

Dear Mondiali organisers,

we're writing you here on behalf of the network for women in football, F_in, regarding the preparation and organisation of the Mondiali Antirazzisti 2009 against the background of the sexual assaults happened at this year's event.

Before we start with our remarks, however, we'd like to stress that all network members of F_in are absolutely aware of the successful history of the Mondiali and convinced of the added value the event has boasted for grassroots networking and campaigning against all forms of discrimination in football ever since its beginnings. We're therefore by no means and at no point intending to question the event and its conception as a whole.

Moreover, the following comments and proposals are supposed to underline this position and our appreciation for the event and its significance as well as our willingness to help maintaining the overall character and reputation of this valuable event for the future.

The content of this letter reflects the results of a discussion held at the F_in Workshop in September 2008. With an update on your current plans for the next Mondiali in mind, F_in network members from three different countries discussed both general principles and proposals for modifications in the overall organisation and preparation of next year's tournament as well as a possible direct contribution on behalf of F_in during the event in July 2009.

The following represents the summary of the aspects discussed.

General Principles

We as the F_in network members, and especially those among us that have attended the tournament several times, believe that the incidents of sexual assault as they occurred at the event this year, only and sadly represent a not comparable but still very extreme manifestation of an already previously existing situation at an - apart from that - actually great tournament. Not only, for instance, have women occasionally reported about incidents of sexual harassment in the past but there also was the apparently necessary inclusion of an explicit call on participants against chauvinistic behaviour in this year's tournament brochure.

Of course, there is also the fact that, as you stated previously already, due to the close proximity of the new venue to the city of Bologna, there has been a bigger number of local people attending the previous two events, possibly without any understanding of the actual nature of the Mondiali.

Given this background, we therefore tend to believe that the perpetrator(s) of the alleged offences could well originate both from the outside and from the inside, means that it might as well have been also one of the tournament participants. At the same time, it is absolutely important, to name but by no means to stigmatise both of them as potential offenders.

As a direct consequence, we think that measures to be taken and implemented for the next event should take both possibilities into account and therefore be aimed mainly at both raising awareness towards the inside and setting up organisational structures to be able to protect the event and its participants to a certain degree from a potential damage coming from the outside.

At the same time, it is, of course, vital that the programme doesn't change its festive character and lose the focus on celebrating of common values as international football fans. Anti-sexism should be as much part of this overall attitude as anti-racism already is.

Also, it would be great if there was a possibility that the Mondiali organisers use the opportunity of the tournament next year being dedicated to anti-sexism and gender issues, to approach a bigger number of gay and lesbian fans groups and/or football teams and encourage them to come. We as F_in would be more than happy to support this approach by passing the respective info on to our contacts.

Regarding concrete measures and proposals, all F_in network members present at the workshop agreed that it should be a vital criteria for all services to be offered and set-up for the Mondiali 2009, whether they've been demanded or requested by participants themselves in view of the incidents that happened this year. This would apply, for instance, if a group of women coming to the event would ask for a "women only" area on the camp site. At the same time, offering such services in the first place and promoting them respectively as Mondiali organisers (without waiting for them to be requested by the participants) can also be important for the perception of some participants on the tournament.

If nothing else, we think these sort of requests need to be taken very seriously and could have a vital impact on the feeling of safety and comfort among the participants.

Proposals for the future tournament organisation and preparation

In the following, we listed the proposals discussed and agreed at our meeting. In case that there is an overlap between the measures you're already planning to take and the proposals below, we merely mentioned them to express our consent and underline their significance from our point of view:

Registration of Teams:

we think that it would be beneficial for both the teams and the spirit of the Mondiali, if there was a low-key application system in place. For instance, there could be a text box underneath the registration form for a team - it should be mandatory for each team (and not be considered an overstretching barrier) to state in a few sentences the reasons why they/want to attend the tournament...

Also, we think the spirit of the tournament can be stressed by letting every team sign a declaration via which they'd consent to the core values of the Mondiali.

Entrance/Admission procedure

It was agreed without any dissent that the Mondiali venue might need a tighter entrance procedure. However, at the same time the open overall character of the event should be maintained and the tournament should by all means remain accessible for all people that care about the spirit of the event. An idea that was raised at the F_in workshop was to hand out wristbands in different colours to the participants for free according to whether people are one-day guests, members of a participating team.

Interaction between teams

We think it is very important that participating teams at the Mondiali should meet each other before the actual start of the football tournament, like it happened this year. This element had a positive impact and should definitely be continued in the future.

On top of that, we'd like to suggest the establishment of a sort of "godfather scheme" whereby new teams are allocated one of the regularly participating teams each. The "old" team would be responsible for the new one during the event and should introduce them to the "spirit of the Mondiali". The therewith established relationship between these two teams can also increase the possibility for the new team to be protected and included. This approach can also be found in the concept of "affidamento" (Libreria delle Donne Milano).

Self-regulation and awareness-raising on anti-sexism among teams

As there have been plenty of talks and discussions involving Mondiali fan teams already and will continue in future, we'd suggest to use this potential and involve the teams during the tournament that have been part of the awareness-raising process in the preparatory phase. For instance, all these teams or at least those members who are willing could get a badge or something the like during the tournament and represent therewith contact persons that can be approached and addressed when there is a complaint or an incident involving sexual harassment or something the like.

Security

Security staff should be visible and recognisable for the participants – their appearance and main posts should be promoted. At the same time, however, it is important to maintain the low-key profile of the security staff in previous years to avoid a hostile atmosphere.

Ideally, if there are enough volunteers, the security staff teams should be of mixed gender if possible and trained with regard to "what to do in emergencies", especially in connection with sexual assault.

Security core points (e.g. main entrance festival area, entrance camp site) should be staffed 24hrs and there should be a central 24hrs phone number to get hold of the organisers in emergencies.

"Pink Point"

F_in would like to explicitly welcome your idea to set up a contact point targeted at gender issues at the event next year! From a professional perspective (as we count many social workers among us), we'd recommend that this Pink Point (or whatever the name is going to be) is always staffed with external professionals who are involved in gender work and counselling and could intervene properly, from a victim-oriented perspective, if need be. We'd also recommend a 24hrs availability of these people.

Programme on anti-sexism/gender issues

Whilst anti-racist campaigning is well-developed and unquestioned in football and among most football fans, anti-sexism mostly seems to be perceived as a merely marginal issue in the male dominated football world, even by people who are active in the field of campaigning against discrimination.

With the Mondiali 2009 being dedicated to anti-sexism, it would be a clear statement of the significance of the issue if all programme elements on gender and anti-sexism would take place at the most central place of the festival, namely the Piazza Antirazzista. We'd consider it unfortunate to say the least, if those programme parts were allocated to e.g. the Pink Point only as this could be perceived as a marginalisation of the issue.

With the same background in mind, we'd therefore also like to encourage the organisers to let the women's tournament take place alongside the main tournament and not at a separate time and on pitches which are more centrally located.

At last, we'd welcome it if there are programme elements on anti-sexism that would be targeted especially at men.

Presentation of the teams at the Piazza Antirazzista

We'd suggest that, for the Mondiali 2009, every team should be called to present especially the women in their group or their activities on gender issues rather than just the group and their activities as a whole for the exhibition at the Piazza Antirazzista.

Mondiali Camp Site

If requested by some women teams, we'd like to recommend to allocate a section at the camp site for women only, regardless whether this might be perceived as a separation...

Similar things would apply to sanitary facilities - from our point of view, the existing shower section should be better protected from voyeurs and if there is going to be a women only section at the camp site, it should be equipped with separate toilet facilities as well.

F_in Contribution to Mondiali 2009

Apart from this letter and the suggestions made herewith, we would like to underline our willingness to actively contribute to the preparation and organisation of the Mondiali 2009.

As a direct contribution to the programme at the tournament – apart from individual input of F_in members on issues like female fans, sexism and anti-sexist work – we'd therefore like to offer to organise a Self Defence Course for female participants as part of the official programme at the Mondiali. We can provide a German trainer and organise a translation of the course into Italian and English. Our already requested German Trainer is part of an international WENDO-Network into which women from Bologna are also involved...

Finally, we hope that the suggestions made in this letter can be of some use for your preparation and help you with the organisation of next year's event as we think that maintaining the positive spirit of the Mondiali should be the responsibility not solely of the organisers but of all people involved.

If you have more ideas or interest regarding a further cooperation with F_in, we'd be happy to talk about and take on your proposals.

Thank you for your commitment as organisers of the Mondiali and we're looking forward to hearing from you and to a great tournament next year.

Best Regards

F_in