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Cover:
*The 2014 UEFA Congress
took place on 27 March in
the Kazakh capital, Astana.*

Photo: Getty Images

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UEFA held its 38th Ordinary Congress in Astana, Kazakhstan, where the national association delegates supported various important measures for the future of football.



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THE FUTURE IS IN OUR HANDS

It was with great happiness and pride that I watched UEFA's member associations make history together at the 38th Ordinary UEFA Congress in Astana. We celebrated our 60th anniversary in style, reaching decisions which guarantee we will continue to develop football across the continent, making it more competitive and transparent than ever before, while also increasing its role in society.

Even though it was the creation of the new UEFA Nations League which grabbed most of the headlines around Europe, I would like to highlight the importance of the new integrity resolution which was approved unanimously by all the national associations. The 11-point resolution sets high standards for everyone to stand united and fight against match-fixing, which threatens the very soul of our sport. We must make sure that there is a zero-tolerance approach towards this menace so that football can maintain its pure and unpredictable nature. It is the only way we can ensure that future generations will continue to love and believe in the magic of this beautiful game.

It was also with future generations in mind that we announced the creation of a new UEFA children's foundation. This foundation will finance programmes helping children in need throughout Europe and around the world, following in the footsteps of other social responsibility initiatives we have conducted in the past. HatTrick, for example, has been a huge success, and the fourth cycle of this programme will get more funding than ever before.

As I turn my attention to our club competition finals, I cannot hide my excitement at the games that are on the horizon. The UEFA Europa League final is taking place in Turin, a city which gave me so much happiness and so many friends during my playing career, while a few days later it will be Lisbon's turn to take the spotlight as it hosts its first European Cup final since 1967.

Who will reign victorious in the Portuguese capital? Whichever team lifts the trophy, we are sure it will be a great occasion for everyone involved.

Michel Platini
UEFA President

ASTANA WELCOMES THE FOOTBALL FAMILY

The capital of Kazakhstan, Astana, and the Football Federation of Kazakhstan were proud and outstanding hosts of the 38th Ordinary UEFA Congress on 27 March.



The city's Palace of Independence staged the annual gathering of Europe's football parliament, from which emerged the blueprint for a new UEFA Nations League for national teams, the establishment of a UEFA children's foundation, and a new programme to set up football academies for talented youngsters. The Congress also approved a resolution for the integrity of football.

In a fruitful week of activity, the UEFA Executive Committee held its second meeting of the year. All in all, Astana was a perfect setting for UEFA to look forward with confidence as it celebrates its 60th birthday this year.

Kazakhstan is one of UEFA's newer members, having joined the European body in 2002. The country and association relished the opportunity to host the Congress, and impressed the UEFA delegation, as well as the 53 other UEFA member associations who made the journey to Astana from all four corners of the continent. "It was a real pleasure and a discovery for many national associations to come here to Kazakhstan for the first time," said the UEFA President, Michel Platini, after the Congress, pleased that the delibera-

tions had been so successful. "Who would have thought," he said in his Congress speech, "when UEFA was established 60 years ago, that this venerable institution would be holding its 38th Ordinary Congress in this beautiful country and this young capital city?"

Kazakhstan expressed its delight at the accolade of staging such a notable event. "The decision [to stage the Congress] was taken in a short time frame after we became members of UEFA, and we are grateful for their trust," said the country's prime minister, Serik Akhmetov. "Without a doubt, football is the number one sport in Kazakhstan and we take its role very seriously. The decisions taken at this Congress in Astana will become a crucial part of the development of football."

Reinforcing the social role of football

"This Congress is a forum that sets out milestones for us," added the Kazakhstan FA president, Adilbek Jaxybekov. "It's interesting to notice the real festive atmosphere here that is highlighted by the success of the Kazakhstan team at international level. I would like to highlight that



The prime minister of Kazakhstan, Serik Akhmetov, addresses the 38th Ordinary UEFA Congress

all of the success has taken place thanks to many seminars organised with experts provided by UEFA, as well as the structural and financial support provided by UEFA."

In his Congress address, the UEFA President pledged that UEFA would be reinforcing its social role in the future, and redoubling its efforts to ensure progress and development for European football. In UEFA's special birthday year, he chose to look backwards to move forwards. *"This is the time to look in the rear-view mirror and try to make sense of things, to ask ourselves some searching questions,"* he said. *"For example, now is the time to ask ourselves why institutions such as UEFA were created in the first place."*

"What exactly did our founding fathers have in mind when they established this institution of ours?" he asked. *"They had two major objectives: to develop football across the continent, and to ensure that as many people as possible benefit from its role in society. Today, I believe the time has come to refocus on those two fundamental objectives. We need to return to our roots – to go back to basics. We need to refocus on our core tasks, on our social purpose and our raison d'être."*

A UEFA children's foundation

The UEFA President reminded the Congress of UEFA's various development initiatives in recent years – and gave news about a new development measure that UEFA is setting in gear. *"We are launching, in those countries that are keen, a brand new programme to establish and develop football academies for promising young players,"* he continued. *"This training centre development programme is aimed at discovering talented young players throughout Europe, training them, following their progress and helping them to advance, in order to produce not only great players of the future, but also decent and responsible citizens."*

"This is a major innovation... It is you, the national associations, who will reap the rewards

of this programme, if you want to be part of the adventure. The Ronaldo of tomorrow may be living in Moldova or Latvia – who knows? This elite football programme will help you to find him."

He said UEFA was also embarking on the creation of a UEFA children's foundation – a move approved by the Executive Committee in Astana – *"with all the enthusiasm and fervour of people who know that what they are doing is right. This foundation will finance programmes helping children in need throughout Europe and around the world. A mechanism will be put in place whereby each national association is able to establish one children's project in its own country which is fully or partly financed by that foundation. More than ever before, football has a social role to play, and what could be better than ensuring our young people benefit?"*

"This foundation will help us – help you – to preserve the magic of football and give hope to those children who need it most. This is a great project, a truly great project, and a cause that is particularly close to my heart."

Irrespective of their talent or level, the UEFA President said, all children had the right to discover the joys of football. *"They have the right to play the game in the best environment possible, and we have a duty to help them. That is why we will be extending our partnerships with governments with a view, under your guidance, to making football the number one sport in all of your countries' schools."*



The national association delegates at the UEFA Congress

He also emphasised UEFA's determination to take measures against third party ownership. *"I have been constantly warning for years that this practice – which is becoming increasingly widespread – is a danger to our sport. It threatens the integrity of our competitions, damages football's image, poses a long-term threat to clubs' finances and even raises questions about human dignity. Today, players are certainly not the property of their clubs, but something worse is happening instead. Increasingly, players are owned by opaque companies based in tax havens and controlled by some unknown agent or investment fund."*

"Quite simply, some players are no longer in control of their own sporting careers and are

transferred each year to generate revenue for anonymous individuals who just want to get their hands on some of the money in football. If FIFA fails to act, we will address this issue in our own competitions in Europe. The UEFA Executive Committee has already adopted a position on this issue in principle, and we will see this through. I do not want to be complicit in these practices, and at the moment I have the nasty feeling that I am."

11-point resolution adopted unanimously

UEFA's 54 member associations also unanimously adopted an 11-point resolution entitled European Football United for the Integrity of the Game. The resolution has various objectives in relation to match-fixing and corruption, which UEFA has identified as a genuine threat to football's essential soul and values. Under the resolution, UEFA member associations agree to set up

effective plans for education and prevention; stipulate minimum standards and abolish any statute of limitations in their regulations; implement reporting systems and procedures; cooperate with domestic law enforcement bodies and hand out severe punishment to anyone involved in match-fixing.

A standing ovation was given to Alina Stetenco, Moldova's women's Under-17 coach, who was present at the Congress and joined the UEFA President on stage. Her information brought about the suspension for life of an official in Moldova for attempted match-fixing with respect to a European Women's Under-17 Championship match last year.

The Congress heard about two important decisions taken by the UEFA Executive Committee at its meeting in Astana. Firstly, the committee approved the financial distribution model for the UEFA EURO 2016 final round in France. A total of €301m will be available for the teams taking part in the first 24-team final round, with each qualified team guaranteed a minimum of €8m. The UEFA EURO 2016 champions stand to earn a maximum of €27m if they win all their matches at the final tournament in two summers' time.

Second, the Executive Committee gave the green light to the financial distribution system for the HatTrick IV programme, earmarking €600m for UEFA's member associations (a 17% increase on HatTrick III), to support their activities and fund long-term investment into developing and fostering football at all levels. The HatTrick assistance programme was launched in 2003 and has seen more than €1.2bn in revenues from the European Championship channelled from UEFA to its member associations for sporting and infrastructure developments.

"Constantly furthering the development of football in Europe needs to be our priority," the

The Congress approved an integrity resolution and gave a standing ovation to the coach of Moldova's women's U17 team, Alina Stetenco, who reported an attempt to fix a match involving her side



A NEW COMPETITION

The UEFA member associations unanimously adopted a four-point Resolution on National Team Football 2018-2022 – heralding the launch of the UEFA Nations League from 2018. The competition will involve promotion and relegation, and will replace most international friendly matches. The exact format of the UEFA Nations League is not yet rubber-stamped, and further consultations will take place. Nevertheless, the concept provides for the 54 national teams to be split into four large divisions according to coefficient rankings. The UEFA President told the associations that the UEFA Nations League would meet their wishes and expectations, because UEFA had taken on board their viewpoints in the consultation process. *"We accept and respect that all UEFA member associations have agreed to create a new competition,"* added Wolfgang Niersbach, chairman of the UEFA National Team Competitions

Committee. *"This is a big step for national teams in Europe and we hope that fans will support the new format."* Under the resolution, the associations recognise the success of the European Qualifiers central marketing for the period 2014-2018 and its benefits for the promotion of national team football; agree with the new sporting concept of European Qualifiers, UEFA Nations League and friendly matches for the period 2018-22, within the dates foreseen by the international match calendar; support, for this new sporting concept, the continuation of central marketing on a similar model as currently practised, for all national team matches also for the period 2018-22; and underline the importance of cooperating closely with UEFA to overcome any potential legal, formal and practical issues that might arise, in particular regarding the sales of the centralised media rights in their respective country. ●



Getty Images

UEFA President told the associations. *“It needs to be our objective, our mission and our obsession... Because you now have greater certainty regarding your budgets for the next few years, you can plan your own development programmes without any concerns. The days of uncertainty and improvisation are over.”*

In recent times, UEFA has signed memorandums of understanding with other continental confederations – demonstrating that UEFA is also responding to the FIFA President’s wishes by showing solidarity towards the rest of the football world. *“You were right,”* he said to the associations. *“That wish is in the process of being granted. UEFA is now providing assistance to the other confederations through programmes exchanging knowledge and good practices – programmes that we will further shape and develop in the future, as that is the desire of all of Europe’s national associations.”*

Ageing well

The UEFA President also expressed the view that while UEFA may be 60 years “young”, the organisation was showing no signs of its age. He said that UEFA’s priorities were in accordance with the aims of those visionaries who were instrumental in UEFA’s birth: developing Euro-

pean football, and ensuring that the game played an essential social role. *“We are being remarkably successful in meeting those objectives, and that is all thanks to you – our friends at the national associations,”* he reflected. *“UEFA remains an association of associations, with you calling the shots, and we will continue to work together to shape the future of football.”*

Delegates at the Palace of Independence were able to view a special exhibition which recalled the six decades of UEFA’s history. A round counter, or virtual clock, of eight metres in diameter, was split evenly into 60 ticks – one per year since 1954 – each showing key facts and stories, as well as pictures relating to UEFA and its competitions.

“The world is changing,” the UEFA President concluded, *“and we are privileged witnesses. In our own way, we are helping to write history... A history that, for us, is 60 years old: 60 years of football; 60 years of passion; 60 years of joy, drama and emotion; 60 years of innovation, but also of respect for tradition; 60 years of incredible drama and charming anecdotes; 60 years of stories great and small; and 60 years of UEFA developing and establishing its authority as a role model in the organisation of football in Europe.”* ●

The flags of UEFA’s 54 member associations overhang a virtual clock, each minute of which represents a year in the history of UEFA

DAWN OF A NEW ERA

UEFA is celebrating its 60th birthday this year. Between now and the end of the year, UEFA•direct will be looking back at the history of European football's governing body, starting with events surrounding the historic moment in summer 1954 which heralded UEFA's birth.



UEFA's founding fathers
(from left to right): José
Crahay, Henri Delaunay
and Ottorino Barassi

In the years following the end of the Second World War, many of Europe's national football associations were looking to play more games at international level, in addition to the FIFA World Cup, the Olympic Games and friendly internationals.

Another major objective was the formation of a united European football movement that could progress in a variety of areas, such as competitions, refereeing, coaching and television. The ultimate aim, however, was to bring Europe's national associations together into one body, fostering solidarity and strengthening them as a result.

With these ideas in mind, a trio began to set crucial wheels in motion at the start of the 1950s. They were Ottorino Barassi, president of the Italian Football Federation; José Crahay, general secretary of the Belgian Football Association; and Henri Delaunay, general secretary of the French Football Federation.

At the start of 1952, Barassi and Crahay called Henri Delaunay and continued to fine-tune their idea at various gatherings across Europe. Important allies were gathered one by one. These included Ernst Thommen, president of the Swiss Association, Sir Stanley Rous, general secretary of the English FA, and Peco Bauwens, president of the Association of the Federal Republic of Germany.

The crucial moment followed in 1953, when, at an extraordinary FIFA Congress in Paris, the

world football body authorised the creation of continental confederations. Later that year, some 20 European national associations met in Paris to discuss the future body's regulations. Barassi chaired the meeting, and Henri Delaunay acted as secretary and interpreter. A decision was taken to send questionnaires to all the European associations.

Official birth

The defining meeting, which is considered as the official birth of UEFA, took place at the Hotel Euler in Basel, Switzerland, on 15 June 1954. A total of 28 associations were involved in the meeting. Czechoslovakia represented Romania, whose delegates had been unable to obtain a visa; England represented Wales; and Greece arrived during the meeting. A motion was agreed upon, which read as follows: *"The European national associations decide definitively on the constitution of a group of the said associations, under a form to be determined. The assembly decides to name a committee representing this group, in conformity with Article XI, paragraph 1, of the draft regulations presented today. This committee is entrusted with drawing up, in conjunction with the previous committee, definitive proposed statutes and regulations, taking their inspiration from projects submitted at a previous stage, and to present this definitive project to the next General Assembly."*

The six-man committee named at the meeting in Basel comprised José Crahay, Josef Gerö (Austria), Sir George Graham (Scotland), Ebbe Schwartz (Denmark), Gustav Sebes (Hungary) and Henri Delaunay. There followed another meeting in Switzerland, in Berne on 22 June, when the new committee of what was known as the "Group of European Associations" elected a bureau comprising Ebbe Schwartz, Josef Gerö and Henri Delaunay and decided to submit draft regulations to the national associations.

The name "UEFA"

On 29 and 30 October, in Copenhagen, the committee proposed Union of the European Football Associations in English, with the initials UEFA, and Union des Associations Européennes de Football in French as the name of the new confederation – replacing an earlier proposal of "Entente européenne". The draft statutes fixed the annual membership fee at 250 Swiss francs, laid down objectives, required the holding of an annual assembly, established the principle of one vote per association and stipulated that the

Executive Committee should comprise eight members. It was also deemed that *“the decisions taken by UEFA would not be binding on the national associations, but that they would take the form of recommendations, excepting matters concerning FIFA and UEFA elections”*.

The objectives defined were: the adoption of a common stance vis-à-vis FIFA; the designation of Europe’s representatives within FIFA; the organisation of a European competition every four years; and the examination of all matters concerning European football.

Following that meeting in Denmark, Henri Delaunay wrote an article entitled *“Is It Possible to Build a Footballing Europe?”*, which expressed his optimism in the light of what had been decided and proposed: *“...[T]he main focus should be on the idea of a competition open to all of the European associations. A three-member committee has been entrusted with examining this difficult problem, which should not lead to the infinite multiplication of international matches, or harm the World Cup...”*

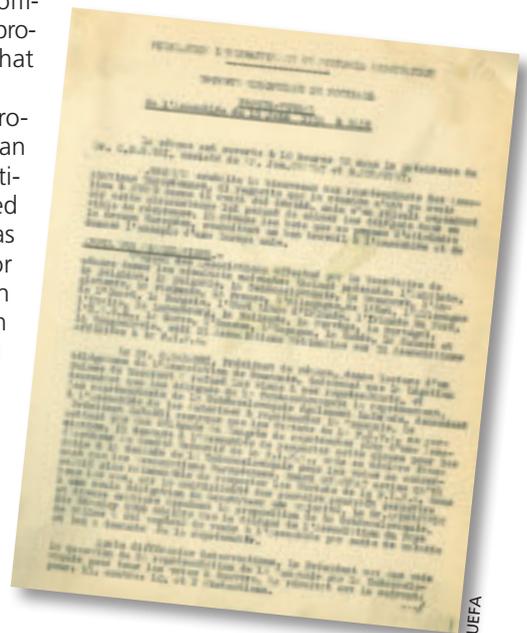
The Vienna Congress

Vienna was the venue for the inaugural UEFA Congress on 2 March 1955. Peco Bauwens and Greece’s Constantin Constantaras joined the UEFA Executive Committee, bringing the total number of members to eight, while Alfred Frey (Austria)

replaced Josef Gerö, who had sadly passed away. Items on the agenda included television, football pools, fixture lists and competitions – as well as the adoption of the first official UEFA statutes – approved and put into force that day in Vienna.

With regard to the project to organise a European national team competition, the Congress decided that such a project was premature and called for further examination. In the meantime, the French newspaper L’Équipe had put forward a project to organise a European club competition. The Vienna Congress decided that it *“was not at the present time competent to take an interest in a project directly concerning the clubs.”*

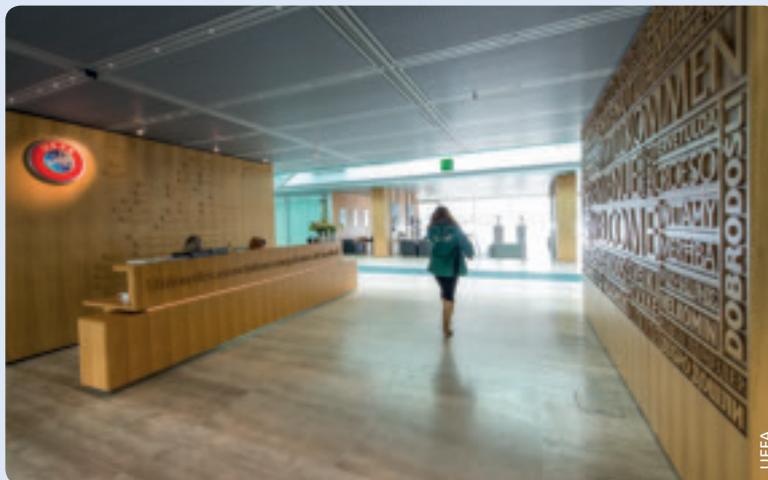
Both competition projects would come to fruition in the not-too-distant future. UEFA had been born, was finding its feet and was moving steadfastly into an exciting future... ●



The minutes of the meeting in Basel on 15 June 1954, when it was agreed to create a “Group of European Associations”, soon to be known as UEFA

REVAMPING THE HOUSE OF EUROPEAN FOOTBALL

To celebrate UEFA’s 60th birthday, the main HQ building in Nyon has been given a new interior design. On entering the House of European Football, visitors are greeted by a wooden panel carved with the word ‘welcome’ in the languages of all 54 member associations. This epitomises the new decor, which is very much in keeping with the building’s original architecture – a harmonious mix of wood, stone and glass that is accentuated by the waters of Lake Geneva and the Alps on the far side. Designed by Designwerk in London and produced by Die Firma in Nuremberg, the new-look lobby also showcases the originals of UEFA’s coveted trophies, grouped by competition type (national team or club). Going down to the lower ground floor, tribute is paid to UEFA’s founding fathers and a timeline adorns the walls, highlighting the most significant events in the last 60 years of European football, illustrated with photos, videos and



memorabilia. Among the memorabilia is Tottenham Hotspur captain Allan Mullery’s white shirt from 1972 – immaculate but for his autograph, as captain of the first team to lift the UEFA Cup – and an original programme from the 1960 final of the European Champion Clubs’ Cup at Hampden Park, where 127,621 spectators watched Real Madrid beat Eintracht Frankfurt 7–3 to claim their fifth consecutive European Cup victory. Floor-to-ceiling photos also pay tribute to the big-name recipients of the UEFA President’s Award (since 2007), with Di Stéfano, Charlton,

Eusébio, Kopa, Rivera, Beckenbauer and Cruyff standing larger than life, and upstairs the meeting rooms have been redecorated to honour the men who steered European football’s governing body to where it is today. With these special touches it is clearer than ever that UEFA is the House of European Football and a home away from home for its 54 member associations. ●

NEW GRADUATES IN EUROPEAN SPORT GOVERNANCE



Graduates, guests and speakers at the MESGO ceremony in Nyon

The second Executive Master in European Sport Governance (MESGO) ended with 17 graduates receiving their certificates at a ceremony at the House of European Football in Nyon in March. The special guest at the ceremony was former United Kingdom athlete Colin Jackson, who won world, European and domestic titles and an Olympic silver medal as a hurdler. Jackson gave an impressive motivational speech, using key examples from his career.

MESGO is designed for elected representatives and managerial staff of sports organisations. It gives them training, social and professional

contacts, and opportunities for knowledge-sharing and personal development. Given the ever-changing environment in the sports industry, this 18-month master's course aims to provide its participants with a better understanding of the key current and future challenges faced by the sports sector, while also focusing on the European dimension of measures that need to be taken. Created by internationally renowned universities and research centers, in cooperation with the members of the Association of European Team Sports, MESGO has UEFA's full support.

GUEST SPEAKER



COLIN JACKSON

"The best and biggest thing is communication"

Colin Jackson was guest speaker at the MESGO ceremony in Nyon. In a brilliant career as a hurdler, the Welshman won a host of world, European and Commonwealth titles, as well as an Olympic silver medal, and was a long-standing world record holder.

Colin, did you enjoy your time at the MESGO ceremony and UEFA? Was the event something new to you, or is it the sort of thing that you regularly attend nowadays in your work?

I totally enjoyed the ceremony. It was organised very well and the graduates were in good spirits. Presenting or speaking in front of this type of audience is a pleasure, and something I do happily nowadays in my work.

What was the main focal point of your presentation to the MESGO audience?

I spoke about the importance of their role, linking that with what they have learnt and pointing out the effect of what they do on the performing sportsmen and women.

From your personal experiences as an athlete, what elements do you think that the MESGO participants could apply in their work and careers that you were taught along the way?

The best and biggest thing is communication – it is paramount for the success of any sport.

You talked about the importance of being focussed and responsible in what you do – is that characteristic something that people might have naturally, or is it something that people really have to learn?

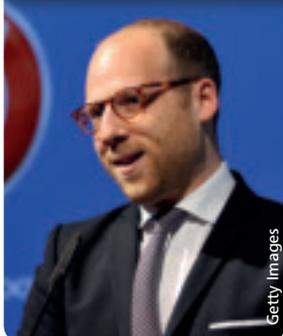
People know about focus and responsibility, but have to be reminded of it all the time... until it becomes the natural default, so that every decision they make is the right one and well thought through.

How important is a positive mindset and setting targets in what you do?

When setting the right, realistic targets, a positive mindset is a good start. This allows you to apply all the facts for the job in hand, and then clearly plan the route to reach your target, one small step at a time.

TWO OF THE GRADUATES

DAVID FROMMER



"The camaraderie within MESGO is fantastic"

Getty Images

European Club Association (ECA),
Head of Public & International
Affairs / Strategic Advisor

What do you think this master's degree has brought you from a personal point of view?

I've developed real and lasting friendships which, without exaggerating, will, I'm sure, last a lifetime. Clearly, the sessions are very intense work-wise, but they're a lot of fun too. Most evenings are spent around a drink and meal with a bunch of great people. The eclectic mix of people has allowed me to understand new cultures and hear about life

experiences which are very different to mine. I come out of the MESGO with the words of Nelson Mandela ringing very true in my ears that "education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world."

How do you think MESGO will help you, in particular in your daily work?

For a start I have deepened existing, or in some cases acquired new knowledge which can only help me in many aspects of my work. By deepening my knowledge of sports governance, I believe I will approach all aspects of my job with enhanced tools to achieve even better results for the benefit of ECA members.

How important was it to also learn from other participants in other fields – and to feel part of a team together?

Even if other sports are very different to football (usually budgets are smaller), you can take on board the realities of other sports and apply them to your own. In MESGO I learned a lot from participants from other sports, such as David (swimming) and Soren (handball), and from people involved in

sports but not directly working for a sports organisation, such as Gianluca (European Commission), Pascal (EBU) and Stéphane (Stade de France). The camaraderie within MESGO is fantastic. Obviously, a few groups emerge. You have the 'French group', the 'Balkan group', the 'ladies' group'. But despite not being French, Balkan or a lady, I was warmly welcomed into each of these groups at different times. People can count on one another and the bond that is created between us all is real and genuine.

What advice would you give to anyone thinking about registering to MESGO?

I believe strongly that MESGO is of great benefit to people working in sport. But to get the most out of it, candidates should be aware that it requires more than 'just turning up'. They need to understand that they must put in the time and effort if they are going to complete the course. They must also ensure that they have full support from the senior management within their organisation, so that they can prepare for sessions properly and be 100% present during these.

EKATERINA FEDYSHINA



"You can learn diverse approaches to find solutions"

UEFA

Football Union of Russia,
Deputy Chief Executive Officer

What do you do think is the most important purpose of the MESGO programme?

I think the most important purpose of MESGO is to enlarge the horizons of participants, to make them think differently and to encourage them to be creative in decision-making.

How important is it to be together with colleagues from different coun-

tries, representing different organisations and different sports?

This is indeed a unique opportunity, and MESGO gives an excellent chance to everybody to learn from the experiences of top representatives of different sports organisations. Especially during the group work on case studies, you can learn diverse approaches to find solutions.

How did it feel as a MESGO participant to be able to visit nine different cities as part of the course?

Again this is really unique: you visit quite different premises and quite different cities over the 18 months and you get to observe the work processes of various organisations. For a week at a time, you detach from your everyday business, which provides you with the opportunity for complete immersion into another mentality, into another way of thinking, and this helps to open your mind.

Has MESGO also helped you to develop new contacts and networks?

This is for sure the case. We are a very close-knit group and very much

enjoyed studying and just being together. We are always in contact, and I am sure and certain that we will keep in touch further down the line.

How important was it for the participants to have such first-class help from expert teachers and speakers?

MESGO is an excellent platform where you meet high-ranking expert teachers and speakers. What I learnt from them I am already using in my everyday business life. And do not forget the mentors: you must not underestimate their work. Students worked very closely with them. And the fact that you deliver a scientific research paper at the end of the course is very important: it is your own contribution to the further development and improvement of sports governance. Finally, I have a mixture of feelings: on the one hand I'm pleased to have reached another level in my professional life and happy to have made new friends, and on the other hand I am a little sad it is over. It was a great time, thank you for that! ●

A SERIES OF GREAT EVENTS IN LISBON

The 2014 UEFA Champions League final is coming to Lisbon, with a host of events organised around the Portuguese capital to entertain local and visiting fans alike.



Just like last year in London, the Champions Festival in Lisbon will give children and adults an opportunity to test their ball skills in a range of fun activities

Preparations have been continuing apace for the 2014 UEFA Champions League final at Estádio do Sport Lisboa e Benfica on Saturday 24 May and, although the match itself will capture most of the attention, there are plenty of other activities going on.

The Estádio do Sport Lisboa e Benfica, known across the world as Estádio da Luz (the Stadium of Light) and as the home of SL Benfica, will be the setting for the final. It was formally inaugurated in 2003 in time to host several matches – including the final – of UEFA EURO 2004. The arena stands on the site of the original Estádio da Luz, which opened in 1954 and hosted the final of the 1992 European Cup Winners' Cup, when SV Werder Bremen beat AS Monaco FC 2-0. The Portuguese city has played host to one previous European Champion Clubs' Cup final, in 1967, when Celtic FC beat FC Internazionale Milano 2-1 at the Estádio Nacional, and the latest showpiece match in the city will be the centrepiece of a rich and varied programme of events.

Champions Festival

A key part of the UEFA Champions League for several years now, the UEFA Champions Festival will be held in the Praça do Comércio from Thursday 22 to Sunday 25 May – and there will be plenty of free activities to keep the thousands of visitors entertained throughout those four days. A regular highlight of the festival is the Ultimate Champions match, a five-a-side exhibi-

tion match between former footballers. This year, a World All-Stars team will take on a Portugal All-Stars XI. The high-profile names involved will ensure that this is one of the UEFA Champions Festival's biggest attractions. The game will kick off at 17.00 local time on Friday evening to ensure as many fans as possible are in attendance.

As the excitement of the UEFA Champions League final comes to the streets of Lisbon, fans at the UEFA Champions Festival will also get the chance to enjoy football on the mini-pitches and at skills stations, to get close to the most famous trophy in club football and to meet some of the game's top stars. During the daytime there will be all sorts of great things to do and see, not least the famous UEFA Museum of Champions – the official museum of the European Cup.

It houses an ever-growing collection of rare and truly European football items and artefacts, from playing shirts and boots to trophies. It will be open from 5 to 24 May.

Evenings at the UEFA Champions Festival will also feature some tremendous events. On Thursday, the UEFA Theatre of Champions will be the setting for the world premiere of the new UEFA Champions League film, a dramatic view of the best moments in the 59-year history of Europe's premier club competition. The film has been transformed this year and will be narrated by the fans, featuring extensive interviews with supporters of some of Europe's top clubs.

Even away from the festival, the UEFA Champions League will play a significant role in Lisbon throughout the month of May. From 6 May, Lisbon city hall will stage Getty Images' UEFA Champions Gallery, an exhibition of more than 150 pictures – including never-before-seen photography. The collection tracks the history of Europe's top club competition all the way back to the first edition of the European Champion Clubs' Cup in 1955, with photographs of some of the most celebrated figures in football – including Portuguese greats Eusébio, Cristiano Ronaldo and Luís Figo, plus Lionel Messi – going some way to capturing the excitement, despair, euphoria and passion of the UEFA Champions League. Unseen behind-the-scenes pictures will offer another perspective on the competition, which gives a stage not just to the great men but also to the great many: the fans and teams that

follow their dreams into Europe and create legends of their own, even if they never get close to the trophy itself. The gallery will undoubtedly evoke memories of great games, great players, great coaches and great teams who have graced the European Cup over the years.

Women's Champions League final

Another key Lisbon event – the 2014 UEFA Women's Champions League final – will be held at 19.30 on Thursday 22 May at Estádio do Restelo, just 5km from the UEFA Champions Festival. The 19,300-capacity home of CF Os Belenenses in the district of Belem was opened in 1956 and has staged Portuguese internationals as well as providing Italy's training base during UEFA EURO 2004. The multi-purpose arena is also a music venue. After the final and cup ceremony, R&B singer Anselmo Ralph – a judge on Portugal's The Voice – will perform, with fans given access to the pitch in front of the stage. The €10 entrance ticket is valid for both the match and the concert, thereby encouraging spectators to join the 94,145 aggregate crowd that has watched the four previous UEFA Women's Champions League finals in Getafe, Fulham, Munich and Chelsea since the fixture became a one-off match at a neutral ground in 2010.

As has become the custom in recent years, to demonstrate its ongoing commitment to grassroots sport, UEFA is donating a mini-pitch to both the cities hosting this season's two major club competition finals. ●

SOCIAL MEDIA AT THE FINAL

The 2013/14 UEFA Champions League final in Lisbon is set to be the most social yet, with a truly global audience primed to interact and engage on all platforms using the official hashtag #UCLfinal. With the streets of Lisbon expected to be a hive of activity, UEFA.com's on-site team will bring fans from around the globe closer to the action via comprehensive multi-platform social media coverage. The digital team on the ground in Lisbon will be working in direct partnership with Facebook to share all the activities at the UEFA Champions Festival from Thursday 22 to Sunday 25 May, as well as the main event on Saturday 24 May.

Fans from over 50 countries will be treated to exclusive video content, prize giveaways, Q&A sessions with greats of the game and much more as Europe's premier club competition reaches its climax. The UEFA Champions League Facebook page (facebook.com/uefachampionsleague) will host much of this great content as it continues to go from strength to strength, recently storming past the 22 million mark and surpassing the NBA to become the most popular sports league or association on the platform.

The UEFA.com Instagram account (instagram.com/uefacom), which gained over 150,000 fans in its first month, will provide the perfect platform to share exclusive photos and 12-second video clips from Lisbon. Elsewhere, the official @ChampionsLeague Twitter account will come into its own to provide over 4 million followers with live updates, photos and six-second Vine videos, as well as reinforcing the use of #UCLfinal. It will be the account to follow for the latest #UCLfinal news as well as fantastic interaction with the two finalists. The UEFA.com and UEFA Champions League Google+ pages boast over 6.5 million fans between them and will be keeping supporters up to date as events unfold at the festival and then at the Estádio do Sport Lisboa e Benfica. ●



The UEFA Museum of Champions houses all manner of memorabilia from some of the big names who have played in the competition over the years

Getty Images



TURIN, CAPITAL OF FOOTBALL FOR A DAY

The 2014 UEFA Europa League final is coming to Italy and on Wednesday 14 May Turin will become the capital of football for a day. This city so steeped in football heritage is worthy of the title, and the two-year-old Juventus Stadium will provide a magnificent backdrop for the match.



"Juve have always been a wonderful painting, and a great painting needs a wonderful frame like this," Alessandro Del Piero said in September 2011 as the stadium opened for business with a 1-1 draw against the team that inspired Juventus's black and white shirts, Notts County FC.

The first club-owned stadium in Serie A, it will now host one of the most prestigious matches in the football calendar.

Built at a cost of around €105m on the site of the old Stadio delle Alpi, the venue boasts a museum and has a capacity of just under 41,000. There is a 'walk of fame' leading to the stadium, featuring 50 Juve stars whose ranks include the UEFA President, Michel Platini, and the UEFA Europa League final ambassador, Ciro Ferrara. In a club founded in 1897, with the most titles in Italy and all 3 of UEFA's major club competitions to its distinguished name, there was stiff competition.

Final legacy

Juventus, of course, are not the only side in town. Il Grande Torino dominated Italian football in the late 1940s and the Italian Football Federation president, Giancarlo Abete, points out that the impact of Turin hosting the final will be even more widespread. *"It is important that an event like this comes to Italy,"* he said. *"Above all, this final gives us an opportunity to present a positive image of international football, and that is a message for the youth. An event like this should be full of joy, and it should be a pleasure for everybody to come and be together but be in competition. International football matters. It is important that there is a legacy connected to this final, because every final*

and every big event in a big city like Turin is an opportunity to strengthen the role of the city and the country. This gives us the opportunity to present a stadium which is the best and most modern we have at the moment, in terms of technology."

There will also be a more tangible legacy in the form of a mini-pitch in the city, donated by UEFA to mark UEFA Grassroots Day the week after the final.

Capital of football

Turin will be decorated in honour of the UEFA Europa League final, with distinctive branding lining pavements well-trodden by locals and supporters alike. The design concept reflects the journey for European success taken by fans and clubs across the continent to reach Turin. Indeed, the final marks the culmination of a voyage that began 316 days and 479 matches earlier, a voyage that for those hardy followers of AZ Alkmaar and FC Shakhter Karagandy involved a 9,200km round trip to see their teams in Group L action.

Surprisingly, hosting a one-off UEFA club competition final was an honour the old Stadio delle Alpi (Juventus's home from 1990-2006) and Stadio Olimpico (1933-90, 2006-11) never had. Nor did Torino FC's Stadio Comunale. Between them, the three venues staged one leg of four UEFA Cup finals, with 75,000 spectators cramming inside the Stadio Comunale to watch Juventus beat Bilbao's Athletic Club in 1977 en route to the first of their three wins.

On 14 May, though, it will be a different story. In the slick new surrounds of Juventus Stadium, with the snow-capped ridges of the Alps still the mesmerising backdrop, a new page in football history will be written. Turin, capital of football for a day, can hardly wait. ●

MALTA GEARS UP FOR FINAL ROUND OF EUROPEAN UNDER-17 CHAMPIONSHIP

Come May, Malta will be firmly in the limelight as that small Mediterranean island hosts a major UEFA tournament – the final round of the European Under-17 Championship. This is the biggest tournament that the Malta Football Association (MFA) has ever organised.



The tournament will be contested by eight countries (England, Germany, Netherlands, Portugal, Scotland, Switzerland and Turkey), with Malta participating as hosts. The 15 matches, which will take place between 9 and 21 May, will be played at Ta' Qali National Stadium, the Hibernians Ground in Corradino and Gozo Stadium in Xewkija, on Malta's sister island of Gozo. The national stadium, which has a capacity of 17,000, will host seven matches in all – including the semi-finals and the final.

This will also be the first time that one of Malta's national teams has competed at this level.

The MFA has appointed six tournament ambassadors – Father Hilary Tagliaferro, head of Malta's youth football association, former internationals Carmel Busuttill, Joe Brincat, David Carabott and Gilbert Agius, and the current captain of the Maltese national team, Michael Mifsud. All of the last five have been capped more than 100 times for Malta. The ambassadors' main task will be to promote the development of the game at local level through campaigns targeting young people.

In recent weeks, more than 400 applications have been received by the local organising committee in response to a campaign launched in January to encourage people to volunteer at the tournament. The MFA has since also launched a campaign – entitled "Reach Out" – to promote the tournament, using the slogan "From Grassroots to Elite".

With the Maltese capital Valletta being named European Capital of Culture for 2018, this major European football tournament will be just the first opportunity for guests to enjoy a taste of Malta's heritage, hence the MFA's second slogan – "Friendship through Football". However, those coming to this sunny island in May will also see the first ever major UEFA trophy to be won in Malta.

The president of the MFA, Norman Darmanin Demajo, said: "The Under-17 finals in Malta will bring our small nation together, united by a common goal. Rare occasions like these serve to remind me that our greatest treasures in life are the people around us.

Without them, our goals will always remain dreams."

The MFA's chief executive, Bjorn Vassallo, is also of the opinion that Malta will rise to the big occasion: "For a small country like Malta, any international event is very significant. I am sure that the local organising committee and their entire team will be putting on an experience to treasure for everyone who loves football – and in Malta, that is a great many people."

The MFA's technical director, Robert Gatt, also offered his views about the big event: "We know we are not going to win the competition, but I am sure we will give a good account of ourselves. This will be a great experience for our young players, who are determined not to miss out on the emotions that such a big event brings with it. This will help them to develop into better footballers, both at club and at national level."

"The desire to participate shown by schools can only be described as fantastic. I have seen that volunteers actually still exist in Malta; the positive response has been quite a surprise. The support of Malta's armed forces should also be singled out and acknowledged. All in all, this is a once-in-a-lifetime experience," said Joe Cassar, the tournament director. ●

Domenic Aquilina

The 17,000-seater Ta' Qali National Stadium will host the semi-finals and finals of the U17 tournament



D. Aquilina

STERLING WORK FOR BLIND FOOTBALLERS

The pride and sense of achievement of an athlete who succeeds when he or she is blind or visually impaired is an intensely special feeling. UEFA's long-standing partner, the International Blind Sports Federation (IBSA), is helping blind and partially sighted footballers experience this for themselves.

IBSA was founded in 1981 as a non-profit-making organisation. With over 100 member countries worldwide, it is fully integrated within the International Paralympic Committee (IPC). Its aim is primarily the organisation of sports competitions and activities for blind and partially sighted athletes, and UEFA provides essential backing for its dedicated work in football.



Football helps blind and partially sighted people not only to play sport but also to be part of a team

IBSA encourages friendship among blind athletes. It motivates blind people to take up regular sporting activities, promotes and shares ideas on both competition and recreational sport for the blind, and plans, promotes and coordinates international events and activities stimulating the development of sports programmes for the blind in its member countries.

The organisation offers numerous sports, including two types of futsal – for totally blind players (B1) and for partially sighted players (B2/B3). Modifications to the laws give blind and visually impaired footballers the opportunity to play. The B1 ball has a special sound system inside, boards run along the pitch to keep the ball in play, and the teams, each comprising four players, have guides to advise them during matches.

IBSA was awarded UEFA's CHF 1 million charity cheque in 2006. This donation led to IBSA's Futsal Development Project Europe

staging seminars across Europe, among other things to educate coaches and referees about blind futsal. "UEFA's support has opened doors," says project coordinator David Stirton. "UEFA is a name that is recognised worldwide, and it lends us credibility."

"The current project with UEFA's support focuses on what we have identified as 'emerging' countries," Stirton adds. "We're now seeing the fruits of the previous project work. A lot of countries have set up local programmes – UEFA has been very keen for us to work at grassroots level – and they are now ready to compete internationally."

"Our projects that have UEFA's support can be an example for development across the world," David Stirton concludes. "IBSA would like to replicate them in other continents." For its part, UEFA is naturally happy to back a body which is doing so much to bring footballing pleasure to so many. ●

"Just try...there's a great feeling when you're in a team and you win!"

One blind player who has already stepped onto the international stage is Alexander Fangmann – captain of the German national team. He lost his sight as a young boy, but never lost his love for the game.

"Football means a lot to me," says the 29-year-old, who is completing his university studies in Tübingen. "At university, I found out about blind football on the internet, I went to a seminar during the 2006 World Cup, and it started from there... I didn't know what to expect, or whether I would play well with other blind people, but there was no problem, and there has been great enthusiasm for building up the game in Germany." The result has been a German championship, and Germany will also take part in the IBSA Blind Football World Championship in Tokyo later this year. "We're very proud, of course. It's a great achievement for us," he reflects. Alexander has sound advice for blind and visually impaired youngsters wishing to play the game: "Just try...there's a great feeling when you're in a team and you win!" ●

SUPPORTERS THE LIFEBLOOD OF THE GAME



Representatives of UEFA and supporter groups met for their annual meeting at the House of European Football in Nyon in early March. The relationship between UEFA and the fan groups has developed continuously in recent years, particularly because UEFA recognises supporters as the lifeblood of the game. The latest meeting provided an invaluable exchange

of ideas, proposals and viewpoints with the overall benefit of European football and its fans in mind. Fans were represented in Nyon by Football Supporters Europe (FSE), Supporters Direct (SD) Europe, and the Centre for Access to Football in Europe (CAFE). All three fan bodies receive specific UEFA backing and recognition. ●

Supporter representatives with the UEFA President

PROFESSIONAL FOOTBALL STRATEGY COUNCIL MEETS IN NYON

On 10 March the Professional Football Strategy Council (PFSC) met at the House of European Football in Nyon, where it discussed issues such as transfers, third-party ownership of players and the timing of the 2022 FIFA World Cup.

On the subject of transfers, the PFSC criticised the amount of commission paid to players' agents and called for regulation in this area. It also reiterated its fears regarding third-party ownership of players, expressing support for UEFA's plan to prevent players who are owned by third parties from taking part in its competitions. UEFA intends to go ahead with that plan if FIFA does not take similar steps at global level.

There were also discussions concerning the timing of the 2022 FIFA World Cup. It was agreed that no decision should be taken until all of the relevant parties have been consulted.

The PFSC and the UEFA President, Michel Platini, expressed disappointment that the International Football Association Board (which decides on the Laws of the Game) had not agreed to amend the triple punishment – a penalty, a red card and an automatic suspension for the next match – which is imposed on a player who fouls an opponent in the penalty area and prevents a clear goalscoring opportunity. ●

€100,000 CHEQUE FOR THE RED CROSS

Before the start of the match between FC Bayern München and Arsenal FC on 11 March in the round of 16 of the UEFA Champions League, Peter Gilliéron, a member of the UEFA Executive Committee and chairman of UEFA's Fair Play and Social Responsibility Committee, handed the German player Philipp Lahm a cheque for €100,000 to present to Charlotte Lindsey-Curtet from the International Committee of the Red Cross on behalf of UEFA. That money will go towards the Red Cross's physical rehabilitation programme for victims of landmines and other disabled people in Afghanistan.

Philipp Lahm was chosen by users of UEFA.com, as he was the player who received the most votes when the team of the year for 2013 was chosen on UEFA's official website. ●

PREPARING FOR THE FUTURE

A major project to upgrade the Faroe Islands' national stadium – which is located in the capital, Torshavn – is currently under way. Later this year, the first covered seating area at Tórsvøllur will be unveiled. However, the stadium development project will not finish there, as the Faroe Islands Football Association (FSF) and local authorities prepare for the future.



The future national stadium and association HQ in the Faroese capital

When the qualifying campaign for UEFA EURO 2016 kicks off in September this year, the Faroe Islands' first match will be at home against Finland. That match will see the official inauguration of the national stadium's new south stand, which has been under construction for the last year or so.

Upgrading step by step

Those 900 covered seats are considered a landmark, as this will be the first time that supporters have had the opportunity to sit under a roof at the national stadium. That is not all, though: that new section of the stadium will also house the FSF's new offices.

The FSF's new headquarters and the improved facilities for spectators are just a small part of the ongoing process of improving and upgrading the national stadium.

It all began in 2011, when new floodlights were installed at the stadium. The following year, the natural grass pitch was replaced with artificial turf. Consequently, all football grounds around the islands now have artificial pitches.

With floodlights and artificial turf in place, attention turned to the facilities on offer for spectators. It is no secret that the climate in the Faroe Islands is very wet, so attending one of the Faroese national team's home matches can be a damp experience – hence the desire for a roof.

Creating new opportunities

The new stand at Tórsvøllur will not only host the FSF's headquarters. The building will have three floors, with the FSF offices all on the third floor.

On the second floor there will be conference facilities, which will be used for any courses that the FSF organises for coaches, referees and other parties involved in Faroese football.

The top floor and the second floor will both also function as VIP areas for international matches.

The FSF is also cooperating with local schools. Over the last couple of years, the FSF has begun organising classes for 14 to 15-year-olds, combining their schoolwork with football training, as well as running classes in football theory. In the future, these classes will also be held in the new building at Tórsvøllur.

On the ground floor there will be a café, as well as facilities allowing various events to be organised for spectators in connection with international matches. Such facilities have been sorely lacking, and there is no doubt that these will create a lot of new opportunities. Such events will help to make international matches a positive experience for everyone, regardless of age or gender.

Planning for the future

Once the south stand has been completed, the FSF and Torshavn town council will develop other areas of the stadium. The next step will be to construct a roof over the stadium's main east stand. This work will probably begin at the end of this year or early in 2015.

Then, the FSF's old headquarters (which are located on the western side of the stadium, behind the technical area) will also be renovated. This will result in improved facilities for media representatives working at the stadium.

Work will then continue on the northern side, with the aim of having all spectators sitting under a roof in a few years' time.

This, combined with all the other improvements to the stadium's facilities, will undoubtedly make Tórsvøllur a top modern venue that is ready for the future and all that it holds for Faroese football.

Vital UEFA grants

The construction of the new south stand has cost almost €7m.

Consequently, it has been vital for the project that UEFA has provided grants covering a large percentage of the costs. The remainder has come from Torshavn town council and the FSF.

The project was originally scheduled for completion in July. However, heavy storms in December did substantial damage to the building, resulting in part of it having to be torn down and rebuilt. That delayed the project by around six weeks.

It is now proceeding according to plan, and people in the Faroe Islands are looking forward to the start of the UEFA EURO 2016 qualifying campaign in September with great excitement. ●

Terji Nielsen

MEMBER ASSOCIATIONS



Albania
www.fshf.org

Presidential and executive committee elections

The Football Federation of Albania (FSHF) held its general meeting on 28 February. Gathering almost all members of the Albanian football family, this was the time for a detailed analysis of the activities of the last four years, as well as elections to the supreme organs of the FSHF, the executive committee and presidency.

The Albanian minister of education and sports, Lindita Nikolli, and the president of the Albanian Olympic Committee, Viron Bezhani, addressed the meeting as special guests.

The incumbent president of the FSHF, Armand Duka, presented a report on the organisation's activities, unanimously approved by its members. Additional reports were then presented by the general secretary, Ilir Shulku, followed by the audit report. The association's new logo was also presented



by the director of marketing and public relations, Gazmend Malo.

In open elections, Armand Duka was unanimously re-elected for a fourth term as president of the FSHF. As for the executive committee, there were 16 candidates standing for 9 available seats. The new composition is as follows:

Armand Duka (president), Lutfi Nuri (first vice-president), Edvin Libohova (second

vice-president), Muhedin Tarkaj (member), Arben Dervishaj (member), Artan Hajdari (member), Abdyl Kuriu (member), Bardhyl Minxhozi (member), Vasil Bici (member), Bardhyl Jera (member), and Tahir

Kastrati (member and president of the referees association).

Armand Duka thanked the voters for their trust in him and, on behalf of the other elected representatives, expressed his belief that they would work hard over the next four years to achieve the objectives set out in the strategy adopted by the FSHF to further the development of Albanian football.

● *Gazmend Malo*



Austria
www.oefb.at

A new travel company

On 18 March 2014 the 110th anniversary of the founding of the Austrian Football Association (ÖFB) was marked by the establishment of a new company, with Austrian Football Marketing, a fully owned subsidiary of the ÖFB, and Hogg Robinson Austria GmbH, an international provider of travel management solutions, announcing a new joint venture: Austrian Sportstravel Management GmbH (ASM). ASM (www.asm.travel) has been in operation since 1 April, offering sports travel, incentive trips and travel packages for fans. It sets new standards in the areas of local services and business travel, combining the extensive experience of Austria's largest sports association with the expertise of an international travel company.

The ÖFB's 110-year history features both great victories and painful defeats. Fantastic

periods at the top table of world football – such as the miracle team of 1931-33 under coach Hugo Meisl, which finished fourth at the 1934 FIFA World Cup, or the team that came third at the 1954 FIFA World Cup – have alternated with periods of bitter disappointment. Austria has produced numerous world-class players, such as the unforgettable Gerhard Hanappi, Ernst Happel, Ernst Ocwirk, Walter Zeman, Herbert Prohaska, Andreas Herzog and Hans Krankl.

Austria have qualified for seven FIFA World Cups, the last being in France in 1998. The national amateur team also won silver medals at the Berlin Olympics in 1936 and were crowned European champions in 1967 in Spain.



Austrian Sportstravel Management, created to mark the ÖFB's 110th anniversary

The most successful individuals in Austria's footballing history are Ernst Happel (best ever coach), Herbert Prohaska (best ever player), Andreas Herzog (most international caps – 103) and Toni Polster (most international goals – 44).

● *Wolfgang Gramann*



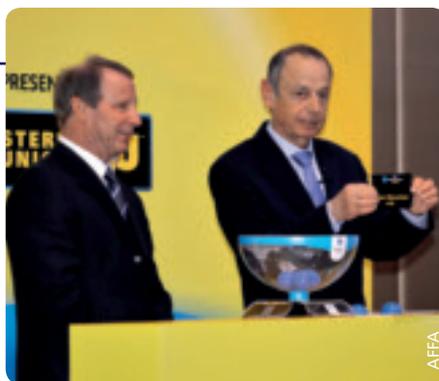
Azerbaijan
www.affa.az

Draw ceremony for UEFA Futsal Cup finals

The draw for the UEFA Futsal Cup semi-finals was held in Baku, Azerbaijan, on 12 March.

The general secretary of the Association of Football Federations of Azerbaijan (AFFA), Elkhon Mammadov, welcomed the participants and reflected on his country's hosting of the tournament:

"Over the last few years Baku has been recognised as a top sports venue. A number of prestigious tournaments will be organised



Berti Vogts assisted with the draw for the UEFA Futsal Cup semi-finals

here in the near future and the UEFA Futsal Cup finals is one of them."

According to the draw, conducted with the help of the national football team's head coach, Berti Vogts, titleholders Kairat Almaty of Kazakhstan will play Russia's FC Dynamo, while the representatives of Azerbaijan, Araz Naxçivan, will meet FC Barcelona of Spain.

The semi-finals, third-place play-off and final will be played on 24 and 26 April at the Sarhadchi Olympic Sport Complex.

After the draw ceremony, a press conference was held for the club representatives to answer journalists' questions.

● *Firuz Abdulla*



BATE Borisov win Super Cup

Filip Mladenović's spectacular free-kick secured the Belarusian Super Cup for FC BATE Borisov as they kicked off the new season with a 1-0 victory over FC Minsk.

Mladenović, 22, struck midway through the first half, catching Minsk and goalkeeper Vladimir Bushma cold. They were all bracing themselves for an effort from free-kick specialist Sergei Krivets when Mladenović stepped forward and sent a pinpoint shot over the wall and into the net. Bushma barely moved.



A delighted FC BATE Borisov

Minsk had no answer then or thereafter as BATE, Belarusian champions for eight years running, defended their advantage with relative ease. Yet before Mladenović struck it was Minsk, who won their first major trophy in May when they lifted the Belarusian Cup, who had made the running. They so nearly broke the deadlock, too, as Predrag Randzelović's inviting cross from the right somehow evaded Aleksandr Makas with the goal at his mercy.

BATE survived that chance, however, and once Serbian defender Mladenović found the net there was only going to be one winner. "We expected this kind of game," said BATE coach Aleksandr Yermakovich. "It is not just Krivets who can deliver set pieces in our team. Maksim Volodko, for example, is also good at free-kicks. There are a lot of options and us coaches like headaches like these."

BATE won the Super Cup for the fourth time and have a total of 16 domestic trophies which also include 10 championships and 2 Belarusian Cups.

● Alexander Aleinik



Young football in Sarajevo

The Bosnia and Herzegovina women's Under-18 team won the UEFA development tournament held at the Asim Ferhatović Hase and SRC Slavija stadiums in Sarajevo. The local team were joined by the women's U18 sides from neighbouring states Croatia and Montenegro, and Greece.

Momčilo Stanić's players won all three of their matches, thanks to a 3-0 victory against Croatia, followed by 2-0 wins against both Greece and Montenegro. Second place went to the Greek team, who notched up two victories against Montenegro (3-1) and Croatia (2-1), while the most prolific game was between Montenegro and Croatia, with Montenegro eventually winning 6-3.

The tournament's top scorer was Tamara Bojat (Montenegro), with three goals. Antonela Radeljić and Esmeralda Mujkić (Bosnia and Herzegovina), Darija Djukić (Montenegro) and Theoni Zerva (Greece) each scored two.

"I would like to thank the Bosnia and Herzegovina Football Federation, which, in cooperation with UEFA, organised a very high quality tournament and allowed us to better prepare for our qualifiers," Stanić said.

The Bosnia and Herzegovina squad showed visible improvements as a result of playing in the now national women's premier league, which started last autumn. In addition to the quality of play, the league attracts more attention as a single league for the

whole country, and more and more young women now want to play.

A ceremony was held after the matches, where trophies and awards were presented by Jasmin Baković, general secretary (NFSBiH) and member of the UEFA Women's Football Committee.

In preparation for the World Cup, the senior men's team played their first friendly on 5 March, against Egypt in Innsbruck, Austria. The Dragons lost 2-0 at the Tivoli Neu Stadium. By the time they line up for their first game in Brazil, Safet Sušić's side will have played two friendly matches, which will be in the United States. The first match will be against Ivory Coast in St Louis on 30 May, and the second against Mexico in Chicago on 3 June.

The senior women's team also played a friendly match recently, in Bijeljina. They played host to Slovenia, who won 2-1.

Meanwhile, the U18s hosted their peers from Serbia in Gradačac, where the guests won 1-0.

In other news, the NFSBiH has signed a cooperation agreement with Special Olympics Bosnia and Herzegovina, which uses sport to help people with learning disabilities. The agreement was signed by Jasmin Baković, and the president of Special Olympics Bosnia and Herzegovina, Enver Ćosićkić. On this occasion, Jasmin Baković said: "I thank our friends from Special Olympics for everything they have done and are doing in their charitable mission.

The signing of this agreement confirms once again our commitment to social responsibility projects."

Enver Ćosićkić added: "We are happy to be signing this agreement as, with it, the cooperation that already exists between our two institutions is made official. It is among, other things, about helping and supporting our athletes, who participate in various competitions, and assisting in the training of trainers for people with special needs."

● Fuad Kravac



Croatia unveils jerseys

Mario Mandžukić and Mateo Kovačić were on hand to present the new home and away national team shirts that the team will wear at this summer's World Cup.

The jerseys were unveiled at a Nike Chance event, a global search for the best undiscovered amateur footballers. Mandžukić presented Josip Juranović, the winner of the day's session, with a new home jersey. "Many great Croatian players inspired me when I was a youngster. I remember dreaming about the day when I would represent my country on the world's biggest stage. And it is a very special occasion to be here today to reward players who are committed and determined to become the next generation to wear this iconic jersey," the FC Bayern München striker said.

The home kit remains true to the world-famous red-and-white checks which were first used on a national team kit in 1990. The new design was actually inspired by the jersey Croatia wore for their first match as an independent team against the USA in October 1990.

Inside the back of the neck there is a woven pennant tab bearing the motto "Budi ponosan" (Be proud), which is the official motto of the Croatian Football Federation and the national team.

"We are a small but a proud country. This inscription will remind us that the whole country is watching and supporting us with all their hearts. It will inspire us to work hard for the team," said Mandžukić.

● Tomislav Pacak



The women's U18s, winners of the UEFA development tournament



Mario Mandžukić and Mateo Kovačić model the new strip

UEFA President praises Danish duo

The UEFA President, Michel Platini, has paid tribute to two prominent figures at the Danish Football Association (DBU) – former president Allan Hansen and former general secretary Jim Stjerne Hansen – who recently stepped down after many years of outstanding service to the organisation. Allan Hansen had been president of the DBU since 2002, while Jim Stjerne Hansen had been the association's general secretary since 1988.

Both were lauded at the DBU's general assembly on 28 February, where the UEFA President paid tribute to them: "I would like to congratulate Allan and Jim and thank them for their many years of service to European football." Later, at a media briefing, Mr Platini added: "I wanted to be here in Denmark to say goodbye to Jim and Allan. In fact, though, they're saying goodbye to the DBU, but not to UEFA, where both will continue their good work."

Before his election as DBU president in 2002, Allan Hansen was chairman of the local football association in Funen, before joining the DBU's board in 1997. He will continue to serve on the UEFA Executive



Allan Hansen (right) and Jim Stjerne Hansen with the UEFA President

Committee, to which he was elected in 2009. He is also chairman of the UEFA HatTrick Committee.

Jim Stjerne Hansen, who was appointed general secretary of the DBU way back in 1988, expressed his pride at having contributed to the development of Danish football: "Denmark is a small country with few football players, but since 1984 our results have been nothing but unique. I am proud that we, in a time of change, have managed to foster a good understanding and smooth cooperation between professional and amateur football in Denmark." He will continue to serve as a member of the UEFA Control and Disciplinary Body.

● Marianne Lath Pedersen

Referees at the heart of the game

On 15 March the French Football Federation (FFF), in cooperation with the French post office, launched a campaign promoting refereeing. Entitled "At the heart of the game", the campaign highlights the human qualities demonstrated by referees, stressing characteristics such as athleticism, courage, responsibility, commitment and passion.

The campaign comprises various elements. A competition organised through Facebook (www.facebook.com/fff), which runs from 15 March to 15 April, will allow two lucky winners to go behind the scenes with the refereeing teams at the men's and women's French Cup finals. Sports bags are also available to win.



The two winners will also appear in a video which will be shown on the various digital platforms used by the FFF, the leagues and the regional associations.

In addition, posters have been sent to France's 17,500 football clubs to display in their changing rooms and clubhouses.

The French post office, which has supported a number of refereeing initiatives over the last seven seasons, will also publicise the campaign via its various communication platforms (magazines, internet and intranet sites, TV screens in its 1,600 branches, etc.).

"Referees are full members of the football family. This campaign is part of our efforts to reform refereeing, one of the objectives of which is to increase the respect given to those who perform this essential – but difficult – task," stresses Noël Le Graët, president of the FFF. "In addition to promoting the role of the referee, we also want to encourage and inspire people to take up refereeing," says Pascal Garibian, head of refereeing at the FFF.

● Stéphane Lanoué

Reporting Discrimination campaign

The Football Association (FA) has launched a Reporting Discrimination campaign, a series of short films to help everyone involved in football to play their part in eradicating discrimination from the beautiful game. The campaign aims to show that discrimination has no place in football, wherever it is played, from the local park to a top-flight stadium. If someone witnesses discrimination, The FA wants them to report it.



With the help of former England players Graeme Le Saux and Dion Dublin, the animated films show people exactly what to do if they witness discrimination while attending or taking part in a football match. The films are available to watch on The FA's website (TheFA.com) or via @FA on Twitter. The message is "hear it, see it, report it".

Le Saux, who was capped 36 times for England, said that the importance of the campaign could not be underestimated:

"I was delighted to be involved in presenting these films on behalf of The FA. When discrimination takes place at any level of the game, we need to ensure that we can take positive action, and the best means of ensuring that is to encourage players and supporters to report it. These films will help explain to players and supporters the importance of reporting discrimination and also highlight the many ways in which they can do so."

Danny Lynch, PR officer for inclusion and anti-discrimination at The FA, said: "We hope the films not only encourage more reporting by fans and players in England, but also highlight how effective film and animation can be in conveying some key social messages. The journey the team here has made in getting these films produced is something we'd be keen to share with the wider football family."

These films will be widely distributed across the professional, semi-professional and grassroots levels of the game in England.

FA director Heather Rabbatts added that the campaign was necessary to ensure that people in the game knew exactly what to do if they came across discriminatory language or behaviour: "We know under-reporting of discrimination in the game is an issue, therefore instilling confidence is key. The FA and the Inclusion Advisory Board have worked with stakeholders across the game in developing these films, which we hope will show how easy it is to report."

● Greg Demetriou



Boateng's MitternachtsSport project wins the integration prize

The Berlin club MitternachtsSport and one of its cofounders, German international and FC Bayern München defender Jérôme Boateng, have been presented with the German Football Association (DFB) and Mercedes-Benz integration prize by the DFB president, Wolfgang Niersbach.

"I'm delighted. In my hometown of Berlin, we're working with MitternachtsSport to do something for children in Spandau and for the local community as a whole," said Boateng, who founded the club in 2009 with social worker Ismail Öner. "I love dropping in on the youngsters."

Presented every year since 2007, this prestigious charity award has paid out more than €1million in money and kind to promote integration projects. At the presentation ceremony at the Mercedes-Benz museum in Stuttgart, Christine Hohmann-Dennhardt, member of Daimler AG board, stressed the importance of diversity in both sport and the economy. "In the car manufacturing industry, too, we place emphasis on team work because it takes the experience and skills of different people to be successful," said the former Federal Constitutional Court judge. MitternachtsSport arranges for sports halls to stay open at night at weekends in the Wilhelmstadt area of Spandau. Hundreds of youngsters, mostly from immigrant families, play football in these



Jérôme Boateng visits the young members of MitternachtsSport

halls from 20.00 to 03.00. Social worker Öner provides academic and vocational assistance alongside the football, and prominent footballers, including Boateng, Änis Ben-Hatira (Hertha BSC), Manuel Schmiedebach (Hannover 96) and Ashkan Dejagah (Fulham FC), support Öner in his important undertaking.

● Thomas Hackbarth



Getting more women involved in football

The Gibraltar Football Association (GFA) has recently launched a new logo and slogan for its women's and girls' football programme.

In conjunction with the launch, a new Twitter account – @GibFAWomen – has been set up to promote all events, results and news relating to women's and girls' football in Gibraltar.

This is the first stage of the GFA's plan to encourage more women and girls of all ages to play football in Gibraltar and to get more Gibraltarian women involved in football in one way or another – be it as players, officials or administrators.

The GFA's head of women's football, Tracey Baglietto, says: "The future of girls' and women's football in Gibraltar



The new logo for the GFA's women's football development programme

looks very promising, judging by the positive response we have received so far from all quarters. We are now looking forward to focusing on our goals and aims and to achieving great results, with our ultimate aim being for football to become the favourite sport of everyone in Gibraltar."

● Steven Gonzalez



University-level referee training course

After several years of preparation, the sports economics and management department of the University of Debrecen has launched a higher education programme for football referees with the assistance of the university's sports office and the Hungarian Football Federation (MLSZ). The aim of the programme is to increase the number of referees who hold an advanced diploma in refereeing studies.

The semester-long course, which is based on material provided by the MLSZ's refereeing department, is 80 % theoretical and 20 % practical. The exam involves a written test, but students are also required to take a practical test. Students who pass the exam can become official referees in the university and county leagues. The plan is for this referee training course to be run continuously during the spring semester over the next few years.

Zoltán Bács, Debrecen University's financial director, says that the sports management degree course (which the university launched in 2001) is very popular, making it a good basis for any new sports courses. The main

goal, he says, is to map and analyse sport's educational and scientific background and transfer knowledge.

Sándor Puhl, vice-president of the MLSZ's refereeing department, stresses that the new training programme is an important milestone in the education of referees in Hungary. He believes that the quality of matches will rise if referees are well qualified because their conflict resolution skills will be so much more effective. He hopes that other universities in Hungary will follow Debrecen's example and produce highly qualified referees for Hungarian football.

"Professional Hungarian referees are playing a major part in the education programme, serving as models for the students. Students can also practise after finishing the training course because they can officiate in county and university championships," Puhl says.

Károly Pető, dean of the faculty of agricultural economics and rural development at Debrecen University highlights the fact that this accredited course is the fruit of several years of cooperation between the MLSZ and the university.

● Sándor Varga



The University of Debrecen has launched a higher education programme for referees

Israel hosts grassroots study group

The Israel Football Association (IFA) recently hosted a three-day grassroots study group with representatives from Ireland, Portugal and Spain. In the course of the three days, the IFA shared the knowledge and programmes applied in particular by its youth department with the 30 or so participants.

One of the main projects featured was the green card scheme, which rewards young players for every positive act on or off the pitch.



Grassroots study group

Among the other grassroots projects presented by the IFA at the study group session were Values in Sport, the Neighbourhood League, Referee Excellency, Girls' Academy and Football for All. The participants got to watch and be part of a training session at the girls' academy run by its head coach, Guy Azury.

On the second day, the participants learned about the good relations and co-existence between the IFA and Bnei-Sachnin FC during

a site visit to the club based in the north of Israel. On the way back from Sachnin, the participants visited Israel's newest stadium, the Sami Ofer stadium in Haifa, which is due to open this coming May.

On the final day, a few hours before the visitors left Israel, there was a short and emotional visit to the beautiful city of Jerusalem, the capital of Israel.

● Michal Grundland

'No to doping' in a joint initiative

The Italian Football Federation (FIGC) has teamed up with UNICEF to say "No to doping", in a joint initiative entitled *Campioni senza trucco* (Champions without Cheating).

Speaking in Crema during the first stop of a roadshow to publicise the initiative, the FIGC president, Giancarlo Abete, said: "You have to look after your health, and you have to make sure competitions are played according to the rules. Those who take drugs damage themselves and others. We want to educate and inform young people."

This is the message that is being targeted at high school pupils participating in the project. The FIGC and UNICEF hope the initiative will increase young people's awareness of

the dangers of drugs in sport, a goal that Italy's national association will be pursuing through its anti-doping committee, led by chairman Pino Capua.

Pupils from schools in Crema, Florence, Pescara and Potenza have already taken part in a competition to create a video on the subject of ethics and doping. The winner will be given the chance to spend a day with the Italian national team at the FIGC's training centre in Coverciano.

After Crema, the roadshow visited Florence (12 March), Pescara (26 March) and Potenza (3 April).

● Barbara Moschini



New futsal championship

The Luxembourg Football Federation (FLF) will organise an official futsal championship for the first time from the start of the 2014/15 season. In recent months, the FLF has reached an agreement with the private organisers of existing futsal competitions in Luxembourg, under which all future competitions will be organised under the FLF umbrella. Eight clubs devoted entirely to futsal, which were accepted as new members of the FLF at its last general meeting, will participate in the new competition alongside a number of football clubs that have their own futsal teams.

Although this is the first time the FLF has officially launched a futsal championship, futsal is not a new phenomenon in Luxembourg. For almost 30 years, the FLF has been organising futsal tournaments for U15s, U13s, U11s and U9s in the winter months of November to February. This season, 273 youth teams from all over Luxembourg took part in these tournaments.

For several years now, a futsal championship has also been held for football club's women's teams, also between November and February. This year's competition attracted 32 participating teams.

Unlike the aforementioned tournaments, which really just supplemented the outdoor activities of the football clubs involved, the 2014/15 futsal championship will mark the official launch of a new sport in Luxembourg. FLF officials are confident that this new competition will prove a valuable addition to the FLF's activities.

● Joël Wolff

Youth futsal tournaments have been organised each winter for over 30 years



Baltic Cup 2014 in Liepaja and Ventpils

The Latvian Football Federation (LFF) reached an agreement with the Daugava stadium in Liepaja and the Olympic sports centre in Ventpils to host the Baltic Cup from 29 to 31 May. Two semi-finals, a match for third place and the final will be held to determine the current strongest team in the Baltic region. In the semi-finals on 29 May, the Latvian national team will meet Estonia, while Lithuania compete against Finland. The third-place play-off and final will take place two days later.

Latvia, winners of the 2012 Baltic Cup



As the main body behind the organisation of this 26th Baltic Cup tournament, the LFF in February invited the whole football family to create and send in their own versions of the logo that will maintain the legacy of Europe's oldest national team competition. More than 40 proposals were received and put to a public vote on the official LFF Facebook page. Voting took place until 28 March, after which the general secretaries of the four national associations represented in the Baltic Cup (Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia and Finland) selected the official logo, taking into account the public's preferences.

Latvia are the reigning Baltic Cup champions, having beaten Finland on penalties in June 2012. It is expected that Māris Verpakovskis, all-time leading scorer of the Latvian national team, will play his farewell match during this year's tournament. Official ticket sales will begin one month before the tournament. For more information, log on to www.LFF.lv or follow the LFF's social media activities on Twitter (@kajbumba) and Facebook (facebook.com/futbols).

● Viktors Sopirins



International Women's Day in Moldova

On 8 March, International Women's Day, for the second year in a row a football match between former Moldovan women's and men's internationals was held at the CSCT Buiucani ground.

Before the match kicked off, the men handed a bunch of flowers to each of the women. The game was fast and the women held the lead until the dying seconds, when the men managed to draw even and make the final result 8-8.

The match was organised by the Football Association of Moldova together with CCPA/OFFS Moldova (Cross Cultures Project



All the players gather for a photo ahead of the match

(captain of the men's team) and Svetlana Ceban (captain of the women's team), both of whom are assistant coordinators with CCPA/OFFS Moldova, as well as Natalia Ceban and Iana Pogarevici, instructors for CCPA/OFFS Moldova.

The match was well attended and received good media coverage as well.

Reports on the match were presented on the official web site of the Football Association of Moldova and on TV.

● Svetlana Ceban

Association/Open Fun Football Schools). Representatives of CCPA/OFFS Moldova also played in the match, including Iurie Conusevici



New "holiday camps"

Northern Ireland internationals Martin Paterson and Sammy Clingan have given their backing to the new Nutty Krust Holiday Camps organised by the Irish Football Association (IFA).

Given the popularity of the IFA's summer soccer camps, this year's programme has been extended and now spans the Easter and Halloween holidays as well. The name has also been changed to "holiday camps" to incorporate the additional dates, but the content and format of the courses will remain the same.

"These camps are an ideal way to introduce youngsters to the game in a fun way, teaching them the basic skills of football while having a good time," Clingan said. Paterson added: "The camps are also a good opportunity for young players to develop



Northern Ireland internationals Martin Paterson and Sammy Clingan with young players at the launch of the new football camps

their skills, giving them the encouragement and guidance to enable them to continue into a more competitive playing environment."

Coordinated by the IFA's grassroots development officers and staffed by qualified coaches, the camps are the ideal way to get children active during school holidays. This grassroots programme is for boys and girls from 5 to 14 years of age, and children of all abilities are welcome.

The IFA's director of football development, Michael Boyd, said: "Our Nutty Krust Holiday Camps promote football for all. The children will develop their existing skills, learn new skills, meet new friends and – most importantly – have a great time. This year we have a load of new and exciting skill challenges for children to try, including football inflatables to test your free kick accuracy, the brilliant 'speed cage', which tests the power of your shot, and also the 'quick feet' challenge, which tests the speed and accuracy of your passing."

● Tracey Campbell



Work on new training centre gets under way

Last month the Football Association of Ireland (FAI) welcomed Leo Varadkar, minister for transport, tourism and sport, and numerous leading political and sporting figures to its headquarters for the official turning of the sod for its new national training centre.

Republic of Ireland manager Martin O'Neill and assistant manager Roy Keane joined Sean Benton, chairman of the National Sports Campus Development Agency, John Treacy, chief executive of the Irish Sports Council, John Delaney, chief executive of the FAI, Joan Burton, minister for social protection, and Brendan Bermingham, chairman of the board of directors of the Dublin and District Schoolboys League (DDSL), at the event.

The FAI is working with the DDSL to establish five grass pitches and one full-size artificial pitch at the national sports campus in Abbotstown, County Dublin. The new facilities are scheduled to be available by the end of this year. Initially, youth development squads and referee and coach education activities will be using the pitches, and in time the FAI's national teams will also be based there.

Meanwhile, the Football Association of Ireland has provided every player in the Irish Premier Division and the Women's National League with a handbook containing information regarding regulations on topics such as betting, match integrity and anti-doping, plus advice on social media and player welfare.



High spirits as work gets under way

The booklet was produced in conjunction with the Professional Footballers' Association of Ireland and also provides players with advice on disciplinary matters and transfer windows.

● Stephen Finn

New, youngest ever president elected

Răzvan Burleanu is the new president of the Romanian Football Federation (FRF). He was elected in the second round of voting in the elections held during the FRF's ordinary general assembly on 5 March.

Burleanu succeeds Mircea Sandu (a member of the UEFA Executive Committee), who had been the federation's president since 9 August 1990 but had decided not to stand for another four-year term. At the same meeting, the general assembly approved the proposal of the FRF's executive committee that Mircea Sandu be made honorary president of the FRF in recognition of his outstanding services to the development of Romanian football.

There were initially five candidates for the presidency: Vasile Avram, Răzvan Burleanu,



The new president, Răzvan Burleanu

Gheorghe Chivorchian, Marcel Pușcaș and Sorin Răducanu; however, Marcel Pușcaș withdrew on the day of the vote. In the first round, none of the candidates obtained an absolute majority, so a second round was needed. In that second round, which was contested by the top two candidates from the first round, Răzvan Burleanu received 113 votes and Vasile Avram 59.

Răzvan Burleanu is the FRF's youngest ever president. Indeed, he is the youngest ever president of a Romanian sports organisation and is currently the youngest president of a European football association – if not the youngest in the world. He was born on 1 July 1984 and is the son of a former Romanian first division player (his father, Gheorghe Burleanu, played more than 350 matches at that level). Răzvan Burleanu played football at youth level, before embarking on higher education at the age of 19. He studied political science at the

national school of political and administrative studies in Bucharest, achieving several master's degrees and a doctorate. He has also worked as a specialist within various high-profile Romanian institutions, such as the country's parliament and presidential office.

Since 2012 he has also been president of the Romanian and European Minifootball Federations.

"Being elected president is a huge responsibility. Thank you so much for your faith in me. This is an extraordinary honour, and I will do my best to perform at the highest possible level. I promise to be impartial and I guarantee that you will not be disappointed. On 6 March we will get to work," Burleanu said following his election.

That work has now started, and Burleanu's main focus is performance. *"We are starting a new era, in which we will have to perform at all levels, with people who can and want to perform. At a sporting level, qualification for final tournaments has to become the norm. We have to rediscover our pride in being Romanian."*

● Paul Zaharia

Kazan to host Russia v Slovakia

A friendly match between Russia and Slovakia will take place on 26 May at the Kazan Arena in Kazan. It will be the first football match to be played at the brand-new stadium.

Previously, Kazan has successfully organised and staged the 2013 World Summer University Games football tournament, Russia's 2014 FIFA World Cup qualifying match against Luxembourg and a qualifying round mini-tournament in the 2013/14 European Under-19 Championship. The senior Russian national team's last trip to the capital of Tatarstan was a success, with our players – under coach Fabio Capello –

coming away with a comfortable 4-1 win against Luxembourg, confirming their spot at the top of their qualifying group.

The Kazan Arena was completed in July last year and will replace Central Stadium as Kazan's main football stadium. Apart from hosting the home matches of Russian Premier League side Rubin Kazan, it will also be a venue for the 2018 FIFA World Cup and the 2017 FIFA Confederations Cup. It has a capacity of 45,105.

As part of their preparations for this summer's World Cup, the Russian national team has also got friendlies lined up against Norway (on 31 May in Oslo) and Morocco (on 6 June in Russia).

● Irina Baranova



Kazan Arena

New UEFA Pro licence holders



Samuel Slovák, now a UEFA Pro licence holder

After two years of study, there are now 20 new UEFA Pro licence holders in Slovakia, many of whom have managed in the Slovak First League. In fact, one of them, former international Samuel Slovák, steered his club to the domestic league and cup double in the 2012/13 season, i.e. while studying on the course. Milan Lešický, who represents coaches on the Slovak Football Association's executive committee, wished all the graduates success at both club and international level. The training of coaches is continuing in Slovakia in line with the UEFA Coaching Convention, with new UEFA Pro, A and B courses beginning later this year.

● Juraj Čurný



Change in management and operations at Friends Arena

Lagardère Unlimited Stadium Solutions (LUSS) have signed a letter of intent with the Swedish FA and other owners of Friends Arena, the Swedish national stadium. The plan is for LUSS to take over management and operation of Friends Arena from 1 January 2015.

“As owners, the Swedish FA has established the arena and laid the foundations. Now is the right time to let an experienced international partner step in and develop the business further,” says the president of the Swedish FA, Karl-Erik Nilsson.



LUSS is taking over the management and operations of Friends Arena

“We see an enormous potential in the location, capacity and flexibility of Friends Arena. We intend to develop the arena further and to make it one of the foremost event arenas in northern Europe for football, other sports and leisure,” says Ulrik Ruhnau, managing director of LUSS.

For now, the Swedish FA remains an owner of the actual real estate of Friends Arena.

Earlier in the month, the Swedish FA posted profits of SEK 16 million (approx. €1.8m) in its financial statement for 2013, due largely to better than expected results from the UEFA Women’s EURO 2013 and revenue from the FIFA World Cup play-offs (against Portugal).

Meanwhile, the limited company running operations at Friends Arena (a company in which the Swedish FA holds a 33% stake) posted a loss of SEK 203 million (approx. €23m) in its first whole year of operations.

● Andreas Nilsson



Ukraine’s Under-18s win Federation Cup

On 6 March Ukraine’s national Under-18 team defeated Latvia in the final of the international Federation Cup tournament in Riga. In addition to the hosts and Ukraine, Finland and Azerbaijan also participated in the tournament.

The Ukrainian team played two matches in the tournament. In the semi-final, they cruised past Azerbaijan, winning 3-1. Besedin, Mysyk and Boryachuk scored the goals, sending the team from Azerbaijan into the third-place play-off. Ukraine then recorded another strong performance in the final, beating Latvia by the same scoreline. Zubkov and Boryachuk scored the goals that brought the trophy home to Ukraine.

This win is important for Ukraine ahead of the qualifying round of the 2014/15 European Under-19 Championship, which takes place in November. Ukraine have been drawn in a group with Sweden, Bulgaria and Israel.

● Yuriy Maznychenko



The Ukrainian U18s, winners of the Federation Cup



International Women’s Day celebrated

The Turkish Football Federation (TFF) celebrated International Women’s Day with a special event on 8 March at the Darüşşafaka Ayhan Şahenk sports complex in Istanbul, where players from the Turkish women’s League played a team of Turkish female celebrities including Ivana Sert (presenter and fashion designer), Işın Karaca (singer), Filiz Taçbaş (actress and former tennis player), Müjde Uzman (actress) and Açelya Danoğlu (model).

The TFF’s director of football and national team coach, Fatih Terim, and the TFF general

secretary, Emre Alkin, were on hand to present flowers to all the players after the match.

The crowd were also treated to a free-style football show during the half-time interval.

Afterwards, Fatih Terim said: *“I would like to thank all women for showing love and compassion to us from birth until death and helping us through all of life’s trials and tribulations. Women’s football is making progress in Turkey and is doing very well globally. We are not separating women’s football from men’s football but focusing on both of them equally. You have seen today that they have talent. I congratulate all women on International Women’s Day.”*

● Aydın Güvenir



Women’s football takes centre stage on International Women’s Day



Osian Roberts’ football world

Wales’ assistant coach and technical director, Osian Roberts, has had a TV crew following him for the last 18 months watching him work – from grassroots football and coaching all the way up to the senior national side. Osian Roberts has been responsible for the identification and development of hundreds of players in the Welsh system, and he coaches the national Under-15 and Under-16 teams, in addition to assisting Chris Coleman with the national squad. The various coach education courses that are run under his auspices have become the envy of many larger associations, and applicants now come from all over Europe. The TV programme is being shown on the Welsh TV channel S4C (with English subtitles) and has already proven very popular with Wales football fans as they learn more about the man and his work in Welsh football.

● Ceri Stennett



Osian Roberts

BIRTHDAYS

Campbell Ogilvie (Scotland, 1 May)
 Peter Mikkelsen (Denmark, 1 May)
 Vasko Dojčinovski (FYR Macedonia, 1 May)
 Ladislav Gádoši (Slovakia, 3 May)
 Vladimír Medved (Slovakia, 3 May)
 Haim Jakov (Israel, 3 May)
 Volodymyr Chorno-Ivanov (Ukraine, 3 May)
 Peter Gilliéron (Switzerland, 5 May)
 Christian Welander (Sweden, 5 May)
 Costakis Koutsokoumnis (Cyprus, 5 May)
 Kenneth Ridden (England, 6 May)
 Gudmundur Petursson (Iceland, 6 May)
 Karl-Erik Nilsson (Sweden, 6 May)
 Liam McGroarty (Republic of Ireland, 6 May)
 Pekka Luhtanen (Finland, 8 May)
 Michel Pralong (Switzerland, 8 May)
 Marc Dobbela (Belgium, 8 May)
 Miroslav Tulinger (Czech Republic, 8 May)
 Stuart Turner (England, 9 May)
Iouri Baskakov (Russia, 10 May) 50th
 Armen Melikbekyan (Armenia, 10 May)
Jean-Marie Gantenbein (Luxembourg, 11 May) 80th
 Ernst-Peter Radziwill (Germany, 11 May)
 Timo Huttunen (Finland, 11 May)
 Maxim Betsko (Ukraine, 11 May)
 Henrik Ravnild (Denmark, 13 May)
 Odile Lanceau (France, 14 May)
 Carlos Manuel Ferreira Matos (Portugal, 14 May)
 Hans-Jörg Eissmann (Germany, 15 May)
 Piotr Maranda (Poland, 15 May)
 Hakan Nyberg (Sweden, 15 May)
 Nikolay Levnikov (Russia, 15 May)
 Evžen Amler (Czech Republic, 15 May)
 Luis Cuervas Del Real (Spain, 15 May)
 Egon Franck (Germany, 16 May)
 Denys Lutiuk (Ukraine, 16 May)
 Svein Johannessen (Norway, 17 May)
 Lars Appelqvist (Sweden, 18 May)
 Tamara Chichinadze (Georgia, 18 May)
 Andreas Morisbak (Norway, 19 May)
 Jozef Marko (Slovakia, 19 May)
 Gaetano De Gabriele (Malta, 19 May)
 Milovan Djukanovic (Montenegro, 19 May)
 Rune Pedersen (Norway, 19 May)
 Greg Dyke (England, 20.2)
 Michał Listkiewicz (Poland, 20 May)
 Serge Muhmenthaler (Switzerland, 20 May)
 Platon Bozatzidis (Greece, 20 May)
Miodrag Belodedici (Romania, 20 May) 50th
 Sandra Ferré (France, 20 May)
 Ewa Gajewska (Poland, 21 May)
 Nicolai Cebotari (Moldova, 21 May)
 Paulo Lourenço (Portugal, 21 May)
Costas Kapitanis (Cyprus, 21 May) 50th
 Theo van Seggelen (Netherlands, 22 May) 60th

Karl Dhont (Belgium, 22 May)
 Christian Hockenjos (Germany, 23 May)
 Patrick Bonner (Republic of Ireland, 24 May)
 Ainar Leppänen (Estonia, 24 May)
 Semen Andreev (Russia, 25 May)
 Suheil Daood (Israel, 25 May)
 Hans Cooman (Belgium, 25 May)
Steven Martens (Belgium, 24 May) 50th
 Ivančica Sudac (Croatia, 25 May)
 Evgeni Giner (Russia, 26 May)
 Robert Jeurissen (Belgium, 27 May)
 Zdenek Sivek (Czech Republic, 28 May)
 Jim Stjerne Hansen (Denmark, 28 May)
 Jean-Pierre Escalettes (France, 29 May)
 Jacques Antenen (Switzerland, 29 May)
Jozef Kliment (Slovakia, 29 May) 50th
 István Huszár (Hungary, 31 May)
 Arnaldo Cunha (Portugal, 31 May)
 Mad Öland (Denmark, 31 May)

UPCOMING EVENTS

Meetings

5 May, Nyon

Medical Committee

13 May, Turin

Executive Committee

21 May

UEFA Grassroots Day

23 May, Lisbon

Club Competitions Committee

27 May, Nyon

Marketing Advisory Committee

Competitions

1 May

UEFA Europa League: semi-finals (return legs)

9–21 May, Malta

European Under-17 Championship: final tournament

14 May, Turin

UEFA Europa League: final

22 May, Lisbon

UEFA Women's Champions League: final

24 May, Lisbon

UEFA Champions League: final

NOTICES

- On 28 February Armand Duka was re-elected president of the Albanian Football Association.
- On 1 March Jesper Møller Christensen was elected president of the Danish Football Association. He replaces Allan Hansen, a member of the UEFA Executive Committee, who did not stand for re-election.
- On 5 March Răzvan Burleanu was elected president of the Romanian Football Federation. Mircea Sandu, a member of the UEFA Executive Committee, decided not to seek another term of office and was awarded the title of honorary president.
- On the same day, Gheorghe Chivorchian replaced Adalbert Kassai as general secretary of the Romanian Football Federation.

OBITUARY

Petar Miloševski (Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia), a member of UEFA's Development and Technical Assistance Committee since January 2013, died in a car crash on 13 March at the age of 40. Following a brilliant domestic and international career as a goalkeeper, during which he won three trophies with FK Vardar (winning the Macedonian First League in 1995 and the Macedonian Cup in 1995 and 1998) and was capped 59 times for his country, he had just begun a new career as an administrator, working as the sporting director for his country's national teams.





NO TO RACISM



RESPECT