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Cover:

*Michel Platini addresses
the 39th Ordinary UEFA
Congress on 24 March
in Vienna, where he was
re-elected for a third term
as president of European
football's governing body.*

Photo: UEFA

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Representatives of all the UEFA member associations convened in Vienna on 24 March for the annual UEFA Congress, where they re-elected Michel Platini for another four-year term as UEFA President and voted in a number of Executive Committee members, three of them new ones.



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PRIDE MIXED WITH CONCERN

The XXXIX Ordinary UEFA Congress in Vienna was a very special occasion for me as I was chosen by you to serve a third term as UEFA President. I feel truly honoured and privileged to have been entrusted with another mandate and I thank you for your support.

I meant what I said in my speech regarding the pride I feel in the way we work together for the greater good of European football. It is indeed a pleasure to be this team's captain and I look forward to leading you and working with you for the next four years.

Together we have conquered many challenges and overcome many obstacles, but we all know there is still a lot of work to be done. I have become deeply concerned about the behaviour of fans in and around our stadiums. It was not so long ago that hooliganism was the greatest threat to the future of our game and we must take this rise in violence seriously and act now to stamp it out. I cannot and will not accept seeing players being victims of verbal or physical abuse on the field of play and fully support our disciplinary bodies in the tough measures they have taken to close stadiums and impose heavy fines.

Of course, football cannot fight this scourge alone. We need the support of all our stakeholders and the authorities, therefore I will once again explore the possibility of creating a police force that can deal specifically with this problem.

On a lighter note, I could not finish this message without paying homage to a man who has been a long and loyal servant of European football, Şenes Erzik. A member of the UEFA Executive Committee since 1990, he retired from his UEFA duties last month. Şenes always worked tirelessly to make sure that the best decisions were taken to uphold our values and will be sorely missed.

Michel Platini
UEFA President

“ROMANTICISM AND REALISM, IDEALS AND ACTIONS”

Vienna continues to hold a special place in UEFA’s history. The Austrian capital staged the inaugural UEFA Congress on 2 March 1955, and two further Congresses followed in 1972 and 1994. On 24 March this year, UEFA returned to Vienna for a fourth time for its 39th Ordinary Congress, which saw Michel Platini re-elected for a third four-year term as UEFA President, elections for the UEFA and FIFA Executive Committees, and honorary membership conferred on Şenes Erzik (Turkey), who stepped down from his UEFA duties after more than three decades of outstanding service – including over 20 years as a UEFA vice-president.



Michel Platini

Michel Platini was confirmed in office by acclamation as the only candidate, and vowed to carry on the work he has undertaken in conjunction with the European football family since his election at the Dusseldorf Congress in January 2007. *“Thank you for your trust and your kind support,”* he told the representatives of UEFA’s 54 member associations. *“This means more to me than you can possibly imagine.”*

“I am proud to be your team-mate, proud to be the captain of this winning team and proud of our achievements,” he added. *“And I am excited to be taking on the challenges that await us over the next four years. I know that I can count on you. And you know that you can count on me. It is the closeness of that bond between us that makes us strong and allows us to take these bold and courageous decisions – decisions which always pay off. This mutual trust, this participatory democracy, is our hallmark, our trademark, and we will continue to work this way over the next four years. You have my word on that.”*

“I hope to make the right decisions at the right time, both for you and for football, during my third term,” the UEFA President continued. *“And I hope to do so while continuing to enjoy myself as much as I have for the past eight years. Because leading this remarkable institution is not just an honour, it is also a genuine pleasure day to day.”*

Austria’s Congress hosts expressed their pride at welcoming the European football family. *“Football is exceptionally popular in Austria and its roots here go all the way back to the 19th century,”* said the president of Austria, Heinz Fischer, by video message. *“I know that UEFA was established in 1954, which was also the year of the dramatic FIFA World Cup in Switzerland, where Austria managed an admirable third place. Not long afterwards, in 1955, the first UEFA Congress was held in Vienna. For Austria, 1955 was also the year in which we signed the State Treaty, so it was a year of great historical significance and one that we have fond memories of.”*



Development the top priority

The president of the Austrian Football Association (ÖFB), Leo Windtner, said that football's development was the overriding priority for the future. "We must ensure that all age groups, whether male or female, take an interest in football, irrespective of their ethnic origins," he stressed. "Our national teams are the drawing cards – the stars are role models for youngsters. It is our top priority to further



Leo Windtner

develop football's appeal as the top sport on our continent – and all criminal activities, such as match-fixing or fan disturbances, must be confronted with the utmost decisiveness."

In his opening address, Michel Platini recalled the first UEFA Congress in 1955. "Sixty years after that founding Vienna Congress," he said, "European football is still 11 against 11, and it still arouses just as much passion. We have simply grown to 54 member associations – evidence not only of the universal nature of our sport, but also of the geopolitical changes that have taken place across the continent in the interim."

"Ultimately, though, if we compare Vienna 1955 with Vienna 2015, the issues at stake have not changed a great deal," he reflected. "Proof that football is a never-ending story. Sixty years and 22 days ago, the official agenda included the following items, and I quote: the broadcasting of matches on television, betting on football, match and competition fixture lists, and the

adoption of UEFA's first official statutes. Those statutes were approved and took effect that same day, just a few streets away."

Mr Platini said that various challenges within European football had needed tackling since he took the helm in 2007. During those eight years, he underlined, great efforts had been made to remain faithful to the philosophy and values of UEFA's pioneers, while also permanently pursuing reinvention to maintain forward momentum. "We have developed a kind of participatory democracy," he told the associations. "The initiatives that UEFA has launched in recent years, the projects it has developed and the decisions it has taken are your initiatives, your projects and your decisions."

HONORARY UEFA MEMBERSHIP FOR ŞENES ERZİK



The Vienna Congress saw the retirement from UEFA duties of Şenes Erzik (Turkey) after 25 years of service on the UEFA Executive Committee, first as a member (1990–94) and then as a UEFA vice-president (1994–2015). His outstanding work on behalf of UEFA since 1982 has also included membership of a variety of committees, bodies and working groups.

Şenes Erzik was made a UEFA honorary member, and received a standing ovation from delegates and guests at the Congress. "There is no doubt that the man who is about to be made a UEFA honorary member deserves it more than any other leader in football today," said UEFA President Michel Platini. "This man is a gentleman ... This man is respected and respectful – respectful of values, principles and all people, regardless of their position. This man is the very embodiment of wisdom. Indeed, one might even say that he is wisdom itself."

"I have been a lucky member of the European football family," said Şenes Erzik in his farewell address. "I must thank the national associations for supporting me through my 25-year tenure as a member of the [UEFA] Executive Committee," he added. "I was lucky all through my fabulous football journey through time, witnessing and being part of some of the most important changes in European football." ●





UEFA via Getty Images

The new UEFA Executive Committee pictured after the Vienna Congress

“We have, together, taken some big decisions for European football and the national associations of Europe. Most of these projects are the result of our joint discussions or discussions between yourselves in which we were privileged to be involved. I am of course thinking, among others, of the 24-team EURO, which will be an exceptional festival of football and is already producing the most exciting, nail-biting qualifying competition yet.”

“I am also thinking of EURO 2020, which will span the entire continent and allow 13 countries to host one of the biggest events in the world. And how can I not mention the new financial distribution models that have enabled us to increase considerably the solidarity and development payments made to each of our member associations within the space of just two HatTrick cycles?”

“These achievements, I repeat, are not mine. They are yours,” Mr Platini emphasised. “They belong to the UEFA Executive Committee, whom I thank most warmly again today, and to UEFA’s 54 member associations. Together, we have shown that it is indeed possible to combine romanticism and realism, ideals and action.”

“A winning team”

The UEFA President praised the national associations for their achievements, and spoke with pride about his role, which he described as being like the captain of a winning team – “one that wins because it boasts 54 talented presidents and general secretaries who are prepared to play for each other, who work hard and put others before themselves, and who share both a love of football and a sense of responsibility... As far as the next four years are concerned, I propose that we remain on the same path, continuing together the fantastic journey that we have been on for the last eight years.”

Michel Platini went on to highlight the many challenges that lay ahead in the future for UEFA and the associations. These included fighting political interference in associations’ affairs, and redoubling the fight to eliminate match-fixing, doping, violence, racism and other forms of discrimination. “Even if we sometimes have the bitter feeling that these battles are matches we cannot win,” he emphasised, “we have to keep playing until the end. We have to play as if it was a cup final – as if it was the most important game of our lives.”

Mr Platini identified social dialogue in football as another challenge to be faced: “It is essential that the contracts of all of Europe’s professional players are respected and the commitments made are honoured. The establishment of minimum conditions to protect players is a matter of principle.”

The UEFA President focused on two issues which he identified as being of particular concern – growing nationalism and extremism in Europe, which were also being reflected within football, and secondly, the worry that UEFA and football were being left to fight certain battles by themselves. “And yet,” he stressed, “these are battles that can only be won with the help of the public authorities. I therefore renew my call for greater awareness of this issue among public authorities, so that we can avoid reliving the dark days of a not-so-distant past – a past where hooligans and all manner of fanatics called the shots in certain European stadiums ... We need tougher stadium bans at European level and – I will say it again – the creation of a European sports police force.”

“A time of maturity, wisdom, mutual trust and common sense”

The Vienna Congress approved the principle of including representatives of other stakeholder

groups as members of the UEFA Executive Committee, pending the amendments to the UEFA Statutes that would be required. *“Stakeholders must never be regarded as the enemy ... they are our partners,”* said Mr Platini. *“And I believe the time has come to grant all or at least some of them the status that they deserve. I am now convinced that we have reached a time of maturity, wisdom, mutual trust and common sense. In other words, it is time to invite some or all of those branches of the family to join us at the top table.”*

Football was, he added, a *“fantastic, welcoming sport that fosters integration and embraces diversity, a ‘school of life’ that teaches the importance of sharing, tolerance and equal opportunities. One of our challenges is to ensure that football continues to play that key role as a creator of social ties. Every village in Europe needs to be in the best possible position to cater for children who want to do just one thing, the most beautiful of things: to play football.”*

HatTrick payments on the rise

The Congress heard about the increase in HatTrick payments – which serve to finance, among others, the campaign against match-fixing, grassroots development, running costs and good governance, coach and referee education, the implementation of club licensing, and the development of infrastructures for the UEFA member associations. The funding each UEFA member association receives during the HatTrick

IV cycle will amount to €11.1m over four years, representing an increase of €1.6m when compared with HatTrick III.

The Vienna Congress approved the 2013/14 activity report of the UEFA President and Executive Committee, as well as the report of the UEFA administration for the same period. Both can be read on UEFA.org. The chairmen of UEFA’s 19 committees also gave reports, in the form of videos, on their respective committees’ recent activities.

Other decisions made during the UEFA Congress included the approval of the 2013/14 financial report and the 2015/16 budget. Next year’s Ordinary UEFA Congress will be held not too far away – in Budapest – when Hungary will welcome Europe’s football parliament on 23 March 2016.

Mr Platini closed by expressing the belief that institutions such as UEFA have an *“obligation to devote themselves to ambitious social responsibility projects, to civic and solidarity initiatives. ... That is why we have established the UEFA Foundation for Children.”* The board of trustees of the UEFA Foundation for Children was appointed and held its inaugural meeting in Vienna. *“The foundation will now be able to put in place its first initiatives in support of children very soon,”* the UEFA President said. *“This foundation belongs to you and the children of your respective countries. Those children, in turn, are the future of European football and Europe as a whole.”* ●

TRIO OF NEWCOMERS ON THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

The UEFA President’s re-election was followed by the election of seven UEFA Executive Committee members, for whose seats there were 12 candidates. Three outgoing members were standing down: UEFA vice-president Şenes Erzik (Turkey) and members Sergey Fursenko (Russia) and Mircea Sandu (Romania). Candidates needed at least 28 votes – an absolute majority of the 54 associations – to be elected in the first round. The following six achieved this:

- **Fernando Gomes (new member, Portugal) – 48 votes**
- **Sándor Csányi (new member, Hungary) – 42 votes**
- **Peter Gilliéron (outgoing member, Switzerland) – 42 votes**
- **Ángel María Villar Llona (outgoing member, Spain) – 42 votes**
- **Grigoriy Surkis – (outgoing member, Ukraine) – 41 votes**
- **Davor Šuker (new member, Croatia) – 34 votes**

A simple majority was enough in the second round, and outgoing Executive Committee member Borislav Mihaylov (Bulgaria) was re-elected with 20 votes.

The other candidates were Yngve Hallèn (Norway), Trefor Lloyd Hughes (Wales), Campbell Ogilvie (Scotland), Geir Thorsteinsson (Iceland) and Servet Yardımcı (Turkey).

FIFA Executive Committee elections were also on the agenda in Vienna. Ángel María Villar Llona was re-elected as a FIFA vice-president, and Wolfgang Niersbach (Germany) was elected as a member. As there were no



The three new members of the UEFA Executive Committee, from left to right: Sándor Csányi (Hungary), Fernando Gomes (Portugal) and Davor Šuker (Croatia)

other candidates, both were elected by acclamation. Having been re-elected as UEFA President, Michel Platini automatically kept his position as vice-president of FIFA. Finally, David Gill (England) was elected as the FIFA vice-president representing the British national associations (England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales) for the 2015–19 period. He replaces Jim Boyce (Northern Ireland), who steps down. ●

IMPORTANT DECISIONS IN VIENNA

Alongside the new financial distribution system for clubs competing in the UEFA Champions League and UEFA Europa League (see opposite), regulations featured heavily on the agenda of the UEFA Executive Committee meeting on 22 March.

Various competition regulations were approved in Vienna, including those for the 2015–18 UEFA Champions League and UEFA Europa League. The UEFA General Secretary, Gianni Infantino, clarified the positions available in UEFA's club competitions for the new cycle. *"Clubs winning either the UEFA Champions League or the UEFA Europa League,"* he said, *"will not add an extra place to the total number of places available for that association in the subsequent club competition season – with one exception."*

"The only time an association can gain an additional place in the subsequent season's club competitions will be if one of its clubs wins either the UEFA Champions League or the UEFA Europa League and, at the same time, does not finish in a place in its domestic league or domestic cup which automatically grants a place in a UEFA club competition."

"It should also be stated," the UEFA General Secretary added, *"that an association with, for example, four places in the UEFA Champions League can increase that to five places if one of its clubs wins the UEFA Europa League the previous season."*

"If that club has already qualified for the UEFA Champions League via its domestic league, then

the association remains with four places in the UEFA Champions League. However, if that club has already qualified for the UEFA Europa League via its domestic league, it results in five clubs participating in the UEFA Champions League, and two – not three – participating in the UEFA Europa League."

The Executive Committee also increased the number of teams entering the 2016/17 UEFA Women's Champions League. The top 12 associations in the rankings – up from 8 at the moment – will be allowed to enter both the winners and runners-up of their domestic competition.

The format of the European Qualifiers for the 2018 FIFA World Cup was also confirmed. Russia qualify as hosts, and Gibraltar is not a FIFA member, so UEFA's 52 remaining member associations will be divided into nine groups: seven groups of six teams and two groups of five. The nine group winners will qualify directly, and the eight best runners-up will enter the play-offs to decide the last four teams in the final round.

Finally, Gibraltar has joined the UEFA Grassroots Charter, which now spans all 54 UEFA member associations. ●



UEFA via Getty Images

INCREASED PAYMENTS AND ENHANCED SOLIDARITY

The financial distribution system for UEFA's club competitions for the 2015–18 cycle sees the amounts available to participating clubs and for solidarity payments increase substantially relative to the 2012–15 cycle.



The UEFA President, Michel Platini, and the chairman of the ECA, Karl-Heinz Rummenigge, sign the new agreement

The new system was adopted by UEFA in close cooperation with the European Club Association (ECA) and was presented to the ECA's member clubs at their annual general meeting in Stockholm on 31 March. All revenue from the two competitions will, for the first time, be centralised in a single pot, with the redistribution to participating clubs based on a fixed ratio of 3.3:1 between the UEFA Champions League and the UEFA Europa League.

UEFA Champions League

The total pot available for distribution to UEFA Champions League clubs is forecast to stand at €1.257bn per season. Clubs in the play-offs will receive €50m: €2m for each play-off winner and €3m for each eliminated club. The €1.207bn that is available to clubs from the group stage onwards will be split, as usual, between fixed amounts and market pool. However, the market pool will be reduced from 45% to 40% of the total, and fixed amounts will increase to 60%.

Fixed amounts (€724.4m)

The 32 group-stage clubs will each receive €12m. Group-stage performance bonuses bring

€1.5m for a win and €500,000 for a draw. Teams in the round of 16 will receive €5.5m each, quarter-finalists €6m, and semi-finalists €7m. The UEFA Champions League winners will receive €15m and the runners-up €10.5m, inclusive of their ticketing revenue share. A club could therefore receive, at best, €54.5m, not counting the play-offs or its market pool share.

The 2015 UEFA Super Cup winners can expect to receive €4m and the runners-up €3m.

Market pool (€482.9m)

The above amount will be distributed according to the proportional value of each TV market represented by clubs taking part in the UEFA Champions League (group stage onwards) and split among the participating clubs from a given association.

UEFA Europa League

The amount available each season for clubs participating in the UEFA Europa League (from the group stage onwards) is forecast to stand at €381m in the 2015–18 cycle (up from €233m in the 2012–15 cycle). This will be split 60:40

between fixed amounts and market pool payments, as in the 2012–15 cycle.

Fixed amounts (€228.6m)

Each of the 48 group-stage clubs will receive €2.4m. In addition, group-stage performance bonuses of €360,000 for a win and €120,000 for a draw will be paid. Group winners will then receive a qualification bonus of €500,000, and runners-up €250,000.

Teams in the round of 32 will receive €500,000 each, teams in the round of 16 €750,000 each, quarter-finalists €1m each, and semi-finalists €1.5m each. The UEFA Europa League winners will receive €6.5m and the runners-up €3.5m, inclusive of their ticketing revenue share. A club could therefore receive up to €15.31m, not counting the market pool share.

Market pool (€152.4m)

The above amount will be distributed according to the proportional value of each TV market represented by the clubs in the UEFA Europa League (group stage onwards) and split among the participating clubs from a given association.

Solidarity payments

An enhanced distribution system also provides for larger solidarity payments to clubs knocked out in the early stages of the UEFA Champions League or the UEFA Europa League. The distribution to clubs taking part in the qualification phases of either competition and not qualifying for the UEFA Champions League group stage will represent 3.5% of the overall revenue. At least €78.6m will be distributed, up from €47.5m in the 2012–15 cycle.

Clubs that are eliminated in the first qualifying round of the UEFA Champions League will receive €200,000, those knocked out in the

second qualifying round will be paid €300,000, and those eliminated in the third qualifying round will receive €400,000. In addition, domestic champions that do not qualify for the UEFA Champions League group stage will receive €250,000.

In the UEFA Europa League, clubs that are eliminated in the first qualifying round will receive €200,000, those knocked out in the second qualifying round will be paid €210,000, those eliminated in the third qualifying round will receive €220,000 and those knocked out in the play-offs will be paid €230,000.

Solidarity payments to clubs not qualified for UEFA competitions

In the 2015–18 cycle, solidarity payments made to non-participating clubs via their national associations and/or leagues (formerly 6.5% of the UEFA Champions League clubs' share) will represent 5% of the overall gross revenue from the two competitions. Thus, €112m will be distributed to national associations and/or leagues for their clubs (up from €82.4m in the 2012–15 cycle). Of that, 80% will be distributed to national associations and/or leagues with at least one club participating in the UEFA Champions League group stage, and 20% will be given to national associations and/or leagues with no participating clubs. Only clubs not participating in the group stage of either competition will be entitled to a share of these solidarity payments.

Distribution to national associations and/or leagues will no longer be based exclusively on their market value: 60% of the available amounts will be distributed in equal shares among all national associations and/or leagues, and only 40% will be based on market values, thereby ensuring a fairer distribution of solidarity payments to European clubs. ●

THIRD-PARTY OWNERSHIP CONTESTED

UEFA and the players' union FIFPro Division Europe have formally lodged a complaint with the European Commission, questioning the legality of third-party ownership of players (TPO) under EU law. The complaint was lodged on 1 April, on the basis that third-party ownership is harmful to the interests of players, clubs and fans and undermines the standing and integrity of the game. In addition, it is felt that the practice of TPO undermines the employment relationship between clubs and players and interferes with important EU legal norms. UEFA is the governing body of European football with a mandate to protect the overall interests of the game and act as a representative voice for European football as a whole. FIFPro has a specific remit to pursue and defend the interests

of professional players, including their right to a dignified and honourable existence. Inherent in the practice of TPO is the desire and ability of so-called 'investors' to control and/or influence the transfer activity of players who are the subject of a TPO arrangement (including players who are not even aware that their 'economic rights' have been sold to a third party). Third parties are driven by a simple motivation, which is to maximise the 'return' on their 'stake' in individual players. UEFA and FIFPro consider that this is not in the best interests of players, clubs or the game of football more generally. Players (including young and vulnerable players) can be exposed to the whims of third parties. In the meantime, clubs can be driven into a vicious circle of debt and dependence. ●

WARSAW IS READY FOR THE 2015 EUROPA LEAGUE FINAL

Poland is hosting the UEFA Europa League final, for the first time in its history, on 27 May. Almost three years after the EURO 2012 semi-final between Germany and Italy, the National Stadium in Warsaw will once again be filled with over 55,000 fans and esteemed guests for a night of European football at its greatest.



The National Stadium Warsaw will be back in the European football spotlight when it hosts the UEFA Europa League final in May

28 June 2012 was a date to remember for football fans around the world. Two goals by Mario Balotelli at the National Stadium in Warsaw gave Italy a secure lead over Germany in their EURO 2012 semi-final showdown. Mesut Özil converted a late penalty but it was not enough to beat the Italians. Three years after that highly entertaining game, Warsaw is once again hosting some of the best footballers in the world, this time in a head-to-head for the UEFA Europa League trophy.

The Europa League final, however, is not limited to the action at the stadium itself. It is a great event which demands a lot of preparations by the many people involved. UEFA, the Polish Football Association, the local organising committee, the stadium operator and the city of Warsaw have all joined forces to provide safety, comfort and the best service possible to all those who decide to watch the game live and those who will be racing home to watch it on TV.

All operational plans were approved during UEFA's last site visit, including the dates for the trophy handover and tour, which will take in various locations around Poland. Two weeks later we started interviewing potential volunteers keen to lend a hand at the 2015 UEFA Europa League final. We have already interviewed

hundreds of people interested in helping out with transport, airport customer service and accreditations. Each interview lasted around 25 minutes and the applicants were assessed on their experience in the given field and in their foreign language skills.

This year's Europa League final will be a tremendous opportunity for Warsaw to yet again prove itself worthy of organising a big football event under UEFA auspices. It is a great chance to promote football in Poland, especially with two Polish internationals still in the race for the final. Grzegorz Krychowiak and his team, Sevilla FC, are the reigning Europa League titleholders, having beaten SL Benfica 4-2 on penalties last year. While Sevilla have to overcome Russian league champions FC Zenit in the quarter-finals before they can set their sights on the final, FC Dynamo Kyiv striker Łukasz Teodorczyk and his team-mates face ACF Fiorentina.

Who will make it to the final at the National Stadium in Warsaw? Whether it be SSC Napoli, VfL Wolfsburg, Sevilla or any of the other teams still in the competition, one thing is sure – Warsaw will be ready to host the grand finale and fans all around the world will enjoy a game to remember for years to come. ●

Press office of the Polish Football Association

BERLIN – CAPITAL OF WOMEN'S FOOTBALL

It's a pretty good formula: UEFA's women's club football showpiece played in the biggest city of Europe's biggest women's football nation.



The bar has been set high for the 2015 UEFA Women's Champions League final at Berlin's Friedrich-Ludwig-Jahn-Sportpark – three years ago a competition record 50,212 fans watched Olympique Lyonnais beat 1. FFC Frankfurt at the Olympiastadion in Munich. The competition's biggest crowds before that, dating from the UEFA Women's Cup era, have all been at finals in Germany: Duisburg in 2009 and Frankfurt in 2008, 2006 and 2002 – the latter a one-off game rather than over two legs as for all subsequent Women's Cup finals.

The Friedrich-Ludwig-Jahn-Sportpark's more limited capacity means that those records will not be broken this year, but appetite for the fixture is high at the first stadium where anyone threw a javelin over 100 metres (Uwe Hohn on 20 July 1984). Tickets went on sale on 14 March and in less than a fortnight more than a third of them had gone, with no way of even knowing yet whether a German team will make it.

A new challenge

There was another ticket sales challenge, as – for the first time since the UEFA Women's Champions League final was introduced in 2009/10, in the same city as the men's decider – the match is not being played the same week as the men's showpiece. With that match on 6 June, the day the FIFA Women's World Cup kicks off in Canada, the women's final is being played on 14 May, i.e. outside the week when the eyes of global football will be firmly on Berlin.

The Friedrich-Ludwig-Jahn-Sportpark, venue for the Women's Champions League final on 14 May



But the German Football Association are no strangers to moving tickets for big occasions such as this, as proven in 2012 and at the previous year's FIFA Women's World Cup. Women's football is an easier sell in a nation with 2 world titles, 8 UEFA Women's EURO victories and triumphs in 8 of the 13 UEFA women's club finals.

Pulling out all the stops

Promotion began in January with the distribution of 20,000 flyers in the Berlin region, and in March a campaign aimed at younger fans began on social media, with a trip to the final up for grabs. Even before the ticketing launch, the UEFA Women's Champions League trophy was on display at the ITB Berlin tourism trade fair, and once tickets went on sale they were promoted at big sports events throughout the German capital, including Hertha BSC Berlin's home matches.

Throughout the city, it would be difficult to miss the promotional videos playing in the public transport network, not to mention thousands more flyers and adverts in magazines and newspapers. Final ambassador Steffi Jones is embarking on a programme of school visits, and on 29 April the UEFA Women's Champions League trophy will be handed to the city of Berlin together with the men's cup – a key moment in the promotion of the annual fixtures. As 14 May approaches, Berlin's cinema-goers will also see special promotional videos.

Those outside Berlin will not miss out on the build-up either, not least thanks to UEFA's own social media channels – keep an eye on @UWCL and the official UEFA Women's Champions League Facebook page (more than three million likes) for all the #UWCLfinal news. And, of course, the game can be watched in Europe (and beyond) on Eurosport, who have screened live matches throughout the competition, as of the early stages.

In the meantime, we must see what happens in the semi-finals in April to find out which two teams will compete for the trophy in Berlin. Whoever goes head to head on the day, a repeat of last year's seven-goal thriller in Lisbon would be a fine reward for ticket holders and TV viewers alike! ●

UEFA DONATION TO THE INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE OF THE RED CROSS

Ahead of the UEFA Champions League match between Real Madrid CF and FC Schalke 04 in March, Toni Kroos and Cristiano Ronaldo presented a UEFA donation of €100,000 to the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC).

The funding is for the ICRC's physical rehabilitation programme in Afghanistan, which uses football as a means of recovery for victims of landmines. Both players were selected by fans for UEFA.com users' Team of the Year. "For football players who are in the public eye and are role models, it's important to be active in that domain," said German international Kroos, with reference to social responsibility projects. "We're doing very well and there are many people for whom things are not going so well, so when you have the opportunity to help them, you should. Football can play an important role because it is such an important topic around the world. It is the number one sport with the biggest platform and we have the chance to do some positive things."

Making a difference

Video footage on UEFA.org highlights the tangible results of the rehabilitation work carried out in Kabul as a result of the funding and a partnership that has been fruitful since the late 1990s. The funding helps the programme to provide artificial limbs, physiotherapy and vocational training and uses football to offer the possibility of a brighter future to many. "It's very natural: sport is very good for everyone," said Masoud Hamidi, one of the athletes benefitting from the ICRC initiative. "And it makes us stronger. For me, the main thing was to become an example for other people with disabilities and to give them the feeling that they are not weak."

"Everyone loves something in their lives," 20-year-old Nangyali added. "My love is football. It saves me from being depressed and sad. When I play football, I feel like a normal player."

A fruitful partnership

The cheque was delivered to the players by UEFA Executive Committee member Peter Gilliéron, who is also the chairman of the UEFA Fair Play and Social Responsibility Committee. It was collected from the players by the director general of the ICRC, Yves Daccord. "The money [we get from UEFA] is spent on building and repairing prosthetics," explained Mr Daccord.



UEFA via Getty Images

"Nowadays, making a prosthetic for a kid is difficult, because it uses very complicated material – it must be durable. But also, because a child grows up very fast, you have to change their prosthetics and you have to follow up with them throughout their life. This donation is crucial because it allows us not only to give physical support but to go a step further in integrating people into society. One thing I'm proud of today is that if you look at the seven ICRC centres in Afghanistan, 90–95% of people working there are former patients. That's fantastic and that was made possible because UEFA helped us in the long term."

The UEFA President, Michel Platini, praised the efforts to make a difference through football. "I would like to pay tribute to the work of the ICRC in Afghanistan, which has been working relentlessly on the reintegration of landmine victims, among them many children and women," said Mr Platini. "The UEFA-ICRC partnership has been running for more than 15 years now, and we want this to develop, showing that football contributes to society beyond the boundaries of the pitch and will continue to do so." ●

Left to right: Yves Daccord, Toni Kroos, Cristiano Ronaldo and Peter Gilliéron

BULGARIA WELCOMES THE STARS OF THE FUTURE

The final round of this season's European Under-17 Championship will be a historic event – the first youth tournament since 2002 to feature 16 teams.



It will also be the first time that a European 16-team final tournament has used only four stadiums, the venues in question being Stadion Lazur, Arena Sozopol, Stadion Beroe and Stadion Hadzhi Dimitar in the cities of Burgas, Sozopol, Stara Zagora and Sliven respectively. Moreover, all 16 teams will stay in the same place, the Sunset Resort on the Black Sea coast – another first.

Between 6 and 22 May, 33 tournament matches will be played, involving 288 players and a total of 200 officials and official guests.

This is only the second time that Bulgaria has hosted a tournament of this magnitude, and the first was way back in 1959. On 6 April 1959, Bulgaria beat Italy 1-0 in the final of the European Under-18 Championship to win their first ever European title. The winning goal was scored by Anton Krastev, and the squad also contained future stars such as Dimitar Yakimov, Nikola Kotkov, Georgi Sokolov and Petar Velichkov.

Bulgaria went on to win the tournament again – being crowned European champions in both 1969 and 1974 – but we have had to wait until now for another opportunity to host such a prestigious UEFA event. This is also the first time since 1991 that Bulgaria's national team have taken part in the final round of UEFA's most junior men's tournament.

The long-anticipated draw for the final tournament was made on 2 April at the Sunset Resort in Pomorie. The guest list for the ceremony included UEFA officials, stars of Bulgarian football



such as Dimitar Penev, Pavel Panov and Emil Kostadinov, and coaches such as Dimitar Dimitrov (who boasts the nickname 'Hero' in Bulgaria). The president of the Bulgarian Football Union, Borislav Mihaylov, the Bulgarian minister for sport and youth, Krassen Kravev, and the chairman of the UEFA Youth and Amateur Football Committee, Jim Boyce, were also in attendance.

A total of 52 national teams competed for the 15 available places in the final tournament (with Bulgaria qualifying automatically as hosts). Those 15 teams are Austria, Belgium, Croatia, the Czech Republic, England, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, the Netherlands, the Republic of Ireland, Russia, Scotland, Slovenia and Spain.

The four groups of four were drawn by Dimitar Penev, the most successful Bulgarian coach of the 20th century.

As hosts, Bulgaria were placed in Group A. Alexander Dimitrov's team will kick off the tournament with a match against Croatia on 6 May in Stara Zagora. They will then play Spain on 9 May at Stadion Lazur, followed by a game against Austria on 12 May at Arena Sozopol.

Group B consists of the Czech Republic, Slovenia, Belgium and Germany. Matches in this group will also be played on 6, 9 and 12 May.

Matches in Groups C and D will take place on 7, 10 and 13 May. Group C contains Greece, Russia, Scotland and France, while in Group D the defending champions, England, will face the Netherlands, Italy and the Republic of Ireland.

The top two in each group will go through to the quarter-finals, which will take place on 15 May in Burgas and 16 May in Stara Zagora. The semi-finals will be played on 19 May, and the final will take place on 22 May at Stadion Lazur in Burgas. Tournament matches will be broadcast live on Eurosport.

The tournament will also determine the six European teams that qualify for the U-17 World Cup, which will take place in Chile from 17 October to 8 November. The four semi-finalists will all qualify, as will the winners of two play-offs between the losing quarter-finalists.

The tournament promises to be highly competitive, with the winners of the last nine editions of the European Under-17 Championship – England (2010 and 2014), Russia (2006 and 2013), the Netherlands (2011 and 2012), Germany (2009) and Spain (2007 and 2008) – all represented in Bulgaria. ●

Pavel Kolev

Tournament ambassador Dimitar Penev, with the chairman of the Youth and Amateur Football Committee, Jim Boyce, at the draw on 2 April



NEW ELITE PLAYER DEVELOPMENT PROJECT

A new UEFA programme designed to help Europe’s national associations foster talented young footballers is moving into top gear and already beginning to have an impact and achieve its objectives.

The UEFA Elite Youth Player Development Programme aims to help nurture talented young players, especially in Europe’s medium-sized and smaller national associations. Three countries – Armenia, Georgia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia – have been chosen for the pilot programme, and youth teams from all three travelled to Cyprus at the beginning of March to take part in a youth development tournament that provided an excellent opportunity to measure their progress.

U14 and U15 players are the target group and the objective is to implement a technical and educational programme within each participating association, based on the premise that proper football education, schooling and rules of conduct are all extremely important elements in a young player’s development.

The associations are being helped to develop effective national academy systems that foster close relationships between the association, schools and clubs, thus creating a top-quality environment for talented players and a clear link between football training and school education. The youngsters are also being taught life skills and given education in positive values such as fair play and respect, in addition to high-quality technical, tactical and fitness training – the latter in key areas such as nutrition.

During the tournament, UEFA’s head of football development, Jean-François Domergue, was able to see at first hand how the project – which began as an idea by the UEFA President, Michel Platini – is developing apace. Mr Domergue has spent time at each of the three academies, living with the young players and observing their daily lives and development. *“I can say that there has been big progress as far as the players are concerned, especially in their education and behaviour during training sessions,”* he says.

Great experience

Mr Domergue visited 15 associations before deciding on the trio for the pilot phase. The programme got under way in August and following the progress that was evident in Cyprus, plans are now in the pipeline to expand the project. *“The next step is to continue as we are, as we have two more visits between now and the end of the season,”* he said. *“We will also try to take on other national associations in this project – this is something that we want to do, because many associations want to benefit from this development programme. In the next few years we could perhaps have around 20 national associations involved in this project.”*



Cyprus FA

The young players welcomed the opportunity to go head to head in Cyprus

For a good number of the youngsters, the Cyprus tournament was a new experience, with many never having even visited another country before. *“Most of these young players are travelling abroad for the first time, so the opportunity to play football at the highest level and have high-level training with highly qualified coaches is a great experience for them,”* noted Giorgi Khachidze, academy manager at the Georgia Football Federation (GFF).

One of those youth players, Sandro Davituliani, voiced those same sentiments, having already seen up close the transformation in his native Georgia. *“It’s been fantastic – a great experience,”* he said. *“I have seen a very big difference. I myself have seen players improving and new talents joining this team.”* Davituliani is one of dozens of U14 and U15 players involved in the scheme. *“The progress is already obvious,”* added Artur Azaryan, coordinator of youth development projects at U14 and U15 level at the Football Federation of Armenia (HFF). *“We gathered those players in August and already now, we can see the difference in their quality. They are happy to be at this academy and, of course, they are happy to be in Cyprus, because it’s their first international experience.”*

Filip Popovski, general secretary of the Football Association of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FFM), is encouraged by the young players’ response. *“They are dedicated to the programme, as well as to the education that they are receiving at the association,”* he said. *“This programme means a lot to us, because we are recruiting young talents from all around the country, bringing them together and preparing them as potential additions to our [senior] national team.”* ●

DRAW FOR THE FINAL ROUND OF THE UEFA REGIONS' CUP

On 30 March, the draw was made in Dublin for the final round of the 2014/15 UEFA Regions' Cup, with the eight qualifying teams being divided into two groups of four. The hosts, the Eastern Region of the Republic of Ireland, will take on Ankara (Turkey), South Moravia (Czech Republic) and Tuzla Canton (Bosnia and Herzegovina) in Group A, while Group B will comprise Zagreb (Croatia), Dolnośląski (Poland), the Eastern Region of Northern Ireland and Württemberg (Germany). The winners of the two groups will contest the final.

The final round kicks off on 26 June in the Irish capital, with the final taking place on 4 July.

With the holders, Veneto, not there to defend their title, Dolnośląski will have the opportunity to win the tournament for a second time, having already lifted the trophy in 2007. ●



Left to right: retired Irish footballer Ray Houghton, UEFA Regions' Cup ambassador James Walsh, and the chairman of the UEFA Youth and Amateur Football Committee, Jim Boyce

ANNUAL MEETING WITH SUPPORTERS' GROUPS

On 16 March, representatives of three supporters' groups (Football Supporters Europe, Supporters Direct Europe and the Centre for Access to Football in Europe) came to the House of European Football for their annual meeting with UEFA. They talked about the progress they had made with current activities and discussed future projects. The issues addressed included cooperation with supporters, club licensing, access to stadiums at UEFA EURO 2016 and discipline, with the supporters' groups suggesting various ways of improving matters. The meeting was attended by the UEFA President, Michel Platini. ●

MEMBER ASSOCIATIONS



National youth teams on a roll

The Austrian Football Association's national youth teams are celebrating one success after another at the moment. Andreas Heraf's Under-20 side recently qualified for the U-20 World Cup in New Zealand in June, and now Manfred Zsak's team have followed suit by topping their elite round group in the European Under-17 Championship – ahead of hosts Russia, Wales and Iceland – and securing a place in the final round of that competition. This is the sixth time an Austrian team has qualified for the final round of a youth competition since 2013, once again supporting the national association's decision to launch the Projekt12 youth development programme.

A beaming Manfred Zsak reflected on his team's achievements: "I am thrilled to have qualified for the final round. We won our group ahead of the favourites, Russia, who also had home

advantage. Having just missed out with the Under-21s and the Under-19s, I am even more delighted that the Under-17s have made it."

The final round will begin on 6 May, with Austria's Under-17s taking on the seven other group winners and the top seven runners-up from the elite round, as well as the hosts, Bulgaria. The tournament will also act as the European qualifying competition for the U-17 World Cup, which takes place in Chile this autumn. There are six European places up for grabs.

● Carmen Redl



The U17s are on a roll



Annual congress and progress reports

The Association of Football Federations of Azerbaijan (AFFA) held its annual congress on 6 March. It opened with a video celebrating the appointment of Baku as a host city for EURO 2020. The AFFA president, Rovnag Abdullayev, then welcomed UEFA Executive Committee member Karen Espelund and the congress delegates, guests and media representatives. Mr Abdullayev gave a short overview of the events the AFFA had organised to further develop football in Azerbaijan over the last 12 months and reported good progress in this regard.

The AFFA's general secretary, Elkhan Mammadov, presented a more detailed report

and emphasised both the achievements and challenges faced by football in Azerbaijan during the period under review. The reports of the chief accountant, Khalid Javadov, and the representative of the independent auditors, Babak Mammadov, were also presented, and the chairman of the AFFA coaches committee, Vagif Sadigov, gave an update on his committee's activities.

Karen Espelund, the guest of honour representing the UEFA Executive Committee, then took the floor and wished the congress and Azerbaijani football as a whole every success in their work. In her speech, the UEFA Executive Committee member emphasised two things in particular: the importance of taking tough action to combat match-fixing and the need for premier league clubs to incorporate women's teams.

The creation of a new appeal and arbitration committee was put to the vote and unanimously approved. A report was also presented to the football community and government officials on the 2005–15 state programme for football development, which was approved on the orders of the president of the republic, Ilham Aliyev, on 10 October 2005. The report was prepared by the AFFA.

After the congress, a meeting of the AFFA executive committee was convened and the AFFA president held a press conference.

● Nubar Aghazada



Karen Espelund representing UEFA in Baku

Futsal team qualify for the play-offs

The latest stage of Bosnia and Herzegovina's bid to qualify for EURO 2016 in France began with the team's first win. Watched by their new coach, Mehmed Baždarević, they won 3-0 in Andorra, remaining in touch with their rivals in Group B in the race for a place in the final tournament.

Meanwhile, the national Under-21 team began to prepare for their next competition, where they will attempt to qualify for the final round of the European Under-21 Championship, which will take place in 2017 in Poland. However, under their new coach, Dragan Nestorović, they lost 5-2 to the US Under-23 team at Stadion Tušanj in Tuzla. Their next two matches – also friendlies – are against Turkey and Montenegro, before their first qualifying match against Norway on 13 June.

The national Under-17 team recently travelled to Tatabánya, in Hungary, for the elite round of

the European Under-17 Championship. Unfortunately, they only finished third in Group 7, so failed to qualify for the final tournament in Bulgaria. They lost their first match 2-0 to Scotland, before drawing 2-2 with the Czech Republic and beating Hungary 2-1. The Czech Republic topped the group with 7 points, followed by Scotland and Bosnia and Herzegovina with 4 points, while the hosts finished bottom with a solitary point.

Meanwhile, the national futsal team performed brilliantly in Group 1 of the main round of the European Futsal Championship, finishing second in the group and qualifying for the play-offs in their bid to reach Futsal EURO 2016. In the Juan Antonio Samaranch Olympic Hall in Sarajevo, Boro Matan's team beat the Netherlands 2-1 in their first game, before defeating Latvia 7-3. In the deciding match against Russia, however, they lost 2-1.

The women's national team recently competed in the Istria Cup in Rovinj, finishing in 11th place after beating Northern Ireland 5-4 on



Bosnia and Herzegovina beat Latvia 7-3 in qualifying for Futsal EURO 2016

penalties, neither side having managed to score in normal time. In the group stage of the competition, Samira Hurem's team lost 1-0 to Costa Rica, before drawing 0-0 with Wales and 3-3 with France.

The women's Under-16 team played in a UEFA development tournament in Zagreb. They lost all three of their matches – 2-0 to Serbia, 4-1 to Croatia and 3-1 to Slovenia – and finished in fourth place. The women's Under-17s, on the other hand, played two friendly matches against their Turkish counterparts in Istanbul. They won both games, 1-0 and 3-1.

● Fuad Kravac

Campaign against racism and violence

In March, the Croatian Football Federation (HNS) launched a national campaign called #mojatribina (meaning 'my stand') – another important step in its ongoing battle against racism, discrimination and violence in football stadiums. The HNS is working in cooperation with Croatia's top-flight clubs, whose players and coaches appear in nine different videos talking about fans' behaviour. By promoting positive values and condemning all forms of hooliganism, the HNS wants to send strong and clear messages that will educate fans and improve the atmosphere at football matches. Those 30-second clips have been shown, among other places, on national television channels, on news websites, on social networks



Davor Šuker with Ivica Olić and his centenary shirt

and in football stadiums. In the next phase of the campaign, national team players, fans, referees and other football stakeholders will all get involved.

Before the recent EURO 2016 qualifying match against Norway, the tireless Ivica Olić was presented with a special award in recognition of his 100 international caps. The president of the HNS, Davor Šuker, presented the award to the

35-year-old forward, who won his 100th international cap last November against Italy at San Siro. Olić thanked Šuker for more than just the award: "It was Davor Šuker who set up my first goal for Croatia. It is a special feeling to play for your country 100 times, and I will be available for as long as the team needs me." Olić celebrated that award with a goal in Croatia's 5-1 win against Norway, earning a standing ovation from the capacity crowd.

That brilliant victory capped a fantastic month for Croatian football, in which the country's Under-17 and futsal teams qualified for the final rounds of their respective European championships, while Davor Šuker was elected to the UEFA Executive Committee – the first time that a Croat has been a member of UEFA's executive body.

● Tomislav Pacak

For the Love of the Game

The FA has produced a short film entitled For the Love of the Game, as it continues to inform and inspire girls to get into football. England women's international Jess Clarke joined Deb Owen from the Manchester County FA, referee Rebecca Welsh, coach Annie Zaidi and Sunderland AFC chief executive Margaret Byrne in highlighting the breadth of opportunities available to women wanting to make a contribution to the English game in a range of roles.

The film came as The FA joined other UEFA member associations in marking International Women's Day. Another initiative saw the launch of a campaign calling for more reporting of sexist abuse in the game by the Women in Football network. Heather Rabbatts, chair of The FA's Inclusion Advisory Board, said: "Dealing with sexism in football is something which needs to be tackled by all in the game. We need to

respond to the issue with a range of methods, from guidance for stewards to the continued encouraging of reporting. Kick It Out has an app – and The FA has a range of short films which guide both players and fans through the process – for swift and effective reporting of all forms of discrimination."

Rabbatts also contributed to a special BBC programme on the subject. The piece looked at what The FA is doing to increase female representation and champion role models in all areas of the game.

FA chairman Greg Dyke was also asked about his view on growth in the women's game, and specifically whether football has done enough to tackle the issue of sexism in sport. "You have got to remember where The FA came from," he said. "It banned women's football for many years. In recent years, it has been on the front foot. It has been incredibly active, very proactive. We played the first women's football match at the new



Women's football is going from strength to strength in England

Wembley this season, which was a big success. We all follow women's football. I think we are on the front foot but let's not kid ourselves: The FA didn't come from the best of positions, it started from a long way back and women's football as a result was a long way back in this country. It is now making great progress."

That progress has been underlined by the first England women's match at the new Wembley Stadium last November, the establishment of a two-tier Women's Super League in the country and the announcement of the first FA Women's Cup final to be played at Wembley. The showpiece match falls on 1 August this year.

● Danny Lynch

Leadership in football

The Faroe Islands Football Association (FSF) recently held a course for leaders from various clubs around the islands. The purpose of the course was to point out and discuss some basic things that leaders and coaches in football need to be aware of.

A good leader is able to make everyone in his team feel like part of the group, at the same time as feeling noticed and appreciated as an individual. Generally speaking a good leader is able to make everyone feel at home in the group or team, and this is particularly important if you want to have success in sport.

The course was held at the FSF headquarters.

It was run by two Swedish instructors, Calle Barling and Mikael Fahlen, both of whom have good theoretical backgrounds and practical experience. Both have coached national youth teams in Sweden and together they have written a book on the subject of leadership. The book is called Lederskapsande – om mennesker, som spelar fotboll (Leadership spirit – for people who play football).

The course was very much focused on what is generally known as 'leadership DNA', in this case applied to football. Around 45 leaders from various clubs in the Faroe Islands took part in the course.

● Terji Nielsen



The participants and instructors at the national stadium in Torshavn

First training camp for Under-20 futsal team

The Football Association of Finland recently established a national Under-20 futsal team and the team's first training camp was held in Oulu from 16 to 18 April.

The training camp was led by the head coach of the men's national futsal team, Mićo Martić. While the establishment of an Under-20 team should help Finland to prepare

for future UEFA competitions at senior level, Martić was also looking for talented young players who could go straight into the senior side, which almost qualified for the play-offs when it competed in the main round of the European Futsal Championship in Poland in March.

Most of the players who were selected for that training camp played in the domestic Under-20 futsal league this season.

● Sami Terävä

Winter workshop for referee observers

On Wednesday 18 February the refereeing department of the Gibraltar Football Association (GFA) held a winter referee observers course. The aim of this day-long course was twofold: to give further training to current referee observers, and to encourage other experienced referees to join the referee observer scheme. GFA referee observers are highly trained, attending frequent courses and seminars in order to continuously improve standards.

Such training focuses on maintaining knowledge and awareness of issues, including updates on the Laws of the Game and the referee observer scheme. Observers are encouraged to develop their skills and offered practical help and guidance. One key objective is to establish a more uniform and consistent approach to the observing of referees.

At matches, all referees are assessed fairly and objectively by referee observers on the basis of the following core competencies:

1. Application of Laws of the Game
2. Control of the match
3. Positioning, fitness and work rate
4. Alertness and awareness, including management of stoppages
5. Communication
6. Team work
7. Advantage rule

For the past two seasons, match officials have been observed in all premier league matches. A system is also in place to ensure the periodic monitoring of referees at lower levels. This has greatly enhanced the support given to our referees and their development.

The GFA's director of refereeing, Adrian Bacarisa, highlights the importance of the role that referee observers play: "Referee observers play an important and integral role in developing the modern-day referee. They are the guardians of standards and provide a quality service that contributes to referee promotion, development and retention. Primarily, the role of the referee observer is to help referees to improve and become better referees." ● Steven Gonzalez

Talented young players gather in Ioannina

In April, Greece's most talented young players travelled from all over the country to participate in the final round of the national team pre-selection championship in Ioannina. Hundreds of ambitious young players – the very best of the many thousands who play football in Greece – take part in this major annual tournament, which stems from the strategic development plan established by the Hellenic Football Federation (EPO) for its national teams.

This was the third year in a row that the tournament had been organised in this particular way. The tournament is made up of three rounds, and the basic objective is to identify the best players in the local football unions' teams, with all matches in all rounds being watched closely by the head coaches of Greece's national youth teams (Under-15s, Under-17s, Under-19s and Under-21s).

First, the youth teams of the country's 53 local football unions are divided into 11 groups. After the first round of matches, the EPO's 11 regional coaches select the best players from each local football union and create regional teams based on geographical criteria. After the second round, the head coaches of the national youth teams, assisted by the 11 regional coaches, take the best players from those regional teams and create eight new teams representing four geographical zones. Those teams then contest the final round of the tournament.

The strategic development plan for Greece's national teams seeks to give structure to the training of young Greek players, establish a single philosophy spanning all of Greece's national teams and help players to learn the fundamentals of life in the national team at the very beginning of their careers – i.e. as soon as they are selected for the national Under-15 team.

The EPO has placed significant emphasis on the grass roots in recent years, and it is already reaping the benefits, with the national Under-17 and Under-19 teams qualifying for the final rounds of their respective UEFA championships in most years.

● EPO press office



Ioannina hosted the final round of the country's third annual youth development championship

Women's Under-19s finish third in Sochi

The Israeli women's Under-19 team recently finished third in the prestigious Kuban Spring tournament in Sochi, Russia. This was the second time that the team had taken part in the tournament, and it was their best performance to date. The team's development is particularly important at the moment, given that Israel will be hosting the final round of the European Women's Under-19 Championship this summer.

Last month, the tournament director, Sharon Zeevi, announced the fourth stadium that would be used in the summer. Matches will be played in the cities of Ramla, Rishon LeZion, Lod and Netanya. Given the team's success in Sochi and the high standard of preparations,



The U19s are rightfully proud of their third place finish

the Israel Football Association is expecting a great tournament both on and off the pitch. The organisers' main goal is now to get fans

into the stadiums and generate lots of interest in women's football.

● Michal Grundland

Tutors for national youth teams

Good performances both on and off the field of play: this was the main aim of the new agreement between the Italian Football Federation (FIGC) and Foro Italico University in Rome. This initiative seeks to foster and establish synergies between the school education system and the sporting education of players who are called up for national youth teams.

At a number of training camps and competitions lasting over a week, the FIGC will provide tutors to help players with their liberal arts and science studies. The tutors will also accompany squads to international tournaments. The agreement covers all men's and women's national youth teams, from Under-15s to Under-19s. The tutors began working with the players at the end of March, when the elite rounds of the European Under-17 and Under-19 Championships were held in Germany (21 to 26 March) and Austria (26 to 31 March) respectively.

"This is a really important project for us. Education is vital for these young players' futures because they need to understand the society they live in. This is the beginning of just one initiative through which we, the FIGC, aim to make a difference," said the FIGC's president, Carlo Tavecchio.

"I am proud and honoured to be part of this project," said the university's dean, Fabio Pigozzi. *"I thank the FIGC for this initiative, which will help to offer important educational support to the country's top young players."*

The FIGC's chief executive, Michele Uva, stressed the importance of the scheme for the national youth teams: *"Education is really important, and it's only fair that all national youth teams are given the same opportunities, not just from a sporting perspective, but also in a broader sense within the organisation. We have a legacy to protect, and this investment of around €100,000 is our commitment to future generations."*

"As a family man, it fills me with pride to tell families that we will take care of their children's education, too," added Giorgio Bottaro, the newly appointed national youth team coordinator. The Under-19 team's captain, Lorenzo Pellegrini, praised the tutors: *"They are really well prepared and they connected well with us. We are really happy about this new scheme, because many of us have to sit our exams this year, and the tutors are a big help."*

● Diego Antezozio



The FIGC and Foro Italico University in Rome as they embark on a new initiative

Start of the 2015 season

Latvia's 2015 football season kicked off in mid-March. Eight teams have been admitted to play in this season's Virslīga, Latvia's top flight – down two from last year. Those eight teams will play each other four times, with the league running until the beginning of November. The Latvian Football Federation and the organisers of the Virslīga believe that this format is ideally suited to the current situation.

The new season is notable for the introduction of a campaign entitled Tīra spēle! (Clean game!),

which urges clubs and players to respect the principles of fair play and refrain from any offensive or racist behaviour. We want Latvian football to be full of respect, sportsmanship, progressive thinking, responsibility and honesty. We want Latvian football to be a joy to watch.

By the end of April, all of Latvia's outdoor football tournaments and leagues will have kicked off and the Latvian Football Federation's annual congress will have taken place. We are looking forward to a colourful season full of intrigue and excitement!

● Toms Ārmanis



Launching the campaign Tīra spēle! (Clean game!)



Hugo Quaderer elected president

On 30 March, Hugo Quaderer was unanimously elected president of the Liechtenstein Football Association (LFF) at its annual congress. He succeeds Matthias Voigt, who stepped down after three years in office.

The new president of the LFF is 50 years old and was a member of Liechtenstein's government from 2005 to 2013, where his responsibilities included running the sports ministry. He is now the chief executive of a Liechtenstein media company and a member of its board of directors. Mr Quaderer has been involved in football since he was a young child. "Football is one of my great passions. This sport has

fascinated me since I was a boy," he said, on becoming the 16th president of the LFF. He explained that he was very much looking forward to the challenge of leading the LFF, as he had seen that the association was "moving in the right direction, with a lot being achieved in the area of youth football".

Meanwhile, Klaus Schmidle, Marco Ender and Edy Kindle, other members of the LFF's executive committee, were unanimously re-elected. Klaus Schmidle remains the LFF's treasurer, but Marco Ender and Edy Kindle have swapped roles, with the former becoming vice-president and the latter taking charge of



Hugo Quaderer

grassroots football. The last two members of the executive committee, Rudolf Marxer and Thomas Risch, have two years of their terms remaining.

The LFF's new president did not have much time to settle in. The very next day, he was on the front line as Liechtenstein defeated San Marino 1-0 in a friendly. "I am of course delighted that my time in office has begun with a win," he said. "This is a positive sign and will motivate me even more to do my very best for Liechtenstein football."

● Anton Banzer



Conference on integrity matters

The Lithuanian Football Federation (LFF) recently organised the country's first ever conference on integrity matters, in partnership with UEFA. The conference was attended not

only by representatives of the Lithuanian police, but also by police officers from Latvia and Estonia, as well as representatives of Europol and Sportradar. This very high-profile conference highlighted the fact that match-fixing is a problem in football, but that it regularly affects other sports as well.

"The fact that the idea of organising this conference came from the LFF and UEFA does not mean that this problem only exists here in football. This 'cancer' affects all sports. Moreover, sports federations cannot solve this problem on their own. We need to adopt and enforce state regulations and legislation in our country," said Edvinas Eimontas, the LFF's general secretary.

UEFA's integrity officer, Urs Kluser, who had visited Lithuania in the past, reported that match-fixing was now occurring more frequently in football. However, he explained that an extremely advanced system had been developed that collected specific

evidence relating to match-fixing and players risked wrecking their entire careers if they were caught.

The LFF – which cooperated very closely with Sportradar and UEFA even before this season – has obtained and carefully reviewed information about several footballers who have violated its integrity rules. Before the season began, the LFF's integrity division organised many meetings and discussions with clubs, players, coaches and referees to inform them that evidence of improper conduct was being recorded. With Sportradar's advanced high-technology programme allowing the monitoring of various different aspects, they were advised not to give in to temptation.

Meanwhile, the LFF's executive committee has decided not to approve new club owners or part-owners without proper checks and confirmation from the LFF's licensing committee. This decision was taken in order to prevent people with questionable reputations from owning clubs – small or large.

● Vaiva Zizaitė



The conference organised by the Lithuanian FA, in partnership with UEFA



New pilot programme for female coaches

The Malta Football Association (MFA) has recently decided to increase its number of female coaches, following several FIFA and UEFA surveys in the past couple of years that have pointed to a lack of women in this sector in many countries. The MFA has been encouraging its member clubs to employ female coaches, and the response has been very encouraging. However, there is still much more to be done to involve women in coaching.

To this end, the MFA has offered scholarships to a group of prospective female coaches as part of a new pilot programme. This programme includes highly popular Coaching Young Footballers (CYF) courses, followed by a national C licence course.

The prospective coaches have committed themselves to two years of coaching girls at

member clubs, with the aim of eventually obtaining their CYF qualifications and applying for the national C licence course. Candidates applying for a place on the pilot programme were subjected to a review process and an

interview. The MFA's technical centre – part of its grassroots department – expressed great satisfaction at the very positive outcome.

The MFA's technical staff will use a specially designed system to maintain contact with these new coaches in the coming years. This will keep the coaches up to date and help to ensure continuity in their services. The new coaches' motivation, strong work ethic and commitment to developing themselves are guarantees of a brighter future for women's football in Malta.

● Alex Vella



D. Aquilina

The participants in the inaugural Coaching Young Footballers course

13th ordinary congress

On 27 February, the Football Association of Moldova (FMF) held its 13th ordinary congress at the FMF Futsal Arena in Ciorescu. The annual congress is the FMF's supreme governing body, with delegates from the FMF's members discussing and voting on various issues relating to Moldovan football.

The meeting began with a minute's silence in memory of all the figures from the world of football who had passed away since the last FMF congress on 13 April 2014.

The congress was attended by Mircea Sandu, a member of the UEFA Executive Committee, on behalf of UEFA. It was also attended by the Moldovan minister for youth and sport, Serghei



The Futsal Arena in Ciorescu hosted the Moldovan FA's 13th ordinary congress

Afanasenco, the vice-president of the Moldovan Olympic Committee, Nicolae Piatac, the mayor of Ciorescu, Ivan Scripnic, and two former presidents of the FMF, Grigore Cuşnir and Constantin Tampiza.

In his opening address to the congress, the FMF's president, Pavel Cebanu, cited the association's various achievements over the last year, which give him confidence for the future. "First of all, I want to thank you for your hard work in support of Moldovan football," he said. "I am delighted that, for the first time in the history of Moldovan football, an FMF congress is taking place in a sports complex built by the FMF itself. Now we can better understand – and even see – how the decisions of the FMF congress become a reality." As well as talking about positive developments, the FMF president also stressed his determination to combat negative elements which persisted.

A number of changes to the FMF's statutes (the legal foundations underpinning Moldovan football), the FMF president and executive committee's report on 2014, and various financial matters (including the consolidated annual accounts for 2014) were also discussed and approved by the delegates at the meeting.

The FMF's Order of Honour was awarded to Anatol Stupa, Ivan Dragni,

Piotr Cristioglo, Ion Comendant, Mihai Arsenii, Tudor Robu, Vladimir Crasilevschi and Grigore Corzun in recognition of the major contribution that each had made to the development of Moldovan football.

● FMF press office

Partnership with top Irish bank

The Football Association of Ireland (FAI) and Bank of Ireland have announced a four-year sponsorship agreement, which will run until the end of 2018. This sees Bank of Ireland become the FAI's official financial services partner and the sponsor of its post-primary schools cup competitions. The bank will also support the FAI and the national team during the EURO 2016 and 2018 World Cup qualifying campaigns and final tournaments.

The sponsorship of the schools cup competitions will help to develop the game at all levels, as the bank will support both boys' and girls' football in post-primary schools around the country. Bank of Ireland will deliver 80 coaching sessions for schools and will provide coaching equipment to all the schools that participate. Support will also be provided to school coaches, as the bank will host elite coaching conferences each year. Over the four years, 2,000 students from secondary schools across the four provinces will be invited to watch the Irish team train, and attend international home fixtures.



Martin O'Neill, John Delaney and John Keegan at the launch of the partnership between the Irish FA and the Bank of Ireland

John Keegan, director of distribution channels at Bank of Ireland, said: "We are very pleased to become both the official financial services partner to the FAI and the sponsor of the post-primary schools cup competitions. We already support schools with strong sporting cultures in a variety of ways, and this new sponsorship is further confirmation of our strong belief in the positive role that sport plays in the lives of students and young people across the country."

The FAI's chief executive, John Delaney, said: "We are very happy to have Bank of Ireland as our official financial services partner, and we are very excited about their involvement in the post-primary schools cup competitions."

● Stephen Finn

Spotlight on young volunteers

As part of its delivery of the Sport in the Community programme supported by the department of social development, the Irish Football Association (IFA) recently teamed up with Ulster GAA and the Ulster branch of the Irish Rugby Football Union to organise a joint volunteer recognition event for young people. At the joint awards ceremony, the three sports organisations shone the spotlight on young sports volunteers. The event formally recognised all young people between the ages of 14 and 24 who had completed 50 or 100 hours of volunteering at their local sports club as part of the GoldMark Programme.



The IFA's president, Jim Shaw, said: "There are many opportunities for volunteering in sport, and the GoldMark Programme has helped promote some of these opportunities to young people and encouraged them to get involved in their local sports club. It has also shown clubs the benefits of giving young people a meaningful role."

The IFA's volunteer development and policy officer, Stephen Garrett, praised the impact of the GoldMark Programme and stressed the importance of recognising volunteers: "The GoldMark Programme is an excellent tool for both recruiting and recognising volunteers. Clubs can promote the fact that they are engaged within the programme, thereby attracting and retaining the volunteering services of young people. Furthermore, the certificates for 50, 100 and 200 hours of volunteering are something which recognises the achievements of the young people and can help to motivate them, as well as aiding their personal and professional development."

● Sueann Harrison

Young volunteers receiving recognition for their hard work



Promoting tolerance and inclusion

On 21 March, about 50 children and young football fans from poor and marginalised communities in Bucharest celebrated the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination at Romania's national training centre in Mogosoia in the company of a number of current and former professionals. The event was organised by the Romanian Football Federation (FRF), in cooperation with both the Policy Center for Roma and Minorities and the National Council for Combating Discrimination. The programme for the event included a small football tournament, as well as African percussion performed by Roma and

non-Roma children under the title Football in the Rhythm of Change. At the beginning of the event, representatives of the three organisations spoke about their commitment to fighting discrimination and stressed the importance of acceptance, inclusion and understanding on the pitch, in the stands and across society as a whole. During the three football matches, the children showed real star quality, demonstrating both talent and commitment. Some were very skilful indeed, and their performance was admired not only by their team-mates, but also by Aurel Țicleanu (the FRF's scouting manager, who spent years playing for the national team) and Victoraș Iacob (the head of the FRF's corporate social responsibility department and



Promoting tolerance and fighting discrimination

a former top-division player, who appeared in a UEFA Cup semi-final with FC Steaua București). Everybody left with happy memories of a fun day and a better understanding of people from different social environments and ethnic backgrounds. The FRF and its partner, the Policy Center for Roma and Minorities, will continue to promote tolerance and fight discrimination – not only by organising such events, but also by running public campaigns raising awareness of this issue. ● Paul Zaharia



Scotland Under-17s in the final round

Scotland's national youth coach, Scot Gemmill, says the last-minute drama that sent Scotland Under-17s to the European Under-17 Championship finals in Bulgaria in May "couldn't have been more dramatic".

Despite losing 1-0 to the Czech Republic in their final elite round match, Scotland still qualified for the 16-team tournament as one of the seven best runners-up.

Scotland have qualified for the Under-17 finals twice before – in 2008 and in 2014 – and this is the first time they have achieved back-to-back appearances following last year's excellent run to the semi-finals of the competition. Gemmill said: "It couldn't have been more dramatic. We sent a member of staff to the other game who was in direct contact with someone at our match. Our match had just finished and the last I heard it was 1-1 in the game with three minutes to go. At that point we thought it was going to go right to the wire and could have gone down



Scotland's U17s, ready for Bulgaria in May

to goal difference or even disciplinary records – that's how close it was."

"Suddenly word came through that Bosnia-Herzegovina had scored. Our players started to celebrate a little bit but reservedly, as they knew the game hadn't finished and even when it did, we still weren't 100% sure. We were trying very hard to get it confirmed by UEFA and they responded within around 20 minutes to confirm we had qualified. You could tell they were absolutely delighted and they deserve all the credit for what they have achieved."

Now Gemmill's attention turns to the preparing for the final tournament. The draw

for the group stage was made on 2 April and there is an added incentive to succeed, with the tournament also acting as the qualifying competition for the U-17 World Cup being held in Chile later in the year. Gemmill added: "Their development will continue, regardless of how well they do at the finals. I felt that about the elite round too. They are going home better players – both on and off the pitch." ● David Childs



Andriy Pavelko elected president

On 6 March the Football Federation of Ukraine (FFU) held its 17th ordinary congress, where Andriy Pavelko was elected as the new FFU president. He replaced Anatoliy Konkov, who had led the organisation since September 2012.



Andriy Pavelko

Three candidates – Mr Pavelko (head of the Dnipropetrovsk regional football association), Yaroslav Hrysyo (head of the Lviv regional football association) and Yaroslav Kolomoyskyi (chairman of FC Dnipro Dnipropetrovsk) – addressed the 137 delegates at the FFU congress before a secret ballot was held to determine the winner. Mr Pavelko received 122 votes, Mr Kolomoyskyi 8 votes and Mr Hrysyo 7 votes.

Vadym Kostyuchenko and Oleksandr Bandurko were elected as first vice-presidents of the FFU, with Serhiy Kunitsyn, Vasyly Orletskyi, Oleg Shkreba, Viktor Mezheyko, Mykhailo Lanyo, Igor Kochetov and Volodymyr Lashkul named vice-presidents.

"Today marks the start of a new chapter in Ukrainian football. After this congress we can clearly say that Ukrainian football finally follows the principles of democracy. Ukrainian football needs reforms, but for this it is essential for people to have confidence in the football authorities. At this difficult time for the country, we all need to unite for the future of our football," the newly elected president said.

● Yuri Maznychenko



New arena being built in Bienne

The Swiss Football Association has moved its Credit Suisse Football Academy for girls from Huttwil to Bienne, where a new multifunctional sports arena is being built, and pledged that the majority of the national Under-21 team's home games will be played there. The ice hockey club EHC Bienne, who play in National League A, will also play their home games at the arena, and the Swiss Curling Association has pledged to move its training centre there.

This new multifunctional arena – the first Swiss venue ever to cater for football, ice hockey, ice skating and curling – will open this autumn. It will be a 5,200-seater football stadium, a 7,000-seater ice hockey stadium and a 10-rink curling arena.

The girls at the Swiss Football Association's Credit Suisse Football Academy are particularly

looking forward to seeing their new home. This training centre for girls between the ages of 12 and 16 was established in 2004/05, with places given to ten girls in each year group. At the new arena, the girls will have everything under one roof – training pitches, changing rooms, a lounge area, offices and catering facilities. ● Pierre Benoit



The new stadium will accommodate 5,200 spectators

BIRTHDAYS

Campbell Ogilvie (Scotland, 1 May)
 Peter Mikkelsen (Denmark, 1 May)
 Vasko Dojcinovski (FYR Macedonia, 1 May)
 Ladislav Gadosi (Slovakia, 3 May)
 Vladimir 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) 80th
 Gudmundur Petursson (Iceland, 6 May)
 Karl-Erik Nilsson (Sweden, 6 May)
 Liam McGroarty (Republic of Ireland, 6 May)
Claus Thomsen (Denmark, 7 May) 50th
Tiago Craveiro (Portugal, 7 May) 40th
 Pekka Luhtanen (Finland, 8 May)
Michel Pralong (Switzerland, 8 May) 70th
 Marc Dobbeleir (Belgium, 8 May)
 Miroslav Tulinger (Czech Republic, 8 May)
 Stuart Turner (England, 9 May)
 Iouri Baskakov (Russia, 10 May)
 Armen Melikbekyan (Armenia, 10 May)
 Jean-Marie Gantenbein (Luxembourg, 11 May)
 Ernst-Peter Radziwill (Germany, 11 May)
 Timo Huttunen (Finland, 11 May)
 Maxim Betsko (Ukraine, 11 May)
 Henrik Ravnild (Denmark, 13 May)
 Mattia Piffaretti (Switzerland, 13 May)
 Odile Lanceau (France, 14 May)
 Carlos Manuel Ferreira Matos (Portugal, 14 May)
 Maria Luisa Villa Gutierrez (Spain, 14 May)
Hans-Jörg Eissmann (Germany, 15 May) 80th
 Piotr Maranda (Poland, 15 May)
 Hakan Nyberg (Sweden, 15 May)
 Nikolay Levnikov (Russia, 15 May)
 Evzen Amler (Czech Republic, 15 May)
Luis Cuervas Del Real (Spain, 15 May) 40th
 Egon Franck (Germany, 16 May)
 Denys Lutiuk (Ukraine, 16 May)
Svein Johannessen (Norway, 17 May) 70th
 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 Đjukanović (Montenegro, 19 May)

Rune Pedersen (Norway, 19 May)
 Greg Dyke (England, 20 May)
 Michał Listkiewicz (Poland, 20 May)
 Serge Muhmenthaler (Switzerland, 20 May)
 Platon Bozatzidis (Greece, 20 May)
 Sandra Renon (France, 20 May)
Ewa Gajewska (Poland, 21 May) 60th
 Nicolai Cebotari (Moldova, 21 May)
 Paulo Lourenço (Portugal, 21 May)
 Costas Kapitanis (Cyprus, 21 May)
 Theo van Seggelen (Netherlands, 22 May)
 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, 25 May)
Ivančica Sudac (Croatia, 25 May) 50th
 Evgeni Giner (Russia, 26 May)
 Robert Jeurissen (Belgium, 27 May)
 Zdeněk Sivek (Czech Republic, 28 May)
 Jim Stjerne Hansen (Denmark, 28 May)
Jean-Pierre Escalettes (France, 29 May) 80th
 Jacques Antenen (Switzerland, 29 May)
 Jozef Kliment (Slovakia, 29 May)
 István Huszár (Hungary, 31 May)
 Arnaldo Cunha (Portugal, 31 May)
Mad Øland (Denmark, 31 May) 50th

NOTICES

- Vladimir Geninson has replaced Maksym Bondarev as general secretary of the Football Federation of Ukraine.

OBITUARY

- **Faruk Basturk** (Turkey), UEFA Ethics and Disciplinary Inspector since January 2013, died on 22 March following illness. He was 37 years old and head of legal services at the Turkish Football Federation.
- **Leszek Rylski** (Poland), a member of the circle of former UEFA committee members, passed away on 1 April at the age of 95. He was a member of the UEFA Executive Committee in the organisation's very early years, from 1956 to 1964 and then again from 1966 to 1968. He was also a member of the Committee on the International European Cup (1956–58), the organising committee for the European Champion Clubs Cup (1958–68), the UEFA Finance Committee (1966–72), the UEFA Youth Committee (1982–84) and the UEFA Board of Appeal (1984–88). In 2009, he was awarded the UEFA Order of Merit in Ruby.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Meetings

28/29 May 2015, Zurich
 FIFA Congress

Competitions

5/6 May 2015
 UEFA Champions League: semi-finals (first legs)

6–22 May 2015, Bulgaria
 UEFA European Under-17 Championship: final tournament

7 May 2015
 UEFA Europa League: semi-finals (first legs)

12/13 May 2015

UEFA Champions League: semi-finals (return legs)

14 May 2015

UEFA Europa League: semi-finals (return legs)

14 May 2015, Berlin

UEFA Women's Champions League: final

27 May 2015, Warsaw

UEFA Europa League: final

30 May–20 June 2015, New Zealand

FIFA U-20 World Cup



NO TO RACISM



RESPECT