

Protection of minors

FAQ

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What does FIFA do to protect minors?

FIFA works hard to protect the rights of players younger than 18 – whether male or female, amateur or professional. This is primarily done through the enforcement of regulations prohibiting the international transfer of a minor, or the first registration of a minor in a country other than their own, except in specific and verifiable circumstances. An international transfer of a minor player cannot take place unless one of the exceptions outlined in article 19 paragraph 2 of the [FIFA Regulations on the Status and Transfer of Players](#) or the so-called “five-year rule” (cf. art. 19 paras 3 and 4 of the mentioned regulations; pg. 22-23) apply. Equally, subject to certain strict prerequisites being met, refugee players or exchange students may, on limited occasions and with reservation, be authorised to transfer internationally based on jurisprudence. The sub-committee of the FIFA Players’ Status Committee is charged with reviewing applications for these cases, taking into consideration the specific circumstances of each individual case while recognising the opportunities for integration that football certainly offers.

Why does FIFA implement such measures?

Young footballers are vulnerable to potential exploitation and abuse when they are in a foreign country without proper controls. While international transfers might, in specific cases, be favourable to a young player’s sporting career, they are likely to be contrary to the best interests of the vast majority of players as minors. For FIFA, protecting the appropriate and stable development of a minor as a whole should prevail over purely sporting interests.

In the past, the trafficking of young players to clubs, mainly in Europe, by unscrupulous persons led to some minors, whose talent may not have met the expectations of the respective clubs, being virtually abandoned on the streets in foreign countries. In these cases, minor players often do not know the language or culture and have no means to return to their home countries. It is also necessary to mention that, in some cases, what is questioned is not necessarily the quality of the training and overall education provided to the minors by this or that club but the methods used to bring the minors into the club. Today, although FIFA’s approach may appear harsh in an individual case, it is only by enforcing the rules consistently and strictly that the abuses of the past can be avoided and a proper and safe development of minor players secured.

How are the respective provisions enforced?

As mentioned above, the provisions relating to the protection of minors need to be applied in a consistent and strict manner. The Court of Arbitration of Sport (CAS) has reinforced this approach, confirming a number of decisions passed by FIFA’s competent bodies, formerly the Players’ Status Committee and its single judge, and currently the sub-committee of the Players’ Status Committee (e.g. CAS 2005/A/955 & 956, CAS 2008/A/1485, CAS 2011/A/2354 & 2494, CAS 2012/A/2787, CAS 2014/A/3611 and CAS 2015/A/4312). Opening the door to exceptions beyond those carefully drafted and included in the Regulations on the Status and Transfer of Players as well as based on the above-mentioned jurisprudence of the sub-committee of the Players’ Status Committee would unavoidably lead to cases of circumvention.

A key measure used by FIFA to monitor international transfers is the international transfer matching system (ITMS) – a web-based tool introduced to foster and sustain a transparent international transfer market. Since 2009, the use of ITMS has been obligatory in all applications

for an international transfer of a minor or for the first registration of a minor in a country other than their own. [FIFA TMS](#), through its Integrity & Compliance Department, investigates potential breaches of FIFA regulations, handing over relevant cases to the secretariat to the FIFA Disciplinary Committee for consideration and decision. A number of clubs and member associations have been sanctioned for breaches. That said, it is important to note that each case is decided on the basis of its specific circumstances.

How have the provisions relating to the protection of minors evolved?

The basis of the current regulations regarding the protection of minors goes back to an agreement signed in 2001 by FIFA, UEFA and the European Commission. The regulations were then further developed and strengthened over the years by way of amendments in 2005 and 2009. Since the transfer activities of clubs are constantly evolving, the situation is being carefully monitored in order for FIFA to be able to take the appropriate measures as and when necessary. For instance, in 2015, the FIFA Executive Committee decided to reduce the age limit at which an international transfer certificate (ITC; acquired via an application through TMS) is required from 12 to 10. This decision was made in order to strengthen the protection of minors and due to the increased number of international transfers of players younger than 12.

FIFA has introduced provisions to ensure that club academies and private academies report all minor players participating in their activities to the respective member association, in accordance with article 19bis of the Regulations on the Status and Transfer of Players. Meanwhile, the [Regulations on Working with Intermediaries](#) reinforce FIFA's commitment to protecting minors. Article 7 paragraph 8 of these regulations prohibits players and clubs from making any payments to an intermediary whose services they engage if the player concerned is a minor.

How many applications are made each year for international transfers of minors?

The following is an overview of applications submitted to the sub-committee of the FIFA Players' Status Committee for international transfers of minors and first registrations of minors in a country other than their own from 2011 to 2015:

YEAR	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
TOTAL APPLICATIONS	1,500	1,747	1,845	2,189	2,716
ACCEPTED	1,343	1,527	1,637	1,929	2,323
REJECTED	157	220	208	260	393

What about child trafficking?

FIFA can only regulate activities within the scope of organised football. Issues related to "child trafficking", like any other criminal activity, fall within the competence of the relevant national and international authorities (police, judicial, governmental). Such matters are outside of FIFA's jurisdiction, although we certainly welcome measures that show authorities are taking them very seriously, and by means of our provisions on the protection of minors we are committed to making a contribution towards tackling this important issue within FIFA's sphere of competence.

Useful links:

[FIFA Regulations on the Status and Transfer of Players](#)

[CAS decision in the case involving FC Barcelona](#)

[CAS decision backs FIFA's efforts in the protection of minors](#)

[Transparency in transfers: FIFA TMS explained](#)

[Major focus on minors](#)

All information pertaining to the above is available on FIFA.com