UEFA
GRASSROOTS AWARDS
BREAKING DOWN BARRIERS

UEFA DIRECT
NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2019
We know UEFA cares about football. It is our motto, after all. But we also care, and have to care, about much, much more. UEFA EURO 2020 is a unique event that poses unique challenges. We have received some criticism for the environmental cost of hosting an event in 12 cities across Europe. However, the nature of the tournament actually means there are many environmental and cost benefits over a traditional one: no need to build new stadiums or the transport infrastructure that they need, for example.

But it has a cost – with increased travel for fans to watch their teams play. UEFA takes its responsibilities on this seriously, and it is right that we offset the carbon emissions caused. That is why UEFA will plant 50,000 trees in each of the 12 EURO 2020 host nations – 600,000 trees in total – to celebrate the 60th anniversary of the European Championship and to leave a lasting legacy from the competition. In addition, UEFA will invest in Gold Standard renewable energy projects in partnership with the sustainability solutions provider South Pole to offset the estimated 405,000 tonnes of carbon produced by fans and UEFA staff travelling to games in the tournament.

Our duty to care naturally extends to children playing our game. That is why it was a pleasure to launch UEFA’s Football in Schools programme in my home city of Ljubljana in September. Getting children to play and enjoy football is a crucial element of my vision for European football. Over the next four years, UEFA – via our HatTrick assistance programme – will invest €44 million in grassroots football in Europe, with €11 million specially dedicated to developing school football.

Another key responsibility is to make sure that everyone who plays our game does so safely. We believe that current concussion safeguards are inadequate, and have told FIFA and IFAB that the regulations need updating to protect both players and doctors. They have reacted positively to our suggestions, which include introducing temporary replacements. While we wait for the Laws of the Game to be updated, we have launched a campaign to raise awareness about concussion and to stress the importance of respecting a team doctor’s decisions in this area.

We also have an obligation to ensure that everyone has the chance to watch football. The UEFA Executive Committee has now recommended that its 55 member associations and all European clubs do not play matches in countries where women have restricted access, including separate entrances and separate stands, to stadiums. If we truly care about football and beyond, this is the only stance we can take.
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CELEBRATING OUR GRASSROOTS CHAMPIONS

UEFA’s Grassroots Awards winners visited Nyon in September, one of the highlights of UEFA Grassroots Week.

“A vibrant grassroots sector is vital to the wellbeing of the sport.” This was UEFA President Aleksander Čeferin’s message to mark UEFA Grassroots Week in September – and this vibrancy was underlined by the winners of the UEFA Grassroots Awards.

This year’s awards highlighted the excellence of the projects being undertaken across the continent and featured two new categories: Best Disability Initiative and Best Professional Football Club. The gold-award winners came from England, Germany, Poland, Scotland and Norway to receive their prizes in person from Mr Čeferin at the UEFA headquarters in Nyon.

All UEFA member associations were invited to submit proposals, with 143 applications received from 43 national associations. The announcement of the award winners was made to mark UEFA Grassroots Week, which took place in conjunction with the European Week of Sport and in cooperation with the European Commission. It is an event designed to promote physical activity and participation in sport at all levels and UEFA’s awards, similarly, serve to recognise, celebrate and promote the inspirational work of some of the thousands of volunteers, projects and clubs that help maintain football’s grassroots across Europe.

“I want to ensure that UEFA continues to work closely with all our member associations to enable everyone to have the opportunity to play and enjoy the sport that we love,” added Mr Čeferin. “The slogan ‘Football First’ is at the core of UEFA’s strategy for the coming years – and without healthy grassroots the game cannot flourish.”
BEST DISABILITY INITIATIVE

Star League (Norway)

As a series of bi-monthly league competitions for players with disabilities, the Star League in Norway is a shining example of the ‘Football for all’ ethos – and for this reason was a deserving winner in the Best Disability Initiative category.

Organised by the regional Football Association in the western Hordaland region of the country, the programme encourages participation regardless of race, gender or ability. It dates back to 2012 and the creation of the first Star League team, and numbers have grown impressively since 2015 when the NFF hired an official to help develop clubs in the region.

The number of clubs offering Star League opportunities for children between 6 and 12 has risen from two to nine, while there are now 18 catering for players at youth (13 upwards) and adult levels. The Star League provides players of all ages with the opportunity to train every week, as well as the chance to play in competitions where teams play games against each other.

The Star League for children is Norway’s only league for girls and boys with disabilities, and it operates within a three-a-side format. Its teams also have the opportunity to participate in local football tournaments for children. From age 13 onwards the format is more varied, with three-, five- and seven-a-side games, and teams can also participate each year in the Landsturneringen, a national tournament.

Overall, there are more than 300 players involved in Star League football and the NFF has also reported an increase in the number of players with disabilities featuring on mainstream teams. Tove Iren Vindenes, the official tasked with assisting clubs in recruiting more players with disabilities, noted: “Back in 2015 there were fewer than 200, so we’ve seen a considerable growth in the number of players since then. That’s been one of the factors behind the success in our work.

“What makes the Star League so special? It’s the players in it of course, because they have a unique ability to care for each other. The solidarity and joy for football that you experience in the Star League is unmatched.”

As a consequence, it has inspired other regions to establish their own children’s teams, with Vindenes adding: “Today, the model and structure that the Star League has developed is also the model for all such football activity in Norway, so we’ve been a forerunner in relation to this kind of football. We’re very proud of that.”
“I thought they must be joking.” That was the reaction of Fatima Hussein on hearing the news that she was this year’s Best Grassroots Leader. The Londoner had already received the Bobby Moore Award for breaking down barriers at the 2018 English Football Association’s Grassroots Football Awards and her UEFA prize completed an “amazing” double. For this Dutch-born Muslim woman, it is recognition of her position as a role model for youngsters in her local community in northwest London.

As a volunteer with the Sport at the Heart (SatH) charity, an initiative supported by the county-level Middlesex FA, Hussein plays an active part in holiday camps for schoolchildren aged four and upwards at the Roundwood Sports Centre, close to her family home in the Brent area. She explained: “I started off going to the camp as a student, enjoying time doing sport activities. As soon as I hit 17, Nary Wijeratne, the founder of charity, got me volunteering. Then at 18 I started coaching.” The charity’s activities include drama, arts and crafts, and dance, though for Fatima, now a Level 1-qualified coach and referee, football is the preferred vehicle for inspiring others and helping to dispel stereotypes.

“There was an impact in my life just from playing the game,” the 19-year-old said, “so imagine coaching and teaching younger kids and changing their mindsets – it makes me so happy.” Fatima’s volunteering efforts began at her school, the Capital City Academy, where she helped out as a play leader and with coaching sessions for younger pupils. Her efforts earned her the Middlesex FA Young Volunteer of the Year award before the bigger prizes followed, yet it is the potential to help younger girls at the SatH camps that she considers the greatest reward. Now studying for a sports science degree, she added: “I think the girls trust me because they see I’m just like them, and a good leader definitely has to be relatable. I’m always telling them how football saved my life and that’s really no exaggeration.” As a child, playing football was very hard for me because of cultural reasons and the fact that my parents didn’t think I should be doing it.” With the support of a teacher at the Capital City Academy and a coach at Queens Park Rangers, Hussein succeeded in making the game a big part of her life, while touching the lives of others at the same time.

**BEST GRASSROOTS LEADER**

Fatima Hussein  (England)

“I think the girls trust me because they see I’m just like them, and a good leader definitely has to be relatable. I’m always telling them how football saved my life and that’s really no exaggeration.”

Fatima Hussein

Gary McLaughlin  
(Scotland, silver)  
was recognised for his involvement in the organisation and coordination of walking football.

Tomasz Wilman  
(Poland, bronze)  
won his award for helping educate disabled children.
Alternative Sports Club ZŁY (Poland)

“AKS is a grassroots club because we want football to be accessible to everyone no matter where you’re from, the colour of your skin, your sexuality, your level of fitness or your gender.” These are the words of Waldemar Grygiel, a board member of Alternative Sports Club ZŁY, the Polish winners of this year’s Best Grassroots Club award.

Based in Warsaw, the club is certainly true to its name. It does things differently, for one being run as a democratic sports club created and run by its members on a voluntary basis (only the coaches are remunerated), plus encouraging diversity with an open door to anybody wishing to participate in its growth.

AKS ZŁY runs both a men’s and a women’s amateur team, which ended last season celebrating respective promotions to the seventh and fourth tiers of the Polish league structure. According to co-founder Piotr Maniszewski, the club’s gender-equality policy is a crucial pillar of its work. “Promoting equality is one of our strengths, without question,” he said. “That’s also apparent in our membership and management – the proportion of males to females is pretty much 50-50. More and more girls are playing football on the streets or at school. I think we’re going in the right direction. The club’s approach to equality has attracted new female players.”

Gender equality is not the only focus. There are free football classes for refugees and socially excluded youngsters, and these are often put on at the club’s stadium on matchdays. The inclusion of disabled players is another priority: the women’s team includes members of Poland’s deaf football national side, meaning the rest of the squad have been learning sign language to aid communication.

The club’s presence in the deprived Praga district of Warsaw, located on the less prosperous east bank of the Vistula, makes it even more of a beacon.

“We support community initiatives and we get involved in local community activities,” said Grygiel, noting how close links with the local district have lead to increased attendances. Men’s and women’s matches are often scheduled as double-headers, with cultural events organised to tie in with matchdays, including concerts, exhibitions and readings. To make the matches even more welcoming, swearing and violent, homophobic or racist behaviour are banned. In short, as Grygiel summed it up, “we try to be a club that promotes positive behaviour.” For this, its award was richly deserved.
A scheme to reintegrate young prisoners, ‘Kick off for a new life’ is run by the German Football Association’s (DFB) Sepp Herberger Foundation. Its success, according to DFB vice-president and foundation chairman Eugen Gehlenborg, lies in the fact it is “successfully getting through to young people through football, and through football teaching them important life lessons.”

Set up in 2008, it uses the sport as a catalyst to prepare inmates for release, help them find employment and reduce re-offending levels by offering football, education and social integration modules. And with some 300 inmates from 22 prisons across 10 federal states involved, the initiative was a worthy recipient of the Best Grassroots Project award.

The Sepp Herberger Foundation was originally established in 1977 with four principal goals: disability football; reintegration into society; schools and clubs; and sozialwerk. Coach of West Germany’s 1954 FIFA World Cup winning team, Herberger was personally involved with prison visits, and the ‘Kick off for a new life’ project features visits from ambassadors such as former national-team striker Uwe Seeler and legendary coach Otto Rehhagel.

Regular football training, coaching and refereeing courses are offered to encourage values such as fair play and team spirit. Each prison team on the scheme features up to 15 young offenders all working towards earning a place at Germany’s biggest football tournament behind prison walls via regional qualifiers. There are both men’s and women’s sides involved, and a parallel entertainment programme includes the presentation of a music project, Teamsong.

“We want to improve the professional status and qualifications of these people, improve their school grades and certificates and, naturally, we try to offer sport as a basis for this.”

Eugen Gehlenborg
DFB vice-president and foundation chairman

“We want to improve the professional status and qualifications of these people, improve their school grades and certificates,” added Gehlenborg. “And, naturally, we try to offer sport as a basis for this, and that is where we work with our most important partners, the federal employment agency and the justice ministry, as well as with clubs across the country.

“The teams subsequently help these youngsters find their way back into society. We often go into the prisons for young people with some of the sport’s most famous personalities and talk to the young inmates, trying to motivate these youngsters to take their chance. In the same way that you can’t play football without rules – it needs them – a life in society is also bound up in the need for rules in order to cope. And that is what this project is teaching through football.”
**BEST PROFESSIONAL FOOTBALL CLUB**

**Aberdeen FC (Scotland)**

Aberdeen FC has a history with UEFA prizes. In 1983, under the stewardship of the then relatively unknown Alex Ferguson, they beat Real Madrid CF on a rainy night in Gothenburg to win the European Cup Winners’ Cup. Seven months later they added the UEFA Super Cup to their cabinet with victory over Hamburger SV. Thirty-six years on, and the club from the northeast of Scotland has received European recognition once more with the Best Professional Football Club prize for the Aberdeen FC Community Trust (AFCCT).

It is an award recognising the Scottish Premiership club’s engagement with 20,402 people across projects centred on three main pillars – football for life, education and healthy communities – and covering a geographical area that accounts for around 25% of the entire land mass of Scotland and roughly 10% of the population.

Established in 2014, the AFCCT works together closely with the Scottish Football Association (SFA), sharing resources and even staff members in an effort to increase football participation, develop local clubs and create a joined-up player pathway in the region. The trust has helped six local grassroots clubs achieve the highest level of the SFA’s club accreditation scheme and it is active in 13 partner schools, organising football-related health and wellbeing activities for youngsters from disadvantaged backgrounds.

“We put ourselves at the heart of the community,” said Steven Sweeney, Aberdeen’s community operations manager. “We focus primarily on developing the next generation of young people. Last season, 2018/19, we had over 1,700 community events, with more than 20,000 participants involved in those programmes. We work hand in hand with the SFA to develop grassroots football. Scottish football at grassroots level is absolutely dependent on good people giving up their time to let kids and adults, whatever age, kick a ball.”

The trust can point to more than 400,000 participants since it was established, with its Football For Life scheme working with over 70,000 people in the name of increasing grassroots participation. To illustrate the impact of its presence in its partner schools, attendance rates have increased from 40% to 90% and behaviour referrals have halved. The effort to help build healthy communities, meanwhile, has included over 15,000 hours of volunteering with individuals at risk of isolation.

For Sweeney, the club has an “authentic community spirit” and the trust’s role in that was further underlined by its move to Aberdeen’s new training campus at the end of October.
The UEFA Champions League draw took precedence on Thursday 29 August, with UEFA deputy general secretary Giorgio Marchetti joined on stage by guests Petr Čech, a 2012 UEFA Champions League winner with Chelsea, and Wesley Sneijder, a 2010 champion with Internazionale. Hamit Altıntop, ambassador for the 2020 UEFA Champions League final in Istanbul, brought in the trophy ahead of the draw, in which holders Liverpool were pitted with Napoli, Genk and Salzburg in Group E.

Last season’s runners-up Tottenham landed in Group B alongside five-time winners Bayern, while Paris and Real Madrid meet in Group A and Barcelona face Dortmund, Inter and Slavia Praha in Group F. Juventus, finalists in 2015 and 2017, play Atlético, runners-up in 2014 and 2016, in a repeat of last term’s round-of-16 drama.

The UEFA Europa League draw followed on Friday 30 August, with guests Ashley Cole and Paulo Ferreira, both 2013 winners with Chelsea. Also involved in proceedings was Andrzej Buncol, the competition’s first Polish winner in 1988 with Leverkusen.

Winners in 2017, Manchester United were drawn alongside Astana, Partizan and AZ Alkmaar; last season’s finalists Arsenal must negotiate a group containing Eintracht Frankfurt, Standard Liège and Vitória SC.

Van Dijk and Bronze win UEFA Player of the Year awards
Liverpool defender Virgil van Dijk, a 2019 UEFA Champions League winner, beat off competition from Barcelona forward Lionel Messi and Juventus’s Cristiano Ronaldo to be crowned UEFA Men’s Player of the Year for 2018/19.

“Eric Cantona was a fantastic player. Later, he became an actor and a commentator – but, most of all, he’s a person who has done a lot for good. He has dedicated part of his life to charity, so he absolutely deserves this award.”

Alessander Čeferin
UEFA president

Cantona, 53, follows in the footsteps of David Beckham, Francesco Totti and Johan Cruyff, among other former winners.
UEFA notably comprised the nine European sides that participated in the Women’s World Cup – together with the coaches of the eight clubs that reached the 2018/19 UEFA Women’s Champions League quarter-finals.

Twenty journalists specialising in women’s football and picked by ESM were also part of the jury. Hegerberg finished second to Bronze, with Henry third.

Elsewhere, four players picked up positional awards for their efforts in the 2018/19 UEFA Champions League: Liverpool’s Alisson Becker won Goalkeeper of the Season, Van Dijk was Defender of the Season, Frenkie de Jong scooped Midfielder of the Season, and Messi was Forward of the Season.

The juries for the positional awards consisted of the coaches of the 32 clubs in the 2018/19 UEFA Champions League group stage, together with 55 journalists selected by ESM and representing each of UEFA’s member associations. Coaches could not vote for their own players.

Eden Hazard, signed by Real Madrid from Chelsea this summer, was named 2018/19’s UEFA Europa League Player of the Season after leading the London club to the trophy. The Belgian forward scored twice in the Baku final against Arsenal.

Bundesliga club Borussia Dortmund were saluted by Borussia Dortmund were saluted by UEFA for their work as role models highlighting diversity, inclusion and accessibility in football.

Cunliffe received his #EqualGame Award for his successful RunAway Challenge, whereby he ran to all of his club’s away matches during 2018/19, raising more than €60,000 for English Premier League clubs’ charities.

“Borussia Dortmund feel that social engagement is extremely important,” he said. “We are delighted that this engagement has been recognised with this prestigious UEFA award.”

Burnley fan Scott Cunliffe and German Burnley fan Scott Cunliffe and German

everyone that is helping me along the way. I’m at a great club with fantastic players and I’m enjoying every bit right now.”

The jury comprised the 80 coaches of the clubs involved in the group stages of the 2018/19 UEFA Champions League (32) and UEFA Europa League (48), along with 55 journalists selected by the European Sports Media (ESM) group, one for every UEFA member association.

Messi came second to Van Dijk, with Ronaldo placed third.

Meanwhile, England and Lyon right-back Lucy Bronze pipped club-mates Ada Hegerberg and Amandine Henry to become UEFA Women’s Player of the Year, following the French giants’ treble of UEFA Women’s Champions League, French league and French Cup.

Bronze, also a 2019 FIFA Women’s World Cup semi-finalist with England, said: “I’m ecstatic and humbled to have won the award up against two fantastic players who I know really well at Lyon. I want to say huge thanks to the England team.

“We had a great summer and I don’t think I would have won this award if it wasn’t for them. The same goes for Lyon. We had an amazing season, we won the treble. Any one of those girls could have been here receiving this award.”

The three-strong shortlist was chosen by a jury composed of the coaches of the 12 highest-ranked teams in the UEFA women’s national team rankings – which notably comprised the nine European sides that participated in the Women’s World Cup – together with the coaches of the eight clubs that reached the 2018/19 UEFA Women’s Champions League quarter-finals.

Twenty journalists specialising in women’s football and picked by ESM were also part of the jury. Hegerberg finished second to Bronze, with Henry third.

Cunliffe said: “I am honoured that UEFA has chosen me as a recipient of the #EqualGame Award,” Cunliffe said. “I believe sport is a great leveller. Everyone should be able to enjoy the sport they love, either as a fan or as a player. I hope my running inspires others to move their legs, hearts and minds, no matter who they are.”

Borussia Dortmund’s #EqualGame Award came for their tireless long-term work in tackling far-right infiltration of their fan base, challenging everyday racism, and adopting a clear policy on the humanitarian rights of refugees and asylum seekers.

Hans-Joachim Watzke, Dortmund CEO, collected the accolade on behalf of his club at the 2019/20 UEFA Champions League draw in Monaco.

“Borussia Dortmund feel that social engagement is extremely important,” he said. “We are delighted that this engagement has been recognised with this prestigious UEFA award.”
GREEN LIGHT FOR NEW NATIONS LEAGUE STRUCTURE

A new UEFA Nations League structure, finals and tournament hosts, and the deployment of the video assistant referee system (VAR) were on a packed agenda at the latest UEFA Executive Committee meeting in Ljubljana, Slovenia, on 24 September.

The UEFA Nations League will have a new league structure for the 2020/21 competition, following the successful inaugural edition in 2018/19. The new structure, agreed following a consultation process involving UEFA’s member associations, will comprise 16 teams each in Leagues A, B and C, and seven teams in League D. The teams are allocated to the leagues based on the overall ranking from the 2018/19 UEFA Nations League.

In addition, the format stipulates that all teams in the same group will play their last match on the same day and at the same time, in the interests of sporting fairness. The 2021 finals format remains unchanged – the four League A group winners will contest semi-finals and a final to determine the UEFA Nations League winners. The draw for the 2020/21 competition takes place in Amsterdam on 3 March 2020, on the same day as UEFA’s Congress in the Dutch city.

Club competition finals were also on the agenda of the latest Executive Committee meeting. St Petersburg, Munich and London (Wembley) will host the UEFA Champions League finals in 2021, 2022 and 2023 respectively. Sevilla will stage the 2021 UEFA Europa League final, and Belfast will host the 2021 UEFA Super Cup match.

The Netherlands will host UEFA Futsal EURO 2022, while over in the youth sector, final tournament hosts were appointed for 2021 and 2022: Under-17s – Cyprus (2021) and Israel 2022; women’s Under-17s – Faroe Islands (2021) and Bosnia and Herzegovina (2022); Under-19s – Romania (2021) and Slovakia (2022); and women’s Under-19s – (Belarus 2021) and Czech Republic (2022).

The Executive Committee decided to use the video assistant referee (VAR) system from the 2019/20 UEFA Europa League knockout stage; at UEFA Women’s Champions League finals from 2019/20 onwards; and at UEFA Women’s EURO 2021, where it will work alongside goal-line technology.

The name of UEFA’s third men’s club competition was approved – the UEFA Europa Conference League – and its commercial concept was ratified. The new competition starts in 2021 and matches will be played on Thursdays, kicking off at 18:45 CET and 21:00 CET. The new early kick-offs will also be used for UEFA Champions League matches on Tuesdays and Wednesdays from 2021, replacing the present 18:55 CET kick-off time.

In other decisions, the Executive Committee approved the draw procedure for the European Qualifiers play-offs and EURO 2020 final draw, and approved a feasibility study to create an independent European agency against match-fixing. Finally, the Executive Committee, which will hold its next meeting in Nyon on 4 December, is to recommend its 55 member associations and all European clubs not to play matches in countries where women have restricted access to stadiums.
Liverpool picked up another European trophy in Istanbul on 14 August, edging out Chelsea on penalties after a 2-2 draw to claim the UEFA Super Cup for a fourth time.

As the sun set on yet another perfect Istanbul summer’s evening, all eyes were on the Beşiktaş Park as Liverpool met Chelsea in this year’s UEFA Super Cup.

European football’s curtain raiser, pitting the UEFA Champions League holders against their UEFA Europa League counterparts, the UEFA Super Cup is much more than just a game.

The competition offers a key platform for the UEFA Foundation for Children to continue its work in demonstrating that football can have a hugely positive impact on children through integration and hope.

As both sides appeared on the pitch, a 30-strong mixed choir of amputee children from the Turkish sports federation for the physically disabled and the singers of the Turkish radio and television’s polyphonic children’s choir performed Bob Marley’s Three Little Birds. It was a hit that delighted both sets of fans, who came together and joined in.

It set the scene for what would go on to be an unforgettable Super Cup, though the festivities had actually begun 24 hours earlier in the case of the disabled youngsters.

They were given the thrill of a lifetime as they met both sets of players at the stadium during their training sessions. They spent time with the superstars, talking about their hopes and dreams before sharing a kickabout with their heroes, who went out of their way to make time for their special guests.

“To be disabled or to be an amputee is not an obstacle,” Agit Siyar, who has been an amputee footballer from the age of 11, told Chelsea forward Olivier Giroud.

UEFA Men’s Player of the Year Virgil van Dijk encouraged Emirhan Kargaci, who was injured in a road accident at 11, to “chase your dreams; don’t let anyone tell you it’s impossible.”

They were then treated to a classic as goals from Chelsea’s Giroud and Jorginho cancelled out two Sadio Mané strikes, sending the match to penalties. Just as in 2005, Liverpool triumphed from spot kicks in the Turkish city to get their hands on the silverware.

Captain Jordan Henderson was presented with the trophy by Ali Turganbekov, a football-mad boy with no legs from Kazakhstan who dreams of becoming a Paralympic champion – but not before Ali was given one of Liverpool coach Jürgen Klopp’s famous bear hugs.

Ali accompanied UEFA president and UEFA Foundation for Children chairman Aleksander Čeferin at the trophy presentation: “The children from the choir and Ali demonstrate that strong beliefs in their dreams can help them overcome many obstacles,” Mr Čeferin said.
UEFA Football in Schools programme launched

GETTING CHILDREN to play and enjoy football is a crucial element of UEFA’s vision – and its new Football in Schools programme will take this vision an important step forward.

The programme was launched in the Slovenian capital Ljubljana on 24 September. At the launch event, six teams of boys and girls – two from Slovenia and one each from neighbouring countries Austria, Croatia, Hungary and Italy – competed at Ljubljana’s Republic Square, with the players divided into teams of mixed nationalities. UEFA president Aleksander Čeferin opened the festival in his home city and played alongside the children in the opening match, along with Luís Figo, Nadine Kessler, Milenko Ačimovič and Florent Malouda.

Over the next four years, UEFA – via its HatTrick assistance programme – will invest €44m in European grassroots football, of which €11m will be dedicated to developing school football. The UEFA Football in Schools programme is open to UEFA’s 55 member associations, and will run from 2020 to 2024.

The project will seek to establish effective cooperation between Europe’s national associations and relevant national education authorities. Among the programme’s objectives are the promotion of football as a social and educational tool; increasing the number of registered players by creating links between clubs and local schools; and making football activities an integral part of children’s physical education.

Stars sign up for UEFA master’s programme

KAKÁ, DIDIER DROGBA and Andrey Arshavin are among the stars who have already enrolled for the third edition of UEFA’s Executive Master for International Players (MIP) programme, which begins in November. The 20-month programme aims to equip top international players with the tools required to transfer their playing strengths into effective management skills that will also benefit football. The MIP course comprises seven week-long sessions staged in major global cities. Each session examines a different aspect of the administration and governance of a football organisation.

The UEFA MIP is run by the UEFA Academy, in close collaboration with the CDES at the University of Limoges in France, and Birkbeck College at the University of London.

“I love football. I love to play, I love to study football, I love to watch football, and I think this is the best way for me to understand a lot of other things [connected to] football,” said former AC Milan star Kaká.
Concussion awareness campaign

IMPROVING concussion management in football is the focal point of a new awareness campaign that was launched by UEFA on 1 October.

The campaign, which got under way for the second matchday in both the UEFA Champions League and UEFA Europa League, follows medical analyses carried out in UEFA’s top competitions, and aims to make the issues surrounding concussion more widely understood.

The campaign, which also features a video, is designed to educate players, coaches, referees, doctors and the general public about concussion, and the importance of respecting a team doctor’s decisions when a player has suffered suspected or definite concussion.

The topic of concussion was raised within UEFA following several high-profile cases that occurred across UEFA’s leading competitions. Consequently, UEFA has decided to launch a campaign that would bring the topic of concussion into sharp focus and raise overall awareness and knowledge of the issue.

Security experts learn together in Athens

THE NEED for smarter cooperation between governing bodies, clubs, public authorities and police was the leading topic of discussion as more than 360 representatives from UEFA, national associations, clubs, police forces, the Council of Europe, the European Group of Football Safety and Security Experts and other stakeholders met for the annual UEFA Stadium and Security Conference in Athens in September.

As such, the theme for the 18th annual gathering was Learning Together, referenced in the opening remarks by UEFA general secretary Theodore Theodoridis.

“The success of this event has been, and will continue to be, getting together to exchange know-how and to learn together,” he said. “Only together can we find solutions to the alarming incidents scarring our game.”

The conference kicked off with a powerful video review, with alarming data showing increases in the number of dangerous incidents in various categories in UEFA competition matches over the past three seasons.

The review also highlighted that more volatile environments in stadia and cities reflected a more volatile Europe, and emphasised the importance of proportionality and targeting in responses.

Among the solutions discussed was the need to exclude the few to keep the many safe, while the scope, legitimacy, proportionality and ethos of exclusion measures were explored.

Delegates were polled throughout the event to gauge opinions on and reactions to issues and possible solutions.

Results showed that effective exclusion of trouble-making fans was widely regarded as the single most important factor for tackling football-related violence and disorder across Europe.
IN BRIEF

Men’s and women’s first-division club booklets

UEFA HAS ISSUED two publications for the 2019/20 season which give comprehensive details of all of the men’s and women’s first-division clubs in Europe – with the women’s issue appearing for the very first time.

The booklets provide all the information required to communicate with any current top-division men’s and women’s club in any of UEFA’s 55 member national associations. Each club’s postal address, telephone and fax numbers, email, website, stadium name, press officer and women’s football contact details are all included. Also given are details of the national associations’ postal address, telephone and fax numbers, email and website address, as well as information regarding their president and general secretary, press officer, date of foundation, national stadium and capacity. Information is also given on the professional leagues. The previous season’s final top-division league table, domestic cup final result and promoted clubs are also included. The booklets can be found on uefa.com.

UEFA technical reports website

UEFA COMPETITION technical reports provide important insights into European football’s technical and tactical development – and they can now be found on a dedicated UEFA website.

The site – www.uefatechnicalreports.com – features analysis, talking points, facts and figures in digital-format reports which cover the broad range of the UEFA men’s and women’s football and futsal competitions. The reports are available in UEFA’s three official languages – English, French and German.

The reports are compiled by UEFA’s teams of experienced technical experts, who examine the tactical and technical performance of the teams and review trends across the season, while bringing together all of the teams’ performance data. Clips, statistics and graphics support and emphasise the key findings, offer up-to-date education and football development information, and can be quickly accessed in a modern digital form.

The aim of each competition report is to enhance the educational concepts provided by UEFA, improve coaches’ competence and, consequently, foster the development of players and the game across Europe.

NOTICES

• Sergei Zhardzetski is the new general secretary of the Football Federation of Belarus, replacing Yuri Verheichyk.
• Fritz Keller has been elected president of the German Football Association, replacing Reinhard Grindel.
• Felix Alvarez has been elected president of the Andorran Football Federation, replacing Victor Santos.
• Dudi Gil has been named as acting president of the Israel Football Association, replacing Moshe Zuares.
• Mark Bullingham has been appointed as the new CEO of The Football Association, replacing Martin Glenn.
European football unites for diversity, inclusion and accessibility

European clubs, national teams and their players joined forces with UEFA and the Fare network in mid-October to back the drive to rid the game of discrimination.

European's premium competitions served as a high-profile platform to convey the unequivocal message that racism, discrimination and intolerance have no place in football. Activities took place at 98 matches in the UEFA Champions League, UEFA Europa League, UEFA Women's Champions League and European Qualifiers in the period between 10 and 24 October to mark Fare's #FootballPeople weeks.

In addition, an impressive show of support for diversity, accessibility and inclusion in football saw more than 150,000 people join the #FootballPeople weeks and take part in 2,000 events in over 60 countries.

Players, clubs and national teams taking part in the various UEFA competitions gave outstanding support to UEFA and Fare – and many made use of their own communication platforms to raise awareness.

Teams lined up for mixed photos with the match referees, while videos were played on giant screens in Europe's stadiums. The hashtag for UEFA's #EqualGame diversity and inclusion campaign was also prominent, and stadium announcements conveyed key messages to thousands of fans. Children wearing #FootballPeople T-shirts were present in stadiums to encourage people to embrace the message that discrimination must be eradicated from football.

A long-standing partnership

“The Fare #FootballPeople weeks are a crucial focal point of the fight against racism, discrimination and intolerance in football,” said UEFA president Aleksander Čeferin. “Thousands of people are involved each year – and UEFA is a committed partner, using its high-profile competitions as a platform to spread key messages. Let's all celebrate diversity and inclusion in the beautiful game!”

UEFA’s close and long-standing partnership with Fare began in 2001.

The #FootballPeople weeks are perfectly aligned with the objectives of the UEFA #EqualGame campaign, which seeks to promote the ethos that football should be open to everyone.

Leading European football stars have given their backing to the #EqualGame campaign, which has been developed from the previous UEFA Respect campaign No to Racism. UEFA remains fully committed to the fight against racism, and has been expanding its campaign to cover all aspects of inclusion, such as ethnicity, gender, age and sexual orientation.

“There is no place in football for discrimination,” said Fare executive director Piara Powar. “The #FootballPeople weeks give the European football community the perfect opportunity to send out a strong and united message supporting inclusion and diversity. Together, we can bring about change – and ensure that any form of discrimination is a thing of the past.”

The #FootballPeople action weeks campaign was in full view at the EURO 2020 qualifier between the Czech Republic and England.
Dries Mertens in action during Belgium’s 4-0 win against Scotland in Glasgow on 9 September. Belgium became the first team to qualify for EURO 2020.
In Belgium, the first person that people think of when they hear the name Auber is the composer of the opera La Muette de Portici. On 25 August 1830, during a performance of that opera at the famous Théâtre de la Monnaie in central Brussels, the aria Amour Sacré de la Patie prompted the audience to rise as one and spill out into the streets, where they joined a crowd of people who were doing battle with the armies of the United Kingdom of the Netherlands. Today, that event is regarded as the spark that triggered the Belgian Revolution, resulting in the birth of the Kingdom of Belgium a couple of months later on 4 October 1830. Since then, this country of just 11 million inhabitants has consistently shown that being small is no barrier to achieving worldwide renown.

When FIFA’s world rankings were last updated in mid-September, Belgium continued to sit proudly at the top of the list. Despite having never won a major tournament, Belgium has been regarded as one of the world’s top footballing nations for a number of years now, thanks to an abundance of highly talented players. Today, the objective for Belgium is clear: win a major international title and, above all, keep playing great football.

May the best team win!

Belgium’s magnificent success is not the result of some kind of miracle: it stems from a long period of hard work. On 17 October 2018, several months after the country had achieved the greatest result in its history by finishing third at the 2018 FIFA World Cup in Russia, the chief executive of the Royal Belgian Football Association, Peter Bossaert, set out an 11-point plan aimed at modernising the organisation. He explained that the Belgian FA was “divided and unwieldy” and was being undermined by an “outdated corporate culture” and a “lack of transparency” – all things that could harm the country’s footballing prospects in the medium term. By Belgian standards, this self-criticism was a rare and bold departure from the norm. In cooperation with Gérard Linard, then president of the association, and Mehdi Bayat, who succeeded him in June 2019, Peter Bossaert devised a set of reforms spanning all levels and areas of the organisation: sporting matters, institutional issues, refereeing, governance, social matters, digital affairs, budgets – you name it.

External assistance

When it came to implementing this second Belgian revolution, the national association had no hesitation in seeking assistance from outside the country. In the case of refereeing, for instance, former international referee David Elleray was tasked with drawing up a master plan for the country to follow. “Belgium has traditionally produced significant numbers of top international referees, but that supply line has dried up since 2010, which was the last time we saw a Belgian [Frank De Bleeckere] officiating at a major tournament. Today, Belgium does not have a UEFA Elite or Category 1 international referee,” says Elleray, who has, in particular, been working closely with Stephanie Forde (operations director), Bertrand Layec (technical director) and Frédy Fautrel (VAR manager). Their work began with a three-month study and detailed consultation, which produced 167 recommendations aimed at creating a new structure to develop and support Belgian match officials. “There was then a meeting with club officials, team captains and head coaches,” the Englishman explains, “in order to set out our expectations regarding conduct on the field of play, and to talk about the law changes and how the VAR system will be used. One of our fundamental
Belgium can count on an exceptional generation of world-class players, led by Eden Hazard, in action here against England in their third-place play-off win (2-0) at the 2018 World Cup.

In Russia, the Red Devils finished in third place, their best World Cup performance ever.

Roberto Martínez and the Red Devils’ other coaches and support staff all attended that seminar. Martínez is, according to David Elleray, very likely the only national head coach in the world who is also a member of that country’s refereeing committee. This makes sense when you realise that Martínez is a workaholic by nature – to the extent that he took on a second role 14 months ago, that of acting technical director. “That allows me to work with the same intensity that I did in club football,” says the Spaniard – who, before coming to Belgium, had spent 10 seasons coaching in Britain at Swansea City AFC, Wigan Athletic FC and Everton FC. “I am working to keep Belgium at the pinnacle of world football, but we also need to plan for the future. With that in mind, we have developed a number of programmes that bring professional and amateur football together, and UEFA has given us enormous support with that. This also allows me, on a personal level, to discover another side of our sport.”

Long-term planning

When he is not coaching his Red Devils, Roberto Martínez works in his office in Tubize, the small town south of Brussels where Belgium’s national training centre is located. Eventually, the whole of the Belgian FA will relocate there, vacating the association’s ageing premises adjacent to King Baudouin Stadium. However, Martínez likes to be out and about keeping an eye on everything: he’s as likely to be spotted in the stands at Belgian top flight games as watching amateur, women’s or youth football. “I always manage to find time for that – thanks to my wife, who is fantastic,” he says. “As a result of watching so many games, I’ve had the odd surprise. For example, I was amazed at the quality of the football in Belgium’s top amateur division. It’s important to have a comprehensive overview of things, and for that you need a good team by your side to help you keep an eye on everything.”

With a work ethic like Martínez’s, resting on your laurels is not an option. “We only have good people working at the national association. We foster the development of all aspects of Belgian football.” When it comes to refereeing, for example, the objective is to have a Belgian referee officiating at a major international tournament. And at a sporting level, there is already a need to start preparing for life after Belgium’s ‘golden generation’ – at which point, thoughts inevitably turn to the country’s Under-21s. Despite a somewhat disappointing performance in Italy in the final round of the last UEFA European Under-21 Championship (where Belgium suffered three defeats in as many matches in the group stage), Martínez is keen to remain positive: “They made it to the final round – the first time that had happened since 2007. Rather than focus on their defeats, I prefer to emphasise the change in mentality that led them to succeed in doing
something that others before them had not achieved. Taking part in major tournaments is important, as it helps you to measure the strength of your team. We now need to make sure that we keep qualifying for them.”

Martínez has a long-term vision for the future, which he says enjoys the full support of the association’s management: “As head coach of the national side and acting technical director, I have to take decisions as if I would still be here in 50 or 100 years’ time, rather than just thinking about the duration of my contract. Every day has to be thought of as an opportunity to put a new project in place.”

**Here come the girls**

Katrien Jans agrees. At just 34 years of age, she is head of women’s football at the Belgian FA. Earlier this year, she and her team launched a five-year plan entitled The World At Our Feet, which seeks to bring about a major expansion of the women’s game. According to a survey conducted jointly by the Belgian FA and UEFA, football is the third most popular sport among Belgian girls, behind tennis and swimming.

The aim is to achieve top spot on the podium by 2024 and, according to Jans, things are looking good: “There has been a change of mindset in the management of the national association. Broadly speaking, what is done for the boys must now also be done for the girls. Previously, we had just one or two people looking after the women’s national team from an administrative perspective; now, we have a whole team of people.” As Jans explains, women’s football in Belgium is in a somewhat unusual position: “We have around 38,500 registered players, and the majority of them are over the age of 18. So, we have an inverted pyramid. Consequently, one of the four pillars of our plan involves making sure that girls start playing as early as possible within structures that are tailored to them.”

Another pillar of that ambitious plan – one that the national association has already invested an additional €3m in, thanks to new sponsorship deals and bumper revenues from the Red Devils’ successful World Cup campaign in Russia – concerns sporting success. After taking part in their first-ever UEFA Women’s EURO in 2017 and losing in the play-offs in their bid to qualify for the 2019 FIFA Women’s World Cup, the Red Flames are hungry for success on the global stage and certainly have the wind in their sails. “These days, their matches are broadcast on free-to-air TV,” Jans says. “And the feedback we get from the team’s matches at Leuven Stadium is always highly positive: some people emphasise the family-friendly atmosphere, others say that it reminds them of how football used to be … The team are gaining in popularity. If you stop people in the street and ask them who or what the ‘Red Flames’ are, they are far more likely to know than they were in the past.”

**Katrien Jans**

Head of women’s football, Belgian FA
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One other positive development, that augurs well for the future, is that people’s knowledge of the national side is no longer limited to Tessa Wullaert and Janice Cayman – admittedly still the biggest names in Belgian women’s football, playing for top European sides Manchester City WFC and Olympique Lyonnais respectively.

For Katrien Jans, future success will also be dependent on improvements being made to the structure of the national championship. Jans, who played in the Belgian top flight with Oud-Heverlee Leuven and FCF White Star Woluwé, refuses to rule out the potential establishment of something like the BeNe League – the groundbreaking cross-border league competition organised between 2013 and 2015 and contested by the top Belgian and Dutch sides. “Back then, the majority of the girls were amateurs, and the kick-off times were sometimes highly restrictive. We often had to take time off work, and sometimes you’d miss a game because you simply had no more leave to take,” she recalls. “These days, the standard is higher and players are more likely to be semi-professionals. Belgium and the Netherlands are in fairly similar situations: their top players play abroad, they have relatively few registered players [160,000 in the Netherlands and 38,500 in Belgium], and their top women’s divisions are small [eight teams in the Netherlands and six in Belgium]. If we’re being realistic, it’s clear that both of us are too small to take on nations such as England or Germany at European level.”

**Giving back to society**

While we do not yet know whether the Belgian women’s national team will manage to follow in the footsteps of their Dutch neighbours, who were champions of Europe in 2017 and runners-up at the 2019 Women’s World Cup, it is clear that they already have the capacity to inspire the public. That can be seen, for example, in the national association’s corporate social responsibility (CSR) programme, which was launched in 2016 and spans four different subject areas: integration, human rights, health and sustainability. This is a way of giving back to a society that is strongly supportive of its national team. “It’s something of a cliché,
but the CSR programme was established because we know that football can help to bring about change in society,” explains Hedeli Sassi, a trained social worker who joined the Belgian FA in 2017. He and his colleague An De Kock are the only permanent members of staff dedicated to CSR at the national association. “We have so many different projects on the go that we have to agree priorities. I sometimes think it would be good to have a bigger team so that we can work even more effectively,” says De Kock, who admits that she was not a football fan at first, but is now a big supporter of the Red Devils after seeing the positive influence they have at a social level.

The players provide considerable support. “The various members of the men’s and women’s national teams have responded very positively to our initiatives, for example, by recording messages aimed at tackling discrimination. Having their support is, of course, extremely useful, as their opinions carry a lot of weight,” De Kock explains, pointing out that the national association also cooperates closely with external organisations working in the various areas covered by the CSR programme, as they “have more detailed knowledge of those specific issues and can deliver superior solutions”. Sassi also points to the support that the CSR programme receives from the association’s management: “We sometimes organise tournaments in order to promote our projects, but we also make great use of social media. Above all, we have the total support of Peter Bossaert and Mehdi Bayat, which is a great help in giving structure to our work and ensuring that we have a clear vision.”

In line with the general approach governing the Belgian FA, everybody contributes, in their own way, to others’ objectives: “We work closely with the two linguistic wings of Belgian football, both of which have someone dedicated to CSR,” Sassi explains. “And on the specific issue of refugees, we work in partnership with the office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. Even sponsors such as Coca-Cola have sat down around the table and made a contribution, in this case to reducing waste.” Against that background, the CSR team are hopeful that Belgium can one day be regarded as a model in ecological terms – “notably by moving towards zero-waste,” Sassi says, pointing out that the work he does with An De Kock has, in part, been made possible by the Red Devils’ sporting success. “More success means more partners – and thus more support for us,” he says. In Belgium, a football team is far more than just 11 players.

Three questions for …

Mehdi Bayat
President of the Belgian FA

You were born in Iran and grew up and studied in France. How did your love affair with Belgian football begin?

In 2003, I joined Royal Charleroi SC as a commercial director. I then climbed up through the ranks within the national association, doing various jobs, before becoming president in June 2019. When you spend almost 20 years in a country, you end up becoming part of it – not just from an administrative perspective, but also, above all, in your heart. I now think of myself as Belgian, and I will soon be acquiring Belgian nationality.

In 2016, you were one of the instigators of Roberto Martínez’s recruitment as head coach of the national team. Tell us about that.

Together with my colleagues Gérard Linard [his predecessor as national association president] and Bart Verhaeghe, I issued a call for applications. And I’m glad that I did, because Roberto Martínez was not, in all honesty, someone who we would have instinctively thought of. When we met him for the first time, he was a real gentleman, and that has never changed. He’s extremely hard working, he’s humble, he lives and breathes football, and, above all, he has reinvented the position of head coach here in Belgium by getting heavily involved in all aspects of sporting preparation. It’s a real pleasure to work with someone who has that kind of passion.

Before being elected president, you were involved in drawing up that famous 11-point plan. Since then, it has been said that your role is more ‘ceremonial’ than in the past. What exactly does that mean?

We want the national association to operate in the same way that all major companies do. That is to say, we have Peter Bossaert, who is responsible for all day-to-day operations, and we have me as chairman of the board. My role involves scrutinising and checking things at the start of each cycle [with his term of office running until 2021], so as to decide which strategy to implement. That effectively began before my election with the 11-point plan, which seeks to implement real reforms in order to professionalise the operational structure of the national association for the long-term. We are 100% behind all of those initiatives, rather than just supporting particular projects. However, I also represent the national association in its dealings with international organisations such as UEFA, hence the use of the term ‘ceremonial’ in relation to my role.
The significance of the first-ever UEFA Under-19 Futsal EURO was far greater than the sum of 15 matches and one winner. A cause for concern at the senior futsal EURO played 18 months earlier had been that 46% of the players had passed their 30th birthday and the solitary player under the age of 21 was 19-year-old Poland goalkeeper Michal Kaluza. The coaches, when the ball started rolling in Riga on 8 September, unanimously agreed that UEFA's launch of the Under-19 competition represented a huge step forward in terms of player development.

The hosts emphatically demonstrated the competition's stimulatory powers. The Latvian Football Federation – and especially its president, Kaspars Gorkšs – was keen to try its hand at staging a major international tournament and delivered the goods with great enthusiasm, professionalism and creativity under the imaginative Futsal's Future Magicians banner that presided over the proceedings. The event provided motivation for national team coach Arturs Šketovs to construct an Under-19 squad – and he did so with emphasis on the 'Under'. Eight of his 14-man squad were born a year or more after the competition's ceiling date of 1 January 2000 and three of them were only 16 – including the talented No10 Edgars Tarakanovs who, had the hosts progressed further, might easily have been shortlisted for UEFA's team of the tournament.

Misleading scorelines
Statistics reveal that Latvia lost their three games in Group A of the eight-team final tournament. A close scrutiny reveals that ten goals were conceded during second halves when fuel levels ebbed. But they do not reveal the team’s ambition, skill and unflagging determination to impress. Only five of the dozen teams who had contested the senior Futsal EURO 2018 were in Riga and, along with Latvia, in the trio of ‘newcomers’ were the Netherlands, who echoed the hosts’ feeling that scorelines did not tell the whole story. The Group B results feature, for example, an opening 7-0 defeat by Ukraine after which Dutch coach (and former international) Hjalmar Hoekema mused: “OK, we might have deserved to lose. But the result should have been something like 6-4.” In this case, the statistics do support his theory. The Netherlands had 28 goal attempts, 13 of them on target. They went on to total 59 in their three games, somehow failing to score. But Hoekema voiced an opinion shared by his coaching colleagues when he talked about “a big step up the learning ladder”.

Talk of ‘newcomers’ is ineluctably interwoven with toasts to absent friends and, in this category, the most illustrious faller was Italy who, after defeats by England and Slovakia, recorded a 1-0 consolation victory over Croatia that, in the light of events in Riga, turned out to be a huge irony. Italy’s demise had been the most striking surprise of the qualifying stages, where no fewer than 34 nations had entered teams for the inaugural Under-19 competition. And the surprise factor travelled with the teams to Latvia. On the opening day, a Russia team featuring many of the players who had won silver medals at the 2018 Youth Olympics seemed on track for a form-book victory over Poland when they took the lead within four minutes. But a marking lapse allowed Poland goalkeeper Krzysztof →
Iwanek – as good with his feet as he was with his hands – to make an end-to-end run through the middle to equalise. A trademark interception allowed Poland to lead at half-time and Russia’s greater intensity after the break translated into five fouls within ten minutes. The sixth allowed Poland to increase their lead via the ensuing 10m penalty and Russia’s extensive use of the flying goalkeeper yielded only one reply. The 3-2 scoreline was to shape the group and the tournament.

The form book had suggested that the Group A encounter between Russia and Portugal would be played with first and second places at stake. But Russia came on court in a must-win scenario against Portugal, who had impressively beaten Latvia and Poland and were strong candidates to add the Under-19 title to the trophy won by their senior team 18 months earlier. At 1-1, and with just over two minutes to play, Russia coach Konstantin Maevskiy resorted to the flying keeper in search of the solitary goal that would clinch a semi-final place. Instead, Portugal pumped the ball into the unguarded Russia net three times in 43 seconds and when, in the next game, Poland beat Latvia, one of the pre-tournament favourites was looking for flights home.

Croatian surprise

The next major surprise was delivered by Croatia, the third ‘newcomer’ in Riga, despite that qualifying defeat by Italy. The team coached by former player Marinko Mavrović had hardly made an auspicious start with a back-foot, damage-limitation display against a rampant Spain, neatly summarised by a total of six goal attempts by Croatia against 32 by their opponents. At that point, nobody expected what lay in store. After a morale-boosting win against the Dutch, a re-armed team took on Ukraine in an all-or-nothing decider. Croatia fought back from a goal down to win 3-1 and line up a semi-final against Portugal, while Spain, sailing through the group with a tally of 15 goals scored and one conceded (a free kick in their 7-1 win over Ukraine) were to take on Poland.

At this point, there were very short odds on an Iberian final – made even shorter by the suspension of Croatia’s No7 Jakov Hrstić, scorer of two of their three goals against Ukraine. In his absence, No10 Josip Jurlina emerged as team leader and inspirational force. Croatia defended stoutly for half an hour, with goalkeeper Nikola Čizmić outstanding between the posts. But it was his opposite number, Bernardo Paco, who broke the deadlock with an unexpected and explosive upfield solo run that allowed his skipper, Célio Coque, to drive Portugal into the lead. The odds became astronomically shorter when José Luis Mendes’ team were still 1-0 up in the final minute. Until a rebound fell nicely to Jurlina’s left leg, which he might have described, as one Irish footballer famously did, as “not one of my
better legs”. He swung it and the ball, with the clock registering 2.4 seconds to play, swept into the net.

So the drama, to neutral spectators’ delight, continued into extra time. After just over four of the first five minutes gone, a kick-in on the right caught Croatia napping and allowed Nuno Chiva, from point-blank range, to make it 2-1 and restore the pre-match odds in favour of a Portugal victory. But the tale of the unexpected was not fully told. Croatia’s reply was less tardy (105 seconds before the klaxon, to be precise) but even more spectacular, with Fran Vukelić lashing an equaliser into the roof of the net from the left.

And so to penalties – the first four impressively converted. Then Hugo Neves, one of the tournament’s outstanding performers as Portugal’s attacking pivot, entertained the crowd with a shimmy and a skip during his run-up but saw his low shot comfortably blocked by Čizmić, a save which cued up Jurlina (who else?) to convert the winning spot kick and earn Croatia, against all the odds, a first-ever appearance in the final of a major futsal tournament.

Spanish tempo
The challenge issued to Spain and Poland as they came on court for the second semi-final, was “follow that!” And, of course, they could not. The tree was momentarily shaken when Poland, with Iwanek once again well out of his goal to participate in the attacking move, scored with their first on-target attempt after 11 minutes. Spain, unfazed, stuck to their high-tempo passing game and aggressive high pressing but, in a match where they forged 56 goal attempts, their only successes stemmed from dead-ball situations: a kick-in on their right, a penalty for handball and a corner on the left.

So the tournament was to feature Croatia v Spain on the opening and closing days. The atmosphere for the final was superb – particularly thanks to the Spanish fans, including a military contingent stationed nearby, who even responded with applause for the staff who cleaned the court after the warm-up and at half-time. The 9,975 capacity Arena Riga provided a wonderful setting for all 15 fixtures and the novel matt playing surface was well received by players, coaches and TV directors who, at earlier tournaments, had found that the reflection from shiny surfaces had been a hindrance to high-definition images.

Croatia, freed this time from damage-limitation priorities, started strongly against an edgy Spain who, uncharacteristically, lacked precision in their passing and cohesion in their pressing. But a lapse in concentration allowed Spain to open the scoring and ease their self-imposed pressure, with Ricardo Mayor left free to tap in a corner. Even though Croatia equalised with a free-kick, the Spanish machine was moving through the gears. Albert Canillas’ team scored three more before the interval – the last a ten-metre penalty after the referees had whistled a sixth foul by Croatia – and effectively ended the contest with two spectacular passing moves in the opening four minutes of the second half, completing a conclusive 6-1 scoreline. As Spain became the first team to lift the UEFA Under-19 futsal trophy, there were priceless, emotional images of sportsmanship, with players and coaches embracing while the Spanish fans applauded their opponents, chanting “Croatia! Croatia!” The first-ever Under-19 tournament was a credit to the young players who had relished the chance to climb the development ladder, a credit to Latvia and a credit to futsal.

Results

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<td>Poland</td>
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<td>Latvia</td>
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<td>Russia</td>
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<td>Poland</td>
<td>1-3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Portugal</td>
<td>4-1</td>
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<td>Latvia</td>
<td>1-3</td>
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<td>Ukraine</td>
<td>7-0</td>
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<td>Croatia</td>
<td>0-3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>0-6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ukraine</td>
<td>1-7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Croatia</td>
<td>3-1</td>
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<td>Spain</td>
<td>5-0</td>
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<th>Semi-finals</th>
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<td>Portugal</td>
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<td>Croatia</td>
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<th>Final</th>
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<td>Croatia</td>
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<td>Spain</td>
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Croatia took everyone by surprise by qualifying for the final at the expense of Portugal.
A CITY TO CELEBRATE

One of Europe’s most loved cities, Copenhagen will be a wonderful all-round destination for visitors next summer, with memories of Denmark’s greatest football achievement certain to resurface.

John Jensen. Kim Vilfort. Peter Schmeichel. The names roll off the tongue. The names intrinsically linked with the high-water mark of Danish football history. Denmark famously did not even originally qualify for EURO ’92, but they won it. And now the tournament so ingrained in local football folklore is coming to Copenhagen.

For the Danish Football Association (DBU) president, Jesper Møller Christensen, it is a source of immense pride that the country’s capital city will play an integral part in EURO 2020. “Danish football has been given a fantastic opportunity to be part of something bigger,” he says, seeing both short and long-term benefits to Copenhagen’s involvement. “We saw a great opportunity in the role as a EURO host, which can help the development of Danish football in the long run – both at the elite and club level – and give all Danes and foreign fans a footballing experience for life that expands way beyond the boundaries of the Copenhagen municipality and out to all of Denmark.”

Heart of the action

The DBU president is excited by the prospect of Copenhagen being one of 12 cities that are hosting games at EURO 2020, and the unique nature of next year’s final tournament. “It is a fantastic opportunity to let a lot of countries and cities host EURO games – including Copenhagen. UEFA has shown openness and innovation by spreading the hosting duties to more nations, and we are happy and proud to be one of the cities that will be hosting the football festivity and the celebration of the 60th anniversary.”

The Danish capital is certainly well set up to hold a celebration. A football village at Ofelia Plads and the fan zone will complement the existing and various attractions of a city that is already a world-leading all-round tourist destination. “Copenhagen has been voted as the best city to live in and for tourists to visit many times, and it is not without reason that Danes have been known as some of the happiest people in the world for years,” Jesper Møller Christensen adds. “This football festival in
Copenhagen

Green, clean and effortlessly stylish, Copenhagen is a forward-thinking city often cited as one of the happiest places to live on earth. The bicycle-friendly Danish capital is closely connected to Sweden by the Øresund Bridge and is a lively centre of Scandinavian culture, renowned for its leading designers and numerous Michelin-starred restaurants. The harbour, Botanical Garden and world-famous Little Mermaid statue also vie for attention, in a city dominated by local giants FC København on the football front. FCK’s home ground welcomes UEFA EURO 2020 after hosting the 1994 European Cup Winners’ Cup final and the UEFA Cup showpiece six years later, with Arsenal FC beating Parma AC in the first game before losing to Galatasaray AŞ on penalties in 2000.

combined with Ofelia village, which can accommodate up to 12,000 daily visitors, can present Copenhagen as a sustainable capital with boats, bikes, harbour buses and a harbour so clean that you can swim in it."

From wandering down the bustling Strøget, Europe’s longest pedestrian street, to dropping in on Tivoli Gardens, visitors will not be short of things to do. “Copenhagen is a city that includes and embraces,” says Jesper Møller Christensen, who was elected DBU president in 2014. “It is a month-long football festival for everybody. Copenhagen is an accessible place to visit because the biking culture is such an integrated part of the city’s infrastructure. The stadium, the fan zone and all the exciting parts of Copenhagen are within biking distance of each other – and you should not miss out on the culinary scene in Copenhagen. That really has so much to offer.”

The summer of ’92

Its geographical location means Copenhagen is very easy to access, and even more so from Sweden since 1999 when it was joined to Malmö by the Øresund Bridge. It was in that city across the strait where, seven years before, Denmark recorded a famous victory against France which kick-started a final tournament campaign that ultimately led to glory. Now, nearly three decades on, two of those heroes are back to play a leading role in the 2020 edition. Brian Laudrup and Peter Schmeichel will be ambassadors for next year’s tournament, and the DBU president is delighted to have them on board. “Denmark and Danes are proud of the country’s football history, and EURO ’92 is the memory that stands out,” he says. “That such great personalities from back then have said ‘yes’ to representing Denmark makes us proud, of course. It is an excellent example that everybody, from the most celebrated names in Danish football to the kids just discovering the game, will be taking part in what is hopefully going to be the biggest sports event on Danish soil ever.”

It is, Jesper Møller Christensen says, a once-in-a-lifetime chance to secure a bright future for the sport in the country. “Danish football has been given a golden opportunity to build on the important relationships we have established during the work for the EURO finals. We have to take advantage of that to develop further and continue the great work that is being done every day in the clubs all over Denmark – both on and off the pitch."

That legacy will follow a successful delivery next summer, which is something Jesper Møller Christensen is sure Copenhagen can do in its own special way. “Football is a community, and we wish to show Denmark and Copenhagen as the best possible hosts for football fans, and culturally interested and foreign tourists. It should all feel like part of a wonderful football festival.”

Jesper Møller Christensen
DBU president

Parken Stadium
Capacity: 38,000

MATCHES

13 June: Group B match
18 June: Group B match
22 June: Group B match
29 June: Round of 16
Grzegorz Kowalski and his Dolny Śląsk players celebrate victory in the Regions’ Cup on 26 June in Bavaria.
Grzegorz Kowalski, how did you become a coach?
I decided to become a coach from very early on. It was a risk because I had never had a proper job before. Some of my colleagues had worked as teachers, others had done something completely different to football before training as coaches. I took a different path. Coaching has always been my main profession.

So how did I become a coach? When I was 19, I started studying at the Physical Education Academy at the same time as playing for Ślęza Wrocław. Even as a player, I was already observing my coaches. People usually have two or three coaches who heavily influenced their football career. For example, one might have been a very charismatic leader that players naturally followed. Another might have been great tactically... When I teach coaches, I first tell them to look inside of themselves and ask if they have leadership qualities. Supposedly, like an actor, you can play any role in life. In football, if you want people to follow you, be authentic. Your players need to believe you, to trust you. In their eyes you must be a leader. Often this quality is apparent as early as primary school. If you were not already used to being the ‘boss’, it might be harder for you to thrive in the world of coaching. I tell aspiring coaches to think about this because there are many other jobs in football. You can be a physical preparation coach or work with kids. Not everyone is cut out to be head coach. If you don’t have the right skills and you just wade in, you are bound to fail.

How else did you prepare for your role as a coach?
First of all, by studying, but I also spent a lot of time collecting any available information. The market for football books used to be very limited in Poland, but my time in Germany and Malaysia worked to my advantage and I grabbed whatever I could there. I also watched countless videos of matches. But the learning process never stops. If you want to work in football, at any level, you need to keep up to date.

Did you have any coaching role models when you were younger?
Only locally, although less so for tactics. My first coach at Ślęza Wrocław, Stanisław Świerk, may not have been the best technical coach, but he definitely had charisma. He was someone that people would follow. Ślęza Wrocław used to be sponsored by the local public transport company and the director was a very important person, inside and outside the club. I recall that at one match, after the team had played a poor first-half, the director came into the dressing room. He started saying something, believing it was his right, but Świerk interrupted him, saying “I don’t interfere with your trams.” This was an important moment for all of us; a clear signal from the coach that he alone ruled the dressing room. For me, as a future coach, this was an important lesson to never allow other people to interfere in the dressing room. You immediately lose authority in front of the team. Świerk always held this authority.

He also had an interesting trait that I will explain using another anecdote. His wife was something of a fortune teller. One time, we were preparing for Świerk’s verdict on a training camp that we had attended in [former] East Germany. We thought it would be like, “this person trained well, that person needs to improve.” But the coach’s wife was seated next to him. She looked at our dates of birth and used the zodiac to tell whether her husband could rely on each player.

Another funny story involves a team-mate...
who knew Świerk was very superstitious. During a game, when he was a substitute, this player told the coach that he’d dreamt about coming off the bench and scoring two goals. As soon as Świerk heard this, he asked the player to start warming up. Of course, he didn’t score any goals.

It was never boring with Świerk. Once, on a long coach journey for an away match, he suddenly started searching for his hat. He believed it brought good luck. He couldn’t find it, so what happened? Although we had already gone quite a way, the driver had to turn round and go back to Wrocław for his hat. Świerk had something about him that made people want to follow him.

The second coach who heavily influenced me was Józef Majdura. He was a completely different character to Świerk. A very cultured person who we found intimidating in many ways. A man who trusted people, a man of principle who believed that rules should not be broken. You learn a lot from people, even if they have very different personalities.

**As coach of an amateur team do you draw inspiration from coaches of professional teams, for example in the Champions League?**

Amateur and professional players share a common motivation. Whatever the level, anyone who steps on the pitch wants to win. I believe that everyone wants to give their all. For these guys, the Regions’ Cup is their Champions League. So yes, even through I am the coach of an amateur team, I can take inspiration from coaches of Champions League teams.

**How do you select players for a squad?**

Lower Silesia is made up of four regions. Our club has people in each region keeping an eye on the lower leagues – it’s our own scouting network. However, at the level of the third and fourth leagues we work closely with the club coaches. We organise a consultation and we assess individual players. I watch many of them myself. I live football 24 hours a day. I’ll even go to four matches on a Saturday!

We take selection very seriously. Personally, I’m looking for two things. First, mentality. When we played a Spanish team in theRegions’ Cup we scored in the last minute. It was a very important goal because it kept us in the tournament.

“**In football, if you want people to follow you, be authentic. Your players need to believe you, to trust you. In their eyes you must be a leader.**”
Coincidence? A surprise? Not for me! Because at the end of the previous season my club team Ślęza Wrocław had scored injury-time winners in four out of five matches. Eight players from Ślęza were with us at the Regions’ Cup. I like players who fight and keep believing until the final whistle.

Second, the Regions’ Cup is a tough and demanding tournament with games played every two days. So we try to select players with excellent physical stamina. It also turned out that the key matches were played in very high temperatures.

**How did you prepare for the Regions’ Cup?**

In the winter, we held a training camp in Wałbrzych. We were considering up to 10 Ślęza players for inclusion in the Regions’ Cup squad, so we decided to take the whole Ślęza team to the camp, as well as the candidates from other teams. We met up again for a few days before the finals in Bavaria. How often do I have contact with members of my squad? As I mentioned, a lot play for my team so I see them every day. Outside of the training camps, I keep an eye on the others as often as possible.

**What was a typical day like during the Regions’ Cup finals?**

It’s a very intense tournament. The games take place every two days, so you must devote a lot of time to recovery and regaining strength. We tried to plan everything so the players were ready to play the next match and the one after that. Of course, there were various ways to relax. We played a bit of mini-golf and took a trip to Bayern Munich’s stadium to visit their museum. But, as I said, if it wasn’t a matchday the most important thing was to ensure proper recovery.

**What is your coaching philosophy? What is your game plan?**

I’m a coach who likes his team to be dominant, to run the match, have a lot of possession. These days, everyone knows how to defend, and every team has two fast players to counter. This makes my preferred style of football much more challenging for a coach. The pressure for results and the fear of being sacked and losing income do not help to encourage positive play. Everyone looks for a way to win. This does not always mean building a strong team or developing good players. Another problem for me as a coach in the fourth league, where in theory I can look for players for the Regions’ Cup squad, is that there aren’t so many young players. Many are well over 30. They love football as they have always known it. They are not candidates for my team.

**And how often do you need to adapt your philosophy and tactics to your players’ abilities?**

It happens. Like the previous edition of the Regions’ Cup finals played in Ireland, where my plan to dominate received a reality check. Instead our opponents took the ball and dominated possession themselves. Possession football is not always possible, because the opponent doesn’t allow it. Another practical issue is that Ślęza is not a rich club. We don’t have money, and the quality of our pitch is what you see. To be honest, it’s not easy to control the ball on this surface, making our efforts to dominate play even harder.

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“I’m a coach who likes his team to be dominant, to run the game, have a lot of possession. These days everyone knows how to defend and every team has two fast players to counter. Working on how to dominate and play possession football is much more challenging for a coach.”
“What is often difficult about this job for coaches is remembering that our players are not fully professional. We demand a lot, but these boys rarely come to training rested. In fact, it’s quite the opposite. They are tired after coming straight from work or college.”

Despite this, we always set ourselves high standards. Sometimes I wonder, looking at these conditions, whether we should really demand so much of ourselves? If we did not dominate an opponent, does it really mean that we played poorly? Perhaps we should be praising the other team for making things difficult for us.

Tactics is one thing. Figuring out your opponents is another. What did you know about your opponents in the Regions’ Cup finals?

When it comes to in-depth knowledge, this was indeed a problem. Regions’ Cup squads are generally assembled at the last minute so there is no way to take a ‘sneak peek’ at the opposition. And even if the team has played before, so much will have changed since their last match that there is no point watching them. They will have completely different players.

Our first match, against the Russians, was a great unknown for us. But we already knew a bit about our second and third opponents as we had the benefit of watching their first outings in the Regions’ Cup. We used this opportunity to work out what to expect. We try to take a professional approach to every aspect of what we do. If it is possible to find out about an opponent’s style of play, we will take advantage. I have an inquisitive mind; I like to know any information that might affect my work and how my team performs. I never turn down the chance to watch rivals.

All five of the goals scored in the final were from penalties. Is there any explanation for this? It doesn’t often happen that there are five penalties in one match.

As a coach, I’ve been involved in thousands of matches, but I don’t remember anything like that. Five penalties in a single match? No, I’ve never experienced this. It’s hard to explain, but one thing I can say is that before the final we made our players work on set pieces. When the players are tired from a tournament played in very high temperatures, set pieces become very important. That’s how it turned out in the final. Winning that match had special significance for Lower Silesia. In the history of the Regions’ Cup, just two teams have won the tournament twice, of which only Lower Silesia triumphed away from home, on both occasions.

At amateur level, do you control the players’ diets and nutrition?

We try to pay attention to these matters as much as possible. From time to time we organise training sessions specifically dedicated to diet and nutrition. When we are at a training camp, we also provide guidelines for our hotel’s kitchen. Obviously, it’s not at the same level of detail as professional football, but we don’t completely ignore it. Our masseur actually knows quite a bit about this topic, so we usually leave everything to him. It’s also helpful that our camps take place at centres that specialise in hosting sports’ teams. They are familiar with what food to prepare for footballers.
What did you find most difficult about the Regions’ Cup finals? The fact that some of the players have other jobs, the level of football, or something else?

In terms of players’ jobs, it wasn’t a problem. A lot of them are students although some have other jobs. When it comes to the quality of football, I can tell you that at the press conference before the finals, representatives of every team, apart from maybe the Russians, were saying they had come to win. When it was our turn, we joked that we had come to visit Bavaria. Seriously though, the level of some of the teams was extremely high. Take the Spanish team, for example. They did not hide the fact they wanted to take the cup home and were doing everything possible to make that happen. In the end, though, it was us who qualified from the group and won the final.

Speaking more generally however, what is often difficult about this job for coaches is remembering that our players are not fully professional. We demand a lot, but these boys rarely come to training rested. In fact, it’s quite the opposite. They are tired after coming straight from work or college.

Did you feel the support of the fans during the finals?

Yes. Admittedly, during the group matches there were only a few people in the stands, but lots of Poles came for the final. The players’ families were brought in a special coach from Wrocław. This meant that Polish fans were in the stands and, in this respect, we did ourselves proud.

Did you get on well with the other teams?

From what I could see, the players were more focused on themselves. It was a competition and there was rivalry, so nobody sought contact with the other teams. I should point out though that the organisers had the great idea of organising a dinner after the group phase. This was a fantastic occasion which allowed the teams to mingle wonderfully. I remember a nice moment when somebody, probably the French, sang a song in their own language. Then, others joined in. There was of course the Russian ‘kalinka’, known all over the world. Us Poles also sang something. It was truly a very nice atmosphere. I also remember another special moment. When the Russians entered the room, they received a standing ovation. Why? For fair play. They had nothing to play for in their group match with the Spanish team, as they had no chance of qualifying. Yet they still played with total commitment, won the match and demonstrated the importance of fair play. I will remember that for a long time.

The rules do not allow it, but out of curiosity, if you could put one player from the Polish national team in your squad, considering your philosophy, style of play, and maybe weaknesses in the team, who would you choose?

I think Robert Lewandowski. Not only because he is currently considered the best Polish player but, above all, because we are missing this type of classic number 9 in our team. Such a player is very useful. So if I could, I would go for Lewandowski.

What do you see as your greatest coaching success?

It’s sometimes hard to define success. I’ve developed a few players who are well known today in Poland. One former player of mine once told me that “whenever I speak to any player who has worked with you, they always name you among their top three coaches.” Nice words but, ultimately, when it comes to success with a team, the victory in the Regions’ Cup obviously deserves a mention. As I said before, most of the participating teams wanted to win but, in the end, we did. I arrived with memories of the previous finals in Ireland. I thought we had a better team there, and yet we lost every game. In Bavaria, it was different. We won the first match against the Russians and then we drew with a very strong Spanish team despite trailing until late in the match. We managed to compete with Spain in terms of possession, determination and intensity. Then, when we really needed it, we equalised in the last minute to stay in the tournament. Then there was the match with the Czechs where we played well but weren’t clinical enough in front of goal. And then there was the final which we have already talked about. Yes, I definitely count the Regions’ Cup as a coaching success. Regardless of the level, a coach must treat every player and every game seriously. And for amateurs, the Regions’ Cup is as important as the Champions League is to professionals.

“I definitely count the Regions’ Cup as a coaching success. Regardless of the level, a coach must treat every player and every game seriously.”
Nicușor ‘Beto’ Vasile and Raluca Petre live in a disadvantaged neighbourhood characterised by poverty and precarious living conditions. ‘Beto’ lives in one room without electricity with his mother and three brothers, while Raluca lives together with her parents, three brothers and two sisters. Both are eager to make their way in life – and see football as a potential road towards the future.

“When I grow up, I want to be a footballer,” says ‘Beto’. “I’d like to be a coach – I want to carve out a career for myself and become somebody in football,” adds Raluca.

‘Beto’ and Raluca are being given crucial guidance by the Bucharest-based Alternative Education Club, a project for Roma and minorities which organises activities such as football for children to help them discover their talents, as well as learn life and social skills. Playing the game has boosted both youngsters’ self-belief and confidence.

They both adore Barcelona ace Lionel Messi, and their sense of joy and fulfilment when they play knows no boundaries. “I’m always happy when I play football,” says Raluca. “I think football is for everyone in the world.” ‘Beto’ heartily agrees: “When I play football, I feel perfect. I feel at ease – and it’s helped me to make friends.” We’re delighted to see this shining example of the beautiful game bringing hope and happiness to young lives…
Football Federations of the Future is a vision created by UEFA and its member associations to outline how the future of European football will look and develop. The footballing landscape is becoming increasingly competitive and it is the responsibility of UEFA and its member associations to evolve in order to stay on top of the challenges that lie ahead to ensure further sustainable football development in Europe.

This will give European football’s governing body, along with these stakeholders, a platform to develop strategies in order to address crucial facets of the game, such as how to increase participation, how to maximise their business potential and how to build strong relationships with the fans.

“The world is changing, and football must adapt to these changes if it is to satisfy the future needs of its many stakeholders,” said UEFA president Aleksander Čeferin.

“To achieve this, we must be bold in our thinking. We must possess a clarity of purpose that will enable us to establish a vision that defines and articulates our ambition for the future of football across Europe. In doing so, we will be able to reach even greater heights and further strengthen football’s place within European society.”

Football Federations of the Future recognises that each national association is unique, in terms of its size, level of resources, individual strategic priorities and the wider socio-economic and cultural environment in which it operates, and that the national associations themselves understand best how to grow football in their own countries.

This strategic framework has been developed in collaboration with all 55 UEFA member associations along with input from over 40 industry representatives and a similar number of external consultants from across the business, corporate and sporting worlds.

**Enhancing support for national associations**

Football Federations of the Future is the long-term vision for the existing UEFA GROW programme, which was established in 2015 with the aim of systematically and strategically growing European football in partnership with national associations.

UEFA GROW has since been implemented across all UEFA member associations and offers tailor-made strategic services in the areas most relevant for football organisations – from building a better image of football or engaging with the entire football community to increasing revenue opportunities and getting more people, like here at the UEFA Grassroots Conference in Minsk in June – is at the heart of the development of football in Europe.

Children playing football and having fun – is at the heart of the development of football in Europe.

“The world is changing, and football must adapt to these changes if it is to satisfy the future needs of its many stakeholders.”

Aleksander Čeferin
UEFA president
Football Federations of the Future will build on this approach by creating a clear, easy-to-follow framework for how associations can best grow football in their respective countries.

Football Federations of the Future has adopted a process of structured self-assessment, which is facilitated with support from UEFA. This process will help national associations of varying size, level of resource and circumstance to evaluate their current performance across 14 core areas of their business, ranging from brand and participation to revenues and financial sustainability.

They will also be able to use the resulting analysis as the basis for creating an exciting and inspiring vision that will define how they need to develop during the coming years.

We want to take football to a completely new level, which takes into account the changing culture and demographics that our national associations are facing, so that we can build an even more successful future for the sport in Europe.”

Zoran Laković
UEFA’s director of national associations

Plotting a vision for the future
National associations will have a number of opportunities to collaborate through Football Federations of the Future. This can be achieved through regional groups, where they will have the opportunity to discuss important topics such as business insights, media rights and strategic planning, as well as the chance to learn from each other’s challenges and successes.

Partnerships can also be created between national associations who want to learn and share ideas about a similar topic, such as how to get more people playing football or improve their image among their key stakeholders.

In establishing this vision, Football Federations of the Future will create a platform for greater collaboration with national associations to support the implementation of UEFA’s strategic plan, which was launched in February 2019.

“National associations are the driving force behind the growth of the game. Our role at UEFA is to work with national associations to help facilitate this growth by providing them with the resources and knowledge required to stimulate, accelerate or maintain levels of growth,” said Zoran Laković.

“We do this through a comprehensive range of programmes that are designed to offer the appropriate support to each national association. Football Federations of the Future will enable national associations to establish a vision across 14 core business development pillars. UEFA GROW will help them deliver it.”
The end of August 2019 marked a significant moment in Danish women’s football, with the first match of the rebranded and relaunched national women’s league taking place. The match between Brøndby IF and FC Nordsjælland marked the culmination of a year’s hard work during which the Danish Football Association (DBU) and the women’s league clubs had set a new vision and strategy with support from the UEFA GROW programme.

The hard work has already paid off. Four days before the first match, insurance company Gjensidige was announced as the main sponsor of the league, which was renamed Gjensidige Kvindeliga. In addition, spectator support has risen by 42% after five rounds, now reaching an average of 277 spectators, compared with an average of 195 last season.

One match per round is now highlighted as a ‘super match’ and gets extra attention and resources to market the game. After five rounds, the super matches have attracted an average attendance of 522. With 721 spectators, the VSK Aarhus versus KoldingQ match tops the attendance leaderboard so far this season.

The DBU’s head of the women’s league, Nicolai Kaas Nordstrøm, is satisfied with the relaunch: “A number of initiatives have been launched to improve the women’s league. We have worked closely with UEFA GROW and the clubs to create fan engagement. The clubs have worked hard and extremely professionally to create interest in women’s football. And now, we are all feeling the benefits.”

When it comes to raising awareness, he is also very impressed with the clubs: “We are really excited to see a huge development in the number of spectators this season. We will continue the good work and we will constantly try to make the overall experience of going to women’s football even better.”

A silver medal for Denmark at UEFA Women’s EURO 2017 was a turning point for Danish women’s football, resulting in a considerable increase in national attention, spectator support and media coverage.
The channel, which is produced from the studios at the FPF’s headquarters, launched at 11:11 local time on the three main Portuguese cable operators. It can also be accessed online at canal11.pt.

Canal 11 opened with a promotional clip featuring football legend and Portugal national team captain Cristiano Ronaldo. “To dream, to fight to become someone, to believe that anything is possible” was the message of the Portugal and Juventus superstar.

The new channel is devoted to Portuguese football as a whole, including the youth national teams, women’s competitions, futsal and beach soccer matches, as well as European clubs and clubs further afield who feature Portuguese players or coaches. It also has rights to national cup competitions, the Under-23 league and highlights of all football coverage.

The TV schedule includes expert football analysis and debate, talk shows and broadcast interviews with sports personalities.

**Growing participation**

Former international Vítor Baía has joined the Canal 11 line-up as host of the Camisola 11 (No11 shirt) programme. He also presented the 2019 Quinas de Ouro awards ceremony, which was broadcast live on the new channel.

The FPF hopes its channel will get more girls and boys to play football, and also attract more spectators and sponsors to the game. Canal 11 covers not only big football events but also games in the smallest of locations.

The channel is not competitive. It wants to be viewed but does not have high audience numbers as its main goal.
UNDER-15 DEVELOPMENT TOURNAMENT PROVIDES VALUABLE EXPERIENCE

ANDI VERCANI

Albania played host to a UEFA Under-15 development tournament from 19 to 23 September in Kamëz, at the training facility of the Football Association of Albania (FShF). Four countries participated in the tournament, where hosts Albania were joined by Estonia, Kosovo and Tajikistan. Despite the difficult weather conditions, the tournament ran smoothly. “We are very happy to host this tournament and the visiting teams in our country. This helps us as an association to gain experience in organising such events, and it helps our young players to gain international experience and develop their skills,” said Dritan Babamusta, head of the national teams sector.

Albania lost their first match, against Estonia, on penalties, after the match had finished 1-1 at the end of regular playing time. They went on to win their second match, against Tajikistan, 3-1, before losing their final match, against Kosovo, 1-0.

“We tested a lot of young players, which is a key element in scouting for talented players. In many aspects, I am satisfied with the team, but we should work harder to achieve important results in the future,” said Albania’s Under-15 coach Armand Dama.

AUSTRIA

NEW, IMPROVED WOMEN’S BUNDESLIGA

SIMON-PETER CHARAMZA

Ahead of the 38th season of the Planet Pure Women’s Bundesliga, the Austrian FA (ÖFB) has unveiled a host of new ideas designed to promote women’s football in Austria.

The ÖFB, in consultation with the clubs, used the summer break to make various adjustments and improvements to Austria’s elite women’s football competitions. This comprehensive package was put together collaboratively for the benefit of clubs and fans alike.

1. New competitions
From the 2019/20 season, the 2. Liga will operate as a single, nationwide competition for the first time, while the newly created Future League will bridge the gap between the 2. Liga and the Bundesliga, giving top-tier clubs’ second-string teams the opportunity to gain more match experience and compete against similarly ambitious opponents.

2. Match analysis
The ÖFB is setting new standards in the field of match analysis thanks to its partnership with the match-filming company Die Ligen, which will produce a video analysis feed for all 90 matches in the 2019/20 Women’s Bundesliga.

3. Goals show
For the fans’ benefit, the ÖFB will also use video images from the analysis feeds to compile footage of all the goals from each Women’s Bundesliga matchday for an exclusive ‘goals show’.

4. PR campaign
Over the summer, the ÖFB and Women’s Bundesliga clubs rolled out the most comprehensive PR campaign in the history of Austrian women’s football. The #mitHerz (‘with heart’) campaign, designed exclusively to promote the Women’s Bundesliga, included an ÖFB-TV club tour, profiling each of the ten teams.

The undoubted highlight of the campaign, however, was the inaugural media day, when the ÖFB brought together key players from all ten teams for a joint video shoot. By the end of the day, numerous photos, match teasers, league trailers, advertising spots and vast amounts of bonus material had been produced.

5. More live coverage
Last season’s extensive live ORF broadcasts proved extremely popular with TV viewers, and ORF and the ÖFB are going a step further for 2019/20. In each round of the competition, if ORF Sport+ does not have a live match scheduled, a match will be streamed exclusively on ÖFB-TV, guaranteeing live coverage at every stage of the competition.
As part of the UEFA EURO 2020 volunteer programme, the Association of Football Federations of Azerbaijan (AFFA) organised a three-day summer camp at the Shamakhi City Olympic centre.

The camp was attended by 200 volunteers who had helped out at the 2019 UEFA Europa League final, or at national team and club matches, and who had registered for the EURO 2020 volunteer programme.

The volunteers were provided with information about EURO 2020 and took part in training sessions with different departments, meetings with special guests and workshops with different companies. Divided into ten teams, the volunteers also took part in football and intellectual challenges.

During the three days, the camp welcomed many special guests, including the AFFA general secretary, Elkhan Mammadov, who also manages the EURO 2020 working group. He participated in team-building and networking activities with volunteers and shared his ideas about the application of managerial skills in work and in personal life.

The main aim of the camp was to enhance communication among the volunteers and to provide them with training that will stand them in good stead for their volunteering duties at EURO 2020 and for the future in general.
After the success of the first Orphans Cup, the Bosnia and Herzegovina Football Federation has held the competition for a second time. This year, the two-day event involved girls and boys from six children’s homes in different parts of the country.

“We want everyone to have the chance to play football and, at the same time, to put a smile on the faces of children without parents to care for them. We are pleased with how things went, and we cannot wait for the next activities and new friendships that will come out of this project. We thank all the volunteers who helped us to organise the Orphans Cup,” said grassroots manager Dženan Djipa.

“We also took part in the Orphans Cup last year, and it was a wonderful experience for us. So we did not hesitate to accept the invitation to take part again. Everything was organised to the highest level and we are glad to have been part of this beautiful story once again,” said Milan Ilić from the Otaharin institution.

In other news, the federation has published a book commemorating 100 years of football in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The book launch was attended by numerous football dignitaries past and present and attracted wide media coverage.

“Time divides generations and all of them have their own characteristics and achievements. But a love for football and its values connects them all, as is plain to see from the memories and images that fill the pages of this book,” said the president of the Bosnia and Herzegovina Football Federation, Elvedin Begić.

Finally, the federation has signed an agreement with the representatives of FK Željezničar Sarajevo to undertake further improvement work on Grbavica Stadium, notably on the roof structures. The work will be funded by the Bosnia and Herzegovina Football Federation, with UEFA assistance. Stadium infrastructure improvements are also the focus of attention elsewhere, with work ongoing to upgrade lighting installations at multiple stadiums throughout the country, as well as to install 15 artificial pitches as part of UEFA youth football development projects.
RECORD-BREAKING START TO THE NEW WOMEN’S SUPER LEAGUE SEASON

NICK SMITH

The Barclays FA Women’s Super League kicked off in September with a record-breaking opening weekend. The season marks the second year of a fully professional women’s top flight and the first with Barclays as the title sponsor.

More than 62,000 supporters attended the opening day fixtures. A record attendance of 31,213 watched Manchester City beat Manchester United at the Etihad Stadium and 22,142 fans turned out at Stamford Bridge to see Chelsea run out winners against Tottenham Hotspur. Fans who were not able to attend the weekend games were able to follow all the action on The FA’s new streaming platform, The FA Player. The new app, which was launched just before the start of the season, provides live league coverage, match highlights, archive footage and regularly updated player and club content.

The FA continues to harness the huge momentum behind the growth in popularity of women’s football by creating flagship moments across the season, including the first-ever Women’s Football Weekend on 16 and 17 November.

With the men’s international week-end creating a pause in the English Premier League and EFL calendars, The FA are calling on supporters to capitalise on the opportunity to back Women’s Football Weekend and to attend a women’s match at any level of the pyramid on Saturday 16 and Sunday 17 November.

The weekend is set to become an annual event and will mark another landmark moment in the growing popularity of the women’s game.

CROATIA ADDS A SHINY NEW MEDAL TO ITS COLLECTION

NIKA BAHTIJAREVIĆ

After the Vatreni’s success at the 2018 World Cup, the Croatian Football Federation made another shining addition to its collection of medals in 2019, courtesy of its national Under-19 futsal team. In early September, head coach Marinko Mavrović and his 14 young futsal players travelled to Latvia for the inaugural Under-19 Futsal EURO, where their strong performances earned them silver medals. After two wins in the group stage against the Netherlands and Ukraine, and a 3-0 defeat against eventual champions Spain, the Croatians reached the final through a penalty shoot-out against Portugal. Their road to the gold medal was cut short by another defeat at the hands of Spain, who thus took the title of inaugural Under-19 Futsal EURO champions. Croatia’s Under-19s returned home with silver medals around their necks and two players who had made the team of the tournament: Josip Jurlina (Split) and Fran Vukelić (Dinamo). With two silver medals earned in two consecutive years, the Croatian Football Federation can certainly pride itself on its recent results – and Croatian football fans are no doubt hoping that the men’s senior football team will secure a place at EURO 2020 and turn the two recent medals into a hat-trick.
The Estonian Football Association (EJL) organised a football tournament especially for teams consisting of mothers. In total, 12 teams and 99 players took part.

The day started with group stage matches, and based on those results teams qualified for the decisive round. After a competitive and entertaining tournament, the participants were granted free admission to the UEFA Women’s EURO 2021 qualifying match between Estonia and reigning champions the Netherlands. “I think the day went well as the teams were happy and the atmosphere was very positive,” said Teet Allas, the head of the EJL’s grassroots department. He was also hopeful that the tournament could turn into an annual event.

“Our aim by putting this event together was to motivate clubs to offer mothers the opportunity to form their own team and take part in a fun tournament. In the long term, we hope to promote an active lifestyle and grow the community around football clubs with these kinds of events,” said Anne Rei, the EJL general secretary.

All matches were held in a good spirit and the mothers also had a lot of pitchside support from family members, who cheered the players on. Teet Allas said that the goal now was to increase participation in the tournament. “Based on the feedback, the mothers embraced the opportunity to play and a lot of them said it gave them motivation to pursue football more actively,” he said.
The Faroese cup finals turned out to be a huge triumph for HB Tórshavn. After a long period with no cup victories, the club succeeded in winning both the women’s and the men’s finals on a foggy 21 September in Tórshavn.

The women’s team had previously lost their cup final three years in a row and this time were up against last season’s winners, EB/Streymur/Skála. On this occasion, however, there was never any doubt that HB Tórshavn were the better team on the day, and they ran out with a comfortable 3-0 victory to ensure their first cup title in 18 years.

The men’s final pitted HB Tórshavn against Vikingur, who have an impressive record of five cup victories during the past ten years. HB have won the cup a record 27 times, but their last victory before this year’s final was 15 years ago, in 2004. The final was affected by heavy fog, which made visibility bad, but the match went ahead. On the pitch, HB were the stronger team and they achieved a comfortable 3-1 win. The result means that HB Tórshavn have qualified for European football next season, while Vikingur, who are currently in fifth position in the league, look to have missed out on European football for the second year running.
FIRST-EVER GIRLS’ SUMMER CAMP

STEVEN GONZALEZ

The Gibraltar Football Association (GFA) held its first-ever girls’ summer camp from 19 to 21 August at the Victoria Stadium.

More than 40 girls ranging in age from 4 to 12 attended the camp over the week, and for some it was their first time playing football. The aim of the camp was to let the players develop their football skills in a fun environment while making friends and being able to ‘play without pressure’ – the banner under which the GFA’s grassroots football activities are structured.

Laura McGinn, the GFA’s women’s football manager, was delighted with how the camp went: “It’s been fantastic to see so many girls here this week enjoying football. Our coaches have done a great job encouraging and helping the girls to improve and it’s been a great atmosphere.”

As well as running Fun Friday sessions throughout the season for girls to turn up and play, the GFA is starting new girls’ development teams that will take part in the youth leagues.

IMPROVING MENTAL HEALTH THROUGH FOOTBALL

MICHAEL TSAPIDIS

The first national five-a-side football competition to focus on the mental health benefits of football has taken place, organised by the Hellenic Football Federation and the EDRA, an organisation that runs social cooperative activities for vulnerable groups.

More than 20 mental health support groups from all over Greece participated in the competition in teams made up of mental health service receivers and mental health professionals and specialists.

The mental health services in question are delivered as part of the Psychargos social integration programme of the department of health.

The five-a-side competition aims to activate and socialise people with mental health problems through the most popular sport in the world, football; to promote the importance of sport and physical activity for mental health; to establish an annual event in which mental health receivers and services from all over Greece can participate; and to raise public awareness of mental health issues and remove the social stigma attached to mental illness.

The finals were held at the national teams’ training centre in Agios Kosmas. The competition comes under the UEFA-approved Same Field social programme of the Hellenic Football Federation, which is an important part of the federation’s Football Everywhere six-year development plan. The basic aim of the Same Field programme is to develop and promote the social aspect of the sport and provide equal opportunities for everyone to participate.
As part of UEFA’s elite youth academy programme, a workshop was held in Israel in September for representatives of the football associations of Israel, Finland and Northern Ireland – the three national associations selected by UEFA to receive customised support in the area of elite youth player development for the coming four years, until 2023.

During the workshop, the three associations presented their academy programmes and visions in terms of facilities, professional teams, collaboration with schools and clubs, difficulties and other aspects.

UEFA’s head of football development, former French international Jean-François Domergue, presented the results of the successful five-year elite youth academy pilot project that started in 2014/15 and ran until the end of the 2018/19 season. He highlighted the progress the participating associations of Armenia, Belarus, Georgia and North Macedonia had made in the areas of technique, mentality, scouting, investment in education, game tactics, physical fitness, connections with clubs, proper management and more.

UEFA will send a representative to each of the three new associations five times each season to take a closer look at the development of the academies and the surrounding conditions. The Israeli academy will be overseen by Jean-François Domergue himself.

The CEO of the Israel FA, Rotem Kamar, said: “I am very pleased that UEFA has chosen the Israeli association, together with two other European associations, to participate in the very unique and professional project of establishing an academy in Israel. For us, this is a very challenging project, for all kinds of reasons, not just in the professional field but also outside the football field – to take children at an early age and put them in a framework where they can develop their talent and ultimately become leading players in Israel.

“In order for the project to succeed, we need full cooperation from all parties involved: the players, families, clubs, the state, the government. This is a project that requires resources from the one side and goodwill and cooperation from all these parties so that we can move our football forward.”

For his part, the Israel FA’s technical director, Willi Ruttensteiner, said: “Opening the academy is a very big step in developing young players and will be recorded in Israeli football history. Our goal is to promote players between the ages of 12 and 15 and actually exclude them temporarily from their club most days of the week in order to make the first stage at international level. These players will get great conditions and great education. We will have to work in full cooperation with the teams.”

The girls’ Under-14 project which began ten months ago under a joint UEFA and Hungarian Football Federation programme has held its final tournament in Telki, with the most talented girls going on to comprise the Under-15 national team.

Margret Kratz from UEFA and Under-14 project leader Edina Markó, who is also head coach of the Hungarian women’s national team, participated in the tournament in Telki along with many of the national team coaching staff and federation coaches. At the two-day event, it was decided that a western Hungary representative team would represent Hungary against Slovakia and the Czech Republic at an upcoming international tournament, also being held in Telki.

As part of the project launched in December last year, UEFA and the Hungarian Football Federation have been working together to discover young, talented female footballers nationwide who will be able to benefit from professional training and international experience at a younger age than they would have been able to in the past.

Margret Kratz has been involved in the programme since it was launched and is pleased with how it has gone. “We’ve taken many steps on the journey to the final. The organisation has been excellent throughout. I think they will make a very good national team one day. If the coaches work with the players for a longer period, the Hungarian national team will have a good chance internationally,” she said.

Four teams with squads of 18 players took part in the tournament in Telki, from which the coaching staff selected a total of 32 players for the future Under-15 national team squad. It is planned that the squad size will be reduced by December, when – like last year – a training course targeted specifically at this age group will be held.
VIVO AZZURRO FAN MATCHES: JUST A BIT OF FUN?

DIEGO ANTENOZIO

Sometimes a football match is more than just a game: it can also be a chance to renew the childlike wonder, spirit of friendship and sense of belonging that make our sport so special. For almost three years, the official Italy supporters club, Vivo Azzurro, has been offering members the chance to take part in matches against the fan clubs of their national team’s opponents. So far, nine ‘fan matches’ have been staged on the fringes of – and in the same city as – Italy internationals, five at home and four away.

The fan teams are mixed: players are aged 20 to 55 and, although most are men, ever more women are getting involved too. Some teams have featured multiple members of the same family, and not all players are based in Italy; many Italians living elsewhere in Europe, in the country where the match is taking place or in another country entirely, have travelled long distances for the chance to ‘represent their country’ in this way.

Around 100 of the 11,000 or so Vivo Azzurro members have played in at least one fan match so far. Fifty-two-year-old Domenico Zingrillo, from Barletta, took to the field alongside his 17-year-old son Alessandro: “I’ve followed Italy all over Europe – I was even at the 2006 World Cup final in Berlin – so for me it’s a huge thrill. To get to do this with my son is something you can’t put a price on.” Francesco Santarsiero, a 29-year-old from Potenza, now living in Finland, expressed a similar sentiment: “I’m a visiting researcher at Tampere University, and as luck would have it, Italy were drawn to play Finland in Tampere during my time in the city. It’s an honour to wear this shirt, even if it’s just a game between fans.”

For the Italian Football Association, fan matches are more than just a fun way to involve supporters; they can also be an act of social responsibility. When Italy hosted Bosnia and Herzegovina in the European Qualifiers in Turin in June, a Vivo Azzurro team played a match at the nearby home of GSD Lascaris against a team representing Freed by Football, an education and rehabilitation programme set up in partnership with the juvenile and family court in Reggio Calabria for young people who have passed through the system.

With UEFA EURO 2020 just around the corner, matches like these offer a positive new way for the fans heading to Rome and the other host cities to come together and share their passion for football in the spirit of togetherness that underpins this 60th-anniversary edition of the competition.
SECOND UEFA PRO COACHING COURSE KICKS OFF

KEVIN AZZOPARDI

The second UEFA Pro coaching course to be organised by the Malta Football Association (MFA) commenced in September. Fourteen coaches are participating in this high-level course, which is coordinated by Stephen Grima, the director of coach education at the Malta FA.

It's an important journey for Maltese football to invest in professional coach education. Looking back at the first UEFA Pro course held in Malta, it was a success story for the graduates, including coaches like Ray Farrugia, who is doing well with the national team.

Nineteen coaches successfully completed the MFA’s first UEFA Pro course, which ran from 2015 to 2017. Staying in the education sector, the MFA recently launched its third Certificate in Football Administration (CFA – Level 1) course. More than 100 candidates have been awarded the Malta FA Certificate in Football Administration since 2017, when the course was introduced.

The CFA – Level 1 course covers a number of key areas related to football administration, including football management, MFA regulations, laws and other regulatory aspects, strategic planning, finances, IT, media and communications, marketing and HR relations.

FIRST FAMILY FOOTBALL FESTIVAL HELD

TOMS ĀRMANIS

This summer, the Latvian Football federation (LFF) started a new grassroots project called Foot Fam Fest. The name indicates the three stepping stones of the project – football, family and festival.

Families and togetherness play essential roles in every footballer’s path towards their dream and all the opportunities that football can offer. Using football's capacity to strengthen family bonds on and off the pitch, the LFF decided to set up a competition in which football families could play in a competitive yet friendly atmosphere, bringing different kinds of people together.

In the first year of the project, the LFF organised two events in cooperation with the towns of Sigulda and Saldus. Before stepping onto the football fields, all the family members were asked to take photos at two places of interest near the host town. By doing this, it was possible to earn 20 points for the family. All the other points were earned on the football field. The LFF believes that playing football is a great activity for all family members and that it is possible to combine it with local tourism.

On the football field, everyone competes within their age and sex category. Up to five members from every family could apply to play in one of the six categories: men (aged 18–65), women (18–65), children (5–7), children (8–10), teenagers (11–13) and teenagers (14–17).

All family members were put into teams in their respective category and then every member tried to earn points for their family. A total of 59 families took part. Next year, Foot Fam Fest will consist of five events.
2020 EUROPEAN UNDER-19 CHAMPIONSHIP FINALS LAUNCHED

NIGEL TILSON

The 2020 European Under-19 Championship finals have been officially launched in Belfast. Northern Ireland will host the eight-team UEFA tournament from 19 July to 1 August next year, with matches being played in Belfast, Ballymena, Lurgan and Portadown.

The Irish Football Association president, David Martin, said it was a great honour for the association to host Europe’s largest youth football tournament featuring national teams.

Rising stars of European football are set to play at next year’s event, which will feature up to 16 matches over 14 days. There will be 12 group matches, two semi-finals and a final – plus there is scope for a play-off following the group stages if required.

The venues for the games are the National Football Stadium at Windsor Park in Belfast, which will host the semi-finals, final and two of Northern Ireland’s three group matches, along with Ballymena Showgrounds, Lurgan’s Mourneview Park and Shamrock Park in Portadown.

The Irish FA president added: “Two years ago we successfully hosted the Women’s Under-19 finals and I am certain next year’s event will also be top class. And I believe this tournament will once again showcase Northern Ireland as an excellent sporting venue.”

Aaron Hughes, who recently retired from senior international duty with Northern Ireland after winning 112 caps, has agreed to be the ambassador for the 2020 tournament.

SUPPORT YOUR NATIONAL TEAM!

PRESS OFFICE

On 22 August, before Moldova’s EURO 2020 home qualifying matches against Turkey, Albania and Iceland, the Football Association of Moldova (FMF) launched the Support your National Team campaign.

“Football is more than a game. It educates and allows people to grow: from those who come to play matches in the colours of the national team, after a lot of training, sacrifice and work, to those who are in the stands and support the national team all the time, with passion. It takes just 11 people to start the transformation, but only if we are tens of thousands supporting the national team can we grow and be better,” said the FMF’s executive director, Adrian Ixari, at the press conference that kicked off the campaign.

The FMF’s head of marketing, Serghei Barcari, said that this campaign is one of the biggest ever launched by the FMF and is a new vision and approach in the development of Moldovan football, involving communication activities and mobilising supporters.

As part of the campaign, the federation called up the players for the matches against Iceland and Turkey in September in a unique way, with the help of the clubs. Each player received a box containing an invitation to play signed by the FMF president, Leonid Oleinichenco, and a Moldova team shirt with their name on it. The clubs’ team captains or head coaches were asked to hand over the boxes in the presence of team-mates. At the same time, Support your National Team billboards were posted in several Moldovan cities.

For the EURO 2020 qualifier against Turkey, the national anthems of both countries were sung by 25 talented children from the Lia Ciocîrlia choir in Chişinău.

“For us it was a new experience, and I think it’s a great idea to make such a partnership between culture and sport. At the same time, the children were able to discover the melody of another language. Civic education of children and knowledge of the anthems of other countries encourages respect for other cultures and traditions,” said Luminiţa Istrate, the choir’s artistic leader.

The FMF also organised a contest for supporters to come up with chants to support the national team from the stands. Apart from receiving prizes for their efforts, the winners will have the honour of hearing their slogans chanted from the stands.
FEMALE COACHES CLIMB UP THE LADDER

GARETH MAHER

Following the success of its inaugural women-only UEFA B diploma course, in which 25 coaches took part, the Football Association of Ireland (FAI) has opened the application process for a second edition. The graduation ceremony for the first cohort was one of the highlights of the FAI Festival of Football in July.

The second course will take a similar format to the first, with block seminars in November 2019 and February 2020, followed by club visits and one-to-one sessions before final evaluations, with course assignments ongoing throughout. Announcing the new course, the FAI’s head of women’s football, Sue Ronan, stressed its importance for female coaches in Ireland: “Our first women-only UEFA B diploma course was a huge success. The 25 participants were a mix of former and current senior and youth international players, former and current women’s domestic league players, and others whose careers have been mainly in grassroots football.

“Their huge knowledge of the game was obvious from the start of the course, while the mix of backgrounds brought a fantastic dynamic to the group, allowing everyone to learn so much. The aim now is for these coaches to stay in the game, with the ultimate aim being to see our most talented female coaches progress up the pathway to coach teams at the highest level of football in Ireland.”

Niall O’Regan, the FAI’s coach education manager, said the second course will increase opportunities for female coaches in the game: “We are delighted to announce a successful application for funding from UEFA, which will be matched by the FAI to allow us to deliver a second women-only UEFA B diploma course. After the success of the first course, it is great to have another opportunity to grow the female coaching side of the game and to continue to increase the number of qualified female coaches at UEFA diploma level.

“From the first group of graduates, Irene Hehir has moved into a role with the Republic of Ireland women’s Under-17s, and Ann Regan was awarded the Noel O’Reilly coach of the year award for 2019 for her work in the west of Ireland. I am already excited having seen some of the applicants, who have significant playing and coaching experience, and many of whom were unlucky not to be selected for the first course. There has been a significant emphasis in coach education on the growth of the number of UEFA-level female coaches in the FAI, and this course will be a further step in that direction.”

TRANSPARENCY AND INTEGRITY MEASURES STEPPED UP

PAUL ZAHARIA

Besides the sports and financial aspects of its activity, the Romanian Football Federation (FRF) pays special attention to all issues related to transparency and integrity. In January this year, the FRF top management and its executive committee initiated an extensive operation to ensure transparency and also to impose strict rules of conduct.

Many of those rules already applied to the work of the FRF and its affiliated members and stakeholders, but without having been formalised in mandatory codes. After adopting the FRF code of ethics, code of conduct, anti-corruption and bribery policy, and gifts and hospitality policy in January 2019, the FRF executive committee has now adopted a declaration of interest form that all Romanian referees and referee observers are obliged to fill out and sign. As well as being part of the FRF’s overall transparency and integrity strategy, this declaration of interest form is intended to combat the increasingly frequent allegations and speculations suggested in the Romanian media with regard to personal or business relationships between referees/referee observers and people working for FRF-affiliated clubs. Where such a relationship exists, the referee or referee observer has a duty and obligation to declare it immediately to the FRF referees committee, which will then consider whether that relationship prevents the referee or referee observer from being appointed for matches involving the club concerned. All declarations of interest will be treated in strict confidence by the referees committee. All these policies and procedures are indispensable in any national association to ensure total integrity and transparency in all areas of its activity, and especially in highly exposed areas such as refereeing.
PRIDE LABS MAKING A DIFFERENCE TO SCOTTISH COACHES

MICHAEL LAMONT

Over the course of the past 18 months, the Scottish FA has introduced a new coach mentoring concept called Pride Labs, devised as a series of workshops to accelerate the development of Scotland’s best up-and-coming youth coaches.

During that time, 19 club academy heads of children (aged 9–12), youth (aged 13–18) and goalkeeping have been developing their roles through the guidance of the Scottish FA performance department headed up by Malky Mackay.

The aim of the programme, which has been revolutionary in Scotland, is to create a platform for all coaches to contribute to an environment where they can share their problems and solutions.

Each of the Pride Labs has an area of focus related to the coaches’ day-to-day role. To further enhance the coaches’ access to best practice, study visits have been arranged to elite European academies, with a visit to Benfica for the heads of youth having already taken place.

These young coaches have only recently been appointed to lead staff and therefore need the required help and guidance to do so. The mentoring programme based at Hampden Park has focused on issues such as leadership, teamwork, culture, time management and reflection.

The latest Pride Lab featured Manchester United’s head of academy, Nick Cox, speaking to nearly 100 coaches from the SFA’s professional clubs. He was surprised and excited by the openness and collaborative nature in the room:

“I think it’s a fantastic concept. The days of clubs keeping secrets from each other are probably over and I think, if we’re going to improve the game and improve our players, collaboration is the answer. The Pride Labs have been a great example of people working together and sharing ideas in the best interests of everyone. The Scottish FA should be extremely proud of leading the game in this area of coach development.”

Scottish FA performance director Malky Mackay said: “Helping our clubs mentor their coaches, share their challenges and offer our support is something I feel strongly about and can only benefit the long-term development of coaching in our country.”

IBRAHIMOVIĆ GOES HOME

ANDREAS NILSSON

Zlatan Ibrahimović may well still be breaking goalscoring records in the MLS, but on 8 October he took up a permanent position in his home town of Malmö. After three years in the making, a huge bronze statue was unveiled outside Malmö stadium, where his career started.

“I’m happy that my statue has been put up in Malmö. That’s what I wanted all along. It’s where it all started and it’s where my heart belongs,” Ibrahimović said.

The bronze statue weighs over 500kg and is 2.7m tall, and the suitably larger-than-life size proved a challenge to put in place. The original plan to place it outside Friends Arena in Solna proved impossible due to weight restrictions on the outside arena concourse.

The Swedish FA eventually decided to donate the statue to the city of Malmö, and, along with Malmö and Zlatan’s original club Malmö FF, decided on the best position. The statue commemorates Ibrahimović’s 62 goals and 116 caps for Sweden, as well as the inspiration he continues to provide at home.

“Zlatan Ibrahimović has put Malmö on the map for people all over the world. Putting this great statue by artist Peter Linde here on Stadiontorget is a way for the city of Malmö to celebrate what Zlatan has accomplished here and in the world of football,” said Malmö’s mayor, Katrin Stjernfeldt Jammeh.

Niclas Carlnén, CEO of Malmö FF, is equally happy with the statue: “Having the statue of Zlatan in Malmö is beautiful and natural. This is where he made his first dribbling runs and his first goals, before he went on to become one of the best players in the world.”
EX-INTERNATIONALS’ ANNUAL GET-TOGETHER

PIERRE BENOIT

It is more than 20 years since the first group excursion was organised for former members of the Swiss national team. The brainchild of former Swiss FA president Marcel Mathier, the event has become a great tradition and Switzerland’s ex-internationals responded enthusiastically to this year’s invitation from the association’s current president, Dominique Blanc, and general secretary, Robert Breiter.

Their destination was Switzerland’s oldest and largest brewery, the Brauerei Feldschlösschen in Rheinfelden. Before sampling various beers and enjoying an informative brewery tour, the group heard from ‘Amici’ president Rico Lugimbühl about the objectives of the Amici, or ‘friends of the Swiss national teams’, and listened to former referee Daniel Wermelinger describe the role of the video assistant referee (VAR), which provoked plenty of lively debate. For once, the traditional quiz was won not by Andy Egli, but by Fredi Scheiwiler who, along with the ‘Amici’ vice-president, Beat Weibel, answered all 11 questions correctly. The day’s events, held in perfect weather, culminated with a superb evening meal in Magden, the site of the ancient Magdalener spring which today serves as the water supply of the Feldschlösschen brewery.

The oldest participant in this year’s excursion was Hansruedi Fuhrer, who won 24 caps for Switzerland. The 81-year-old former BSC Young Boys and Grasshopper Club Zürich midfielder continues to enjoy excellent health. Hansruedi won four Swiss championships with Young Boys between 1957 and 1960, and he and Valais-born René-Pierre Quentin were the only players to appear in all of Switzerland’s matches at the 1966 World Cup.

NEW NATIONAL FOOTBALL DEVELOPMENT CENTRE

MELISSA PALMER

The Football Association of Wales (FAW) held an official opening ceremony in September for Colliers Park, the new national football development centre in Wrexham, North Wales.

Dignitaries from the Football Association of Wales, including CEO Jonathan Ford, Cymru coach Rob Page and president Kieran O’Connor, were joined by principal project partners and supporters from UEFA, the Welsh government, Wrexham County borough council and Wrexham Glyndwr University to celebrate the opening of the national facility.

The high-class training facilities at Colliers Park include two grass pitches and a 3G pitch as well as activation areas, learning suites and changing facilities.

The facilities at Colliers Park have recently been tested by the Wales senior men’s and Under-21 squads ahead of their respective UEFA EURO 2020 and European Under-21 Championship qualifiers, in addition to hosting a UEFA Under-15 development tournament and the 2019 Cymru Cup.

The national football development centre will benefit Welsh football both nationally and locally, offering improved development, recruitment and participation opportunities for talented young boys and girls and the wider football workforce in North Wales.

The Football Association of Wales CEO, Jonathan Ford, said, “The FAW was founded in Wrexham in 1876 and it is fantastic to see the new national football development centre based in an area of Wales with an important and rich football history and to celebrate this with our project partners.

“We look forward to Colliers Park complementing the work at Dragon Park to help raise the standards of Welsh football and strengthen our player pathway, coaching, workforce and development opportunities.”
## BIRTHDAYS IN NOVEMBER

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<td>Francesco Bianchi</td>
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<td>Italy (Damian Nowak)</td>
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<td>Anne McKeeen</td>
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<td>Fernand Meese</td>
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<td>Efrem Barak</td>
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<td>Vladimir Badura</td>
<td>Slovakia (50)</td>
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## BIRTHDAYS IN DECEMBER

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<td>Janusz Basaj</td>
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<td>Dominique Ban</td>
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<td>Avi Halevi</td>
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<td>God Poynton</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>Friday</td>
<td>Frédéric Jossinet</td>
<td>France (50)</td>
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## Additional Information
- Martial Saugy
- Otakar Mestek
- Cécile Grandsimon
- Petr Fousek
- Alain Hamer
- Horst R. Schmidt
- Tibor Sisa
- Tibor Sis [Hungary]
- Christian Andreasen
- Laura Mclaflin
- Maria Lefkaritis
- Christian Andreasen
- Andrea Agnelli
- Andreas Akkelesis
- Frédéric Jossinet
- Frédéric Jossalet
- Petrozzi Abrudan
- Noël Le Graët
- Laura Montagone
- Nikola Mislavčič
- Erikson Pucci
- Steven Stride
- Matthew Paris
- Marios Lefkaritis
- Pal Kiduš
- Petter Tornbo
- Martin Kozčič
- Martin Kozčič
- Antonina Mamedova
- Olga Samoilenko
- Dario Peroški
- Sarahusters Stark
- Michael Post
- Ingrida Siliuniene
- Stephanie Kammerer
- Szabolcs Vargha
- Dominique Bel 
- Ethnic Minorities
- Ethnic Minorities
- Ethnic Minorities
**FORTHCOMING EVENTS**

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<td>8 FRIDAY</td>
<td>Gjergji Bíteli (Malta)</td>
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<td>Aurel Mihăiul Ionescu (Romania)</td>
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<td>Willi Hink (Germany)</td>
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<td>17 SUNDAY</td>
<td>Ján Fasung (Slovakia)</td>
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<td>26 TUESDAY</td>
<td>Michal Beneš (Czech Republic)</td>
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<td>Marcos Del Cuadro (Switzerland)</td>
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<td>27 WEDNESDAY</td>
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<td>Michel D'Hooghe (Belgium)</td>
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<td>18 MONDAY</td>
<td>Knarik Abelyan (Armenia)</td>
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<td>22 MONDAY</td>
<td>Sergio di Cesare (Italy)</td>
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<tr>
<td>26–28 NOVEMBER</td>
<td>UEFA Women’s Champions League:</td>
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<tr>
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<td>draws for the quarter- and semi-finals</td>
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<td>12 NOVEMBER</td>
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<td>29 NOVEMBER</td>
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<td>4–11 NOVEMBER</td>
<td>European Women’s European Championship: qualifying matches</td>
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<td>5/6 NOVEMBER</td>
<td>UEFA Champions League: group matches (matchday 4)</td>
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<td>UEFA Youth League – UEFA Champions League path: group matches (matchday 4)</td>
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<td>6 NOVEMBER</td>
<td>UEFA Youth League – domestic champions path: second round (first legs)</td>
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<td>14–16 NOVEMBER</td>
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<td>17–19 NOVEMBER</td>
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<td>19–24 NOVEMBER</td>
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<td>UEFA Youth League – domestic champions path: second round (return legs)</td>
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<td>3 NOVEMBER</td>
<td>UEFA Under-19 Championship: draws for the 2019/20 elite rounds, the 2020/21 qualifying round and the 2020-22 round one</td>
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<td>22 NOVEMBER</td>
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<td>25 NOVEMBER</td>
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<td>26–28 NOVEMBER</td>
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