

UEFA



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AN UNFORGETTABLE YEAR





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Aleksander Čeferin
UEFA President

PROTECTING THE EUROPEAN SPORTS MODEL: OUR BIGGEST ACHIEVEMENT IN 2021

Looking back at an unforgettable year for UEFA and the European football community, it is difficult to single out our biggest achievement. The roll call of ‘winners’ is simply too long. Club and national team captains lifted UEFA trophies in no fewer than seven competitions – EURO 2020, the Nations League, the men’s and women’s Champions Leagues, the Europa League, the European Under-21 Championship and the Futsal Champions League.

The kick-off of new club competition cycles created a win-win situation for both women’s and men’s football. Far-reaching changes to the Women’s Champions League have significantly enhanced its competitive balance, exposure and prestige, while the launch of the Europa Conference League has made our men’s competitions more inclusive, with a number of clubs making their first-ever appearance on the European stage. Football even secured its own sporting victories over the pandemic, firstly, by staging so many matches across the year amid constantly shifting health regulations; secondly, by showing that fans could safely return to stadiums.

Over the past 12 months, every member of our community has made a telling contribution to these standout successes – national associations, domestic leagues, players, fans, clubs, coaches, match officials, partners and the media. However, our most significant achievement deserves more recognition – protecting the European sports model that guides the mission of UEFA, its member associations and countless other sporting organisations. Based on a pyramid structure that connects grassroots football at the bottom to elite clubs at the top, the model works on a double premise. Not only is revenue from professional competitions reinvested across the game; clubs are also promoted or relegated on sporting merit.

Few organisations embody the European sports model’s values more strongly than UEFA. Every four years, our European Championship channels a large proportion of revenue into football development projects across the continent through the HatTrick programme. From 2020 to 2024, €775.5 million in EURO 2020 revenue will benefit all levels of the footballing pyramid – from training male and female coaches to supporting grassroots clubs and nurturing talented young players who dream of competing in future EUROs. Similarly, the model’s commitment to open competition was a key driver in our creation of the Europa Conference League. All 55 national associations are now guaranteed representation in at least one UEFA competition each season.

Last April’s ill-fated attempt to launch a closed ‘super league’, which focused only on filling the bank accounts of a few clubs, threatened values that lie at the very heart of the European sports model and UEFA’s mission. Its demise, driven by political and popular condemnation from across the continent, was our most significant, shared victory in 2021. I would like to extend my personal gratitude to each of you for standing with UEFA at such a challenging moment. Your support has ensured that all our achievements, for years to come, will continue to build a sustainable future for football in Europe.

IN THIS ISSUE

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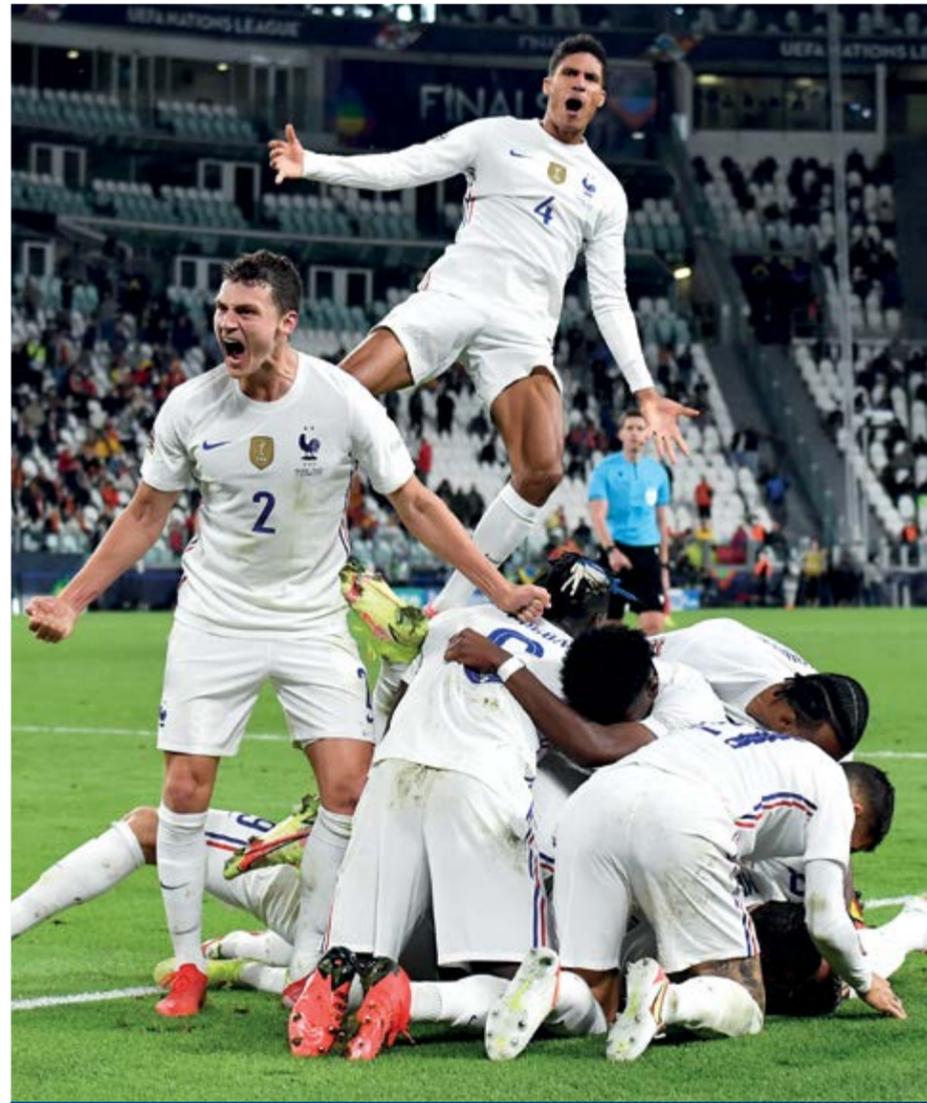
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08 UEFA Nations League
The second edition of the latest UEFA national team competition lived up to expectations.

22 Women's EURO 2022
The amount for distribution to the 16 teams that have qualified for next summer's finals in England is double the amount distributed last time round.

36 Stadium & Security Conference
More than 330 police and security officials from across Europe met online for UEFA's annual Stadium & Security Conference.

38 UEFA Grow
UEFA Grow Awards go to projects from across Europe that benefit the growth of the game.

40 UEFA Academy
The UEFA Academy adds five new programmes to its existing offering.

44 News from member associations



32 Grassroots football
Grassroots football is showcased in Chişinău, Moldova, at the start of UEFA's Grassroots Football Week.



14 World Cup qualifiers
Ahead of the play-offs in March, when three more teams will seal their place in the 2022 World Cup, ten European teams have already booked their tickets to the finals.



24 The Technician
At all levels of the game, coaches have to inject fitness training into their coaching activities.



18 Futsal EURO 2022
The now quadrennial Futsal EURO will feature 16 teams for the first time in the Netherlands in 2022.

SOLIDARITY PAYMENTS ENHANCED

On 22 September, the UEFA Executive Committee met in Chişinău, Moldova, and approved a new solidarity payments model for the men's club competitions.



Increased solidarity payments will benefit all top-division clubs, such as Sion and Luzern, in action here in the Swiss Super League, regardless of whether they play in the UEFA Champions League.

The Executive Committee approved an enhanced solidarity payment model for clubs not taking part in the UEFA men's club competitions, thus reaffirming UEFA's strong financial commitment to the whole of European football, and ensuring greater financial solidarity to a wider spectrum of non-participating clubs for the 2021–24 cycle. The aim is to reinforce the solid foundation on which the game in Europe is built.

The key changes include:

- increased shares for all non-top-five national associations, and capped shares for the top five associations (England, Spain, Germany, Italy and France);
- reduced gap between associations with and without clubs participating in the UEFA Champions League group stage;
- reduced weight of market shares, and distribution made more on fair and recognisable sporting principles.

The 4% solidarity share for non-participating clubs (€140m based on projected overall revenue of €3.5bn) will be supplemented by 30% of the revenue generated by the club competitions above €3.5 billion, up to a maximum of €35 million.

As a consequence, a total of €175 million is expected to be available from the competition revenue for non-participating clubs, compared with €130 million in the 2018–21 cycle, and the share reserved for the non-top-five associations will increase to €132.5 million (around €50 million more than with the previous scheme, representing an increase of more than 60%).

A new financial model for the Women's EURO

The 16 teams that have qualified for Women's EURO 2022 in England will share a total of €16 million, double the amount distributed in 2017. The financial distribution model will include increased

UEFA and CONMEBOL broaden cooperation

On 28 September, UEFA and CONMEBOL announced the broadening of their existing cooperation, as well as the staging of a match between the EURO 2020 champions Italy and the Copa América 2021 winners Argentina in June 2022.

The organising of this match is part of the expansion of the cooperation between the two continental confederations, which notably includes women's football, futsal and youth categories, the exchange of referees, as well as technical training schemes.

The agreement reached by the two organisations currently covers three editions of this match between the respective EURO and Copa América winners, and also includes the opening of a joint office in London, which will be in charge of coordinating projects of common interest.

By reaching this agreement, UEFA and CONMEBOL express their commitment to the development of football beyond their geographical zones.

guaranteed amounts and performance-based bonuses for the group stage.

In addition, the Executive Committee approved the introduction of a club benefits programme for the first time, making available a significant total amount of €4.5 million to reward European clubs releasing players for the UEFA Women's EURO final tournament for their contribution to the success of the event (see pages 22–23).



LOGO UNVEILED AT THE OLYMPIASTADION IN BERLIN

The brand identity for EURO 2024 was unveiled at 20:24 local time on 5 October at the Olympiastadion in Berlin, Germany, where the tournament will be held across ten cities in under three years' time.

The brand launch was attended by UEFA president Aleksander Čeferin, the interim president of the German Football Association (DFB), Rainer Koch, EURO 2024 tournament director Philipp Lahm, as well as the governing mayor of Berlin, the lord mayors of Dortmund, Düsseldorf, Gelsenkirchen and Stuttgart, representatives of the other host cities (Cologne, Frankfurt, Hamburg, Leipzig and Munich), high-level members of the German federal government and other invited guests.

The event featured a spectacular light show which culminated in the unveiling of the UEFA EURO 2024 logo.

The tournament logo is derived from UEFA's 55 member associations' flags and their colours, which assemble in various combinations, reflecting the shape of the Olympiastadion roof. The famous Henri Delaunay Cup features at the centre of the logo, while the 24 coloured slices around

the trophy represent the 24 participating EURO teams.

The brand promotes a EURO where everyone feels welcome and diversity is celebrated. Football is a place where everyone should feel at home, and the brand is a first step in building that home in Germany for EURO 2024. The brand assets, from the logo to the patterns and brand video, celebrate the diversity of fans and European football.

The slogan 'United by Football. Vereint im Herzen Europas' further strengthens the message of unity, togetherness and inclusion. It is the same slogan as used in the bidding process and was selected together with the host cities. Additionally, each host city – Berlin, Cologne, Dortmund, Düsseldorf, Frankfurt, Gelsenkirchen, Hamburg, Leipzig, Munich and Stuttgart – selected a famous landmark to feature on their respective city logos.



UEFA
EURO2024
GERMANY

UEFA president Aleksander Čeferin said: "It is great to see the logo of UEFA EURO 2024 come to life at the iconic Olympiastadion. From now on, the tournament has a brand identity which reflects the ambition we have together with the host association and host cities: a EURO which is truly for everyone! For one month, we will be united by football in the heart of Europe."

The brand is the result of extensive collaboration between UEFA, the DFB and the ten host cities, which started in September 2018, when the host association was announced. The creative agency VMLY&R Branding from Lisbon, Portugal, designed and developed the brand.

The 51 matches of EURO 2024 will be held across the ten host venues in Germany in June and July 2024. The full match schedule will be confirmed in early 2022. For more information about the tournament, visit www.euro2024.com.



FRANCE BOUNCE BACK

After a disappointing UEFA EURO 2020, France more than redeemed themselves in the 2020/21 UEFA Nations League finals, coming back from behind first against Belgium and again against Spain.

The UEFA Nations League has become a staple of European football. That much is clear after this second season, the finals of which were held in Italy from 6 to 10 October. Although COVID-19 health restrictions prevented Stadio San Siro in Milan and Juventus Stadium in Turin from welcoming capacity crowds, the competition attracted a huge global TV audience, with cumulative viewing figures of around 130 million

across the 200 countries and territories in which it was broadcast – 30% more than the 2019 finals in Portugal. Whereas the inaugural finals were won by the home side, this year’s hosts – the newly crowned European champions no less – were knocked out by Spain in the semi-finals. The distinguished line-up for the finals included European champions Italy, EURO 2020 semi-finalists Spain, and Belgium, number one in the FIFA rankings,

but it was the 2018 World Cup winners, France, knocked out of EURO 2020 in the round of 16, who came out on top. Led by Kylian Mbappé and Karim Benzema, who both scored in both matches, Didier Deschamps’ men perfectly embodied the competitiveness and unpredictability of a competition in which all of the final four matches were decided by a single-goal margin, France coming from behind to beat both Belgium and Spain. →



Ferran Torres up against Alessandro Bastoni.



SEMI-FINALS

Italy v Spain Italy unbeaten in 37 matches; Spain break the spell

It is no exaggeration to describe Spain's victory over Italy as a triumph. After coming so close to knocking the Italians out of the EURO 2020 semi-finals (1-1, 2-4 on penalties), Luis Enrique's men produced another solid performance and deservedly secured their place in the final.

All the omens had been on Italy's side before kick-off: not only were they the European champions playing on home soil, their 37-match unbeaten run was the longest in the history of men's senior international football. This world-record

run, stretching back three years to 10 October 2018, was brought to an abrupt end by an impressive Spanish outfit.

Playing their usual style of football, led by Sergio Busquets – later named player of the finals – the Spaniards simply refused to relinquish possession of the ball. Having been wasteful in front of goal in their EURO 2020 semi-final, La Roja were much more efficient this time around and fully merited Ferran Torres's two almost identical goals following pinpoint Mikel Oyarzabal crosses at 17 and 45+2 minutes.

Italy were reduced to ten men before the break, when Leonardo Bonucci was

shown a second yellow card, for an elbow on Busquets (42'). The unstoppable Oyarzabal then almost headed Spain into a 3-0 lead in the 63rd minute, but instead the Squadra Azzurra reduced the deficit, Lorenzo Pellegrini finishing off a quick breakaway led by the inexhaustible Federico Chiesa seven minutes from time.

That brave late rally served as a reminder that, even when outnumbered for more than half the match, the Azzurri remain a tough nut to crack. It was not enough, however, to stop the Spaniards from avenging their EURO defeat and confirming their return to the pinnacle of European football.

Disappointed Italy captain Giorgio Chiellini congratulates Spain coach Luis Enrique after their teams' semi-final.



Short-lived joy for Belgium, who fell to their bogey team, France.

Belgium v France A recovery à la Française

While Spain had a score to settle with Italy after the EURO 2020 semi-finals, Belgium remained haunted by defeat at the hands of France at the same stage of the 2018 World Cup in Russia. For much of the match, the Red Devils thought they were on the verge of burying those bad memories. Hugo Lloris pulled off a remarkable save to defy Kevin De Bruyne four minutes into an evenly balanced first half, only to then be beaten twice in quick succession by Yannick Carrasco (37') and Romelu Lukaku (41'), who both converted fine De Bruyne passes from a narrow angle.

In the space of four minutes, Belgium had once again demonstrated the striking potential that has lit up the European game for almost a decade, and appeared to have taken a huge step towards the final in the process.

France, for their part, had served up a reminder of the defensive frailties that had got the better of them at this summer's EURO, a far cry from the solidity shown at the 2018 World Cup. The French do, however, have some outstanding individuals in their ranks and Benzema threw his side a lifeline virtually single-handedly, outsmarting Thibaut Courtois with a clever turn inside the Belgian penalty area (1-2, 62').

Not long afterwards, Mbappé, who had missed the decisive penalty against Switzerland at EURO 2020, equalised from the spot (2-2, 69'). His strength of character was shared by his team-mates, who needed it in abundance to survive a crazy end to a match that seemed to swing first one way and then the other.

With the French pushing forward in search of a winner, Lukaku thought he had clinched it in the 87th minute; the video assistant referee said otherwise. Then, in the 90th minute, an extraordinary free-kick by Paul Pogba crashed against the Belgian crossbar. This served as a final warning. The French completed their comeback almost immediately after, Theo Hernández sending an unerring strike into the far corner of Courtois' net. Once again, Belgium's golden generation will look back with huge regret as they continue their quest for a maiden international trophy.

THIRD-PLACE PLAY-OFF

Italy v Belgium Italy return to winning ways

Following the disappointment of semi-final defeat, Italy and Belgium met at Juventus Stadium to try to ease the frustration of their elimination. Although

both coaches made sweeping changes to their starting line-ups, the match created a strong sense of déjà vu.

Belgium started on the front foot, but failed to convert their chances, hitting the woodwork three times through Alexis Saelemaekers (25'), Michy Batshuayi (60') and Carrasco (82'). Italy, meanwhile, stood firm and showed greater efficiency, scoring two set-piece goals in the second half. Nicolò Barella's volley from a poorly cleared corner (1-0, 47') was followed by a penalty by Domenico Berardi (2-0, 65').

In what was a very open encounter, the Belgians finally managed to beat Gianluigi Donnarumma when the promising Charles De Ketelaere netted his first international goal to halve the deficit in the 86th minute. However, it was too little, too late to rattle Roberto Mancini's men, who quickly returned to winning ways after Spain had ended their record unbeaten run. →

Italy quickly recovered from their semi-final disappointment to take third place against Belgium.



FINAL

Spain v France France overcome the Furia Roja

Featuring two doyens of international competition, each having contested three EURO or World Cup finals since the turn of the century, the 2020/21 Nations League decider looked too close to call. And so it proved.

With 60% possession, Spain's age-old tactic of depriving their opponents of the ball served them well until Oyarzabal's 64th-minute opener. Having already contributed two assists in the semi-final, the Real Sociedad de Fútbol forward beat Dayot Upamecano before striking the ball firmly past Lloris.

All the matches in the final round, including the final, were extremely close-run and were decided by single-goal margins.

Even though they had held the upper hand, it was the Spanish side's first clear chance of the match, coming shortly after the French had almost taken a surprise lead, Hernández hitting the crossbar from

Benzema's cross (63') in a rare incursion into the Spanish penalty area.

The Real Madrid CF striker then showed his class by finishing off a move that will remain indelibly marked in the history



books of the French national team. Straight from the kick-off after Spain's goal, before a single Spanish player had even touched the ball, Benzema found Unai Simón's top corner with a sensational 66th-minute curler to cap an eight-pass move lasting 21 seconds. Banished from the French national team for nearly six years, the former Olympique Lyonnais player made a stunning return to the fold, the main catalyst behind his side's comebacks in both the semi-final and the final.

Galvanised by their equaliser, the French kept up the momentum and were rewarded with another Mbappé goal (1-2, 80'). The Paris Saint-Germain striker lived up to his reputation as a man for

the big occasion, having previously scored against Croatia in the 2018 World Cup final.

Far from giving up, the Spaniards could have levelled the score, but volleys by Oyarzabal (88') and Yereimi Pino (90+4') were kept out by Lloris, who ensured the French retained their lead.

Just as in the EURO 1984 final – the only previous meeting between the two countries in the final of a major competition – France were victorious, proving that EURO 2020 was probably just a blip in an impressive recent run in major tournaments that has seen them finish runners-up at EURO 2016, lift the 2018 World Cup and, most recently of all, win the 2020/21 Nations League. 🏆

Karim Benzema scored the goal of the tournament in the final.



RESULTS

Semi-finals

6 October – Milan
Italy – Spain 1-2 (0-2)
Referee: Sergei Karasev (Russia)

7 October – Turin
Belgium – France 2-3 (2-0)
Referee: Daniel Siebert (Germany)

Third-place play-off

10 October – Turin
Italy – Belgium 2-1 (0-0)
Referee: Srdjan Jovanović (Serbia)

Final

10 October – Milan
Spain – France 1-2 (0-0)
Referee: Anthony Taylor (England)

Kick-off in June 2022

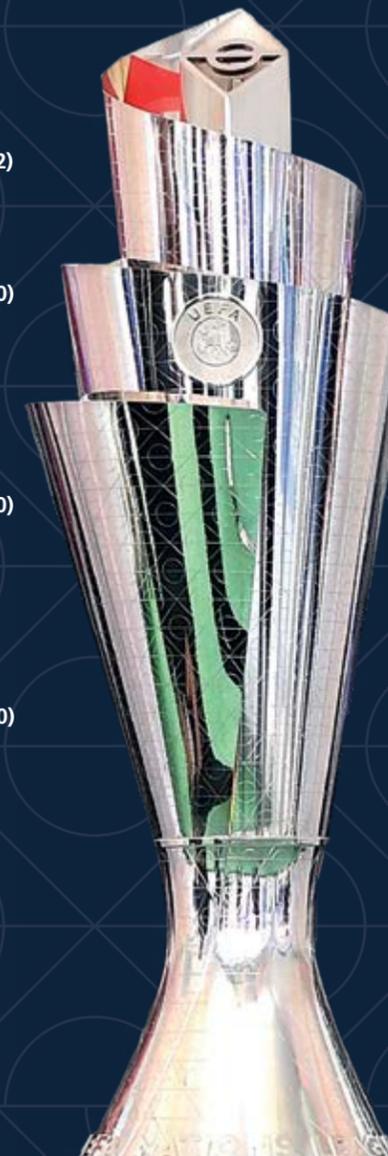
The 2022/23 UEFA Nations League, the third season of the competition, will follow a similar format to the last. The 55 teams will be split into four leagues (A, B, C and D), with Leagues A, B and C comprising four groups of four teams and League D containing just two groups, one with four teams and the other with three.

The distribution of the teams within each league depends on their results in the 2020/21 competition. Having finished top of their respective groups in League B, Wales, Austria, the Czech Republic and Hungary, for example, secured promotion to League A for 2022/23.

The make-up of the 14 groups was determined at the draw in Nyon, Switzerland, on 16 December (see UEFA.com).

Every team shares the same objective: to finish top of their group. The group winners in Leagues B, C and D will be promoted to the league above for the following season, while the four League A group winners will qualify for the finals, which will be played in June 2023.

Most of the group stage matches will be played a year before the finals, since four of the six matchdays will be held in June 2022 in order to accommodate the 2022 World Cup, which is being played in November and December. The big question that remains going into the 2022/23 Nations League is whether or not play-off places for UEFA EURO 2024 in Germany will be up for grabs, since the format of the qualifying competition for the next EURO has yet to be confirmed.



EUROPE'S FIRST TEN TEAMS QUALIFY

At the end of a highly competitive European Qualifiers group stage, the first ten European sides have booked their tickets to the 2022 World Cup in Qatar. A further 12 teams will compete in play-offs in March to determine Europe's last three representatives.

A European team has won every World Cup since 2006, thanks to Italy, Spain, Germany and most recently France. If further evidence were needed of Europe's domination of world football, a staggering 13 of the 16 semi-finalists at the last four tournaments were European sides.

Most of the Old Continent's heavyweights will be in Qatar next year, in a bid to maintain that supremacy. Of the first ten European sides to qualify, only the Netherlands were not in Russia for the 2018 World Cup. And of the 14 European teams that took part three years ago, only Iceland are definitely out of the running for a place in Qatar.

A number of groups remained in the balance right up until the final matchday, with Italy and Portugal, for example, slipping down into second place at the last minute and now facing the unenviable prospect of having to contest the play-offs. Here we review the state of play for all of Europe's 55 national teams.

Group A: Serbia and Mitrović consign Portugal to the play-offs

Up until the 90th minute of their final group match, Portugal (second, on 17 points) had a ticket to Qatar in their hands. However, a last-gasp header by Aleksandar Mitrović (eight goals in qualifying) gave Serbia (first; 20 points) a 2-1 win in Lisbon and top spot in the group, depriving the timeless Cristiano Ronaldo (six goals) of the opportunity to appear at a fifth World Cup – albeit only temporarily perhaps. Serbia are the only group winners to have missed out on EURO 2020. Behind Serbia and Portugal, the Republic of Ireland (third; 9 points) leapfrogged surprise package Luxembourg (fourth; 9 points) on the final matchday, while Azerbaijan (fifth; 1 point) struggled.

Group B: Spain finish strongly

With two matches remaining, Sweden (second; 15 points) sat top of Group B, thanks in particular to their 2-1 win at home to Spain (first; 19 points). However, a surprise loss against a solid Georgia (fourth; 7 points) and defeat in their winner-takes-all final group match in Spain consigned them to the play-offs. Semi-finalists at EURO 2020 and beaten finalists in the last UEFA Nations League, Spain will go to Qatar – appearing in their 12th consecutive World Cup – looking like serious contenders for the ultimate prize. Greece (third; 10 points) were never really in the running, and neither were Kosovo (fifth; 5 points).

Group C: Italy falter; Switzerland take advantage

Italy (second; 16 points) were magnificent at EURO 2020 but they came down to earth with a bump. After starting very strongly (with three wins out of three), Roberto Mancini's side more or less ground to a halt thereafter, finishing with a miserable →



With a goal in the 90th minute on the last matchday, Aleksandar Mitrović secured Serbia's place at the World Cup in Qatar and left Portugal in the play-offs.



PresseSports

France completed their qualifying campaign against Kazakhstan, with four of their eight goals coming from Kylian Mbappé.

0-0 draw away to Northern Ireland (third; 9 points). Switzerland (first; 18 points) twice held the European champions to a draw (0-0 at home and 1-1 away), with Jorginho missing a penalty in both games. With the best defence in qualifying (just two goals conceded), Switzerland are off to their fifth consecutive World Cup. At the other end of the group table, Bulgaria (fourth; 8 points) fared better than Lithuania (fifth; 3 points), who had a torrid campaign.

Group D: France qualify at a canter; Ukraine go to the wire

Disappointing at EURO 2020 then brilliant in winning the Nations League, France (first; 18 points) eased their way to top spot in Group D thanks to their attacking trio of Antoine Griezmann, Kylian Mbappé and Karim Benzema. Despite three draws, Didier Deschamps' side will be travelling to Qatar to defend their world title. Behind France, Ukraine (second; 12 points) secured a play-off spot despite recording only two wins and six draws (including draws in all four home games). Finland (third; 11 points) let second place slip from their grasp in losing at home to France on the final matchday. Bosnia and Herzegovina (fourth; 7 points) were disappointing, as were Kazakhstan (fifth; 3 points).

Group E: Belgium reliable as ever

As has become routine, Belgium (first; 20 points) sailed through their qualifying group, thanks to their exceptional strike force (with 14 different goalscorers). Meanwhile, a draw against the group winners on the final matchday was enough to secure a play-off place for Wales (second; 15 points). Just behind them were the Czech Republic (third; 14 points), who will also go into the play-offs as one of the two Nations League group winners that achieved the best results in the European Qualifiers without finishing in the top two in their group. At the bottom of the table, Estonia (fourth; 4 points) and Belarus (fifth; 3 points) secured a solitary victory apiece, each winning at home against the other.

Group F: Denmark almost faultless

Semi-finalists at EURO 2020, Denmark (first; 27 points) maintained their recent form by dominating Group F, where they were as formidable up front (30 goals scored) as they were impenetrable at the back (just three goals conceded). Only Scotland (second; 23 points) managed to take points off the Danes, the Scots qualifying for



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the play-offs and keeping alive their hopes of appearing on the world stage for the first time since 1998. Israel (third; 16 points) worked wonders, thanks in no small part to their strike partnership of Eran Zahavi and Munas Dabbur, who scored 14 goals between them. They finished ahead of Austria even (fourth; 16 points), who enter the play-offs nevertheless, thanks to their Nations League performance. The Faroe Islands (fifth; 4 points) and Moldova (sixth; 1 point) finished a long way behind.

Group G: Depay makes the difference for the Netherlands; Turkey sneak into the play offs

The European Qualifiers' joint top scorer (12 goals), as well as being joint top for

assists (6 assists), Memphis Depay was the driving force behind the Netherlands' qualifying campaign (first; 23 points). The Dutch, who had missed the 2018 World Cup, had a perfect record at home (five wins out of five), with a 2-0 victory against Norway (third; 18 points) on the final matchday sealing qualification. That defeat deprived the Norwegians of a play-off spot, with Turkey (second; 21 points) taking full advantage and pipping them on the line. Whereas Montenegro (fourth; 12 points) and Latvia (fifth; 9 points) caused a few occasional headaches for the group's big names, Gibraltar (sixth; 0 points) were one of only two countries to finish without a single point.



4

- 1 Not content with eliminating world champions France at EURO 2020, Xherdan Shaqiri and his Switzerland team-mates blocked European champions Italy's direct route to the World Cup.
- 2 Wales' draw with Belgium secured Joe Morell and his team-mates a place in the play-offs.
- 3 After qualifying for EURO 2020, Goran Pandev and his North Macedonia team-mates have gone one step further and qualified for the play-offs for the World Cup.
- 4 Memphis Depay, in action against Norway, was the architect of the Netherlands' qualification for the World Cup.

Group H: Croatia pip Russia at the post

For a long time, Croatia (first; 23 points) looked to be destined for a place in the play-offs. However, Luka Modrić and his team-mates, beaten finalists in 2018, snatched top spot in Group H in the 81st minute of their final match, thanks to an own goal by Russia's Fedor Kudryashov. Russia (second; 22 points), who had topped the table until that moment, reigned supreme at home, but ended



3

up paying for their inconsistent away form. Slovakia (third; 14 points) and Slovenia (fourth; 14 points) were too timid against the group's favourites, while Cyprus (fifth; 5 points) and Malta (sixth; 5 points) both achieved some respectable results.

Group I: A stroll for England; Poland still in the running

With the best attack (39 goals) and the best goal difference (+36) in qualifying, England (first; 26 points) maintained their impressive form shown at EURO 2020, sweeping the other teams in Group I aside. Harry Kane was joint top scorer (12 goals) and found the net both home and away against England's main rivals, Poland (second; 20 points). With Robert Lewandowski (eight goals) doing the damage as usual, Poland edged out Albania (third; 18 points) and Hungary (fourth; 17 points). Andorra (fifth; 6 points) put up a fair amount of resistance, whereas San Marino (sixth; 0 points) had the weakest attack (one goal scored) and the worst defence (46 goals conceded) in qualifying.

Group J: A formality for Germany; North Macedonia no one-hit wonder

Now led by Hansi Flick, Germany (first; 27 points) qualified with ease for their 17th consecutive World Cup, thanks to their

2022 World Cup play-off draw

The draw for the play-offs was made in Zurich on 26 November. The 12 teams were drawn into three four-team paths (A to C). Each path features single-leg semi-finals and a final. The winners of the three finals will qualify for the World Cup, hosted by Qatar from 21 November to 18 December 2022.

Semi-finals – 24 March 2022

Path A

Scotland v Ukraine
Wales v Austria

Path B

Russia v Poland
Sweden v Czech Republic

Path C

Italy v North Macedonia
Portugal v Turkey

Finals – 29 March 2022

Path A

Wales / Austria v
Scotland / Ukraine

Path B

Russia / Poland v
Sweden / Czech Republic

Path C

Portugal / Turkey v
Italy / North Macedonia

impressive strike force (36 goals; six players with three goals or more). Only North Macedonia (second; 18 points) managed to stop the German steamroller, surprising everyone with a 2-1 win away in Duisburg. That victory was decisive in securing a play-off place and proved that their appearance at EURO 2020 had not been a fluke. Romania (third; 17 points) were too inconsistent, but they did enough to finish ahead of Armenia (fourth; 12 points) and Iceland (fifth; 9 points), who were a long way short of the form that had taken them to the 2018 World Cup. Meanwhile, Liechtenstein (sixth; 1 point) were simply outclassed. 🇵🇸



FUTSAL EURO COMES OF AGE

First 16-team final tournament is ready to kick off in the Netherlands

Finland's Tero Intala scores in his team's Futsal EURO 2022 qualifier against Belgium.

Even before the ball starts rolling, UEFA Futsal EURO 2022 has posted an impressive list of firsts. The 12th final tournament is the first to involve 16 teams; a record number of 50 national associations entered teams for the competition; and the main qualifying round was conducted in eight groups of four teams who, for the first time, competed on a home-and-away basis over a period of months – a major improvement on the previous format

of mini-tournaments at single venues, which meant that some teams rarely, if ever, played competitive matches in front of their own supporters. For the first time, the final tournament is being staged in the Netherlands, where the first 32-match event will be played between 19 January and 6 February at two venues: the magnificent Ziggo Dome, a stone's throw from the Amsterdam Arena, and at the MartiniPlaza in the city of Groningen. But there is a lot more to Futsal EURO

2022 than the media release material to promote the tournament. More significantly, it demonstrates that the European Futsal Championship has really come of age. On the other hand, the futsal competition, like a fair percentage of the human race, is reluctant to be questioned too closely about its age. Some record books register the date of birth as 8 January 1996, when six pretenders to an inaugural European futsal crown

assembled in the Spanish city of Córdoba. But, as less than half of UEFA's member associations at the time – 17 to be precise – had entered the nascent competition, it could not, statutes in hand, be classed as an official UEFA European Championship. The alternative date of birth was therefore 22 February 1999, when an entry list of 25 national associations paved the way for eight finalists to return to Andalusia and dispute the first official UEFA Futsal Championship in Granada.

Early years

The parameters of that groundbreaking tournament in Córdoba illustrate the progress made by futsal before reaching its silver anniversary. The group stage was wrapped up in three days and all six matchdays were squeezed into a week. Referees were imported from football and, after hurriedly mugging up on the Laws of the Game, they ran the touchlines in their outdoor uniforms of shirt, shorts and long socks. Mercifully, the parquet floor was spared the studded boots. Grey areas in the rules about combining futsal and football meant that Netherlands star Edwin Grünholz nipped home at the weekend to play for his 11-a-side club. Media coverage was politely described as 'local' and the pre-tournament mailbox included a few enquiries from reporters about how much UEFA would pay them to cover the event. But a spectacular tournament was played with great pioneering spirit and Spain's 5-3 victory over Russia in the final was hailed as an advertisement for the virtues of the indoor game.

Five months later, at EURO '96, 16 finalists played 31 matches in eight English cities, culminating in a final at Wembley Stadium, in front of an average attendance of 41,158 – facts which mapped the enormous gulf between the outdoor and indoor games that existed a quarter of a century ago and, since then, has been steadily eroded.

The first official futsal EURO in 1999 was a first step on the upward climb. Specialised futsal referees made their debut. So did Portugal, a country also embarking on a climb towards the world summit. One of the salient features in Granada was that the opening match was the first encounter in any sporting discipline between Yugoslavia and newly independent Croatia. The latter emerged as 4-3 winners from a game played, to quote from UEFA's technical report on

the event, "with exquisite sporting attitude". Curiously, the first goal to hit the net in the official European Futsal Championship was scored in the second minute by Mićo Martić, the Croatia captain and legend who, 23 years later, returns to a Futsal EURO – this time as head coach of the Finland national futsal team that is one of a quartet of debutants able to step on to the big stage thanks to the expansion of the final tournament.

A Spanish speciality

That 1999 edition also culminated in a Russia v Spain final, with the former taking the title in a penalty shoot-out after a thrilling 3-3 draw. At this point, acknowledging that the senior competition was not underpinned by any age-limit tournaments, UEFA decided to offer more international match-play opportunities by staging the Futsal EURO every two years. Spain bounced back in Russia in 2001 to claim the second of their seven titles, and one of the competition's other curiosities was that the only two finals not to have involved Spain ended with Italy lifting the

trophy – firstly on home soil in 2003 when they beat Ukraine 1-0, and then in Antwerp in 2014 when Roberto Menichelli's team defeated Russia 3-1.

But between Italy's two victories, the competition had undergone radical and rapid evolution. Spain's third victory in Ostrava in the north-east of the Czech Republic in 2005 was the penultimate edition to be disputed by eight teams – and the ultimate was significant because the 2007 final tournament in Portugal was played in November instead of occupying the usual January-February slot in the sporting calendar. Returning to the mid-winter timing entailed a switch to even-numbered years, starting in 2010 and continuing through to current times.

Those 2007 finals were the first to be played at two venues: Gondomar and Santo Tirso in the greater metropolitan area surrounding the city of Porto. And the tournament showcased the vigorous growth of futsal from the low-key semi-official tournament of 1996 into a spectacular, strongly branded →



Russia's Yanar Asadov (left) and Armenia's David Aslanyan fight for the ball in their teams' qualifier.



Norway's Christopher Moen (No7) up against Portugal's Mario Freitas.



Portugal's Ricardinho (left) and Poland's Mateusz Madziag in action in qualifying.



Georgia's Roninho and Bynho celebrate after their team's qualifying match against France.

championship with massive TV audiences. During that period, Futsal EUROs were being screened by Eurosport on a pan-European basis. Their viewing figures allowed growth to be measured. The Futsal EURO in 2001 attracted an audience of 13,000. During EURO 2007, 11.7 million viewers tuned in, while another 4.4 million watched the event on Portuguese TV. This had knock-on effects in marketing and commercial areas, with sponsorship flourishing. Giant screens and electronic perimeter advertising boards added to spectacle and blue state-of-the-art playing surfaces were being laid – not only to provide striking TV images but also to

promote lightning-fast circulation of a seamless futsal ball designed and refined by adidas. And, in the search for further refinement, the blue playing surface gave way to black, with gravitation towards more of a matt finish to prevent excess light from bouncing off the surface into the rapidly increasing number of camera lenses.

A European expansion

In the meantime, futsal itself was keeping pace with technical advances. The top players have gained in athleticism and, as a result, the speed of the game has increased dramatically. And the rapid rise in the number of national associations entering teams – for example, from 29 entries for EURO 2005 to 39 two editions later, 46 for EURO 2016 and 50 on the starting grid for EURO 2022 – prompted the expansion of the final tournament to a dozen teams as from EURO 2010 and, in consequence, greater opportunities for players from more countries to gain top-level international experience. Azerbaijan and Belarus, for instance, immediately made final tournament debuts at Futsal EURO 2010 in the Hungarian cities of Budapest and Debrecen.

However, in sporting terms, 12 is an odd number. There is constant debate about whether to split them into three groups of four or, as UEFA decided to do, four

The groups

- Group A** Netherlands, Serbia, Ukraine, Portugal
- Group B** Kazakhstan, Italy, Slovenia, Finland
- Group C** Russia, Poland, Slovakia, Croatia
- Group D** Georgia, Spain, Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina

The calendar

- Group stage** 19–29 January
- Quarter-finals** 31 January and 1 February
- Semi-finals** 4 February
- Final and third-place match** 6 February

The venues

- Group stage, knockouts** Ziggo Dome, Amsterdam
- Group stage** MartiniPlaza, Groningen

groups of three. The pros and cons are reminiscent of tales about short blankets that leave either head or feet uncovered. Groups of three mean that some teams play only two games. As one coach at EURO 2016 in Serbia put it: "You stage training camps, play your way through the qualifying phase, organise friendlies, get your squad together to prepare for the final tournament – and two games and 72 hours later you're on your way home." Then there is debate about match

schedules that entail differences in terms of rest and recovery times between matches. Or the fact that the two teams playing the last fixture in each group know exactly what is required to avoid elimination. Or scenarios like the one at EURO 2016 where two teams (Hungary and Slovenia) went home before two of the other contestants (Croatia and Czech Republic) had set foot on the field of play.

So there was widespread applause when UEFA announced that Futsal EURO 2018 would be the fifth and last 12-team final tournament. The presence of 16 squads in the Netherlands is set to erase all those previous debating points once and for all.

What is more, the decision to launch a UEFA U19 EURO to promote youth development paved the way for the senior competition to be played in four-year cycles which align it more closely with the outdoor game.

From 12 to 16

One thing is for certain: the 12-team format had no negative effect on the fast-growing popularity of futsal. At EURO 2012 in Croatia, for example, a new record attendance was set three times. The third still stands, with 14,300 fans watching the Croatia v Russia semi-final at the Zagreb Arena. And the 12-team format bowed out with a spectacular flourish at the 2018 finals in Slovenia where, with 10,352 watching Portugal beat Spain in the final, the cumulative attendance figure again exceeded 100,000 at an average of 5,097 per game – massive audiences compared with other indoor sports. And this trend is poised to continue in 2022 with, by mid-November, ticket sales already topping the 18,000 mark.

Meanwhile, the 2016 tournament in Serbia had already set out not only to stage a memorable event but also to create a legacy in the host nation. And this pathway was extended when the show moved on to Ljubljana two years later. A broad spectrum of social and grassroots events was pegged to the final tournament and, before the ball started rolling at the magnificent Stožice Arena in the Slovenian capital, a trophy tour had visited a dozen towns in the host country. Twenty broadcast partners beamed images to 100 territories – and they were rewarded by a stunning all-Iberian final that offered the fans 104 goal attempts and a long-awaited victory for Jorge Braz's Portugal in a match against Spain packed with ball skills, intensity and drama.

Ricardinho's seven goals, four assists, leadership qualities and magical ball skills earned him the UEFA player of the tournament award and the honour of becoming the leading scorer in the history of the Futsal EURO. Sadly, the time has come to toast an absent friend. The magician announced his retirement after Portugal had gone on to complete a double by lifting the FIFA Futsal World Cup trophy in Lithuania at the beginning of October, prompting speculation about Portugal's defence of the European title in the Netherlands – where, after

delighting the fans at five EUROs, he will be sorely missed.

Four newcomers

But doors shut and doors open. Alongside Finland, the national teams of Slovakia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Georgia will be debutants in the Netherlands – the last two in a fascinating Group D which pits them against Azerbaijan and Spain. And the new kids on the block are keen to make their presence felt. Bosnia and Herzegovina clinched top spot, with two games to spare, in their qualifying group, ahead of regular finalists Serbia and Romania. Georgia finished ahead of France who, also as debutants, produced impressive performances in 2018. Slovakia's place in the final tournament hinged on their ability to hold Azerbaijan to a 1-1 draw in their home fixture. And Finland, who will be cheered on by 1,000 of their fans at the final tournament, scored 20 times to claim second place behind Italy and ahead of Belgium. The quartet is set to march into a tournament where there is no clear favourite and where Ricardinho's superstar status has become a job vacancy. The first 16-team final tournament has all the ingredients to confirm that European futsal has come of age. 🇪🇺

Josip Suton of Croatia in action against Denmark.



PRIZE MONEY DOUBLED

On 22 September, the UEFA Executive Committee decided to double the total prize money on offer for the Women's EURO and reward clubs for releasing their players for the first time.

In the past year, UEFA has made far-reaching changes to the financial distribution models for both its premier women's national team competition and this season's UEFA Women's Champions League. Both underline the governing body's determination to deliver on three ambitious objectives of its five-year strategy for the women's game, Time for Action:

- Doubling the reach and value of the UEFA Women's EURO and the UEFA Women's Champions League
- Doubling the number of women and girls playing football in UEFA's member associations to 2.5 million
- Changing perceptions of women's football across Europe

UEFA has offered payments to clubs that provide players for the men's EURO since 2008 in recognition of their role in making the tournament possible. With its latest decision, European football's governing body has approved plans to introduce a similar 'club benefits programme' for the Women's EURO – acknowledging clubs' contributions to the final tournament's success by releasing players. The club benefits programme will amount to a significant €4.5 million.

Club benefits programme

Payments will only be allocated to European clubs whose players are selected for national teams participating in Women's EURO 2022. The total amount paid will be calculated according to the number of days that a player is released for the final tournament: this will cover ten preparation days, the total number of days a player participates in the tournament, plus one additional travel day.

Eligible clubs will be compensated at a rate of €500 per player per day, with

payments distributed between October and December 2022. For each of its players taking part in the Women's EURO, a club is guaranteed a minimum payment of €10,000.

The club benefits programme represents a critical component of the virtuous circle of growing the women's game. As well as compensating clubs for the time that their players are absent with the national team, UEFA is also encouraging clubs to reinvest the redistributed funds for the benefit of the sport.

New standards for the women's game

The total prize money on offer will total €16 million – the highest ever and double the €8 million available at the previous Women's EURO in 2017.

Two UEFA decisions have made the rise in overall prize money possible: separating the commercial arrangements for its men's and women's competitions, and increased overall UEFA investment in the competition.

Prize money will be allocated according to two criteria: equal distribution (60%) and tournament performance (40%).

- Equal distribution, accounting for 60% of the total amount available. €9.6 million of the total €16 million prize money will be divided equally among all 16 participating national associations, regardless of their performance in the final tournament.
- Tournament performance, accounting for 40% of the overall pot. The remaining €6.4 million will be allocated according to national teams' group stage results and performances in the knockout rounds – the latter will account for almost two-thirds of the performance pot.



Reigning European champions the Netherlands (in action here against Slovenia) will be defending their title in England in what promises to be a record-breaking Women's EURO.

Distribution of prize money at Women's EURO 2022

- All 16 teams will receive a guaranteed minimum payment of €600,000, double the equivalent amount for Women's EURO 2017.
- For the first time ever at a UEFA women's national team competition, performance-based bonuses will be introduced during the group stage: €100,000 for a win and €50,000 for a draw.
- Teams reaching the quarter-finals will receive an additional €205,000. Semi-finalists will be allocated a further €320,000.
- The 2022 Women's EURO champions will receive €660,000 versus €420,000 for the runners-up. Prize money is cumulative; if the champions also win all their group matches, they will receive a total of €2,085,000.

THE GROUPS

The final draw took place in Manchester on 28 October.

- Group A:** England, Austria, Norway, Northern Ireland
- Group B:** Germany, Denmark, Spain, Finland
- Group C:** Netherlands, Sweden, Russia, Switzerland
- Group D:** France, Italy, Belgium, Iceland



THE VENUES

The Women's EURO will be played in England from 6 to 31 July 2022 in nine cities/towns and ten stadiums.

- Brighton & Hove:** Brighton & Hove Community Stadium (30,000 spectators)
- London:** Brentford Community Stadium (17,000), Wembley Stadium (final only, 80,000)
- Manchester:** Manchester City Academy Stadium (7,000)
- Milton Keynes:** Stadium MK (30,000)
- Rotherham:** New York Stadium (12,000)
- Sheffield:** Bramall Lane (30,000)
- Southampton:** St Mary's Stadium (32,000)
- Trafford:** Old Trafford (opening game only, 76,000)
- Wigan & Leigh:** Leigh Sports Village (12,000)

FITNESS AND THE COACH

UEFA injects a fitness competence framework into coach education.

Let's tour the clubs of Europe asking two simple questions: how much do coaches know about football fitness training? And, secondly, how much should coaches know about football fitness training? The answers could probably be compiled into a decent-sized book. At the top clubs where specialists abound, you might hear

"oh, I leave that to the fitness coach" or words to that effect. But, as you descend the footballing pyramid, the answers take on a radically different tone. We soon reach levels where the concept of a fitness coach might appear on wish lists. And the coaches with UEFA C or UEFA B diplomas working in grassroots football probably won't even waste time on wishes.



At these lower levels, the lack of support from specialist staff means that coaches theoretically require a much broader armoury, including a good knowledge of football fitness. They may not need to know more about fitness training than the elite frontline coaches at Pro level but they will certainly have to do more fitness training than their illustrious colleagues. Then there are coaches – maybe with UEFA Elite Youth diplomas – who need to steer players through the adolescent years when, in any given group of players, physical maturation progresses at different speeds. Then there are the coaches who need to understand the different physical parameters of women’s football. Or the special requirements attached to the fitness coaching of goalkeepers.

The aim of that rambling opening paragraph is to illustrate the complexity

of the topic and highlight a major step forward: the launch of the new UEFA fitness competence framework as a complement to the UEFA Coaching Convention.

Back to the 90s

For some time, many national associations have been seeking guidance on the fitness components of their coach education courses. UEFA’s interest in the subject certainly goes back a long way. Back to the 1990s when Denmark’s Jens Bangsbo at the University of Copenhagen published *Fitness Training in Football – A Scientific Approach* and collaborated with UEFA at workshops and symposiums before joining the coaching staff at Juventus under Carlo Ancelotti and Marcello Lippi and going on to play a similar role with the Denmark national team. Since then, it has been a

question of keeping pace with the rapid, not to say explosive, evolution of fitness training principles and sports science, which coaches like Sir Alex Ferguson, Roy Hodgson and many others signal as the greatest change noted during their careers.

In the UEFA context, much credit is also due to Andreas Morisbak of Norway, who was a prime mover in UEFA’s first fitness for football initiatives and an enthusiastic promoter of the principle of football specificity in physical preparation, whereby training activities should be as similar as possible to the competitive situations in terms of design and the demands made on the body during real match play. He firmly believed that fitness training should be football-specific and not isolated from the skills and decision-making learning processes associated with the game.

A need for standardisation

UEFA’s initial searches for a degree of standardisation revealed enormous diversities across the map of Europe at a time when the rapid advances in sports science represented an invitation to step away from traditional pathways – an invitation which, in all walks of life, is often accepted with a degree of reluctance

UEFA’s initial searches for a degree of standardisation revealed enormous diversities across the map of Europe at a time when the rapid advances in sports science represented an invitation to step away from traditional pathways – an invitation which, in all walks of life, is often accepted with a degree of reluctance or not accepted at all.



Switzerland warm up before their EURO 2020 match against France.



Andreas Morisbak of Norway promotes the principle that fitness training should be football-specific.

or not accepted at all. This explains why the introduction of a fitness competence framework has taken time and a great deal of painstaking work, research and consultation. Feedback from a survey conducted among national associations served to clarify their requirements. Many asked for support material and knowledge-sharing seminars or workshops allied with guidelines that would allow their coach educators to upgrade the knowledge and competence of football coaches at all levels in fitness matters.

No fewer than 51 national associations took part in the survey, which also featured 35 follow-up interviews. Just over half (51% to be pedantic) reported that between 76% and 100% of their professional clubs currently employ full-time fitness coaches. On the other hand, almost 40% of the national associations stated that there was no minimum requirement to operate as a fitness coach – maybe slightly surprising bearing in mind that technicians, physios or team doctors all need qualifications. Among those that do have requirements, only 18% demand a UEFA coaching licence, whereas 43% require a degree in sports science. The survey also revealed that 16 associations have embraced the need to formalise the education of fitness coaches and have developed their own national fitness diplomas. On the other hand, 35 have not. However, 25 of the latter added that they have plans to do so in the future. Interestingly, some associations have introduced fitness diplomas as a further education or continuing professional development (CPD) add-on for existing UEFA licence holders.

The status quo in coach education is

that only a few national associations do not engage a fitness specialist in their UEFA A and Pro courses, with over half of them clearly recognising the important relationship between football and fitness by adding that their specialised fitness educators are in possession of UEFA coaching diplomas.

Fitness for football advisory group

In the meantime, UEFA had decided to move forward by inviting a team of leading specialists to form a fitness for football advisory group – a team of seven (five men and two women) captained by Paul Balsom, widely respected as Leicester City’s head of performance innovation for 13 years, in addition to a long list of

World Cups and European Championships as the Sweden national team’s performance manager. The advisory group’s brief was basically to sharpen ideas, pinpoint the key concepts and set them out in a readily understandable fashion. The aim was to define minimum levels of content and competences that coaches with UEFA-endorsed diplomas should possess; to align with contemporary thinking on football fitness education at all levels; and to respect the reality-based learning that the UEFA Coaching Convention has been built on. The result is a framework that outlines, diploma by diploma, the basic guiding principles for the fitness component in coach education courses – a core structure that national associations can furnish to their own taste to incorporate their own underlying principles and identity.

The next step was to present the framework to UEFA’s 55 member associations – initially via documents offering guidance on the topics to be delivered during coach education courses and, early in 2021, by a 90-minute online launch attended by 160 participants. This allowed technical directors and coach education specialists to be properly warmed up for a series of webinars which all national associations were invited to attend – and did. To make them user-friendly, the 55 were split into three groups involving three to six coach education specialists from 16 to 20 associations: in one group, those who already deliver their national fitness diplomas; in another, →



A training session at Schalke 04 in Germany.



France get ready for EURO 2020 action.

those who are considering doing so; and, finally, those who are not. All these webinars were genuinely interactive, embracing UEFA adult learning principles, and gave all national associations a real opportunity to contribute to the roll-out of this milestone in football fitness.

The follow-up was a series of 90-minute best practice forums, drawing on the impressive experience and existing delivery from various national associations. These were organised on a weekly basis during April 2021, with the online doors open to all.

Integrating the framework

In the autumn, on-site presential meetings were allowed to resume – which paved the way for a series of fitness for football seminars staged under the UEFA Share banner, where small groups of national associations get together for three days in a host association for an interactive knowledge-sharing programme – with

members of the fitness for football advisory group on hand to offer advice and guidance on how best to inject the framework principles into the various diploma courses organised by the individual associations. These workshops are not traditional education courses, but rather reflect, respect and exploit, in highly interactive and open environments, the extensive experience that exists in member associations.

The result of all this was a great deal of feedback from national associations which have welcomed the initiative and are committed to integrating the framework into their coach education programmes. Some of their concerns highlighted the value of the seminars and the best practice interchanges on aspects such as how to do justice to the fitness components in UEFA C courses which adhere to the minimum duration of 60 hours. Or how best to prepare C diploma coaches for work with diverse end-user groups in

terms of age, gender and so on, enabling players to experience the health benefits of regular football and enhance their feeling of well-being – all of which offered encouragement for UEFA to publish support material on a community page. On the higher rungs of the UEFA diploma ladder, where relationships among the team behind the team take on greater relevance, one of the key factors for the coach is to have enough knowledge to achieve maximum cooperation with fitness specialists and, of course, to avoid conflicts.

Isolation v integration

Indeed, one of the important areas in the fitness framework (at all levels) is the isolation v integration question. To what extent should fitness work be done as isolated sessions? In other words, how often do you take your players – or let the fitness coach take them – for isolated physical exercising which is maybe not the

most pleasurable pastime for the average player, especially at grassroots levels? To what extent can you take an integrated approach and achieve the same fitness benefits by designing more enjoyable drills with the ball? What is your attitude to isolated fitness sessions for individual players? How much work should your players do in the gym? The UEFA Share sessions are sure to generate healthy debate over the extent to which different associations promote isolated v integrated approaches.

The impact of playing styles

The fundamental aim of the framework is to develop coaches that understand and are comfortable with the physical

demands of football and that, when structuring football training programmes, will confidently account for the physical demands to produce performance-related plans which also mitigate risks of injury. So coach education needs to cover the principles of load management and, at the top end of the game, this entails a familiarisation with the technologies now available to monitor physical parameters during training and match play. And, right across the board from UEFA C onwards, this involves assessments based on the minimum dose concept of calculating the amount of physical output required in order to achieve objectives. Chris Barnes, a member of the advisory group, explains: “The coach should have a

multidisciplinary (technical, tactical and physical) approach to designing training sessions. If all goals can be effectively achieved in a 60-minute training session, coaches shouldn’t be led to deliver longer sessions merely to keep players on the field for longer durations. It makes sense to aim for the minimum rather than create overloads.” This interlocks with coach education aspects such as periodisation (designing weekly, monthly and seasonal training programmes), taking into account the impact of playing styles and job descriptions for individual playing positions on physical demands or, in the upper echelons of the game, considerations like adjusting training loads for non-playing substitutes.

The grassroots question

Monitoring physical condition is evidently more of a challenge at grassroots levels where technological backup is less prevalent. One approach at this level is the use of rating of perceived exertion (RPE) questionnaires, an inexpensive tool which provides coaches with objective feedback on the demands of training drills and sessions, with plenty of online backup

“The coach should have a multidisciplinary (technical, tactical and physical) approach to designing training sessions. If all goals can be effectively achieved in a 60-minute training session, coaches shouldn’t be led to deliver longer sessions merely to keep players on the field for longer durations.”

Chris Barnes
Member of the fitness for football advisory group



Olympique Lyonnais’ Amel Majri working with a fitness coach.

available. Ditto fitness tests such as Yo-Yo or 505 runs, where there is no shortage of online data to help coaches measure their players' conditioning against similar groups elsewhere.

For the fitness competence framework to be a valuable tool, it has to cater for the coach educators working across the full spectrum of UEFA diplomas. This means that the framework offers detailed guidance in eight different categories – the four core diplomas and the four specialised areas covering youth development and goalkeeping.

The fitness components in the UEFA Youth B and UEFA Elite Youth A courses are evidently more focused on the demands coaches face while working with players at crucial stages of physical development and maturation when they need to negotiate transitions from youth to elite youth and/or elite youth to senior professional football. One of the main challenges facing coaches in this domain is managing the wide range of individual differences in growth and development. There are specific challenges in this adolescent sector of the game – among them, for instance, developing and maintaining match fitness for elite players that may have progressed into senior squads but, as regular occupants of the bench, may have to cope with deficits in playing time. In the youth development area, debates on the isolation v integration dilemma tend to have greater frequency and relevance at a stage where the coach

needs to find a nice balance between isolated and integrated work on strength, speed and agility. A further debating point is whether youth players should be trained for a specialised job description or equipped to cope with the physical demands of various playing positions. And, for coaches of youth teams, there is the perennial challenge of reconciling long-term player development aspects with the short-term requirements of winning matches.

Age-limit considerations

One of the most frequent talking points in UEFA's technical reports on age-limit tournaments has been the emphasis on selecting players from the top end of the chronological parameters – a tendency that reaches as high up the ladder as Under-21 level. As recently as 2019, players born in the first three months of the year accounted for 33% of the workforce at the final tournament, as opposed to the 17% with dates of birth between October and December. Many national associations are already implementing programmes aimed at combating a trend that suggests that talent is being allowed to slip through fingers. But it remains an issue that youth development coaches need to address.

Feedback from the national associations yielded a number of proposals that UEFA has taken on board: the creation of educational materials focusing on the management of issues related to the periods of peak growth and development;

and the sharing of best-practice principles, videos, presentations and reference material on youth football on the UEFA fitness community page, an invitation-only platform to which the technicians from national associations have exclusive access.

The special case of the goalkeeper

And then there are the goalkeepers. Nowadays, they spend more and more time training with the rest of the squad thanks to a marked shift away from 'traditional' attitudes over recent years. But the keeper is still a 'special case'. As Chris Barnes points out: "In physical terms, the goalkeeper reverses the parameters that govern the rest of the group. For the outfield players, the heaviest physical load



Unai Simón training with Spain at the UEFA Nations League finals.



Hydration is just as important to physical fitness as exercise.



Sarina Wiegman, then head coach of European champions the Netherlands, taking part in a youth training session at Utrecht.

There is currently a shortfall in the numbers of female coach educators, while not all male coach educators feel equipped or comfortable in dealing with the specificities of women's physical preparation.

is on matchday. But for the goalkeeper it can be the easiest day of the week. This obviously impacts on the goalkeeper coaches' planning, as they need to think carefully about the best days to programme sessions which might be heavy physically and/or technically demanding." To quote from the Goalkeeper A diploma section of the framework, the coach should be able to "design and deliver effective goalkeeper training programmes that are flexible enough to meet both the individual needs of the goalkeeper and the global needs of the team".

One of the related issues expressed by national associations is the scarcity of benchmarks when it comes to monitoring the physical performance of goalkeepers at the various levels of the game. And the periodisation of keepers' training programmes was a topic that generated discussion. The feeling was, once again, that the sharing of knowledge and experience among national associations pays big dividends.

A framework for women too

Fitness in women's football was another important aspect to emerge while the framework was under construction. Performance parameters and injury patterns are evidently different but, surveying the full spectrum of eight UEFA diplomas, many associations voiced, during the launch phase of the framework, concerns about a lack of specific reference data and wondered how best to promote further research – maybe in collaboration with universities. In terms of applying the principles outlined in the framework to the women's game, there is currently a shortfall in the numbers of female coach educators, while not all male coach educators feel equipped or comfortable in dealing with the specificities of women's physical preparation – which means that, at the moment, national associations may need to rely on external specialists. Hence UEFA's initiative of setting up an advisory group to address these issues, headed by Anna Signeul, who led Scotland to a first-

ever appearance at the Women's EURO finals in 2017 and is currently in charge of the national team in Finland. The aim is to integrate women's football content into each UEFA coaching diploma. This takes on even greater relevance in the wake of a decision taken in April by the coach education experts on UEFA's Jira Panel to mandate the fitness for football advisory group to work towards the introduction of specialist fitness diplomas. Foundations for this significant move are currently being laid by another UEFA working group.

In the meantime, the launch of the UEFA fitness competence framework is a key milestone in its mission to encourage coaches to acquire greater understanding of the physical demands of training and match play and deliver physical development programmes that align with contemporary thinking, take into account players' individual abilities and help to mitigate the risk of injury. It is 20 years since Ric Charlesworth, in his book *The Coach: Managing for Success*, wrote: "A manager must optimise athletes' capacities with a training, learning and counselling regime. The coach must absorb scientific data and apply them to the best effect using judgement and finesse." Since the publication of that book, sports science has evolved at great pace. But the words remain equally valid. 🌱

MOLDOVAN SCHOOLCHILDREN TEAM UP WITH FOOTBALL LEGENDS



The showcase grassroots football event in Chişinău was an opportunity for schoolchildren to play their favourite sport and to meet some footballing legends, including Robbie Keane (below).

At the end of September, a school football festival in the Moldovan capital of Chişinău set the ball rolling on UEFA's and its member associations' annual celebration of grassroots football.



Football legends lined up with 70 local schoolchildren to kick off UEFA's Grassroots Football Week at a special event showcasing the benefits of learning the beautiful game as early as possible in life.

UEFA ambassador Luís Figo of Portugal, former UEFA Women's Player of the Year Nadine Kessler, Brazilian defender Maxwell, Croatia's Zvonimir Boban and Republic of Ireland striker Robbie Keane all took part in the festival organised by the Football Association of Moldova (FMF) to highlight its Football in Schools development programme.

'Football is a school of life'

"I think it is very important that children play lots of sport in school," said UEFA president Aleksander Čeferin, who also took part in the event. "Through football, children will learn that girls and boys can play together, they learn that they can all be friends, they see different cultures, different backgrounds and they see that football is friendship. In a way football is a school of life."

"It's all about educating and motivating the future generation," added Maxwell, UEFA's chief of football development. "Everything starts here – sharing good moments with friends, sharing values like respect and discipline. I wish all the children a lot of fun in football." "All this makes us confident in the future of this project, which aims to

increase society's interest in sports and football in particular," said Leonid Oleinicenco, the FMF president. "A healthy nation is a nation that does physical exercise, does sport, does football."

European Week of Sport

Each year, UEFA's Grassroots Week marks the annual European Week of Sport by highlighting the importance of ensuring everyone, everywhere has an equal opportunity to play football. For this year's event – held from 23 to 30 September – UEFA and its 55 member associations put the focus on playing football in schools.

In Chişinău, 12-year-old girls and boys from three local schools pitted their skills against the UEFA president and former players on the brand-new pitch at the Nikolai Gogol Lyceum before playing a series of short matches.

"This is how my love for the game started. I know how they feel. Festivals like this one today will inspire children," said Kessler, chief of women's football at UEFA. "Moldova definitely has a bright football future ahead."

Moldova's focus on children

"The creation of the football education system is one of the FMF's priorities for the next five years," said the FMF president. "The motto of the new development strategy of the Football Association of Moldova is Focus on Children."

The Chişinău pitch is one of six municipal school football pitches renovated with funds channelled through the FMF's own Football in Schools programme, a core component of the national education curriculum and a central pillar of the association's 2020–24 strategy for developing football. Working closely with the ministry of education and local public authorities, the FMF is rolling out the programme in kindergartens, schools, specialised classes and football academies.

"The scope of the Football in Schools project is unprecedented since the proclamation of the independence of the Republic of Moldova," said Mr Oleinicenco.

Chişinău's municipal authority has invested €1 million in 2021 towards improving school infrastructure, increasing the salaries of teachers and coaches involved in football in schools and providing food twice a day for children participating in football classes. It also plans to build more than ten football fields for local schools.

“The construction of such pitches is possible thanks to the full support of UEFA. Thanks to UEFA, we are improving a sports infrastructure that has stagnated over time,” added Mr Oleinicenco.

Football in Schools 2020–24: focus on Moldova (projected numbers)

- Children taking part: 45,000
- Schools running activities: 230
- Teachers trained: 400
- Supporters:
 - FMF
 - Ministry of education
 - Local public authorities

UEFA Football in Schools programme

The FMF’s Focus on Children initiative is one of numerous four-year school football projects being rolled out by UEFA member associations thanks to funding provided through UEFA’s Football in Schools programme.

By encouraging partnerships between associations, education authorities and schools across Europe, UEFA hopes to give more children the opportunity to learn core values early in life by playing football: fair play, respect, teamwork and leadership.

Alongside coach education and club development, the initiative is a key component of the governing body’s Grassroots Football Charter. Between 2020 and 2024, UEFA will channel €11 million in funding to support Football in Schools initiatives – one quarter of the total €44 million earmarked for grassroots football support to associations from 2020 to 2024.

The programme is just one example of how UEFA draws on revenue from the European Championship (EURO) to fund football projects across Europe using its HatTrick development project.

Football in Schools 2020–24: focus on Europe (projected numbers)

- Associations investing in school football: 55
- Children taking part: 2.8 million+
- Schools running activities: 81,000+
- Teachers trained: 63,000+
- Total investment: €24m +
 - UEFA: €11m+
 - Associations: €6.5m+
 - Governments and other institutions: €6.5m+



The UEFA president, Aleksander Čeferin, greets the budding champions.



Trying to keep the ball from Luis Figo, with Nadine Kessler looking on.

A look at two Football in Schools projects

Read and Move

Football Association of Finland



Schools running activities
2,230



Number of schoolchildren
50,000

The Read and Move The Owl campaign supported, encouraged and inspired children in two important areas: reading and moving. The campaign was aimed at all Finnish kindergartens and pupils in the first three years of primary school. Classes collected feathers for the owl by completing reading and exercise tasks. Participants were encouraged to share photos and videos of their group’s reading and exercise moments on social media with the tag #Read! Every week, prizes were awarded, with one lucky class receiving match tickets for all students to a World Cup qualifier at the Helsinki Olympic Stadium.

Former Finland international Tim Sparv was one of the campaign’s biggest supporters. “Football and books are two of the best things I know, and that is why I am very happy to be a part of the campaign. There are many benefits to reading and playing, and my hope is that children and young people will also understand how important they are. Everyday life gets better when we give space and time to moving and reading.”

Learning through Football

Scottish Football Association (SFA)



Schools running activities
480



Number of schoolchildren
21,000

In partnership with Glasgow City Council, the SFA has developed an online platform that uses the common language of football to teach seven subjects, primarily at primary school level: languages, maths, numeracy, health and well-being, science, technologies and expressive arts.

“Teachers can go into the platform, pick up a couple of subject ideas and they can use football as a vehicle for learning,” said Paul McNeill, SFA head of community development.

According to Jacqueline Church, principal teacher at the Miller Primary School, one of 480 schools expected to use the online resource by 2024: “Not only are the assignments fun and interesting, but the children are able to apply a range of skills to meaningful life contexts, boosting their confidence and leadership skills. By exploring jobs within the industry, they are also recognising the teamwork, communication and perseverance skills we need to work in any job, which sets them in good stead for the future.”

FOCUS ON EURO 2020

In September, more than 330 police and security officials from across Europe met online for UEFA's annual Stadium & Security Conference, in preparation for the start of the 2021/22 football season.



Mounted police outside the stadium in Munich before the Portugal v Germany match.

This year, there was something different about UEFA's Stadium & Security Conference. Instead of the traditional face-to-face gathering, and owing to COVID-19 restrictions, the participants met online for an abridged 90-minute webinar featuring six panel members.

The event was hosted by Michael van Praag, chairman of the UEFA Stadium & Security Committee, with this summer's EURO 2020 tournament the focal point of the deliberations. "We may be meeting online, but we can still take the learning points from EURO 2020 and see how they might apply to other matches for the rest of the season," said Michael van Praag in his opening address.

Those present mainly comprised national association security officers, members of the National Information Football Point network (NFIPs) and club security officers from this season's participants in UEFA's three main men's club competitions: the UEFA Champions League, the UEFA Europa League and the brand-new UEFA Europa Conference League, as well as their local police counterparts.

The effects of COVID-19

With the season kick-off coinciding with the return of spectators to stadiums, the six panel members insisted on the importance of improved preparation, and discussed the impact of COVID-19 on match organisation. The webinar heard that the COVID-19 pandemic had led to many changes in the organisation of safety and security provisions at football matches. Following the recent completion of EURO 2020, the webinar included several videos outlining good police practices from the tournament, as well as how to deal with COVID-19 restrictions, and reflecting on the risks that occurred and how to manage them.

Uncertainty and information at short notice from governments regarding stadium capacity regulation changes had also presented further challenges to match organisers. For instance, a shortage in stadium personnel, namely stewards and security guards, had been a particularly difficult issue.

There was also a consensus among the body of football safety and security experts that a full stadium is easier to

manage than a reduced capacity stadium because there is less need to think about seating patterns, spectator entry, social distancing and evacuation routes. "Less is more complicated," said Chris van de Poll, EURO 2020 local manager in Amsterdam.

In addition, body-searching procedures for stadium stewards had been revised in accordance with COVID-19 sanitary regulations. "The aim is to reduce physical contact between the stewards and the spectators," explained Steve Frosdick, an independent expert on safety and security at sports grounds.

UEFA security officer Stephen Thomas also highlighted the importance of pushing all the checks to the outer perimeter of the stadium, while fellow UEFA security officer Vlado Glodjovic underlined the necessity to separate security checks from medical checks. "I think that's a model of good practice," he said.

The webinar also heard from Steve Frosdick that teams' laps of honour after games were very helpful in managing the departure of spectators from the stadium, because it creates a psychological cue in each sector for fans to exit the stadium progressively.

Creation of the International Police Cooperation Centre

One of the important by-products of EURO 2020 was the creation of the International Police Cooperation Centre (IPCC). Established in The Hague as a cooperation tool between Europol, Interpol, the NFIPs and UEFA, the goal of the IPCC was to facilitate the

information exchange between law enforcement authorities and the tournament's host states.

The IPCC was a tool developed not only for EURO 2020 – it can now also be used for club competitions. "This is a legacy that was first tested during the tournament," said Adrian Dinca, chair of the European Group of Safety and Security Experts at the Council of Europe.

"The IPCC is a restart of the cooperation in our network, I see it like that," said Joost Arentsen, head of NFIP Netherlands.

UEFA security officer Frank Wijnveld reflected that, when teams move to other venues with supporters following them, the IPCC "is able to quickly monitor which groups go in which direction, share the

information and prepare the organisation on-site."

Overall, the advice given to the body of match organisers is to work closely with their government, communicate with supporters and assess what kind of impact the various elements involved will have on entry procedures. "We need to exchange information hour by hour, constantly," said Vlado Glodjovic.

Looking ahead

An Information Exchange Checklist was shared with all the participants ahead of the webinar. The checklist is a tool to help home and away clubs prepare for and organise the safety and security of their matches in the best way possible.

This practice usually takes place face to face at UEFA's annual conference, when club security officers are given the opportunity to meet and prepare for the start of the season.

When asked for advice that could be given to new clubs joining the competitions, Michael van Praag mentioned the UEFA stadium and security unit's training courses focusing on stewarding, ticketing, crowd management, how to deal with pitch invasions, and how to implement an integrated approach. "We have all that for you, and we are here for you," he said.

Due to the success of this webinar, another one is planned to take place just before the start of UEFA's club competition knockout phase in early February. 🇳🇵



Czech and Dutch supporters create a festive atmosphere inside the stadium in Budapest.

UEFA GROW AWARDS RECOGNISE STRATEGIC EXCELLENCE

On 3 December, off-field projects from across Europe were rewarded with UEFA Grow awards, honouring strategic activities that have benefited the growth of the game.

Grow awards recognise and promote initiatives and successes of UEFA member associations, while also communicating best practice models and strategies that are helping to keep European football moving forward both on and off the pitch. UEFA received a record 150 nominations from 43 of its

55 member associations for this year's eight award categories, a sign of the excellent work and strategic progress across the continent despite the challenges presented by the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. A creativity and innovation award was presented in each category in addition to the overall winner.

Three nominees from each of the eight categories presented their projects to the UEFA Grow awards jury, made up of eight industry experts. The award winners were announced with the help of football legends Nadine Kessler and Luis Figo during a ceremony streamed to associations from UEFA headquarters in Nyon, Switzerland.

THE 2021 UEFA GROW AWARDS

Brand development

Winner: Football Association of Finland (SPL)
The SPL rebranded Finland's top football league for women and renamed it the National League, removing gender references to reflect the new competition's focus on equality and courage. The launch achieved worldwide media coverage and generated increased attendances, social media audiences and commercial value.
Other nominees: Germany, Iceland
Creativity and innovation award: San Marino



SPL



FRF

Commercial partnership

Winner: Romanian Football Federation (FRF)
By upgrading its retail partner, Penny, into a main sponsor, the FRF was able to co-create a new brand of products targeted at football fans in the country and endorsed by the national football team. This came with a powerful advertising campaign that delivered fantastic results through TV, online and social media.
Other nominees: Finland, Norway
Creativity and innovation award: Spain

Communications campaign

Winner: Royal Netherlands Football Association (KNVB)
A drop in new grassroots participation due to the COVID-19 pandemic prompted the KNVB to launch a new football festival drawing on the popularity of the men's and women's senior national teams as well as Dutch pop sensation Snelle. A new app and website helped increase numbers and push participation above the 2019 figures.
Other nominees: Poland, Serbia
Creativity and innovation award: Italy



KNVB



FIGC

COVID-19 community initiative

Winner: Italian Football Federation (FIGC)
Following the outbreak of the pandemic, the FIGC was able to use the power of football to provide comprehensive support to society in three areas: raising awareness of correct behaviours to minimise the spread of infection, opening the FIGC technical centre for COVID-19 patients and helping to raise funds for medical care and equipment.
Other nominees: Croatia, Denmark
Creativity and innovation award: Moldova

Data and insights project

Winner: Royal Belgian Football Association (RBFA)
Identifying a need for better understanding and presentation of data within the association, the RBFA has created a series of user-friendly data dashboards that empower users to generate their own insights on subjects ranging from participation to marketing and media value.
Other nominees: England, Sweden
Creativity and innovation award: Norway



RBFA

Fan engagement project

Winner: Portuguese Football Federation (FPF)
The FPF launched a new initiative to attract fans to international matches and tournaments. By launching a new fan club, Portugal+, the association has attracted more than 250,000 fans around the world. By learning from other associations and engaging directly with supporters through a fan engagement team, they were able to sell all available tickets for three of Portugal's four EURO 2020 matches, as well as adding 33,000 new fans to the database during the tournament.
Other nominees: Netherlands, Poland
Creativity and innovation winner: Turkey



FPF



FAI

Organisational development project

Winner: Football Association of Ireland (FAI)
The FAI's new constitution and extensive programme of structural reform was crucial in modernising the organisation, rebuilding stakeholder trust and ensuring it can thrive in the future. By engaging with stakeholders, including UEFA and the UEFA Grow team throughout the process, the FAI has shown that great change can be achieved in a short period of time.
Other nominees: Belgium, Russia
Creativity and innovation award: Scotland

Stakeholder support initiative

Winners: Ukrainian Association of Football (UAF)
The UAF's strategic regional development programme helped grow grassroots participation in men's and women's football by 17,000, adapting to the COVID-19 situation by staging knowledge-sharing webinars with all 25 regional associations within Ukraine. Successful practices in club development, participation, digital engagement and social impact were shared by regions from England, Germany, Poland and Portugal during the programme.
Other nominees: Portugal, Sweden
Creativity and innovation award: Russia



UAF

PROVIDING PLAYERS WITH SPECIALISED EDUCATION

The UEFA Academy continues to develop a broad range of education programmes dedicated to elite footballers, leading to jobs in management, administration, scouting or the media.



Didier Drogba and Florent Malouda (back to camera) are current participants of the Master for International Players (MIP), which sets out to equip former international players with essential professional skills to successfully transition to a second career.

For the 2021/22 season, the UEFA Academy, along with academic and football partners, has added to its existing offering a series of five new programmes that offer current and former elite players the necessary skills to advance within the game in a wide variety of roles, on and off the field.

Education courses available for players

UEFA Career Transition Programme

A unique orientation programme guiding players that are either reaching the end of their playing career or have recently retired in their choice of second career.

Duration: one week

UEFA Certificate in Football Management (CFM players' edition)

An online adaptation of the well-established UEFA education programme to

meet the needs of professional football players and referees, allowing them to gain a comprehensive understanding of how the game is managed.

Duration: nine months (academic certification delivered by the Swiss Graduate School of Public Administration, University of Lausanne, Switzerland)

UEFA Executive Master for International Players (MIP)

This programme equips former international players with essential professional skills to achieve their ambition of successfully transitioning to a second career within football organisations.

Duration: two years (academic certification delivered by the Centre de droit et d'économie du Sport, University of Limoges, France)

UEFA Elite Scout Programme

A foundation programme for professional scouts, coaches and ex-players wishing to pursue a scouting career in the modern-day football environment.

Duration: three months

UEFA Player Agent Programme

This programme provides current and future agents with state-of-the-art proficiency in managing players, negotiating, and closing deals on behalf of their clients.

Duration: three months

UEFA Media Consultant Compact Course

This course is designed for former elite players wanting to get an exclusive look into the football media ecosystem and dive into the profession of media consultancy by learning from academic and media experts as well as shadowing them on the field.

Duration: one week

UEFA Financial Management Training

A free online platform offering practical tools and knowledge to elite players so they can be in the driving seat of their finances and financial future.

Duration: 25 hours

UEFA For Players app

A free mobile application designed to expand players' football and career management knowledge at the touch of a screen.

Duration: 8-10 hours

The UEFA Academy in numbers

3,000+ graduates from over 150 countries
62 learning initiatives each year spread over 130 days
50+ countries visited by our programmes
2,000+ documents available on our online platform, UEFA Academy Online.
www.uefaacademy.com

A CAMPAIGN AGAINST CLIMATE CHANGE

UEFA and the European Commission (EC) teamed up for the UEFA club competition matchdays in October to kick off #EveryTrickCounts, a new public awareness campaign in which football stars and freestylers rally against climate change.

Football greats Luís Figo of Portugal, Italy's Gianluigi Buffon and French duo Delphine and Estelle Cascarino turn on the skills in a campaign ad showing that everyone has a role to play in defeating the environment's toughest opponent.

In the video, which was played on television, social media and stadium screens, the four players use an array of footballing tricks to show how simple changes in our daily lives can make a big difference in the fight against climate change.

Respect

#EveryTrickCounts sits under the overarching Respect programme uniting all UEFA social responsibility projects that use football to tackle either environmental or human rights issues.

UEFA's president, Aleksander Čeferin, said: "The message of the advert is simple. It takes all of our tricks to protect the climate. We want everyone to join us and show theirs. By helping the EC deliver this message to an audience of millions, football has the potential to dramatically shift

mindsets on climate change – a critical first step to getting everyone involved in creating a climate-neutral economy."

Frans Timmermans, European Commission executive vice-president for the European Green Deal, added: "Football brings our continent and our planet together. To keep enjoying our favourite game, we need to win the fight against climate change, as a team. I'm delighted that UEFA and the European Commission are kicking off this campaign to assist our climate goals."

European Climate Pact

This advert fulfils a key goal of UEFA's commitment to the European Climate Pact, which invites communities and organisations to help the European Union achieve the Green Deal and Europe's transition to an economy with net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050. UEFA announced its support for the pact in December 2020, agreeing to leverage the global popularity of its elite competitions by running a joint three-year TV advertising campaign to promote the Green Deal. 🌱

"With the European Green Deal, we are pressing for the big, structural changes necessary to make our economy and society ready for a climate-neutral future. But we will not succeed without everybody tackling the issue, by taking small, individual steps like getting to the pitch or stadium sustainably, recycling the waste from our half-time snacks, or turning off a couple of lights as we glue our eyes to the match on TV. Let's kick our bad habits, for the sake of our planet."

Frans Timmermans,
European Commission Executive Vice-President for the European Green Deal





Peter Kopuň



Nina Patalon



Roberto Mancini



Jess Fishlock



Louis van Gaal

NATIONAL TEAM COACHES PROMOTE HEALTHIER LIFESTYLE

UEFA has kicked off a health and well-being campaign that aims to mobilise the European coaching community to educate young people about nutrition, physical activity, mental health and substance abuse.

Germany's Hansi Flick, the Azzurri's Roberto Mancini and Louis van Gaal of the Netherlands are among more than 60 national team coaches supporting the UEFA #FeelWellPlayWell campaign, which uses football to encourage adolescents to make healthy choices early in life.

Initially piloted in four countries in October, #FeelWellPlayWell asks coaches of men's and women's teams representing

Europe's 55 national associations to record 10–30 second video messages that advise 13–17 year-olds about nutrition, physical activity, mental health and substance abuse – especially alcohol and tobacco.

From 7 December, and over the next few months, associations will share these messages with fans, grassroots clubs, coaches and schools through their communication channels. The campaign

“Be active and practise sport for at least 60 minutes every day. You will feel stronger, more dynamic and with more energy. Like true champions!”

Roberto Mancini
Head coach of Italy's men's national team

will culminate on World Health Day 2022 (7 April) with a joint activity organised by UEFA and its member associations.

UEFA Health and Well-being policy

This campaign is the first of many initiatives that UEFA plans to launch as part of the new health and well-being policy described in its five-year strategy, Together for the Future of Football. The policy aims to safeguard health and well-being both through football activities across all age groups and awareness-raising initiatives.

So far, more than 30 national associations have answered UEFA's #FeelWellPlayWell call to action with coaches from all levels of the game – youth, futsal, Under-21 as well as senior – recording video messages.

UEFA's campaign messages are based on scientific guidance from the Italian non-governmental organisation *Insieme contro il Cancro* (Together against Cancer) and address four topics: physical activity, nutrition, substance abuse, particularly alcohol and tobacco, and mental health.

Pilot campaign

UEFA widened the scope of #FeelWellPlayWell to all European associations after successfully piloting the campaign in Italy, the Netherlands, Northern Ireland and Slovenia.

The initiative also forms the centrepiece of UEFA's official pledge to the European Commission's *HealthyLifestyle4All*, a campaign with similar goals that encourages organisations, civil society and public authorities to promote the long-term benefits of sport and healthy lifestyles.

The influence of coaches will provide a fresh perspective on the benefits of playing sport and leading healthy lifestyles, and spur momentum for spreading good habits for a healthier Europe. 🌱

Björn Kuipers appointed as UEFA refereeing officer



FORMER INTERNATIONAL REFEREE Björn Kuipers has been appointed by the UEFA Executive Committee as one of UEFA's five refereeing officers.

He replaces Marc Batta (France), who stood down at the end of November after 11 years of excellent service supporting and developing young international referees. Kuipers rose through the ranks in his native Netherlands, refereeing his first

professional match in 2002. His international career saw him take charge of the 2014 UEFA Champions League final and two UEFA Europa League finals, in 2013 and 2018.

He was a key member of the referee teams at UEFA EUROs 2012, 2016 and, most recently, 2020, where he was appointed for the final between Italy and England at Wembley Stadium in London.

Helping learners in Oceania with a new free platform

THE UEFA ASSIST football development programme has helped the Oceania Football Confederation (OFC) launch its new online education tool, OFC Learn, from which national football associations across Oceania will benefit.

The new free platform, funded by UEFA Assist and designed with guidance from the UEFA Academy, will revolutionise the way people learn by offering different educational resources, such as online courses, webinars, articles and group discussions, to OFC national associations and their staff, sharing examples of European best practice.

The first phase, which will have content added to it on a regular basis, focuses on referee and coach education materials, but will grow to include corporate, administration, medical, marketing and communications fields, with the overall aim of building capacity in all 11 OFC member associations.

OFC Learn is the latest global initiative supported by Assist, which has channelled UEFA support to more than 200 football development projects in close to 60 countries worldwide since its creation in 2017.

Record interest in hosting Women's EURO 2025

FIVE POTENTIAL bids have been submitted to host the European Women's Championship finals in July 2025: a joint declaration of interest from Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden, as well as single declarations of interest from France, Poland, Switzerland and Ukraine.

The associations have until October 2022 to submit their bid dossiers, on the basis of which the UEFA Executive Committee will appoint the hosts in December 2022.

UEFA has responded to the ever-increasing growth in popularity of women's football by raising the standards for hosting the finals in 2025. As part of a flexible bidding process, bidders are recommended to present eight UEFA Category 4 stadiums with a variety of capacities ranging from 15,000 to 30,000.





Eddy Risch

NATIONAL TRAINING CENTRE OPENS

The Liechtenstein Football Association (LFV) has taken a giant step along its five-year road map for improving technical standards in both the men's and the women's games with the launch of a state-of-the-art national training centre.

BY ANTON BANZER

Opened in September and funded in part by UEFA's HatTrick development programme, which channels EURO revenue into football projects in all 55 of UEFA's member associations, the new complex stands to benefit Liechtenstein's national teams and local clubs.

Part new build, part redevelopment, the centre is equipped with four pitches (three natural grass and one artificial), dressing rooms for teams, coaches and match officials, physiotherapy facilities,

an analysis and consultation room, a performance testing and warm-up area, together with a beach soccer court.

The adjacent privately run hotels and gym are the perfect extension to the training centre, ensuring all teams' needs are comprehensively met.

Infrastructure is a strategic priority of Gemeinsam.2026 (Together.2026), the LFV's football strategy, unveiled in August. The successful opening of the national training centre in Ruggell completes the first of a two-part

development programme. The next big milestone is the opening of an LFV campus in Schaan in 2026.

"Here in Ruggell we did a very good job of reconciling the interests of all the different stakeholders: the national teams, the local clubs and the local community," says the LFV president, Hugo Quaderer. "The training centre project also laid the groundwork for the LFV campus in Schaan. It is an excellent example of what we can achieve by repurposing existing infrastructure in cooperation with the local community."

Vision Football Liechtenstein

The LFV strategy is the product of both an in-depth consultation process with key stakeholders – Vision Football Liechtenstein – and guidance from UEFA's Grow programme, which offers strategic development services to member associations across a range of football management topics.

"The support we received from local clubs and the UEFA Grow and HatTrick programmes has been invaluable," said Peter Jehle, general secretary of the LFV. "We are looking forward to continuing this journey together as we implement our Gemeinsam.2026 strategy.

"We are certain it will help us positively shape the future of football over the next five years," he added.

Developing the game – to the power of five

Gemeinsam.2026 will develop the national game by focusing on five specific goals:

1. Strengthening infrastructure, in particular by creating the LFV campus, a national centre of excellence for football;
2. Supporting club development through closer cooperation with the LFV;
3. Increasing participation thanks to positive football experiences and capitalising on the power of the game to address social issues;
4. Ensuring the sustainable development of women's football by implementing a separate five-year strategy, Frauen am Ball 2026 (Women on the Ball 2026);
5. Guaranteeing more competitive football by adopting tried-and-tested European methods to nurture talented young players. 🌱

NEW NATIONAL STADIUM OFFICIALLY OPENED

The Stade de Luxembourg, a brand-new football and rugby venue, was officially inaugurated at the end of September.



FLF

A festive opening ceremony was attended by His Royal Highness Grand Duke Henri; Fernand Etgen, president of the chamber of deputies; Lydie Polfer, mayor of the city of Luxembourg; and Dan Kersch, minister for sport. The Luxembourg Football Federation (FLF) was officially represented by its president, Paul Philipp, and members of the federation's board of directors.

State-of-the-art venue

Luxembourg's brand-new national football and rugby stadium is fully compliant with the latest standards in terms of comfort, technology and safety, and features an adjoining multipurpose space designed to accommodate a wide range of sporting and cultural events.

The Stade de Luxembourg meets all the specifications for a UEFA category 4

stadium, and has a seating capacity of 9,471 – 8,708 standard seats, 512 VIP seats, 27 VVIP seats, 174 press seats and 50 seats for people with reduced mobility.

Distinctive design

Instantly recognisable for its distinctive architectural design, the stadium is a prominent feature on the skyline of the newly developed Cloche d'Or district. With its timeless architecture, it will become a symbol of Luxembourg football.

As the stadium will host rugby and football matches alike, the playing surface serves as both a football pitch (105 X 68 m) and a rugby pitch (115 X 70 m). The pitch also features an automatic sprinkler system, with water supplied by a rainwater collection tank.

To ensure a high-quality playing surface during the winter months, an

electric heating system is built into the pitch's foundations. Depending on the weather, mobile ultraviolet lights help support the turf's growth. The project has been subsidised by the ministry of sport, and the construction of a parking area has been fully financed by the city of Luxembourg.

Winning start

The Stade de Luxembourg has already begun hosting football matches. On 1 September, the men's senior national team played the first official match in the new stadium, beating Azerbaijan 2-1 in the European Qualifiers for the 2022 World Cup. Six days later, Luxembourg and Qatar played out a 1-1 draw in a friendly. The national women's team also made their debut at the venue, in a Women's World Cup qualifier against England. 🌱

THE GROWING IMPORTANCE OF WOMEN'S FOOTBALL IN POLAND

In October, the Polish Football Association hosted a UEFA Share meeting in the city of Sopot on the development of women's football.

BY PIOTR WIŚNIEWSKI

UEFA Share (previously the Study Group Scheme) supports football development in Europe by providing opportunities for the exchange of technical knowledge and experience between the technical staff, coach educators and coaches of UEFA member associations.

Representatives of five national associations joined the Polish FA's own representatives for the four-day meeting. "Our guests did not expect so much to be happening in Poland as regards the training of female players," said Paweł Grycmann, the new director of the association's coach education school. "I think it was a very productive and time well spent in terms of sharing our own experience of working with younger and older female players. The presence of associations that have strong women's teams – England, France and Norway – was a bonus. They were joined by two smaller associations, San Marino and Andorra, who also presented some



Representatives of five national associations joined hosts Poland in Sopot.

really interesting projects. I am uplifted by the fact that Poland has absolutely nothing to be ashamed of in terms of the development of women's football; on the contrary, several ongoing projects put us at the absolute forefront," he said.

"Starting from the bottom, there is the UEFA Playmakers project for girls, then the 'From the Backyard to the Stadium for the Tymbar Cup', followed by the network of Young Eagles academies for 6–11 year-olds, the Talent Pro project and,

finally, the national youth leagues," Grycmann explained. Nina Patalon, head coach of the Polish women's national team, was also on hand to share lessons learned from her work with the national teams.

The issue of coach education was also discussed. In Poland, women are starting to gain UEFA qualifications. Apart from Nina Patalon, who holds a UEFA Pro licence, there are two Polish female coaches with Elite Youth A licences. 🌐

The Syrenka Cup returns

BY EMIL KOPAŃSKI

After a one-year break due to the coronavirus pandemic, the Syrenka Cup tournament returned to the pitches. From 3 to 7 September, eight national Under-17 teams competed in the latest edition of this prestigious competition, which is now a permanent part of the football calendar.

Teams from Poland, the Czech Republic, England, Moldova, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal and Romania took part in the tournament. The matches were played at four venues: in Elbląg, Malbork, Ostróda and Starogard Gdański. The idea behind the tournament, which has been organised since 1986, is to popularise football among children and young people.

The first edition was won by the French national team, which featured the young Zinedine Zidane, the future European and world champion.

This time, the Netherlands lifted the cup. In the decisive match, played in Ostróda, the Oranje defeated England 3-2. Third place went to Poland, who defeated Portugal 2-1 in the contest for the lowest step on the podium. Interestingly, all matches of the hosts, as well as the final, were broadcast live on the Łączy Nas Piłka YouTube channel, owned by the Polish Football Association. In addition, video assistant referee (VAR) technology was used in every televised match, which is a rare occurrence at youth level in football.

AUSTRIA

www.oefb.at

GERHARD MILLETICH ELECTED NEW ÖFB PRESIDENT

MICHAEL GRASWALD

Gerhard Milletich was elected president of the Austrian Football Association (ÖFB) by 11 votes to 2 at the association's annual general meeting in Velden on 17 October. He succeeds Leo Windtner, who held the position for 12 years and was named ÖFB honorary president at the AGM.

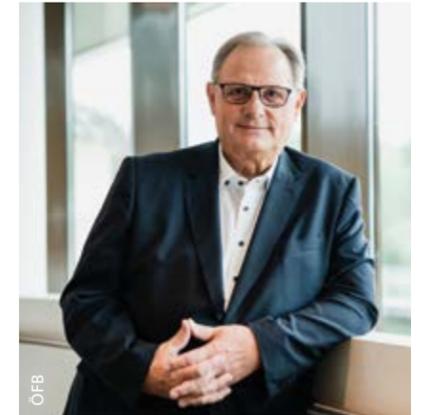
Johann Gartner, Josef Geisler, Gerhard Götschhofer and Philip Thonhauser were all elected as vice-presidents.

Gerhard Milletich has been heavily involved in football for decades, in various capacities. The 65-year-old businessman has been president of the Burgenland Football Association since 2012 and was chairman of SC/ESV Parndorf for 27 years. He also has the full-time job of running

the Bohmann Verlag, one of the largest publishing houses in Austria, which he co-owns.

"It is a great honour for me to be elected ÖFB president and to serve Austrian football in this way. I am fully aware of the huge responsibility that the position entails," said Gerhard Milletich following his election. "I can guarantee that I will do everything in my power to lead Austrian football as best I can through the coming years."

Milletich also paid tribute to the outgoing ÖFB president, Leo Windtner: "He can look back on numerous highlights and successes. On behalf of Austrian football, I would like to extend to him enormous gratitude and respect for his outstanding achievements. I am delighted



and consider it very fitting that he has been named ÖFB honorary president."

AZERBAIJAN

www.affa.az

SHAMAKHI CITY STADIUM OPENS

FIRUZ ABDULLA

The president of Azerbaijan, Ilham Aliyev, and First Lady Mehriban Aliyeva participated in the opening ceremony of Shamakhi City Stadium on 1 November.

The Association of Football Federations of Azerbaijan (AFFA) executive vice-president, Elkhan Mammadov, presented some details about the new stadium, which was funded 87% by UEFA and 13% by the AFFA.

The stadium, with a capacity of 2,200, will have a UEFA Category 2 classification, based on the fact that it has all the facilities for international matches. Matches in the first, second and third qualifying rounds of UEFA club competitions, as well as national team matches in all age-limit competitions, can be held there.

The complex also includes a sports hall for judo and wrestling, as well as a gym. It also boasts two mini-pitches with artificial turf, each with a stand that can seat 300 supporters.



BELGIUM

www.rbfa.be

CONSTRUCTING AND FUNDING BELGIAN RED COURTS

MATTEO BALLIAUW

The Royal Belgian Football Association (RBFA) wants to have a meaningful and sustainable impact on society. This is why we created the Belgian Red Courts project.

Back in 2005, the RBFA built 40 mini-football pitches (courts) in different municipalities in Belgium. Now, 15 years later, we want to start a new chapter on the occasion of our 125th anniversary.

Our objective is to renovate those 40 mini-pitches all over the country within four years. It is very important for us to renovate, rather than build new courts, because this is the most sustainable option and it is therefore in line with our strategy to be sustainable, environmentally caring and inclusive. More specifically, it is a way to upgrade public spaces, spaces that are steadily decreasing in number.

Through this initiative, we also want to strengthen the link between the RBFA and the 40 local communities by creating a programme of activities for each court

and holding the Belgian Red Courts Cup. The programme will use the power of sport to work on the prevention of radicalisation. Moreover, we aim to educate and raise awareness on different topics, such as inclusion, health and well-being, ethics and the environment. Youngsters who live near the courts will have the opportunity to take up a leadership role within their community as a Belgian Red Court coach. They will receive training on the objectives of the court, how to organise an activity in a safe way and how to use the power of football to have a local impact.

The Belgian Red Courts Cup, on the other hand, will be a national football tournament for different target groups (youngsters, people with disabilities, older people [walking football], women, fans, etc.).

Former men's and women's national team players are taking on the role of ambassador for each court.



In order to fund this and other social responsibility projects, we are auctioning the shirts worn by our men's and women's national team players on the pitch, as well as other memorabilia (e.g. captain's armbands, pennants, and signed books) and experiences (e.g. a visit or a training session at our national training centre). We are doing this through a dedicated platform, MatchWornShirt.com, where it is possible to bid for the shirts during the match, thereby adding a new experience for fans when watching our games. As many clubs already use the same platform, many football fans from different parts of the world are registered on it, which attracts a large audience for the auctions of clubs' Belgian players' shirts and results in substantial income for our social responsibility projects.

BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

www.nfsbih.ba

WOMEN'S UNDER-19 PROMOTION AND STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT

SLAVICA PECKOZA

The Bosnia and Herzegovina Football Federation (BHFF) hosted a qualifying mini-tournament in League B of the European Women's Under-19 Championship from 19 to 25 October in Mostar and Široki Brijeg.

Both cities have a rich football history and the stadiums, Pod Bijelim Brijegom and Pecara, in addition to excellent conditions, offered the participants the special charm of playing on fields where some beautiful football stories were written.

Bosnia and Herzegovina's women's Under-19 head coach, Dragan Jevtić, said: "This tournament was the pinnacle of everything we have done in the past year. We were not afraid of being the tournament favourites because we believed in our quality and knew how good our players are. We have a competitive national team and now our expectations are even higher with our promotion to League A.

This is a very positive evolution for our women's Under-19 team and we will continue to develop our style of play."

During the qualifying tournament, a UEFA Football Federations of the Future workshop was held in Sarajevo, attended by representatives of all premier league clubs, including SFK 2000 Sarajevo, who made a key contribution to the discussions on the development of women's football in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Before the end of this year, UEFA's Grow team will submit a proposed football development strategy for Bosnia and Herzegovina for the period from 2022 to 2026.



BULGARIA

www.bfunion.bg

BORISLAV MIHAYLOV RE-ELECTED AS PRESIDENT

CHRISTO ZAPRYANOV

Borislav Mihaylov was re-elected as president of the Bulgarian Football Union at an extraordinary general assembly held on 12 October. The former UEFA Executive Committee member won 241 of the delegates' votes, leaving behind former Manchester United striker Dimitar Berbatov. This will be Mihaylov's fifth term as head of Bulgarian football – a



position he has held since 2005. The former Bulgarian international goalkeeper resigned in October 2019 but withdrew his resignation 18 months later. Despite the pandemic situation in the country, the level of professionalism in the organisation of the general assembly and the transparency of the voting procedure were recognised by the UEFA and FIFA observers in attendance.

CROATIA

www.hns-cff.hr

INCREASED INVESTMENT IN FOOTBALL INFRASTRUCTURE

NIKA BAHTIJAREVIĆ

Along with Croatia's continued successes on the pitch, the Croatian Football Federation (HNS) has another important achievement to be proud of when looking back on 2021 – its investments into improving the state of football infrastructure in Croatia. In the second half of 2021, the HNS completed the construction of four full-size artificial pitches in Krapina, Zagreb (Ravnice), Dugopolje and Rab, as well as a mini-pitch in Pakrac. All the pitches were funded through the UEFA HatTrick programme and will serve to promote football development and participation in local communities.

The HNS also invested UEFA HatTrick funding into football infrastructure for professional clubs, with state-of-the-art hybrid pitches being installed at the stadiums of NK Šibenik, NK Varaždin and HNK Hajduk. This second series of hybrid pitch construction is a continuation of the HNS's 2018 hybrid pitch project – thanks to these two series of pitch construction, Croatian top-division matches are now all played on modern hybrid pitches, which have contributed greatly to reduced injury rates



HNK Hajduk

HNS president Marijan Kustić and HNK Hajduk representative Ivan Matana.

and the increased quality of Croatian football, especially under winter conditions. With football infrastructure being a key strategic pillar for the HNS,

the federation plans to continue its investments in 2022, with two pitches scheduled to be completed in January already.

DENMARK

www.dbu.dk

USING HUMOUR TO PROMOTE FAIR PLAY

ANNE TJELL

Lack of respect for referees, coaches and players is a problem that requires continued focus. A new survey among Danish football referees shows that a majority have experienced negative behaviour and shouting on the pitch. There are also continuing examples in the media of referees and players being subjected to unacceptable behaviour.

In response, the Danish FA (DBU) launched the Raab Paent! (Shout Respectfully!) campaign in August 2021.

A humorous film on social media with former national team player Stig Toefting in the lead role is one of the key elements of the campaign. Toefting was known for his fiery temper earlier in his career.

However, since then, he has gained more understanding of fair play on the field. He has learned to be neither too polite nor too kind, but to be someone that people can relate to.

Clubs can order fair play materials such as posters and stickers to raise awareness of the theme. The goal is to influence and change behaviour and attitude, knowing that it will take more than one campaign to do so.

Therefore, efforts in this direction must go on. The DBU has continuously focused on respect and fair play, and it recently drew up a code of conduct to formalise the fair play principles. In addition, the sanctions have been tightened, resulting in several Danish top-division clubs



receiving historically high penalties and fines in 2019 and 2020 for homophobic chanting and insults from their fans and players, which hopefully will have a preventive effect and lead to more fair play and respect in the future.

ENGLAND

www.thefa.com

SEASON-LONG CAMPAIGN TO CELEBRATE 150 YEARS OF THE FA CUP

TOM EVERETT

Ahead of the first round of this season's FA Cup, the English FA (The FA) launched a campaign to celebrate the 150th anniversary of the world's longest-running football knockout competition.

The FA Challenge Cup was established 150 years ago, with the first matches taking place on 11 November 1871

following a proposal by the then secretary of the association, Charles W. Alcock, with a vision to bring hope, opportunity and equality to football.

To kick off the season-long campaign, The FA unveiled a film that features two-time winner Ian Wright and showcases how Alcock's founding values are just as relevant and important today.

The film was released across The FA Cup's digital channels and brings to life the rich history and traditions of the competition, while highlighting the impact that it continues to provide at all levels of the football pyramid.

A series of large-scale image projections supported the film, with key figures and moments through the years displayed on landmarks across the country to depict the competition's values alongside scripted lines from the film. A key example was Charles W. Alcock featuring on the playing surface of The Oval, London, where the competition's very first final was contested by Wanderers and Royal Engineers on 16 March 1872.

The 150th anniversary of the competition will continue to be recognised and celebrated by The FA throughout the season, culminating in the final at Wembley on Saturday 14 May 2022.



ESTONIA

www.jalgpall.ee

ESTONIAN FA CELEBRATES ITS CENTENARY

EVA NÖMME

The Estonian Football Association (EFA) celebrated its 100th anniversary on 14 December.

The association was founded on 14 December 1921 by nine representatives (Bernhard Abrams, Karl Akel, William Fiskar, Julius Reinans, Oskar Raudsep, Otto Silber, Hans Roost, Verner Eklõf and Vladimir Tell) of three clubs (Estonian Sports Society Tallinna Kalev, Tallinn Football Club and Gymnastics Society Tallinn Sport). The EFA's first chairman was Gustav Laanekõrb.

The Estonian FA became a member of FIFA in 1923 and of UEFA in 1992. After being disbanded as a result of Estonia's occupation after World War II, the association was re-established on 3 December 1988.

At the end of last summer, a special postage stamp dedicated to the 100th birthday of the Estonian Football Association was issued, depicting its insignia. That was followed at the end of the year by a commemorative calendar illustrated with caricatures of people



who have made a significant contribution to Estonian football, including former national team players as well as current players and coaches.

Among the other celebrations, the public broadcasting channel will air a one-hour special dedicated to Estonian football, and the EFA will award orders of merit in gold and silver to individuals

whose actions have helped Estonian football grow.

Next year, various activities are planned to mark the important anniversary. An 800-page book on the history of Estonian football will be published, while in the summer an exhibition match will take place with players that played for the country in the past 30 years.

FAROE ISLANDS

www.fsf.fo

KLÆMINT REACHES MILESTONE

TERJI NIELSEN

In the final group match of the European Qualifiers for the 2022 World Cup in Qatar, Faroese forward Klæmint Andrasson Olsen reached a milestone when he scored to make it 2-2 against Israel in Netanya in Israel. Just a few days earlier, he had managed to put the ball past Kasper Schmeichel and become the first player to score against Denmark in their World Cup qualifying group. Denmark went on to defeat the Faroe Islands 3-1 in the match in Copenhagen.

The 31-year-old legendary Faroese forward already holds the record as the all-time top scorer in the Faroese league with 221 goals in 348 matches.

And now he can also call himself the joint top scorer of all time in the Faroese national team with ten goals in 45 matches.

Olsen played his first full international back in 2012, but it was only in 2019 that he scored his first goal for the national team, meaning that he has managed to score ten goals in just over two years.

He shares the record of ten goals with former international Rógvi Jacobsen, who played for the national team between 1999 and 2009. But with hopefully many more years still to come in the national team, it is surely only a matter of time until Olsen breaks the



record, and it will be exciting to see how many goals he eventually scores before the end of his playing career.

GERMANY

www.dfb.de

DFB LAUNCHES AMATEUR BAROMETER

NIELS BARNHOFER

What matters to members of amateur clubs? The German Football Association (DFB) and its 21 state associations have launched an amateur 'barometer' to find out.

Regular surveys will be sent to footballers, coaches, referees and volunteers, giving everyone involved the opportunity to express themselves on the topics that matter to them. The findings can then be used when making decisions about crucial aspects of the amateur game.

Gauging the opinions of those involved in amateur and grassroots football in Germany was one of the recommendations of the DFB amateur football congress in 2019, when delegates expressed a wish for greater communication and involvement.



All the 24,500 or so amateur clubs in Germany have been informed of the barometer's launch and are encouraged to participate. Under the motto Make the Game, the DFB and its state associations are reaching out to precisely those

individuals and clubs that shape the game and prop up the pyramid.

The barometer is intended for everyone involved in amateur football clubs or sections, from volunteer chairpersons and treasurers, youth leaders and coaches to players and parents.

It is possible to sign up at any time and get notifications as soon as a new survey starts. So far, there has been a welcome questionnaire, a survey about COVID-19 vaccinations and another about current developments in the pandemic.

Technical implementation and support is carried out by SLC Management GmbH, which successfully implemented a similar project with the Bavarian football association and manages the Bundesliga Barometer, the biggest fan survey in Germany football.

GIBRALTAR

www.gibraltarfa.com

UNDER-19S MAKE THEIR INTERNATIONAL FUTSAL DEBUT

STEVEN GONZALEZ

Gibraltar's men's Under-19 futsal team made their competitive international debut at the beginning of November when they hosted their Under-19 Futsal EURO preliminary round qualifying group at the Tercentenary sports hall.

Gibraltar's opponents in the group were North Macedonia and Montenegro, two nations that had visited the Rock in the past in various other UEFA competitions, both in football and futsal.

Montenegro were arguably the favourites to win the group and, as decided by the draw, their first match was against Gibraltar – in other words, it was a baptism of fire for the hosts.

However, under the expert guidance of Gibraltar's futsal head coach, Jose Carlos Gil Prieto, Gibraltar got off to a flying start. Spurred on by the noisy and raucous home crowd, Gibraltar were 2-0 up after

11 minutes and held on to that lead until half-time. In the second half, Montenegro began to show their class and scored six unanswered goals. A late rally by Gibraltar saw them pull one goal back, leaving the final score as a very respectable 6-3 defeat.

The second match saw Montenegro beat North Macedonia 2-0, justifying their billing as group favourites and progressing to the main qualifying round as group winners.



The final game in the group, North Macedonia v Gibraltar, was therefore a straight contest for second place. Once again, Gibraltar took the lead, but this time their opponents hit back immediately and began to stamp their authority on the game, racing into a 4-1 lead. With five minutes to go, Gibraltar pulled a goal back and immediately deployed their flying goalkeeper. What followed was a three-minute onslaught on their opponents' goal, but chance after chance was squandered by the hosts, leaving the visitors as 4-2 winners.

Despite those two defeats, Gibraltar's U19 futsal team can take plenty of positives from their international bow. Many of the players in the squad are still young enough to get a second chance at this level in two years' time, and their performances prove that they can look forward to a bright futsal future!

ISRAEL

www.football.org.il

FIRST-EVER TECHNICAL DIRECTOR OF WOMEN'S FOOTBALL

EITAN DOTAN

The Israel Football Association has recruited Nora Haeuptle under a two-year contract, with an option for an additional two years, as the first-ever technical director of women's football in Israel. Haeuptle, who is originally from Switzerland, will be responsible for the development of women's football for all age groups, as well as appointing the professional staff for the various teams, coaching the senior team, managing the centres of excellence and academies for women, and leading training and coaching courses in women's football.

Yossi Sharabi, CEO of the Israel Football Association said: "We are committed to promoting, developing and nurturing

women's football, which we believe has enormous potential in Israel, and the appointment of Nora Haeuptle is a game changer. The Israel Football Association has invested a lot of resources in bringing in a senior, professional figure with an impressive résumé to lead women's football. I have met Nora several times and the impression is that she is a first-rate professional. We are not afraid of revolutions, we are ready for a long and orderly process, and we believe that Nora will make a great contribution to the change that we all long for."

Nora Haeuptle said: "I'm very satisfied that I've signed with the Israel Football Association and enthusiastic to represent



Nora Haeuptle

Israeli football and its outstanding values as the new coach of the women's national team and technical

director. I thank the association's leaders for the confidence they have placed in me and I'm looking forward to starting a successful journey with my new staff and team. I see a lot of potential for women's football in Israel, and I'm very excited to develop an ambitious new vision. All together we can create a bright future based on the development and empowerment of the Israeli players, coaches, referees, administrators and clubs."

ITALY

www.figc.it

PERFORMANCE ITALIA TO REDUCE INJURIES

DIEGO ANTENZIO

The Italian Olympic Committee (CONI) and the Italian Football Federation (FIGC) – through the Institute of Sports Science and Club Italia, respectively – have launched Performance ITALIA, a series of educational videos designed to help improve performance and reduce injuries.

After two years of work by a pool of technical experts in training methodology, coordinated by Prof. Valter Di Salvo (head of performance and research at the FIGC's Club Italia) and Prof. Alessandro Donati (training methodology coordinator at the CONI's Institute of Sports Science), a first series of videos has been produced, on the topic of specific movements. The four videos, each about 20 minutes long, are available on both coni.it and figc.it. The initial project plan foresees additional video series on integration, aerobics, individualisation, literature and nutrition.

This collaboration will provide coaches with a new methodological approach, based on the principle that improvements

in performance are not possible if players are forced to reduce their training time due to injury. Significant benefits will also be felt in relation to wear-and-tear pathologies (particularly on the joints), improving footballers' overall health and quality of life after their playing careers.

"At CONI we have done four years of high-precision work with each federation, which had an impact on two-thirds of the medals won in Tokyo," explains Carlo Mornati, CONI general secretary. "Now we want to do something innovative by offering training from top to bottom. I thank the FIGC for its support and for the excellent work of its performance division."

"Certain results cannot be achieved without the excellence of contributors such as our performance division, Club Italia and the Institute of Sports Science," says the FIGC general secretary, Marco Brunelli. "The project itself is not revolutionary, but its objective in terms of prevention is innovative."



Modern football is increasingly projected towards a performance model in which speed of play and movement have become decisive. This creates problems in terms of injuries, and the preventive methodology used up until now has had no effect on the number of injuries, particularly injuries to the joints. Performance ITALIA offers a different approach, integrating information on specific effects, performance analysis and the importance of individualisation based on scientific evidence, but also each player's habits and lifestyle."

LITHUANIA

www.lff.lt

2021 FUTSAL WORLD CUP PROMOTING LITHUANIA'S NAME AROUND THE WORLD

AGNĖ RUDYTĖ

The largest futsal event of this year, the Futsal World Cup, held in Lithuania, created value and made a significant contribution to Lithuania, not only by increasing public interest in futsal in the country, but also by appreciably promoting Lithuania's name around the world.

"It was a great honour and responsibility for the Lithuanian Football Federation to organise this historic event. We are happy with the excellent results and the legacy that this sports festival will leave by creating value for football and making Lithuania's name known," said Edgaras Stankevičius, general secretary of the Lithuanian Football Federation. Despite the number of visitors being

affected by the pandemic, 63,748 people from the host country and elsewhere attended Futsal World Cup matches in the different arenas. The number of spectators reached its peak on the final day, with 6,374 and 8,498 watching the match for third place and the final respectively.

According to research conducted by the research company Kantar after the event, the 2021 Futsal World Cup had a considerable impact on the general interest of Lithuanians in futsal, with the popularity of the sport increasing by 10% among the respondents in the 16–50 age group and awareness of the Futsal World Cup increasing by 6% among the population as a whole.



MALTA

www.mfa.com.mt

TALENT IDENTIFICATION AND GREATER ACCESSIBILITY TO FOOTBALL

PAMELA SCHEMBRI

Greater accessibility and increased participation in football, the pathway from grassroots to elite level, talent identification and social responsibility are the core aspects of the Inhobb il-Futbol (I Love Football) Foundation set up earlier this year by the Malta Football Association (MFA).

The foundation is at the heart of the develop and grow pillar of the MFA strategy, described by the association's president, Bjorn Vassallo, as "a pivotal part of the association's strategic plan as it prioritises aspects that are crucial for Maltese football to move forward in the long term. Our aim, through a unified game philosophy, is to perform better and obtain constant results."

Over the past six months, the Inhobb il-Futbol Foundation has embarked on a series of projects, including the launch of regional hubs. This is essentially a talent

identification programme for promising young players in the 11–14 age bracket, who are being given the opportunity to train under the guidance of Malta FA-appointed coaches in addition to their sessions with their respective clubs.

UEFA Playmakers is another exciting project undertaken by the foundation, with the support of UEFA and Disney. Sessions, held at various primary schools across Malta and Gozo, involve girls aged five to eight, who are invited to venture into the magical world of Disney as they take their first steps on their footballing journey.

The foundation has also launched the Fun Fit Schools programme, another initiative aimed at encouraging schoolchildren to play football while promoting physical activity and a healthy lifestyle from a very young age. This programme follows the signing of a memorandum of understanding with the ministry of education.

As part of its remit to implement a new performance strategy for youth development in collaboration with local clubs, the foundation has also taken over the organisation of the youth leagues for Under-17, Under-15 and Under-14 teams.

The MFA remains fully committed to using football's unique ability to inspire and unite people by championing good causes and helping those in need. The foundation's social responsibility department is currently working on several initiatives, including different programmes intended to promote social inclusion and the integration of refugees, a new UEFA HatTrick project called #mytime to encourage older people to remain active, and fundraising events as part of the nationwide Pink October–November awareness campaign organised by the Marigold Foundation.

NORTHERN IRELAND

www.irishfa.com

FEMALE-ONLY COACHING COURSES THRIVE ACROSS NORTHERN IRELAND

NIGEL TILSON

The Irish FA Foundation's female-only coaching courses are proving to be extremely popular across Northern Ireland. This year has seen the biggest uptake to date for courses where only women and girls take part. Five female-only national coaching certificate (NCC) courses have been staged so far – a new record.

In the early part of 2021, three courses were run under strict COVID protocols, which meant there had to be a blended approach to their delivery. There were virtual settings for the theory elements of the courses, with practical sessions taking place a few months later, followed by further practical sessions held at the National Football Stadium at Windsor Park.



More recently, NCC courses for women and girls were delivered at Crewe United's ground in Glenavy (24 participants) and the Bawnacre Centre in Irvinestown (18 participants).

The Irish FA Foundation's girls' participation officer, Clare Carson, said

the roll-out of the courses supports the vision within the Irish FA women's football strategy of growing the game and maximising impact. This year, more than 90 new female coaches from over 40 clubs have been upskilled by completing female-only NCC courses, she added.

Gail Redmond, the Irish FA Foundation's development manager for women's football, said: "We are on target not just to have 24 new female coaches per year but to double the amount of female NCC coaches by 2024."

ROMANIA

www.frf.ro

A NEW UNDER-20 NATIONAL TEAM

PAUL ZAHARIA

Taking into consideration several aspects, including the fact that, at certain ages, Romanian footballers do not benefit from continuity, the Romanian Football Federation (FRF) has taken some measures to fill these gaps.

Earlier this year, the federation created its first-ever Under-20 national team with a view to ensuring a smoother transition at international level from the Under-19s to the Under-21s. The team's head coach is 43-year-old former goalkeeper Bogdan Lobonț, who was capped 85 times for the Romanian national team. The Under-20s have already played some strong opposition, including the Czech Republic, England, Germany, Italy, Poland and Portugal. Next year, some of the team will perhaps be ready to make the jump to the Under-21 national team, which has a schedule of friendlies lined up, ahead of the European Under-21 Championship

finals in 2023, for which it qualifies automatically as one of the hosts, along with Georgia.

Turning to youth football at domestic level, the FRF executive committee has approved the creation of an Under-12 national championship, which will be organised by the federation in partnership with the 41 county football associations, plus Bucharest, the capital.

This new national championship also serves the purpose of continuity. There is already an Under-11 championship, but with not so many teams, whereas the new Under-12 championship will involve teams from all clubs in the top three divisions.

The main goal is to identify, monitor and develop the youngest talents all over the country. No championship table and standings will be kept.

Teams will be mixed for the eight-a-side matches, with boys born on or after

1 January 2010 eligible to take part, as well as up to three girls born on or after 1 January 2008. The teams will play two 30-minute halves on reduced-size pitches of 60x40 metres. In addition, each squad will be divided into two groups, and each group will play for 15 minutes in each half.

The first round will be at county level, with each team playing at least 22 matches. At the end of the first round, the technical committees of each county will determine the 'team of the county', putting 42 teams through to the second phase, which will be between the counties.

Then comes the final phase, involving one team from each of the six regions of Romania.

The new competition therefore has all the ingredients to achieve its main objective and add up to an extensive scouting scheme at national level.

RUSSIA

www.rfs.ru

FOOTBALL LEGEND CELEBRATES 95TH BIRTHDAY

EKATERINA GRISHENKOVA

 On 12 October, Nikita Simonyan, the patriarch of Soviet and Russian football and currently the first vice-president of the Football Union of Russia, celebrated his 95th birthday.

The whole of Simonyan's life is inextricably linked with domestic football, to which he brought fame and

dignity, first as a player, then as a coach, and as an administrator after that. For today's generation, he is an example of someone with a professional attitude and love for football.

Born in the city of Armavir (Krasnodar region), Simonyan holds many titles and awards. Olympic champion in 1956 in Melbourne as part of the USSR national team, four-time champion and two-time USSR cup winner, he is the all-time top scorer in the history of FC Spartak Moscow (160 goals).

Subsequently, he repeatedly led Spartak and Ararat Yerevan to victories in the USSR championship and cup as a coach.

One of the most famous stories about him comes from the

1956 Olympics, where the USSR national team beat Yugoslavia in the final. Eduard Streltsov played four matches for the Soviet team, but he was not included in the squad for the final. Back then, only the players in the final received gold medals. Simonyan, considering that Streltsov was far worthier of a medal, offered him his own medal, but Streltsov refused.

For outstanding achievements in football, he was awarded orders of merit by the International Olympic Committee, FIFA and UEFA, the Russian Order of Merit for the Fatherland and Order of Friendship, and the honorary title of Honored Worker of Physical Culture of the Russian Federation. In 2017, Simonyan assisted with the 2018 World Cup draw at the Kremlin.

In honour of his significant birthday, Simonyan received many warm congratulations from Russia and abroad, including from the UEFA and FIFA presidents.



SAN MARINO

www.fsgc.sm

A SPECIAL EDITION 90TH ANNIVERSARY KIT

LUCA PELLICIONI

 As the year-long commemoration of the 90th anniversary of the San Marino Football Federation (FSGC) drew to a close, the men's senior national team wore a special edition 90th anniversary kit for their World Cup qualifier against England on 15 November.

Instead of their familiar blue strip, the team wore colours inspired by the country's former flag. Created with sportswear manufacturer Macron, the perimeter of San Marino's borders with the nine 'castles' (municipalities) inside is embossed on the bottom left front of the shirt, with 90 ANNI printed inside the collar.

It is also the first shirt to feature the new national team logo, which is part of the federation's new brand identity, also launched to coincide with the 90th anniversary and developed with the support of the UEFA Grow programme.

The orange, white and red shirt was available to buy as a limited edition in special packaging. Two series of 90 items, each numbered from 1 to 90, were snapped up by fans and collectors.

The souvenir shirts were unveiled in a preview to the most illustrious and important supporters of San Marino sport, the captains regent Francesco Mussoni and Giacomo Simoncini. At a reception at the Palazzo Pubblico,



the FSGC's president, Marco Tura, presented gifts of the coveted and historic shirt that the national team would later wear on the world stage against England to the two captain regents as well as to the secretary of state for sport, Teodoro Lonfernini, and the president of the national Olympic committee, Gian Primo Giardi.

SCOTLAND

www.scottishfa.co.uk

UEFA AND DISNEY BEGIN INCREDIBLE INITIATIVE IN SCOTLAND

MICHAEL LAMONT

 Girls across Scotland are set to benefit from the groundbreaking Playmakers football programme developed by UEFA and Disney.

Using Disney's world-renowned storytelling and inspired by academic research showing the positive role of storytelling in helping children take up sport, Playmakers will be put into practice throughout Scotland with the aim of increasing participation levels of young girls.

Targeting 5–8 year-old girls not currently playing football, Scotland has joined 22 other UEFA member associations in their commitment to make use of the Playmakers programme through schools, clubs and local communities, with more than 1,000 girls expected to benefit within the first year.

Using a unique storytelling approach featuring Disney characters, the



programme aims to increase the proportion of girls meeting the World Health Organization's minimum standards for physical activity – currently just 16%.

Playmakers will initially follow the narrative of Disney global box office

smash hits Frozen 2 and Incredibles 2. Equipped with footballs, bibs and cones, trained coaches will encourage participants to play the roles of popular characters such as Elastigirl, and Elsa and Anna, bringing the films' action scenes to life through movement, teamwork and imagination.

The Scottish FA's head of girls' and women's football, Fiona McIntyre says: "UEFA Playmakers in partnership

with Disney is a programme we are passionate about in Scotland as we believe its unique style and format will be of great benefit to young girls across the country and ignite their interest to play football."

SLOVAKIA

www.futbalsfz.sk

SLOVAKIAN GIRLS FULL OF ADVENTURE THROUGH FOOTBALL

PETER SURIN

 "It would be a sin not to reflect on all the positives that UEFA Playmakers will bring. We believe it will be popular among parents and girls and that it will fulfil its primary goal. We believe that the whole of women's and youth football will benefit from this project in Slovakia," said Miriama Bočková, who is in charge of the project within the youth and development department of the Slovak Football Association.

Playmakers is UEFA's first-ever pan-European grassroots programme for 5–8 year-old girls, which uses Disney's iconic storytelling to inspire regular exercise and kick-start a love of football.

The Slovak FA got involved in the project this year and has so far created 31 centres around the country, where girls are given the opportunity to play football, take care of their health and build their self-confidence, make new friends and learn useful skills.

Each centre has specially trained coaches who lead the activities. Every participant receives an 'Adventure pass' for taking part.

"A very positive environment is prepared for the girls. They get to be



creative and make decisions and a lifetime connection to a healthy lifestyle and football," said Miriama Bočková.

SWITZERLAND

www.football.ch

TOP SWISS COACHES MEET AT FIFA HEADQUARTERS

MARTINA KÜPFER

Every year, the Swiss Football Association (SFA) brings together its UEFA Pro licence coaches to exchange ideas and discuss experiences. This year, for the first time, the gathering took place at FIFA's headquarters in Zurich.

A total of 134 coaches were present, all of whom had been awarded a UEFA Pro licence by the SFA and are working as coaches or sporting directors in Switzerland or abroad. They discussed the latest trends and developments in football, as well as training theory and tactics.

This year, there was a focus on the fostering of talent. FIFA and the SFA presented their plans for a more targeted and efficient approach to the spotting and development of talent, right up to players' entry onto the international scene.

The meeting was attended by Vladimir Petković, former coach of Switzerland's senior men's national team, and three current national team coaches: Murat Yakin (Switzerland), Hansi Flick (Germany) and Thomas Häberli (Estonia).

Switzerland's head coach gave the event a big thumbs-up. "We have excellent coaches here in Switzerland," Yakin said. "Discussions like these benefit us all." Flick was also full of praise for the cross-border initiative: "I have been very impressed. I know that the Swiss FA is doing great work in the field of coach education. Switzerland is a small country, but it is leading the way in many areas of training theory and is always coming up with new ideas. It is really helpful, therefore, to be able to exchange ideas like this and further refine the things that we are doing."



WALES

www.faw.cymru

OUR WALES | EIN CYMRU

MELISSA PALMER

The Football Association of Wales (FAW) recently launched its strategy Our Wales | Ein Cymru with the vision of ensuring increased participation and quality facilities that meet the growing demand of football in Wales.

Creating inspirational and fit-for-future facilities is one of the six strategic pillars detailed in Our Wales that the FAW believes can deliver the vision of becoming a global, local Wales.

The new strategy also sets ambitious goals to grow participation of registered players by a third to 120,000 and to double the size of the women's game by 2026.

The FAW's commitment to doubling the women's game not only includes a doubling of participation but a pledge to double its fan base and investment

to further accelerate the growth of the game, as detailed in the women and girls' strategy for 2021–26, Our Wales: For Her.

As the association looks to grow the game through the delivery of its new strategy, the FAW has utilised the UEFA Grow social return on investment (SROI) model to measure the impact of grassroots football on the Welsh economy.

The Value of Welsh Football Study has found players across the country currently generate over £553 million each year, broken down as a £263 million direct contribution to the Welsh economy, a more than £206 million healthcare saving and an almost £84 million economic impact of social benefits.



The UEFA Grow SROI findings have been key for the FAW to determine the real value of football to Wales, both in monetary and social terms, while reaffirming football's contribution to Welsh society.

The FAW's strategic plan can be viewed at Our.Cymru.

MEETINGS

FEBRUARY

12 February, Nyon
UEFA Youth League: round of 16, quarter-final and semi-final draws

25 February, Nyon
UEFA Europa League and UEFA Europa Conference League: round of 16 draws

MARCH

18 March, Nyon
UEFA Champions League, UEFA Europa League and UEFA Europa Conference League: quarter-final and semi-final draws

22 March
UEFA Executive Committee

COMPETITIONS

JANUARY

19 January – 6 February, Netherlands
UEFA Futsal EURO 2022

FEBRUARY

8/9 February
UEFA Youth League: play-offs

15/16 and 22/23 February
UEFA Champions League: round of 16 (first legs)

17 February
UEFA Europa League: play-offs (first legs)
UEFA Europa Conference League: play-offs (first legs)

24 February
UEFA Europa League: play-offs (return legs)
UEFA Europa Conference League: play-offs (return legs)

MARCH

1/2 March
UEFA Youth League: round of 16

8/9 and 15/16 March
UEFA Champions League: round of 16 (return legs)

10 March
UEFA Europa League: round of 16 (first legs)
UEFA Europa Conference League: round of 16 (first legs)

15/16 March
UEFA Youth League: quarter-finals

15–20 March
UEFA Under-19 Futsal EURO: qualifying competition main round

17 March
UEFA Europa League: round of 16 (return legs)
UEFA Europa Conference League: round of 16 (return legs)

22/23 March
UEFA Women's Champions League: quarter-finals (first legs)

24 March
2022 FIFA World Cup: play-off semi-finals

24–27 March
UEFA Women's Futsal EURO: final round

24–29 March
UEFA Under-21 EURO: qualifying competition

29 March
2022 FIFA World Cup: play-off finals

30/31 March
UEFA Women's Champions League: quarter-finals (return legs)

NOTICES

- **Vanda Sigurgeirsdóttir** has been elected president of the Football Association of Iceland.
- **Borislav Mihaylov** has been re-elected president of the Bulgarian Football Union.
- **Gerhard Milletich** has been elected president of the Austrian Football Association.

**It takes all our
tricks to protect
the climate.**



#EUGreenDeal

