

Speaking notes

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In Portugal, the Observatory's annual Report (2019) mentioned the "Fair Play" Operation, involving a large number of young South-American footballers. On 14 March 2019 the Immigration and Borders Service (SEF) arrested, in Leiria, two South American citizens, football managers, responsible for the illegal entry and stay of a large number of young footballers, in an irregular situation. The football managers have been charged with the crimes of trafficking in human beings, facilitating illegal immigration and document fraud. The football club, Nazaré, and its President have also been charged.

This action was the outcome of months of investigations initiated by SEF in late 2018, when SEF operation led to the identification of about twenty young footballers, irregular migrants, hosted in some football club facilities, in inhuman and degrading conditions and in extreme economic difficulties. It was proven that they had arrived in Portugal through a criminal action involving several people and football clubs, including the two South American football managers arrested in 2019.

The footballers, all South Americans, were promised legalization in national territory and the signing of professional contracts with football clubs, in exchange for large sums of money, and in many cases, their families had to incur debts. Once in Portugal, the footballers were assigned to the clubs in question, but any of the promises were kept. After initially being hosted in flats, they were progressively abandoned and ended up being hosted, in inhuman conditions, in the facilities where they were identified by the SEF, without adequate food and without any remuneration from the football clubs. Some of the footballers left the country and others, with the support of the SEF and within the legal framework for protecting victims of trafficking are awaiting for a resident permit.

Additionally, FIFA adopted a range of measures for reducing the risk of human trafficking and exploitation among minors footballers.

- In 2001, FIFA adopted strict rules to combat the exploitation and mistreatment suffered by young players ([Regulations on the Status and Transfer of Players](#)). Article 19 of the Regulations only permits the international transfer of players aged 18 or above.
- On 10 July 2019, FIFA launched the [FIFA Guardians Programme](#), a new initiative to assist [FIFA's member associations](#) and confederations around the world and introduce stronger child safeguarding measures in football.
- In September 2019 FIFA made some important updates to its [Code of Ethics](#) to explicitly cover sanctions for sexual harassment, abuse and exploitation.