Italian project receives UEFA Grassroots Award

The 2017 UEFA Grassroots Award for Best Project goes to the Italian project GiocoCalciando, which is teaching over 32,000 students across the country about football.

A scheme which combines e-learning and practical football sessions at schools across Italy has won gold in the Best Project category of the 2017 UEFA Grassroots Awards.

GiocoCalciando was developed by the youth sector of the Italian Football Federation (FIGC) and Italy's ministry of education, and involves over 32,000 students and 2,400 teachers at primary schools all over the country.

"The idea was to provide teachers with a simple tool with which to teach football and convey certain educational messages," explained the general secretary of the FIGC youth and educational department, Vito Di Gioia.

“GiocoCalciando is a multimedia guide which is split into four levels. In every level there is a multimedia educational part, there’s a quiz with questions and answers, and there’s a video section which allows us to familiarise the children with the exercises developed by our coaches.

"The e-learning part is very important," he added, "as the kids learn the laws of football by playing an interactive game. Fair play is crucial, as the laws of the game not only apply to football, but also in terms of rules in everyday life. That's something which is stressed repeatedly in the interactive game. It's the real aim of the game."

As well as these elements taught with teachers in a classroom setting, the children also get the opportunity to follow up what they have learnt with a practical session.

"Our grassroots experts come to schools at least four times a year to explain the project. Then they must also train the teachers to run the project over the course of the year," said Di Gioia.

On hearing the news of the award, FIGC youth sector president Vito Roberto Tisci told UEFA.com: "It's such a big recognition and, of course, it's a source of great pride for the association and me personally, having run this department for the last two-and-a-half years.

"It's the first time our football association has won this award, which besides the honour in itself, I'd like to stress the great results this project has achieved, which are very important to us."