



PARIS TO HOST 3RD EDITION OF THE SPECIAL OLYMPICS UNIFIED FOOTBALL WORLD CUP 2026

After an unforgettable Paris 2024 Olympic and Paralympic Games, Paris will become the world capital of inclusive football in July 2026 with the hosting of the Special Olympics 2026 Unified Football World Cup.

Held for the first time outside of the United States, the event will bring together athletes with and without intellectual disabilities, known as Unified partners, to compete for the goal of being named Unified Football World Cup Champions.

PARIS, WASHINGTON DC, 17 NOVEMBER 2025,

Special Olympics International and Special Olympics France have finalized the hosting agreement of the Special Olympics Unified Football World Cup 2026. For the first time, France will host a Special Olympics International event with the 3rd edition of the Special Olympics Unified Football World Cup coming to Paris in 2026. The first two editions were held in the United States, Chicago 2018 and Detroit 2022.

From 5-11 July 2026, 24 teams (12 men's and 12 women's) made up of 324 players and 48 coaches will descend upon Paris to compete for the cup in front of 10,000 fans.

With the strong support of the French Public Authorities and of the French Football Community, Special Olympics France will have the unique opportunity to highlight the inclusive power of sport during a time when the whole world will be focused on football.

By far the most popular sport in the world, and Special Olympics' most popular team sport, football is the best way to showcase athletes with and without intellectual disabilities playing together. Across all Special Olympics regions, more than 450,000 athletes compete in the sport and over 1,470 footballers and Unified partners competing in France alone.

More than hosting men's and women's unified football tournaments, the Paris 2026 stakeholders aim to offer a once-in-a-lifetime Paris experience to Special Olympics athletes and coaches.

They are also strongly committed to building a lasting legacy for the inclusion of people with intellectual disabilities with the goal, from 2026 to 2030, of creating more opportunities for youth to play unified football in grassroots clubs, primary schools, and high schools in the greater Paris area and across France.



Special Olympics

CHAIRMAN TIM SHRIVER,

stated his support for the event: **"Paris, France will become the capital of inclusion at the Special Olympics 2026 Unified Football World Cup, where teams will come together under the principle of 'Living together, playing together'—uniting athletes on the playing field with a collective goal."**

"France's deep commitment to harnessing the power of sport to drive inclusion makes Paris the perfect host for this global celebration of unity, resilience, and joy. We are deeply grateful to the French Government and the City of Paris, along with the French Football Federation and Paris FC for their collaboration in advancing the power of football to build a more inclusive society."



SPECIAL OLYMPICS BRAZIL ATHLETE AND SPECIAL OLYMPIC'S INTERNATIONAL BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEMBER, EMANUELLE DUTRA FERNANDES (MANU),

shared her thoughts for the upcoming Cup: **"With France's extensive excellence in football for both men and women, being in Paris for the Unified Football World Cup will be an experience unlike any other. We will show the world that through football we can be inclusive and overcome barriers together with determination, love and unity. Inclusion is for everyone!"**



Special Olympics France

PRESIDENT, PIERRE DEJOUX, AND THE CHAIRMAN OF THE LOCAL ORGANIZING COMMITTEE OF THE SPECIAL OLYMPICS UNIFIED FOOTBALL WORLD CUP PARIS 2026, JACQUES RIVOAL,

shared: **"We warmly thank Special Olympics International for its trust and all stakeholders of the event for their support."**

Since the Rugby World Cup France 2023 and the Olympic and Paralympic Games of Paris 2024, France is a key destination for the international sport events. With the Special Olympics Unified Football World Cup Paris 2026 and as part of the legacy of the Paralympics Paris 2024, the country is becoming a key destination for inclusive sport."

"Thanks to this event, Special Olympics France will continue to work hard to bring together all the public authorities, sport entities, and private partners engaged to build a more inclusive society in France."





For the French Central Government,

MRS MARINA FERRARI, MINISTER OF SPORT, YOUTH AND COMMUNITY LIFE,

announced: "For the first time, France will host a Special Olympics international event. The French Government is firmly committed to making sport a powerful force for inclusion throughout society. That is why it proudly supports the Special Olympics Unified Football World Cup Paris 2026 and the legacy it aims to create. This unique event embodies the values of solidarity and respect – values that also define the entire sporting movement in France."



For the Greater Paris Authority,

MR PATRICK OLLIER, PRESIDENT OF THE GREATER PARIS METROPOLIS,

said, "In the momentum of the Paris 2024 Games, the Greater Paris Metropolis continues its commitment to a sporting legacy that is unifying and inclusive by supporting the organization of the Special Olympics Unified Football World Cup 2026, hosted for the first time in France! This event is a unique opportunity to promote inclusion through sport at the heart of the Metropolis, ensuring consideration for people with intellectual disabilities, and to extend its reach across all 130 municipalities, particularly among young people."



For the French Football Federation (FFF),

MR PHILIPPE DIALLO, FFF PRESIDENT,

announced: "The FFF is proud to support Special Olympics France and to see France host the Special Olympics Unified Football World Cup 2026. This event shows a common commitment for an inclusive football for all."



For the City of Paris,

MRS ANNE HIDALGO, MAYOR OF PARIS,

shared: "Paris is proud to host the Special Olympics Unified Football World Cup 2026. After the emotion aroused by the Olympic and Paralympic Games and their amazing popular success, this 'Special World Cup' will pursue our ambition to host parasport events, and will mark a new step in our commitment to a sport open to all. The City of Paris continues its accessibility strategy by making its facilities, services and public spaces ever more inclusive and accessible, by training its agents, by developing innovative solutions and ensuring that everyone can fully participate in the life of the city. Hosting this World Cup is for us the opportunity to show that Paris remains a supportive, engaged and accessible capital."



For the Île-de-France Region Authority,

MRS VALÉRIE PÉCRESE, PRESIDENT OF THE ÎLE-DE-FRANCE REGION,

announced: "After the incredible momentum of the Paris 2024 Olympic and Paralympic Games, the Île-de-France Region is proud to host the Special Olympics Unified Football World Cup 2026. This event carries on the spirit of the Games: a sport that brings people together, breaks down barriers, and gives everyone a place on the field."



For the Paris FC,

MR PIERRE FERRACCI, PARIS FC'S PRESIDENT,

announced: "Paris FC is very proud to be part of the hosting of the Special Olympics Unified Football World Cup 2026. Inclusion, diversity and openness are at the heart of our club's identity. Welcoming these athletes from around the world – with and without disabilities – to Paris is a powerful way to show that football can and must be a true driver of equality and respect."

ABOUT SPECIAL OLYMPICS

Founded in 1968, Special Olympics is a global sports movement to end discrimination against people with intellectual disabilities. We foster acceptance of all people through the power of sport and programming in education, health and leadership. With more than 4.6 million athletes and Unified Sports® partners and over one million coaches and volunteers in more than 200 countries and territories, Special Olympics offers over 30 Olympic-type sports and delivers more than 60,000 events and competitions each year.

Engage with us on: **X, Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, TikTok, and LinkedIn.**
Learn more at **SpecialOlympics.org**

ABOUT SPECIAL OLYMPICS FRANCE

Founded in 1991 and appointed by the French Government as association of public interest in 2013, Special Olympics France gives, year after year, to more and more of the 700,000 people with intellectual disabilities living in France some opportunities to benefit from the Special Olympics sport, health and school programs.

Through partnerships with sport unions and local authorities, and with the support of some private companies, Special Olympics France works closely with the care institutions hosting the people with intellectual disabilities and helps the public authorities to build a more inclusive society.

MEDIA CONTACTS:

Special Olympics International,
Niamh NELSON,
Special Olympics Manager of Storytelling
Activation and Sports Communication
nnelson@specialolympics.org

Special Olympics France,
Julien COLLETTE,
Special Olympics Unified Football World Cup Paris
2026 Local Organizing Committee
managing director
j.collette@specialolympics.fr

THE SPECIAL OLYMPICS UNIFIED FOOTBALL WORLD CUP PARIS 2026 IS SUPPORTED BY:



Métropole
du Grand Paris



Deloitte.

FIRST OFFICIAL
PARTNER

sanofi

HEALTH OFFICIAL
PARTNER



OFFICIAL
PARTNER



FIRST OFFICIAL SUPPORTER

WITH THE INVOLVEMENT OF:

