	
<u>UEFA Champions League</u>	
<u>UEFA Europa League</u>	

- Seniors' Second Amateur League: 1743 clubs
- Seniors' Third Amateur League: 1 club
- Women's League: 9 clubs
- Juniors' First Amateur League: 27 clubs
- Juniors' Second Amateur League: 100 clubs
- Juniorslubs
 - Antalya: 10 clubs
 - Bursa: 16 clubs
 - Istanbul: 18 clubs
 - İzmir: 12 clubs
 - Diyarbakır: 7 clubs
 - Trabzon: 13 clubs
 - Samsun: 10 clubs

UEFA Europa Conference League

UEFA Super Cup

National team

FIFA World Cup

UEFA European Championship








UEFA Nations League




Rams Park is home stadium of club Galatasaray.

Amateur clubs are put into leagues included in the Amateur League system and are eligible for promotion to the Turkish Third League.

Largest football stadiums in Turkey

#	Image	Stadium	Capacity	City	Home team(s)	Opened
1		<u>Atatürk Olympic Stadium</u>	74,753 ^[3]	<u>Istanbul</u>	Turkey, <u>Fatih Karagümrük SK</u>	2002
2		<u>Rams Park</u>	52,223 ^[4]		<u>Galatasaray SK</u>	2011
3		<u>İzmir Atatürk Stadium</u>	51,337 ^[5]	<u>İzmir</u>	<u>Karşıyaka SK</u>	1971
4		<u>Şükrü Saracoğlu Stadium</u>	47,834 ^[6]	<u>Istanbul</u>	<u>Fenerbahçe SK</u>	1908
5		<u>Bursa Metropolitan Municipality Stadium</u>	43,361 ^[7]	<u>Bursa</u>	<u>Bursaspor</u>	2015
6		<u>Vodafone Park</u>	42,590 ^[8]	<u>Istanbul</u>	<u>Beşiktaş JK</u>	2016
7		<u>Konya Metropolitan Municipality Stadium</u>	42,000 ^[9]	<u>Konya</u>	<u>Konyaspor</u>	2014
8		<u>Şenol Güneş Sports Complex</u>	40,782 ^[10]	<u>Trabzon</u>	<u>Trabzonspor</u>	2017

#	Image	Stadium	Capacity	City	Home team(s)	Opened
9		<u>Samsun 19 Mayıs Stadium</u>	33,919	<u>Samsun</u>	<u>Samsunspor</u>	2017
10	<u>Gaziantep Stadium</u>		33,502	<u>Gaziantep</u>	<u>Gaziantep F.K.</u>	2017

Cup competitions

The two major cup competitions are the Turkish Cup and Turkish Super Cup. The Turkish Cup includes clubs from every division. The Super Cup is an annual match held between the winners of the Süper Lig and Turkish Cup.

Now-defunct Turkish cup competitions include the Prime Minister's Cup, Atatürk Cup, Istanbul Football Cup and Spor Toto Cup.

Qualification for European competitions

Competition	Who Qualifies	Notes
UEFA Champions League group stage	Club finishing 1st in the Süper Lig	
UEFA Champions League third qualifying round	Club finishing 2nd in the Süper Lig	
UEFA Europa League third qualifying round	Club finishing 3rd in the Süper Lig	
UEFA Conference League second qualifying round	Club finishing 4th in the Süper Lig	
UEFA Europa League group stage	Winner of the <u>Turkish Cup</u>	If the winner is already guaranteed a place in Europe, the highest ranked club in Süper Lig which did not qualify to UEFA Champions League will replace them.
UEFA Europa League	Süper Lig club with the best UEFA Fair Play ranking that has not already qualified for Europe, but only if Turkey has the best fair play ranking or has a fair play score of above 8 and is one of the two countries drawn out of the hat	

In addition, once in a European competition, it becomes possible to qualify for others:

- All the losers of the Champions League third qualifying round go forward to the UEFA Europa League Play-off round
- All the losers of the Champions League play-off round go forward to the UEFA Europa League group stage
- Any clubs playing in the Champions League that finish third in the group stage go into the UEFA Europa League round of 32

European Competition Records

The following teams have made the last eight of European competitions:

UEFA Super Cup

- Galatasaray (**2000 – Champions**)

European Cup / UEFA Champions League

- Galatasaray (1988–89 – Semi-finals)
- Galatasaray (1962–63 – Quarter-finals)
- Galatasaray (1969–70 – Quarter-finals)
- Besiktaş (1986–87 – Quarter-finals)
- Galatasaray (1993–94 – Group stage)[‡]
- Galatasaray (2000–01 – Quarter-finals)
- Fenerbahçe (2007–08 – Quarter-finals)
- Trabzonspor (2011–12 – Group stage)*

- Galatasaray (2012–13 – Quarter-finals)

[‡] Galatasaray was one of the eight teams in the group stage of the 1993–94 UEFA Champions League, however, UEFA does not consider this a quarter-final participation.

*Fenerbahçe excluded due to matchfixing scandal

UEFA Cup / Europa League

- Galatasaray (**1999–00 – Champions**)
- Fenerbahçe (2012–13 – Semi-finals)
- Besiktaş (2002–03 – Quarter-finals)
- Besiktaş (2016–17 – Quarter-finals)

Inter-Cities Fairs Cup

- Göztepe (1968–69 – Semi-finals)

Balkans Cup

- Fenerbahçe (**1966–67 – Champions**)
- Sarıyer (**1991–92 – Champions**)
- Samsunspor (**1993–94 – Champions**)
- Eskişehirspor (1975 – Runners-up)

UEFA Cup Winners Cup

- Fenerbahçe (1963–64 – Quarter-finals)
- Göztepe (1969–70 – Quarter-finals)
- Bursaspor (1974–75 – Quarter-finals)

- [Galatasaray \(1991–92 – Quarter-finals\)](#)

UEFA Intertoto Cup

- [Kayserispor \(2006 – Joint Winners\)](#)
- [Trabzonspor \(2007 – Runners-up\)](#)
- [Sivasspor \(2008 – Runners-up\)](#)
- [İstanbulspor \(1997 – Semi-finals\)](#)
- [Samsunspor \(1998 – Semi-finals\)](#)
- [Trabzonspor \(1999 – Semi-finals\)](#)
- [Bursaspor \(1995 – Quarter-finals\)](#)

Turkey national team

The Turkey national team made its debut on October 26, 1923. The match ended in a 2–2 draw against the Romania. Turkey have qualified for the [FIFA World Cup](#) twice: 1954 and 2002. Their longest duration of competing for the Cup was coming third in the 2002 FIFA World Cup. Turkey also finished third in the 2003 Confederations Cup, reached the semi-finals of [Euro 2008](#) and played in the quarter-finals of [Euro 2000](#).^{[11][12][13][14][15]}

Women's football

Records

Seasons

1900s:					1904–05	1905–06	1906–07	1907–08	1908–09	1909–10
1910s:	1910–11	1911–12	1912–13	1913–14	1914–15	1915–16	1916–17	1917–18	1918–19	1919–20
1920s:	1920–21	1921–22	1922–23	1923–24	1924–25	1925–26	1926–27	1927–28	1928–29	1929–30
1930s:	1930–31	1931–32	1932–33	1933–34	1934–35	1935–36	1936–37	1937–38	1938–39	1939–40
1940s:	1940–41	1941–42	1942–43	1943–44	1944–45	1945–46	1946–47	1947–48	1948–49	1949–50
1950s:	1950–51	1951–52	1952–53	1953–54	1954–55	1955–56	1956–57	1957–58	1958–59	1959–60
1960s:	1960–61	1961–62	1962–63	1963–64	1964–65	1965–66	1966–67	1967–68	1968–69	1969–70
1970s:	1970–71	1971–72	1972–73	1973–74	1974–75	1975–76	1976–77	1977–78	1978–79	1979–80
1980s:	1980–81	1981–82	1982–83	1983–84	1984–85	1985–86	1986–87	1987–88	1988–89	1989–90
1990s:	1990–91	1991–92	1992–93	1993–94	1994–95	1995–96	1996–97	1997–98	1998–99	1999–00
2000s:	2000–01	2001–02	2002–03	2003–04	2004–05	2005–06	2006–07	2007–08	2008–09	2009–10
2010s:	2010–11	2011–12	2012–13	2013–14	2014–15	2015–16	2016–17	2017–18	2018–19	2019–20
2020s:	2020–21	2021–22	2022–23	2023–24						

See also

- [List of Turkish football champions](#)
- [List of football clubs in Turkey](#)

- [Sport in Turkey](#)
- [Big Three \(Turkey\)](#)
- [Amputee football in Turkey](#)

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External links

- [TurkishFootballNews.com](http://www.turkishfootballnews.com/) - your source for the latest in Turkish football (<http://www.turkishfootballnews.com/>)

- [Turkish soccer live scores and news and blog by Ahmet Bob Turgut \(http://www.turkish-football.com/\)](http://www.turkish-football.com/)
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