## 2017 UEFA Grassroots Awards winners unveiled

## Armenia, Italy and Northern Ireland have won gold in the 2017 UEFA Grassroots Day Awards, which honour the best leaders, clubs and projects in Europe for the excellence of their work in this crucial sector of the game.

The winners of the 2017 UEFA Grassroots Awards have been approved by the UEFA Executive Committee.

Awards for Best Grassroots Leader, Best Grassroots Project and Best Grassroots Club were ratified by the committee, following recommendations by the UEFA Grassroots Panel bureau and the UEFA Development and Technical Assistance Committee.

The awards reward excellence in the grassroots field – seen by UEFA as crucial in helping to nurture football's overall good health.

“Grassroots is football’s lifeblood, because without healthy foundations, our sport cannot flourish," said UEFA President Aleksander Čeferin. "UEFA has always invested heavily in grassroots projects around Europe, and will continue to do so to ensure that football can be played by all.”

“I would like to congratulate the winners of the UEFA Grassroots Awards for their fantastic initiatives," he added. "I would also like to thank all those who have worked tirelessly to make sure that people of all abilities can play this game at grassroots level."

"Thanks to their dedication, loyalty, sacrifice and love for the game, the sport’s future is in safe hands.”

**The 2017 award winners:**

**Best Grassroots Leader**

Gold - Senik Arakelyan (Armenia)

A grassroots coach and leader who arranges a wide variety of football activities for able bodied and disabled players, as well as in orphanages.

The silver award went to Ralf Klohr (Germany), a dedicated regional association president and innovator whose FairPlayLiga initiative focuses on the implementation of football in a friendly, playful and positive way. Ana Paula Pinho Almeida (Portugal) is the bronze award winner, for her work as a technical coordinator of women’s grassroots at a club providing excellent opportunities for girls to play football.

**Best Grassroots Project**

**Gold: GiocoCalciando (Italy)**

An educational and promotional programme developed by the Italian Football Federation (FIGC) and the country’s ministry of education, focusing on the implementation of football at primary schools, while promoting sporting values, as well as health and activity.

Kannusta Mua – Campaign (Finland) wins the silver award for its work in Helsinki which centres on improving the behaviour of adults in and around children’s football, by using social media and marketing platforms. Bronze goes to Grandmas for Football (Lithuania), a project designed to promote activity and healthy lifestyles in older people, by encouraging children to bring their grandparents to play with them in small-sided games.

**Best Grassroots Club**

**Gold: St. Oliver Plunkett FC, Belfast (Northern Ireland)**

A club using football as a medium to develop young people in a disadvantaged community, by encouraging a sense of pride and belonging. The club is fully engaged with the grassroots programme run by the Irish Football Association (IFA), and fields over 40 teams of boys and girls.

FV Blau-Weiß Gonnesweiler e. V. (Germany) are the silver award winners – a grassroots community club committed to contributing to the integration of refugees – and the bronze award has been won by FK Breznica Pljevlja (Montenegro), a club using sport to foster a spirit of community, as well as to promote healthy lifestyles.