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GAME CHANGER



BECAUSE EVERY
CHILD IS A CHAMPION





Aleksander Čeferin
UEFA President

EURO 2022 – A NEW DAWN FOR WOMEN'S FOOTBALL

The wait is finally over. At long last, UEFA Women's EURO 2022, the premier European women's national team football tournament, is upon us. The curtain is about to rise on a spectacle that promises to be a game changer for the future of women's football – in the host nation England, across the continent and beyond.

This much-anticipated event has been delayed by a year amid the challenges presented by the pandemic – but the delay, while initially frustrating, has ultimately played to the advantage of the women's game. The Women's EURO has now become this summer's major footballing attraction. It will capture the sporting headlines, put women's football into the spotlight around the world, and, most importantly, attract a legion of new followers to the game – all essential to building a sustainable future for the sport.

For what is set to become the biggest and best-ever European Women's Championship, there can be no better setting than England, the birthplace of football. Over a tough and testing three-week tournament, culminating in a showpiece final at London's iconic Wembley Stadium on 31 July, Europe's 16 finest teams and their talented footballers will take the women's game to new heights of skill and competitiveness.

The English Football Association is highly experienced in hosting high-calibre football occasions, and I would like to thank them on behalf of the European football community for rising so magnificently to this latest challenge. Ticket sales have exceeded all expectations, with ten splendid venues helping to maximise exposure of the women's game across England. Beyond the stadiums, The FA has organised legacy programmes that will give almost a quarter of a million women and girls their first taste of the beautiful game.

The European Women's Championship has written rich chapters in footballing history and EURO 2022 will be no exception, setting new benchmarks for the organisation of all women's sports events. Get ready to savour every minute of a wonderful festival of football. In troubled times for Europe, the Women's EURO will demonstrate the power of football to lift spirits and delivering lasting, positive change.

IN THIS
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06 Women's EURO 2022
With the opening match at Old Trafford and the final at Wembley,
Women's EURO 2022 is set to break all the records.

10 Interview
Debbie Hewitt, chair of the English
Football Association, describes the expected
impact of Women's EURO 2022 on English
football, women's and men's alike.

13 Development
Women's football is hitting new heights
thanks to a European women's football
strategy.

14 Refereeing
The Women's EURO referees prepare
for the tournament in Istanbul.

26 Club competitions
Women's, men's and futsal club
competitions... the 2021/22 season
reflects a return to normality after
two years of living in the shadow of
the pandemic.

58 News from member associations



18 Congress
The 46th Ordinary UEFA
Congress in Vienna heralds
European football's unity
and solidarity.



40 The Technician
The Technician takes a look at some of the technical and tactical trends observed during the
2021/22 UEFA Women's Champions League.



46 Finalissima
South American champions Argentina defeat European champions
Italy at Wembley to claim the new CONMEBOL-UEFA Cup of
Champions trophy.



50 Under-17s
After a two-year absence, the European Under-17 championships
return, with Germany triumphing in the women's competition
and France lifting the men's trophy.



SILVER JUBILEE HERALDS GOLDEN AGE

UEFA Women's EURO 2022 in England is poised to set new benchmarks in women's national team football.

Hinsight puts things into perspective. Twenty-five years ago, UEFA upgraded its European Women's Championship to an eight-team final tournament featuring, as a major novelty, a group stage. The expansion allowed France and Spain, now consolidated among the world's elite, to make their debuts in a competition that had hitherto – six times, to be precise – been decided in a final four format.

Co-hosted by Norway and Sweden, that ground-breaking event in 1997 was played over a fortnight in front of crowds averaging 2,382. At the time, anyone predicting that the 2022 edition would feature 16-teams, 31-matches and video assistant referees would have been accused of reading too much science fiction. Similarly players would have rolled their eyes in disbelief at the suggestion that UEFA would be sharing €16 million among the participating teams – a figure,

incidentally, that doubles the cash incentives on offer just four years ago. Nor would they have believed that €4.5 million would be set aside to compensate clubs for releasing players.

The silver anniversary of a milestone moment in the history of women's football in Europe is an appropriate time to reflect on the unstoppable development of the women's game.

Not that the 13th edition of the European Women's Championship was meant to commemorate silver anniversaries of any description. Generations to come might be puzzled by the five-year gap since Sarina Wiegman's Netherlands team lifted the trophy for the first time in 2017, raising eyebrows when parents tell tales of a pandemic that halted the men's EURO and the Olympic Games in their tracks and delayed UEFA Women's EURO 2021 to 2022. They might also need to be told why Russia was removed from

the original list of finalists opening a window of opportunity to Portugal, one of five debutants alongside Austria, Belgium, Scotland and Switzerland when the final tournament was expanded to 16 teams in 2017. Talking of debuts, the presence of Northern Ireland on this year's starting grid is a further indicator of rapid growth and development. Back in 1997, Northern Ireland did not even enter a team.

An open race

Bookmakers might offer long odds on Kenny Shiels' team lifting the trophy, but the elite women's game is now so competitive that there are no clear favourites. In the past, eight-times EURO champions Germany automatically started as front runners. And a Nordic team has appeared in 10 of the 12 finals. In 2022, it is a reflection of how far the women's game has come that several serious candidates for the overall title have never lifted the trophy.

Host nation England, with EURO 2017 champion coach Sarina Wiegman at the helm, are strong on ambition and public support, even though their most recent appearance in a final was in 2009 when the tournament was expanded from eight to 12 teams. France, uncrowned in this competition, will be looking to translate strength in club football to Corinne Diacre's national team, while the Netherlands are more than keen to defend their title. Not forgetting Austria. Five years ago, they demonstrated the potential of outsiders and the value of well-organised defensive strategies by reaching the semi-finals and going home unbeaten.

Germany, with Martina Voss-Tecklenburg now in charge, will be determined to bounce back from a surprise quarter-final exit in 2017. First, they will have to survive one of the tournament's toughest groups that includes Jorge Vilda's impressive Spain, Finland and Denmark. →

Above: The final at Wembley Stadium is poised to set a new attendance record for a women's match. **Right:** England will be counting on their striker Ellen White, the Three Lionesses' leading scorer with 50 goals to her name so far.



Denmark were silver-medallists in 2017 and the highest scorers in the qualifiers alongside the Dutch and Spanish with 48 goals. Talking of which, the strike rate in qualifying matches for EURO 2022 augurs well for the final tournament: 836 goals in 204 games at an average 4.1 per game, almost double the rate of previous EUROs.

A tale of nine cities

Except EURO 2022's success will not be measured purely by the results of 31 games played over 26 days. The tournament represents a key building block in securing UEFA's long-term vision for women's football. That means raising participation rates and using the rapidly increasing visibility and commercial value of the competition to develop the game from grassroots to elite levels.

To maximise the game's exposure, EURO 2022 will take place in nine host towns and cities, stretching from the south coast up into the North West of England. The tournament's opening match will kick off between England and Austria at Old Trafford, while Wembley will stage the final – prestigious venues that will help raise the status, both of the EURO and women's football. So can Bramall Lane in Sheffield, setting for the first floodlit match in 1878 and rated the oldest major stadium in the world to still be hosting top-level professional football matches.

By contrast, Milton Keynes – the venue for four games, including a semi-final – is a new stadium in a new city built in the 1960s. Alongside Premier League venues in Brentford, Brighton & Hove and Southampton, there will be games at Rotherham (newly promoted to the English second tier), the Manchester City Academy and the Leigh Sports Village, where Manchester United's women's team play their Women's Super League fixtures.

Each of the host cities has designed legacy programmes – and fan zones of all shapes and sizes. Maybe the most spectacular, bearing in mind the grandiose venue, will be the nine-day fan party in London's Trafalgar Square during the week leading up to the final on 31 July,

the climax to a UEFA Women's EURO 2022 that is set to be an Event with a capital E.

Early evidence suggests EURO 2022 is on track to fulfil its goal of becoming the biggest European women's sport event in history – figuratively as well as numerically. At the official launch of ticket sales in London, three-metre tall table football characters strolled along Carnaby Street, while members of the public could win match tickets by competing in digital football games.

The scale of ticket sales quickly followed in the giant footsteps of the launch event. The opening match alone is expected to pulverise the current Women's EURO record attendance (41,300 for the 2013 final between Germany and Norway),

#REALSCARS

RESPECT

Real Scars

Watch out for it on giant screens and perimeter boards at the venues, in match programmes, on UEFA tv, EURO 2022's official broadcasters and social media. Real Scars is a new campaign launched under UEFA's Respect banner to combat online abuse, which has become an important issue in football and in society. With backing from the national associations of the participating teams, the aim is to educate fans and to take action against online abuse which, as the campaign graphically puts it, leaves scars.



The host cities are putting on all sorts of events and activities to entertain fans of any age, like these girls in Sheffield.

while the final at Wembley is already sold out. With prices ranging from £5 to £50 and reduced rates for families of four, sales across the nine venues are nudging the half-million mark. Ditto the TV audience, projected to number 275 million around the globe.

The aim is not just to get people into seats. The longer-term objective is to create a lasting legacy by getting more young girls and women into football. To this end, The FA will run development programmes designed to give almost a quarter of a million women and girls in England their first taste of the beautiful game. The initiative kicked off at the start of May with the first stage of a 43-day roadshow: a massive, mobile event that will travel 1,300km, take in ten stadiums and climax in London on 2 July, four days before the start of Women's EURO 2022. With a heady cocktail of football, fitness and live music, the roadshow will give families and communities the chance to learn new football skills, try presenting and interviewing in a TV studio, design shirts, footballs or flags, and take a selfie next to the trophy.

Furthermore, within the UEFA Football in Schools grassroots programme, three new resources have been added to the initiative during the run-up to EURO 2022, including lesson plans for personal, social, health and economic education in schools, a heritage resource and a football festival pack – with the additional incentive for one lucky class to head for Wembley, enjoy a behind-the-scenes visit and engage in a EURO 2022-themed lesson on-site.

State of the art

In a first for The FA, the Arts Council England has donated £800,000 to an arts

and cultural programme. The aim is to help EURO 2022 connect with new and diverse audiences by working with local artists, musicians and community groups in the host cities. Three projects, one of them led by the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, have been created, including an opportunity for the public to compose an original anthem to commemorate EURO 2022.

"The FA's first arts programme will transform the streets where people live throughout the Women's EURO," the Arts Council's chief executive, Darren Henley, told UEFA Direct. "The combined forces of culture and sport have the power to improve lives, regenerate neighbourhoods, support local economies and bring people together nationally and internationally. Reaching out to local communities in the nine host cities and across the nation, they will have a deep and lasting effect for girls,

women and young people, which in turn uplifts us all."

Lasting legacy

By setting benchmarks for organising women's sporting events, both The FA and UEFA hope that EURO 2022 can leave a lasting legacy for society as well as the game. Great emphasis is being placed on a wide range of issues such as carbon footprint offsetting, energy efficiency, waste management, healthy food options and gender balance across staffing, along with mobility and accessibility measures (bicycle parking, walkways and wheelchair access, to name but a very few) to make sure that the football is easily available to all abilities. And, of course, a no-smoking policy and measures to prevent any whiff of discrimination. 🌱

Smart, strong and skilful

Even traditional 'accessories' to the final tournament have been given a novel twist. The classic mascot, for example, has become a team of three collectively known as Hat Trick and individually adorned with different



squad numbers and personalities. Kai, No4, is smart. Ashley, skipper and No7, is strong. Robyn, No10, is all about skills. They made their debut as interactive characters on the Road to UEFA Women's EURO on the Roblox platform and then starred alongside some of Europe's top players, such as Alexia Putellas, Vivianne Miedema and Lucy Bronze, on a YouTube series to be distributed via the UEFA Football in Schools programme.

Women's EURO 2017 in the Netherlands was a huge success, which EURO 2022 is already on track to emulate and even surpass.



DEBBIE HEWITT

Chair of the English Football Association

'THE BIGGEST WOMEN'S EUROPEAN SPORTS EVENT IN HISTORY'

Debbie Hewitt, the first woman to head the English Football Association (The FA) in its 158 year history, explains how EURO 2022 will boost English football as a whole.

Looking ahead to the Women's EURO this summer, what does it mean to The FA to be hosting this tournament?

It is a huge privilege. England last hosted the Women's EURO in 2005 and that was a real honour, but the tournament and popularity of women's football have grown immeasurably since then. We know it's going to be a bigger and better spectacle than before, and it provides an invaluable opportunity to inspire the next generation of players and fans.

We have 16 nations taking part this year, compared with eight in 2005, so the tournament itself has doubled in size. Women's football in England, and across Europe, has experienced exponential growth in recent years and we want to build on that momentum.

Our aim is twofold: firstly, to deliver a positively memorable, record-breaking tournament, and secondly, to leave a tangible legacy that will bring even more momentum to the growth of the women's

game, with the hope of creating 500,000 additional opportunities for women and girls to participate and engage with football through legacy groups in the host cities.

How much demand is there for tickets for this Women's EURO and what does that tell us about interest in the women's game?

We've seen incredible demand so far. We have already sold more than 400,000 tickets, with supporters from 71 different countries attending. We are expecting close to 100,000 international visitors to England this summer, solely for the UEFA Women's EURO.

The current record for total tournament attendance at a Women's EURO is 240,045 for EURO 2017 in the Netherlands. We are on course to potentially double that number and we will also be looking to achieve a new attendance record for any EURO match with the final at Wembley.

A sell-out capacity crowd at the final on 31 July at Wembley would not only set a new attendance record for a Women's EURO final but this would also be a record for any EURO final – men's or women's. This would speak volumes about the significant strides the women's game has taken in recent years.

How is The FA taking advantage of the opportunity to promote women's football this summer?

The Women's EURO has tremendous potential to be so much more than the great football that will be taking place on the pitch. It is a such a powerful opportunity for us to engage with people who might not have had an opportunity to get into any type of football – not just women's football, but football in general.

On match days, each host city will have additional activities going on, from fan parties to family-oriented community events, concerts, arts installations, museum and outdoor exhibitions.

Our EURO roadshow programme will also be visiting each host city prior to the tournament and will be inspiring and encouraging communities to get involved. We have ensured that the tournament will have something for everyone.

Can you explain the aims of the legacy plan put in place to inspire a new generation of girl footballers? The FA has said it will mean 120,000 more girls playing football regularly, but how?

We believe the tournament will inspire long-term, sustainable positive change in women's and girls' football. One of our FA game changers is to ensure that girls have an equal opportunity to play football in schools and clubs as their male counterparts. We are working with the host cities and our schools and clubs to drive that ambition more quickly and to ensure that we have inclusive and diverse programmes that make all girls feel welcome. We believe this will result in 120,000 more girls playing football across the nine host cities by 2024.

We are working with families of schools to embed girls' football in the physical education curriculum and providing resources and support to encourage girls to play during lunchtimes and after school. We are also liaising with grassroots clubs to get at least 75% of all grassroots teams running at least one girls' team (currently only around 30% do this) and we will be working with our county FA teams to run more free taster sessions for girls and women in each region. We have been really pleased with the level of engagement so far, from both our professional game and national game stakeholders.

What is The FA doing to ensure the growth in participation in grassroots women's football embraces not just players but female referees, coaches, leaders and volunteers?

In addition to getting more girls and women playing football, we also want to get more women involved in other aspects of the game. Our host city legacy programme will result in 300 newly qualified coaches and 350 new FA-qualified referees from diverse

backgrounds achieving their qualification. We will also look to achieve 1,000 women and girls completing The FA's entry-level Playmaker Award, which is a free online entry-level course for anyone interested in taking a more active volunteering role in grassroots football at a coaching level.

England now has one of the best women's football leagues in the world in the Women's Super League (WSL). How important has it been to have a fully professional league to raise standards and provide a platform/opportunities for English talent?

A fully professional league has been essential to raising standards right across the game. We now have a league that attracts the very best players in the world playing alongside our home-grown talent. New commercial and broadcast partners have enabled us to attract large numbers of new fans. It has also given us the opportunity to profile our players as role models for young girls and to inspire them to take up the game and achieve their potential. Training with the very best players every day helps our young players develop and thrive. The current Lionesses squad has a great blend of experience and youth drawn largely from the Women's Super League teams, where they are playing weekly at a level of intensity and skill required to develop and push their game onto new levels. We have seen 25 players make their debut for England since the last Women's EURO in 2017, which highlights the talent coming through the domestic pathway.

What is exciting with the trajectory of the women's game is that the best is still to come. A home EURO presents a tremendous opportunity to take the game to new heights.

Can you talk about the significance of the WSL's broadcast deal with Sky/BBC and what this has meant in terms of income and exposure?

The first year of our broadcast agreement with Sky Sports and the BBC has been so positive and the exposure provided has opened the game up to new audiences.

The free-to-air element of the BBC saw us attract a peak audience of over

one million viewers for the Manchester derby last season, with an average peak across the season of over 950,000 on BBC One, and around half a million on BBC Two.

Sky Sports have made their own impact by adding a new dimension to the live coverage of women's football, with in-depth analysis during their broadcasts attracting a cumulative average peak audience of 420,000 per weekend. It's a perfect combination and we have seen such a positive reaction from fans, new and established, with viewing hours up almost fourfold from the previous season. The investment for the broadcasters allows us to reinvest that money into the professional game and ensure it continues to grow and provide the best opportunities for our players.

Finally, how are you using the enterprise and expertise of the private sector to build a sustainable future for women's football?

We're seeing that purpose-driven brands want to invest in the women's game as part of an overall vision to inspire positive change for women and girls. An example would be our relationship with Barclays, which has been in place since 2019 and has seen significant investment, but also big steps forward. In December we announced a renewed partnership that will see £30 million invested into the women's game at both professional and grassroots levels, which highlights Barclays commitment to all levels of the women's and girls' game, not just the top level.

Similarly, Visa were one of the first-ever UEFA sponsors dedicated to women's football and have supported our marketing programmes to drive ticket sales and maximise audiences.

We're also seeing big brands come on board such as Vitality, while Continental Tyres have now been associated with the women's game for over ten years. We've got some exciting partnerships to announce over the summer that will highlight how far the women's game has come. There has been a significant shift in approach, with brands positively wanting to be involved in our sport and now competing to participate.

If I have one message to readers, it is that UEFA Women's EURO England 2022 is set to be the biggest women's European sport event in history. 🏆

UEFA AND THE FA UNVEIL WOMEN'S EURO 2022 IMPACT REPORT

The biggest UEFA Women's EURO ever is set to deliver £54 million in economic activity to the nine host cities.

On 23 May, UEFA and the English Football Association released the UEFA Women's EURO 2022 Impact Report, confirming that the competition is on track to be the biggest women's European sports event in history.

The report, produced by EY, indicates that the tournament is expected to deliver £54 million in economic activity to the nine host cities: Brighton & Hove, London, Manchester, Milton Keynes, Rotherham, Sheffield, Southampton, Trafford and Wigan & Leigh. The host cities are expecting to welcome 96,000 international visitors from 95 territories.

There will also be engagement from fans from all over the world as international audiences could reach over 250 million across more than 195 territories.

Host cities will also see a positive socio-economic impact thanks to over 5,500 people taking part in the volunteer programme.

The report reveals ticket sales for the tournament are set to double the attendance of UEFA Women's EURO 2017 in the Netherlands, with 51% of football fans planning to attend or watch.

Providing a platform for greater participation in the game and community engagement, the tournament aims to leave a lasting legacy by inspiring the next generation of players and fans, providing opportunities for more than 500,000 women and girls to participate and engage with football through focused efforts of legacy groups within each of the host cities (see interview with FA chair Debbie

Hewitt on page 10). Baroness Sue Campbell, UEFA Women's EURO 2022 board member and director of women's football at The FA, added: "With less than 50 days to go until the tournament gets under way, this report highlights what we can achieve with a continued focus on capitalising on the opportunities offered by UEFA Women's EURO 2022 and, importantly, how we can measure our success."

EY will produce a 'flash' report that will be published approximately six to eight weeks after the tournament to provide an initial indication of the impacts achieved. Developments in participation and interest in women's football will be monitored to inform the full post-event impact study, which will be produced in summer 2023. 🌐



GROWING WOMEN'S GAME HITTING NEW HEIGHTS

The women's game has gone from strength to strength in the last few years and with a summer focused on the UEFA Women's EURO, the signs are that the sport will soon go to ever higher levels. UEFA's chief of women's football and former European champion **Nadine Kessler** explains how the progress has been made so far, and what the future holds.

The European Women's Championship has come a long way since its first match 40 years ago to its current status as a huge, globally significant sporting event. What are the reasons behind this growth?

It is a huge year for women's football. While there had been steady progress over many years with UEFA giving a platform to the national and club game, the growth has been exponential in recent times. This could not have happened without the rising interest among the national associations, clubs and other stakeholders and the work they have carried out. UEFA's main role has been to provide support across the board and since 2019, this has been taken to a whole new level with the launch of UEFA's women's football strategy, Time for Action.

What, in tangible terms, has Time for Action delivered?
We are now in a place where 42 out of 55 European national associations have their own women's football strategy – this is vital to measure and facilitate progress. At club level, the Women's Champions League solidarity programme set up for all top-division sides has started to deliver on its goal of raising standards across the continent. At the same time, our commercial programme has been a

runaway success! We have sold out our sponsorship packages, with new partners coming on board and existing ones strengthening their ties with the game.

The change in format of the Women's Champions League and centralising of broadcast rights immediately opened up the competition to whole new audiences. The impact of that competition has been astonishing to see with the incredible crowds and media coverage we had this season. Likewise, this Women's EURO has attendance and TV audience records in its sights – it can never be said again that there is no interest in the game.

How can girls and women benefit from this development?
The strategy addresses women's football from the grassroots up. We were determined to turn words into action and driving participation is the first priority – everything else stems from that. The UEFA Playmakers Programme with Disney has given girls aged 5–8 an early and innovative window into the sport – it has now been delivered in 45 countries and 82% of the participants had never previously played football before. What's more, the Together #WePlayStrong campaign has created a community for football-playing teenagers with its social media posts gaining hundreds of millions of impressions.

What else is UEFA doing to help more women get involved in football?
We are on a journey and while we're not at our destination yet, we have made great strides: significantly increasing female representation on UEFA bodies is a strategy goal we are already 75% towards achieving, while there's been a 53% rise in associations with women's football leads and a 55% uplift in female graduates from the UEFA Academy, which runs academic football courses. On the pitch, over 300 scholarships for female coaches have been created and refereeing standards continue to increase, demonstrated by Stéphanie Frappart's handling of a men's UEFA Champions League game – with many more following in her footsteps.

What does the future hold?
These big strides the game is taking will continue to positively shift perceptions of women's football, but we want to do more: continue to raise standards in our competitions, from youth level up, increase visibility worldwide and deliver top-class tournaments such as this one. Women's EURO is a huge moment for us – the biggest ever – but it also gives us the platform to kick on and really take the game to another level. 🌐

REFEREES PRIMED FOR WOMEN’S EURO CHALLENGE

“Play your part in a great event” – the clarion call issued to the Women’s EURO 2022 refereeing team as they finalised preparations for July’s tournament in England.



Right: The Women’s EURO 2022 referees receive their technical instructions for the tournament. **Left:** French referee Stéphanie Frappart (front) and colleagues put their fitness to the test.



The 13 referees, 25 assistant referees, two support officials/fourth officials and 16 video assistant referees forming the 17th team at the EURO came together for a four-day pre-tournament workshop in Istanbul to bond as a ‘family’, take in important technical instructions, test fitness levels and absorb crucial advice on their role as key actors at the much-awaited finals.

The entire team were urged to make their own special contribution to the success of the EURO at the end of what UEFA Referees Committee chairman and chief refereeing officer Roberto Rosetti described as “a long road of preparation.”

‘100 per cent ready’

“I believe that this group is the best that UEFA has ever had for a Women’s EURO,” Rosetti emphasised. “They’re professional and they have a great attitude. This EURO will be a fantastic occasion – and we’re 100 per cent ready for it.”

“We used this workshop for team-building,” added UEFA refereeing officer

Dagmar Damková. “And you could sense the anticipation. There was also a certain sense of relief among the officials. Any pressure they had felt ahead of the selection announcement had disappeared.”

Damková admitted that the EURO referees’ selection process had been a demanding task on account of the growing number of high-quality female referees now handling matches across Europe. “The process lasted three years,” she reflected. “We followed the referees constantly – how they were refereeing their matches, how they worked at courses. Performance was obviously the number one factor, but more things mattered this time.”

Welcome balance

The result is a EURO team uniting vastly experienced referees with younger officials savouring a major step along their career pathways. “We’re preparing not only for the present, but also for tomorrow,” Rosetti explained. “It’s been a key target

in selecting the team,” Damková added. “We have referees who were at youth tournaments a short while ago and who have now made this big leap forward. It proves that referee development is on the right track.”

In addition, as part of an exchange programme within the framework of the cooperation agreement between UEFA and the South American football confederation CONMEBOL, Venezuelan referee Emikar Calderas Barrera and assistant referees Migdalia Rodríguez Chirino (Venezuela) and Mary Blanco Bolívar (Colombia) will be part of the group in England. A European refereeing team will officiate together with CONMEBOL’s referees at the forthcoming Copa América Femenina 2022 in Colombia – referee Sandra Braz Bastos (Portugal) will be accompanied by assistant referees Andreia Catarina Ferreira Sousa (Portugal) and Rita Cabañero Mompó (Spain).

New challenges

The EURO comes at an exciting time for

European women’s football. The tournament follows on from the first UEFA Women’s Champions League season to feature a 16-team group stage with centralised media and sponsorship rights, which has boosted the competition’s visibility and exposure.

Rosetti agrees that referees are adjusting to new challenges as the women’s game evolves in terms of technical skills, tactical knowledge, fitness and preparation. “We’ve entered a new era,” he reflected. “The Women’s Champions League has had a significant impact on levels of intensity – for example, the enhanced physical preparation of players means that the game is getting faster, and all our referees are having to adapt to this trend.”

“It’s becoming more and more professional,” Damková added. “There are many more people around the referees to support their preparation – for instance, the number of fitness coaches and physios accompanying them. Referees now study team tactics and player characteristics ahead of matches. We’re moving closer to the men’s game in many ways. So we’re asking more from the referees – and in return they’re also getting more support from us to help them prepare and develop.”

VARs’ decision-making role

Following on from its deployment in the latter stages of last season’s Women’s Champions League, the video assistant referee (VAR) system is being used at a Women’s EURO for the first time, and the Istanbul workshop included specific practical exercises. Both Rosetti and Damková – former leading international referees themselves – hailed this move as a crucial contribution to women’s refereeing.

“VAR is there to help the referees,” said Damková. “It should give them a greater incentive to be calm and focused.” Rosetti sent out a clear VAR message. “Decision-making on the field must be left to the referees,” he said, “but the VARs will obviously be ready to intervene in the event of a clear and obvious mistake.”

Just as the talented footballers on show in England will act as important role models, Damková underlined that the EURO referee team can also serve to inspire women and young girls to take up refereeing. “National associations are now fostering a growing number of female referees,” she reflected, “and when I’ve spoken to younger referees, some say that they started refereeing after seeing the top female officials at tournaments like this. So it’s actually already happening!”

UEFA referee briefings for EURO teams

UEFA Referees Committee members are visiting all 16 teams ahead of the Women’s EURO to explain exactly how the Laws of the Game will be interpreted in England, as part of UEFA’s commitment to ensuring that referees, players and coaches are on the same page at the tournament.

The measure has proved successful at the last two men’s EUROs. Teams will be briefed in full about the various technical instructions and guidelines that UEFA has given the Women’s EURO referee team.

They will hear about the guidelines given by UEFA to the referees on issues such as handball, offside, penalty-area incidents and protecting players from reckless challenges.

“It means that the teams will know what is expected of them,” said Roberto Rosetti. “It’s a very positive process that is proving its worth – in fact, not only the players and coaches learn from us, but we receive important feedback from them as well. It’s a win-win exercise.”



Roberto Rosetti, UEFA’s chief refereeing officer.



The Women in Football Leadership Programme, which started in 2014, attracted 32 participants this year.

WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP PROGRAMME AIMS TO INSPIRE

The drive to increase the number of women in senior leadership positions within European football is gathering pace – with UEFA at the forefront of the campaign thanks to its role within the Women in Football Leadership Programme. The latest course in this ambitious and far-reaching project was held in Switzerland at the end of March.

Thirty-two women representing all six continental football confederations, nominated by their respective member associations, and holding senior management positions in football such as general secretaries, executive board members or directors, came together to share perspectives and experiences to develop their leadership skills with an eye on the future.

Taking careers forward

The Women's Football Leadership Programme, established in 2014, is a week-long biennial course run jointly between FIFA, the UEFA Academy and the IMD Business School, empowering decision-makers and potential senior executives to take further steps forward in their careers.

The programme aims to elevate more women into senior positions in world football, creating a powerful network of women set to advance their own careers, influence the improvement of the sport and provide an example for more women to aspire to.

The Women in Football Leadership Programme brings together professionals working in football to exchange their viewpoints on the game and how it can continue to develop, particularly around diversity and inclusion, as well as the obstacles blocking women from taking on more leadership positions within the game.

The latest gathering included leadership training, practical role plays, round-table discussions and one-on-one coaching, with participants developing a sense of

self-awareness, as well as a strong global network of like-minded contacts.

Unleashing potential – promoting gender balance

Studies have shown that organisations with mixed senior management teams tend to outperform those with no women in positions of power. Football has traditionally been dominated by men, but more women are gradually moving into leadership roles.

Nadine Kessler, UEFA's chief of women's football, emphasises that the Women in Football Leadership Programme is an essential component within European football's modern-day landscape: "Developing a new generation of female leaders in football is crucial to promote greater gender balance in representative roles across football and its decision-making bodies," she said.

"By identifying talents and providing them with a platform that can unleash potential, elevate their capabilities and, most importantly, empower them to step up and take on leadership opportunities, the Women in Football Leadership Programme encourages both personal and professional growth."



FEMALE LEADERS LIGHTING THE WAY

The current situation in European football is providing encouragement – a number of pioneering women have taken up senior leadership roles in national associations, offering fresh inspiration to other women seeking to make notable professional careers in the game.

Europe presently boasts three female national association presidents: Debbie Hewitt (England), Lise Klaveness (Norway) and Vanda Sigurgeirsdóttir (Iceland). They are joined by several colleagues serving as association general secretaries: Klara Bjartmarz (Iceland), Florence Hardouin (France), Teresa Romão (Portugal), Anne Rei (Estonia) Teresa Romão (Portugal) and Heike Ullrich (Germany). Alongside them, Donata Hopfen is working as CEO of the German Football League (DFL). As a consequence of her appointment, Hopfen has also become a vice-president of the German Football Association (DFB) and a member of the association's executive committee.

All of these senior officials show that there are important professional routes ahead for women that are already paved across the football landscape. Other women can draw inspiration and motivation from their journeys. It is a trend that will hopefully gather increasing impetus in the years to come.

The presence of women in important positions in major football nations like England and Germany, as well as the other significant examples elsewhere, sends out a highly positive message in itself – one that will provide a spur to other women seeking a career in the game.

For instance, Debbie Hewitt can draw on a wealth of experience from a career which has included a spell as chief executive of the RAC, the British automotive services company, while Donata Hopfen entered the football world from a position as managing director and partner at BCG Digital Ventures, a company of the Boston Consulting Group, having previously worked as managing director of the

Bild Group, which includes Germany's biggest-circulation newspaper. Others come from sound football backgrounds – in addition to a master's degree in law, Lise Klaveness is a former Norwegian international who won 73 caps for her country, while Vanda Sigurgeirsdóttir is a former Iceland national team player and coach.

Their access to the top points to a new chapter of women becoming ever more involved in the governance of the game as part of European football's natural evolution. Sigurgeirsdóttir, part of a unique female duo at the helm in Iceland together with Klara Bartmaz, emphasises that the voices of women in football must be heard at all levels. "And that includes the decision-

making level," she says. "Women in football must be visible – on boards, committees and councils. We are important role models and, in my opinion, UEFA should praise this positive development, as that could inspire women to aspire to such roles."

"Their presence provides ample proof that women can make a significant impact within the game," adds Anne Rei – who is also chair of UEFA's Women's Football Committee – on behalf of the general secretaries. "I feel that a clear pathway is being opened for a future generation of female leaders – and I strongly believe that the example being set currently will serve as an immense source of inspiration for women to play a full part in shaping the future of the game on this continent." 🌟



FOOTBALL'S UNITY HELPS MAKE THE DIFFERENCE



46th UEFA
CONGRESS 2022
Vienna 11 May

Ter Tebas Karl-Heinz Rummenigge Nasser Al-Khelaifi Jesper Møller Christensen Florence Hardouin Armand Duha David Gill Sándor Csányi Karl-Erik Nilsson Aleksander Čeferin Theodore Theodoridis Fernando Gomes Luis Rubiales Zbigniew Boniek Gabriele Gravina Servet Yardımcı Davor Šuker Rainer Koch Just Spee

UEFA's 46th Ordinary Congress, which took place in Vienna on 11 May, provided a welcome opportunity to herald European football's united response to the challenges faced by the sport during the last two years of turbulence and crisis.

The latest gathering of Europe's football parliament, held at the Messe Wien Exhibition Congress Centre, came at a moment when the impact of the COVID pandemic had given way in the headlines to the shockwaves generated worldwide by the outbreak of war in Ukraine.

Both UEFA president Aleksander Čeferin and guest speaker Margaritis Schinas, the European Commission (EC) vice-president, underlined the encouraging successes achieved in such difficult circumstances – reinforcing UEFA's commitment to remain at the vanguard of football, promoting, protecting and developing the 'beautiful game'.

Solidarity and support

Addressing delegates from UEFA's 55 member associations, key football stakeholders and other distinguished guests, the UEFA president expressed the firm belief that, by staying united, football would continue to provide proof that "a different world is possible, a world of resilience and hope, in which not everything is dictated by power, profit or cynicism."

Mr Čeferin paid tribute to European football's united reaction to events in Ukraine. He singled out "the associations that helped to evacuate players and their families, those who helped [UEFA] to organise training camps [for Ukrainian



teams], and the ones that agreed to play [matches] later because of the situation in Ukraine.

"All we can do now is hope that reason prevails as quickly as possible and that order is restored, and that we have peace for the good not only of our Ukrainian brothers and sisters, but also for our Russian brothers and sisters. When UEFA issues unprecedented sanctions, football is trying to make its own tiny contribution to society and Europe's leaders as they strive for peace on the continent."

Open competition and sporting merit

European Commission vice-president Margaritis Schinas assured the Congress of his support for UEFA's decision to base access to its post-2024 men's club competitions on open competition and sporting merit only (see more on page 22).

"It confirms the shared commitment of the European football family to values which lie at the core of our European

way of life," said Mr Schinas in a video address, "and the model of society that we stand for."

"European football must remain open, based on sporting merit, and serve the interests of all of society," he insisted, describing European football as "one of the leading success stories" of the European sports model.

The vice-president reiterated the European Commission's commitment to working with UEFA, its national association partners and EU member states to protect and promote the European sports model. "Football is about much more than profit and entertainment," he said, "and, as [Europe's] governing body, you play a vital role to ensure that the commercial →



In a video message to the UEFA Congress, European Commissioner Margaritis Schinas emphasised the European institutions' commitment to the European sports model.



success of the elite level is there also to support all other levels.”

Mr Schinas highlighted football’s wider contribution to society beyond the pitch – a key tenet of the European sports model – whether through education, innovation, sustainability or breaking down barriers. “We also count on you to harness the power of the game as a force for good in our communities, societies and lives across Europe, to develop the game at all levels for all people in all areas,” he said.

Standing strong in adversity

The UEFA president had begun his address by hailing the solidarity demonstrated by the football community in its response to the effects of the pandemic, as well as to the threat of a ‘European super league’, which had emerged last year ahead of UEFA’s Congress in Montreux.

“In adversity, we stood strong,” Mr Čeferin said. “Together, we found the solutions we needed. When we stand together, we are unbeatable. Football wins, and society wins as well.”

The UEFA president described the failed

super league venture as “a brazen attempt by a handful of oligarchs and football aristocrats to launch a project that would have trampled on all the values of European football and European society.”

Calendar creativity – payments in advance

The UEFA president remembered how, in 2020, UEFA had put its own interests aside and postponed all its competitions, enabling Europe’s domestic competitions to be completed. He praised the creativity shown by UEFA in amending its calendar and adapting competition formats in record time, devising a ‘final eight’ for the UEFA Champions League and UEFA Europa League.

During the COVID period, he explained, UEFA had not only honoured all of its solidarity payments during an unprecedented economic crisis, but also made payments in advance to relieve the pressure on struggling national associations and clubs.

UEFA, he continued, had solemnly pledged to increase solidarity payments

to its member associations for the next cycle, especially through the HatTrick development programme, as well as its payments to clubs, irrespective of whether they qualified for its competitions.

Football benefited, he said, “when UEFA manages its finances so rigorously that it can plough over 97% of its income back into football and spend less than 3% of its total revenue for operating costs.”

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“When UEFA adopts strict medical protocols that can save the life of a player who suffers a cardiac arrest, life and football are the winners”

Aleksander Čeferin
UEFA President



UEFA general secretary Theodore Theodoridis.

Stakeholder backing

Turning to financial fair play, the UEFA president welcomed the support given to UEFA by all European football stakeholders for a major overhaul of the system “in order to safeguard the long-term future of club football, stimulating investment and restoring economic balance.” UEFA’s announcement ahead of the Congress of the final format and access list for its men’s club competitions from the 2024/25 season had also followed fruitful consultation within Europe’s football community.

“As a governing body with the duty and responsibility to defend the general interest rather than the interests of a minority,” the UEFA president said, “we have decided, together with the European Club Association and the clubs, to stay true to our principles of sporting merit ... and purpose over profit.”

Mr Čeferin recalled how crucial medical provisions had saved the life of Denmark player Christian Eriksen during last June’s UEFA EURO 2020 match against Finland. “When UEFA adopts strict medical

protocols that can save the life of a player who suffers a cardiac arrest, life and football are the winners,” he said. Meanwhile, UEFA’s social conscience had been illustrated by continued annual increases in the budget for the UEFA Foundation for Children’s work on behalf of disadvantaged children around the world.

Seeking solutions

The UEFA president stressed that alongside all of these positive developments, it was also important to recognise failings as well as successes. “We still have many problems to solve to make our sport a role model and a greater source of inspiration than it is today,” he reflected.

Violence at football matches remained a major problem. “When a family goes to watch [a football match], it’s time for fun, for enjoyment,” he said. “People should feel safe in and around the football stadium.” The UEFA president urged greater efforts to promote and integrate minorities in football at every level.

“To claim that there is no racism or discrimination in football is not true,” he underlined. “It exists, in football as in the rest of society. It’s up to us to tackle this issue head-on.

“We also need to look after players’ physical and mental health. We must take steps to prevent them being abused on social media, we must offer psychological support to help them deal with the pressure they are under.”

The UEFA president, in closing, stressed the need to ensure that everyone was given a chance in football – “that the small can continue playing against the giants, and sometimes shock the world by beating them. That is what makes football such a fantastic and beautiful game.”

More support for development projects

UEFA has underlined its commitment to safeguarding European football from the ongoing economic crisis by significantly increasing future funding for development projects run by its member associations.

UEFA general secretary Theodore Theodoridis told the Vienna Congress that an additional €160 million (+21%) would be allocated to the sixth cycle of UEFA’s highly successful HatTrick development programme. Each national association will therefore be able to receive up to €17 million over the 2024-28 period.

“This means that we can deliver more investment in football development through our member associations,” the general secretary said.

Every four years, HatTrick distributes revenue from the men’s European Championship to all 55 UEFA member associations for investment in infrastructure and development projects.

Since its creation in 2004, HatTrick has invested nearly €2.5 billion in European football.

UEFA reports approved

The 2020/21 UEFA annual and financial reports were approved in Vienna. Both reports focus on how UEFA applies the values of the European sports model at all levels of the football pyramid.

Data, stories and graphics highlight UEFA’s activities and events over a hectic period – and, in particular, how UEFA lives the values of this model in every aspect of its mission.

The European sports model forms the foundations on which UEFA and other sports governing bodies are built. Its pyramid structure works on the premise that revenue generated at the top by professional competition is reinvested back into football at all levels, while also recognising the sport’s contribution to society beyond the pitch.

The annual report reveals the specialist skills, coordination and collaboration required to successfully stage 1,400 club and national team matches across Europe during a health crisis. Graphics in both reports also show clearly how UEFA, a not-for-profit organisation, redistributes the majority of income from its elite competitions back into the game to benefit Europe’s national associations.

Furthermore, the annual report provides a comprehensive overview of how UEFA development programmes strengthen all aspects of the game, and explains how UEFA’s groundwork ensures that football’s pan-European popularity plays a game-changing role in tackling human rights and environmental issues.

The report is packed with countless examples of UEFA’s work behind the scenes to ensure that European football stays ahead of the game.

The next Ordinary UEFA Congress will take place in Lisbon, Portugal, on 5 April 2023. 🌐



CLUB COMPETITION FORMAT AND EURO 2024 MATCH SCHEDULE APPROVED IN VIENNA

The UEFA Executive Committee’s meeting in the Austrian capital on 10 May provided important decisions on European men’s club football, UEFA EURO 2024 and club licensing in women’s football.

Club format and access list

The UEFA Executive Committee gave the green light to the final format and access list for UEFA’s men’s senior club competitions as of the 2024/25 season. The move follows exhaustive consultation with stakeholders across football and follows the committee’s decision of

19 April 2021 to introduce a so-called ‘Swiss system’ (see UEFA Direct No. 194). The key amendments involve a reduction from ten matches to eight in the league phase of the UEFA Champions League, as well as the change of criteria for the allocation of two of the four additional places in the UEFA Champions League,

removing access based on club coefficients – confirming UEFA’s strong commitment to the principle of open competitions and sporting merit, while recognising the need to protect domestic leagues. The eight UEFA Champions League matches will be played over the ten European weeks foreseen by the

April 2021 decision. The UEFA Champions League, UEFA Europa League and UEFA Europa Conference League will all enjoy one week of calendar exclusivity. The four additional places created by the increase from 32 to 36 teams in the UEFA Champions League league phase will be allocated as follows:

- One place will go to the club ranked third in the championship of the association in fifth position in the UEFA national association rankings.
- One place will be awarded to a domestic champion by extending from four to five



the number of clubs qualifying via the champions path.

- The final two places will go to the associations with the best collective performance by their clubs in the previous season (total number of points obtained divided by the number of participating clubs). Those two associations will earn one place for the best-ranked club in the domestic league behind the UEFA Champions League positions. For example, at the end of the current season, the two associations adding one club to the Champions League, based on the collective performance of their clubs, would have been England and the Netherlands.

The Executive Committee also confirmed that all games before the final will still be played midweek, recognising the importance of the domestic calendar of games across Europe.

“UEFA has clearly shown,” said UEFA president Aleksander Čeferin, “that we are fully committed to respecting the fundamental values of sport and to defending the key principle of open competitions, with qualification based on sporting merit, fully in line with the values and solidarity-based European sports model.”

Format summary

Taking the total number of teams from 32 to 36 in the UEFA Champions League, the biggest change will see a transformation from the traditional group stage to a single league phase including all participating teams. Every club will now be guaranteed a minimum of eight league stage games against eight different opponents (four home games, four away) rather than the previous six matches against three teams, played on a home-and-away basis. ➔



Special rules for Women’s EURO 2022

On 27 May 2022, the Executive Committee approved special rules for Women’s EURO 2022 in England from 6 to 31 July in order to guarantee the smooth running and continuity of the competition in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. Once the player list has been submitted on 26 June, the current regulations allow unlimited replacements on the player list in case of serious injury or illness before the first match, provided the replacements are medically certified. For the sake of clarity, players who have tested positive for COVID-19 or who have been put in isolation are considered as cases of serious illness and can therefore be replaced before the first match with the approval of the UEFA administration. The new regulations will now also allow goalkeepers to be replaced before each match during the tournament in case of physical incapacity even if one or two goalkeepers from the player list are still available. To ensure the integrity of the competition, a player who has been replaced on the player list cannot be reinstated on the list.



Portugal are replacing Russia at Women’s EURO 2022.

The top eight sides in the league will qualify automatically for the knockout stage, while the teams finishing in ninth to 24th place will compete in a two-legged play-off to secure their path to the last 16 of the competition.

Similar format changes will also be applied to the UEFA Europa League (eight matches in the league stage) and UEFA Europa Conference League (six matches in the league stage) and both will also include 36 teams in the league phase.

EURO 2024 match schedule

The Executive Committee approved the match schedule for EURO 2024, which will take place across ten cities in Germany from 14 June to 14 July 2024. The opening game will be played at Munich’s Football Arena, with the final taking place at the Olympiastadion in Berlin.

For the first time, sustainability is

included in the tournament regulations. Three clusters of venues have been established: North/North-East (Berlin, Hamburg, Leipzig), West (Dortmund, Düsseldorf, Frankfurt, Gelsenkirchen, Cologne) and South (Frankfurt, Munich, Stuttgart).

Matches in each group will take place only across two clusters, thereby reducing travel distances for teams and fans between the host cities, and favouring team delegations travelling by train or bus from their base camps to the group match venues.

Club benefits programme

Previously, on 7 April, the Executive Committee approved the allocation and distribution criteria for the EURO 2024 club benefits programme which – every four years – is based on an amount generated by the EURO and paid out to clubs that

contributed to the successful staging of all UEFA’s national team competitions by releasing players for those matches.

The available amount for the 2020–24 cycle is €240 million, as stipulated in the memorandum of understanding signed by UEFA and the European Club Association (ECA) in February 2019. The programme covers matches in the UEFA Nations League, the European Qualifiers as well as the EURO 2024 final tournament, and the distribution system remains largely unchanged from EURO 2020.

€100 million will reward the release of players for the 2020/21 and 2022/23 UEFA Nations League, as well as the European Qualifiers for EURO 2024. This represents an increase of €30 million from EURO 2020 and will ensure more solidarity to a very large number of European clubs. The amount for the release of players for EURO 2024 will also be increased from €130 million to €140 million.

After EURO 2020, €200 million was paid to 697 clubs from all 55 UEFA member associations.

UEFA Women’s Champions League club licensing regulations

The Executive Committee also approved dedicated UEFA Club Licensing Regulations for the UEFA Women’s Champions League. While licensing for the elite women’s club competition was introduced in 2019, these are the first set of fully separate regulations for the competition.

The regulations, which came into effect on 1 June, aim to promote participation in football, contribute to the development of women’s football, and protect the integrity and smooth running of the UEFA Women’s Champions League. They will also improve the professionalisation of clubs’ structures and contribute to long-term sustainability, as well as providing increased transparency and improved quality of financial information and financial management.

2023 Conference League and UEFA Congress venues

The Eden Arena in Prague was appointed to host the 2023 UEFA Europa Conference League final on 7 June 2023, while the 47th Ordinary UEFA Congress will be held in Lisbon on 5 April 2023.

The next meeting of the UEFA Executive Committee is scheduled to take place in Hvar, Croatia, on 20 September 2022. 🌐

DECISIONS CONCERNING RUSSIA

Further to its 28 February 2022 decision to suspend all Russian representative teams and clubs from participating in UEFA competition matches until further notice, the UEFA Executive Committee took a series of decisions on 2 May relating to the implications of that decision for its forthcoming competitions in order to ensure their smooth staging in a safe and secure environment for all those concerned.

2022/23 UEFA Nations League: Russia will not participate in Group 2 of League B and will automatically be ranked fourth in this group. Consequently, Russia will be relegated at the end of the group phase and ranked in 16th and last place in League B.

UEFA Women’s EURO 2022: Russia will not participate in Group C of the UEFA Women’s EURO 2022 final tournament in England from 6 to 31 July and will be replaced by Portugal, the opponent Russia defeated in the play-offs.

European Qualifying Competition for the 2023 Women’s World Cup: Russia did not play their two matches scheduled in April in Group E (comprising Denmark, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Malta and Azerbaijan) owing to their suspension. Russia will not participate in any of the subsequent matches in this competition and all their results until now are considered as null and void. Consequently, Group E will continue as a group of five teams.

2021–23 European Under-21 Championship: Russia did not play their two matches scheduled in March in Group C (comprising Spain, Slovakia, Malta, Lithuania and Northern Ireland) owing to their suspension. Russia will not participate in any of the subsequent matches in this competition and all their results until now are considered as null and void. Consequently, Group C will continue as a group of five teams.

2022/23 UEFA club competitions (UEFA Champions League, UEFA Europa League, UEFA Europa Conference League, UEFA Women’s Champions League and UEFA Youth League):

Russia will have no affiliated clubs participating in UEFA club competitions in the 2022/23 season. Consequently, the respective access lists of the men’s and women’s club competitions have been rebalanced in accordance with the principles set out in the relevant competition regulations.

Furthermore, Russia will be assigned a number of coefficient points equivalent to the lowest number it has earned in any of the past five seasons, i.e. 4.333 points for the men’s association club coefficient and 1.750 for the women’s association club coefficient, for the purpose of points calculation for the 2022/23 season.

UEFA Women’s Futsal EURO 2022: Russia will not participate in the final tournament (involving Portugal, Spain and Ukraine) in Portugal from 1 to 3 July and will be replaced by Hungary, who finished second in Group 1 of the main round, won by Russia.

2022/23 UEFA Women’s Futsal EURO: Russia had been directly drawn into Group 4 of the main round. As the three group winners and the best runner-up qualify from the preliminary round, Russia will be replaced in the main round by the second best-ranked runner-up of the preliminary round.

2022/23 UEFA Futsal Champions League: Russia will have no affiliated clubs participating in the 2022/23 UEFA Futsal Champions League.

European Qualifying Competition for the 2024 Futsal World Cup: Russia will be replaced in the draw for the main round group phase by Norway, the best third-ranked team of the preliminary round.

2022/23 youth competitions: Russia will not participate in the 2022/23 men’s Under-17 and Under-19 Championships and teams drawn in the same group will compete against each other in a mini-tournament with three teams.

Russia will not participate in the Women’s Under-17 and Women’s Under-19 Championships, with one additional three-team mini-tournament taking place in each competition.

2022/23 UEFA Regions’ Cup: Russia will be replaced in Group 1 of the intermediate round by the runner-up of the preliminary round.

EURO 2028/32 bid procedure: The Executive Committee declared the bid submitted by the Football Union of Russia to host UEFA EURO 2028 or UEFA EURO 2032 as ineligible, in accordance with Article 16.02 of the Bid Regulations for UEFA Finals and Final Phases, which states that: “Each bidder shall ensure that it does not act in a manner that could bring UEFA, the UEFA final or UEFA final phase, any other bidder (or any employee, officer or representative of any of the foregoing), the bidding procedure or European football into disrepute.” Moreover, “the automatic qualification of the host team(s) shall be guaranteed (...) for a single host (...)” Therefore, given the uncertainty as to when the suspension of Russian teams will be lifted, the acceptance of a bid from the Football Union of Russia would go against the Executive Committee decision of 28 February 2022 suspending all Russian representative teams and clubs from participating in UEFA competition matches until further notice.

On 27 May 2022, the Executive Committee decided to prevent teams from Belarus and Ukraine from being drawn against each other in any future UEFA competitions with immediate effect and until further notice. On 3 March 2022, the UEFA Executive Committee had already decided that since the invasion of the Ukrainian territory by the Russian army had been facilitated by access given by the neighbouring territory of Belarus, no UEFA competition match could be played on the territory of Belarus until further notice and no spectators could attend matches in which the teams from Belarus featured as the host.

This decision of 27 May 2022 has been taken to ensure the smooth running of UEFA competitions as the safety and security of teams, officials and other participants may not be fully guaranteed because of the existence of a military conflict.



309 CLUBS,
959 MATCHES

Women's Champions League

- 1 ACF Milan (ITA)

2 Agarista (MDA)

3 Åland (FIN)

4 Anderlecht (BEL)

5 Apollon (CYP)

6 Arsenal (ENG)

7 Barcelona (ESP)

8 Bayern (GER)

9 Benfica (POR)

10 Beşiktaş (TUR)

11 BIIK-Shymkent (KAZ)

12 Birkirkara (MLT)

13 Bordeaux (FRA)

14 Bratislava (SVK)

15 Breidablik (ISL)

16 Breznica Pljevlja (MNE)

17 Brøndby (DEN)

18 Celtic (SCO)

19 Chelsea (ENG)

20 Cluj-Napoca (ROU)

21 CSKA (RUS)

22 Czarni Sosnowiec (POL)

23 Dinamo-BSUPC (BLR)

24 Eindhoven (NED)

25 FC Nike (GEO)
- 26 Ferencvárosi (HUN)

27 Gintira (LTU)

28 Glasgow City (SCO)

29 Glentoran (NIR)

30 Håcken (SWE)

31 Hayasa (ARM)

32 Hoffenheim (GER)

33 Juventus (ITA)

34 Kamenica (MKD)

35 Kharkiv (UKR)

36 Kiryat Gat (ISR)

37 Klaksvik (FRO)

38 Køge (DEN)

39 Kristianstads (SWE)

40 Levante (ESP)

41 Lokomotiv Moskva (RUS)

42 Lyon (FRA)

43 Manchester City (ENG)

44 Minsk (BLR)

45 Mitrovica (KOS)

46 NSA Sofia (BUL)

47 Okzhetpes (KAZ)

48 PAOK (GRE)

49 Paris SG (FRA)
- 50 Peamount (IRL)

51 Pomurje (SVN)

52 Racing Luxembourg (LUX)

53 Real Madrid (ESP)

54 Reykjavik (ISL)

55 Rigas (LVA)

56 Rosenborg (NOR)

57 Rosengård (SWE)

58 Sarajevo (BIH)

59 Servette (SUI)

60 Slavia Praha (CZE)

61 Slovácko (CZE)

62 Sparta Praha (CZE)

63 St. Pölten (AUT)

64 Subotica (SRB)

65 Swansea (WAL)

66 Tallinna (EST)

67 Twente (NED)

68 Vålerenga (NOR)

69 Vilaznia (ALB)

70 Wolfsburg (GER)

71 ŽNK Osijek (CRO)

72 Zürich (SUI)

Men's Champions League

- 1 AC Milan (ITA)

2 Ajax (NED)

3 Alshkert (ARM)

4 Atalanta (ITA)

5 Atlético de Madrid (ESP)

6 Barcelona (ESP)

7 Bayern München (GER)

8 Benfica (POR)

9 Beşiktaş (TUR)

10 Bodø/Glimt (NOR)

11 Borac (BIH)

12 Borussia Dortmund (GER)

13 Brøndby (DEN)

14 Budućnost Podgorica (MNE)

15 Celtic (SCO)

16 Chelsea (ENG)

17 Club Brugge (BEL)

18 CFR Cluj (ROU)

19 Connah's Quay (WAL)

20 Crvena zvezda (SRB)

21 Dinamo Tbilisi (GEO)

22 Dinamo Zagreb (CRO)

23 Dynamo Kyiv (UKR)

24 Ferencváros (HUN)

25 Flora (EST)

26 Fola (LUX)

27 Folgore (SMR)

28 Galatasaray (TUR)

29 Genk (BEL)

30 HB (FRO)

31 Hibernians (MLT)

32 HJK (FIN)

33 Inter Escaldes (AND)

34 Inter Milan (ITA)

35 Juventus (ITA)

36 Kairat (KAZ)

37 Legia (POL)

38 Leipzig (GER)

39 Lincoln Red Imps (GIB)

40 Linfield (NIR)
- 41 Liverpool (ENG)

42 LOSC (FRA)

43 Ludogorets (BUL)

44 Maccabi Haifa (ISR)

45 Malmö (SWE)

46 Manchester City (ENG)

47 Manchester United (ENG)

48 Midtjylland (DEN)

49 Monaco (FRA)

50 Mura (SVN)

51 Neftçi (AZE)

52 Olympiacos (GRE)

53 Omonoia (CYP)

54 Paris Saint-Germain (FRA)

55 Porto (POR)

56 Prishtina (KOS)

57 PSV (NED)

58 Rangers (SCO)

59 Rapid Wien (AUT)

60 Real Madrid (ESP)
- 61 Riga (LVA)

62 Salzburg (AUT)

63 Sevilla (ESP)

64 Shakhtar Donetsk (UKR)

65 Shakhtyor (BLR)

66 Shamrock Rovers (IRL)

67 Sheriff (MDA)

68 Shkendija (MKD)

69 Slavia Praha (CZE)

70 Slovan Bratislava (SVK)

71 Sparta Praha (CZE)

72 Spartak Moskva (RUS)

73 Sporting CP (POR)

74 Teuta (ALB)

75 Valur (ISL)

76 Villarreal (ESP)

77 Wolfsburg (GER)

78 Young Boys (SUI)

79 Žalgiris (LTU)

80 Zenit (RUS)

Europa League

- 1 Anorthosis (CYP)

2 Antwerp (BEL)

3 AZ Alkmaar (NED)

4 Braga (POR)

5 Fenerbahçe (TUR)

6 Frankfurt (GER)

7 Jablonec (CZE)

8 Lazio (ITA)

9 Leicester (ENG)

10 Leverkusen (GER)
- 11 Lokomotiv Moskva (RUS)

12 Lyon (FRA)

13 Marseille (FRA)

14 Napoli (ITA)

15 Randers (DEN)

16 Real Betis (ESP)

17 Real Sociedad (ESP)

18 St Johnstone (SCO)

19 Sturm Graz (AUT)

20 West Ham (ENG)

21 Zorya Luhansk (UKR)

Europa Conference League

- 1 Aberdeen (SCO)

2 AEK (GRE)

3 AEL (CYP)

4 AGF (DEN)

5 Anderlecht (BEL)

6 Apollon (CYP)

7 Arda (BUL)

8 Aris (GRE)

9 Ashdod (ISR)

10 Astana (KAZ)

11 Austria Wien (AUT)

12 Bala (WAL)

13 Basel (SUI)

14 BATE (BLR)

15 Birkirkara (MLT)

16 Breidablik (ISL)

17 Bohemians (IRL)

18 Copenhagen (DEN)

19 Coleraine (NIR)

20 CSKA-Sofia (BUL)

21 Čukarički (SRB)

22 Dečić (MNE)

23 Diddeleng (LUX)

24 Dila (GEO)

25 Dinamo Batumi (GEO)

26 Dinamo Brest (BLR)

27 Domžale (SVN)

28 Drita (KOS)

29 Dunajská Streda (SVK)

30 Dundalk (IRL)

31 Elfsborg (SWE)

32 Europa (GIB)

33 FCSG (MDA)

34 FCSB (ROU)

35 Fehérvár (HUN)

36 Feyenoord (NED)

37 FH (ISL)

38 FK Podgorica (MNE)
- 39 Gagra (GEO)

40 Glentoran (NIR)

41 Gent (BEL)

42 Gzira (MLT)

43 Håcken (SWE)

44 Hajduk Split (CRO)

45 Hammarby (SWE)

46 H. Beer-Sheva (ISR)

47 Hibernian (SCO)

48 Honka (FIN)

49 Inter Turku (FIN)

50 Kauno Žalgiris (LTU)

51 Keşla (AZE)

52 KI (FRO)

53 Kolos Kovalivka (UKR)

54 KuPS (FIN)

55 Laç (ALB)

56 La Fiorita (SMR)

57 Larne (NIR)

58 LASK (AUT)

59 Levadia (EST)

60 Liepāja (LVA)

61 Llapi (KOS)

62 Lokomotiv Plovdiv (BUL)

63 Luzern (SUI)

64 Maccabi Tel-Aviv (ISR)

65 Maribor (SVN)

66 Milsami (MDA)

67 Molde (NOR)

68 Mons Calpe (GIB)

69 Mosta (MLT)

70 Newtown (WAL)

71 Noah (ARM)

72 NSÍ (FRO)

73 Olimpija Ljubljana (SVN)

74 Osijek (CRO)

75 Paços Ferreira (POR)

76 Paide (EST)

77 Panevėžys (LTU)

78 PAOK (GRE)

79 Partizan (SRB)

80 Partizani (ALB)

81 Petrolub (MDA)

82 Plzeň (CZE)

83 Pogoń (POL)

84 Puskás Akadémia (HUN)

85 Qarabağ (AZE)

86 Racing Union (LUX)

87 Raków (POL)
- 88 Rennes (FRA)

89 RFS (LVA)

90 Rijeka (CRO)

91 Roma (ITA)

92 Rosenborg (NOR)

93 Rubin (RUS)

94 Santa Clara (POR)

95 FC Santa Coloma (AND)

96 Sant Julià (AND)

97 Sarajevo (BIH)

98 Sepsi Sfantu Gheorghe (ROU)

99 Servette (SUI)

100 Shakhter (KAZ)

101 Shkupi (MKD)

102 Sileks (MKD)

103 Široki Brijuni (BIH)

104 Sivasspor (TUR)

105 Škask (POL)

106 Sligo (IRL)

107 Slovácko (CZE)

108 Sochi (RUS)

109 Spartak Trnava (SVK)

110 St Joseph's (GIB)

111 Stjarnan (ISL)

112 Struga (MKD)

113 Süduva (LTU)

114 Sumgayit (AZE)

115 Sütjeska (MNE)

116 Swift (LUX)

117 Tobol (KAZ)

118 Torpedo Zhodino (BLR)

119 Tottenham (ENG)

120 TNS (WAL)

121 Trabzonspor (TUR)

122 Tre Penne (SMR)

123 Újpest (HUN)

124 Union Berlin (GER)

125 Universitatea Craiova (ROU)

126 Urartu (ARM)

127 Vaduz (LIE)

128 Vålerenga (NOR)

129 Valmiera (LVA)

130 Velež (BIH)

131 Vitesse (NED)

132 Villaznia (ALB)

133 Vojvodina (SRB)

134 Vorskla (UKR)

135 Yerevan Ararat (ARM)

136 Žilina (SVK)

CLUBS GROUPED BY THE COMPETITION THEY KICKED OFF IN

80
UEFA CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

21
UEFA EUROPA LEAGUE

136
UEFA EUROPA CONFERENCE LEAGUE

72
UEFA WOMEN'S CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

ANCELOTTI MAKES HISTORY AS REAL MADRID WIN AGAIN

The 2021/22 UEFA Champions League season closed on Saturday 28 May with Real Madrid victorious for the 14th time.

Madrid's 1-0 final victory over Liverpool at the Stade de France was the product of a second-half goal by Vinicius Júnior and a player of the match performance by Thibaut Courtois, whose series of saves included outstanding stops from Sadio Mané and Mohamed Salah. It was a night of celebration for the Spanish champions and for the man in their technical area, Carlo Ancelotti, winning the trophy for the fourth time as a coach – his second success with Los Blancos, after two triumphs with AC Milan.

Of Ancelotti's players, Karim Benzema earned recognition from UEFA's technical observer panel as the competition's player of the season – reward for his exceptional centre-forward play, which brought an unmatched tally of 15 goals – including knockout-stage hat-tricks against Paris Saint-Germain and Chelsea. Vinicius Júnior, who teed up four strikes for Benzema among his six assists, as well as scoring four of his own, was named the UEFA Champions League Young Player of the Season.

Yet the 2022 final was also an occasion which gave UEFA deep reason to reflect, following the events beforehand outside the Stade de France, a venue selected to host the final after it was moved from St Petersburg in February in the wake of Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Immediately after the final, which kicked off 36 minutes late, UEFA commissioned an independent review aimed at understanding the reasons for the frightening and distressing scenes involving spectators queuing to enter the stadium and determining what lessons can be learned to ensure there is no repeat.

From the beginning

This was the 30th campaign of the UEFA Champions League era and it had begun in late June 2021 with a preliminary round containing the champions of Andorra, the Faroe Islands, Kosovo and San Marino, from which Prishtina, the Kosovan side, advanced to the first qualifying round.

Three qualifying rounds later, by late August, 12 teams entered a play-off round from which Benfica, Malmö, Salzburg, Shakhtar Donetsk, Sheriff and Young Boys advanced to the group stage. In the case of Sheriff, they became the first group-stage participants from Moldova – one of 15 nations represented – and they produced arguably its biggest surprise with a 2-1 September victory at the Santiago Bernabéu. Their winning goal was a brilliant 90th-minute strike by Sébastien Thill with which he became the first scorer from



Thibaut Courtois' stunning performance in goal was crucial to Madrid's victory.



Luka Modrić lifts his fifth Champions League trophy and Madrid's 14th.

Final – 28 May in Paris
Liverpool 0-1 Real Madrid

Villarreal on his first home outing in the competition in United red since 2009.

The 2021 UEFA Europa League winners, Villarreal, would dust themselves down and venture all the way to the semi-finals, ousting Juventus and Bayern with the help of pivotal contributions by thirtysomethings Raúl Albiol and Dani Parejo. It took the best of Liverpool's 'mentality monsters' – as Klopp called his side – to end the Yellow Submarine's journey on a semi-final night in Spain when Unai Emery's side led 2-0 before losing 3-2.

Comeback kings

When it came to fightbacks, though, nobody could match Madrid. Benzema's 17-minute hat-trick overturned two Kylian Mbappé goals in their round of 16 tie against a Paris Saint-Germain left to rue a first-leg penalty miss by Messi. Against Chelsea, despite Benzema's first-leg treble in London, they were ten minutes from elimination prior to goals by substitute Rodrygo and Benzema again. And the Bernabéu worked its magic again in the semi-final against Manchester City: Madrid were two goals behind in the tie entering the 90th minute before substitute Rodrygo popped up with a quick double to force extra time. Cue a Benzema penalty winner.

Incidentally, in this first season without the away-goals rule, that was the only tie which would have run a different course under the old system – Madrid's three goals in their 4-3 first-leg defeat in Manchester would have meant no extra time in the second leg. 🍷

Luxembourg in the competition in the UEFA Champions League era. By the following spring, the coach who had overseen that victory over the eventual champions, Yuri Vernyub, was back in his native Ukraine having enlisted with his country's army.

Other notable performers in the group stage were Ajax, Bayern München and Liverpool, who each won all six fixtures. For Liverpool, it was the first perfect group campaign by an English club and Jürgen Klopp's men delivered more landmarks, becoming the first team to win all six away games from group stage to final and the first Liverpool side to win ten matches in any European campaign.

There was just one win for AC Milan, the seven-time winners, as they made their first appearance in the group stage since 2013/14, while Barcelona, without Lionel Messi, managed just two goals as they

exited the UEFA Champions before Christmas for the first time since 2000/01. By contrast, Salzburg ensured Austria representation in the knockout rounds for the first time this century. Their run would end at the hands of Bayern München, whose 7-1 win was the biggest victory margin and ensured that Bayern ended the season as 31-goal top scorers.

On the subject of goals, the group stage also witnessed an impressive scoring streak by Ajax's Sébastien Haller. At 27, he was new to the competition but hit the ground running with four goals on Matchday 1 at Sporting. The goals continued to flow, with at least one in seven successive appearances before Ajax's elimination by Benfica. Back at Manchester United, Cristiano Ronaldo scored in their first five group games – including an added-time winner against



Super Cup
in Helsinki

Real Madrid's UEFA Champions League success has set up a UEFA Super Cup date with Eintracht Frankfurt, winners of the UEFA Europa League. The Super Cup match will take place in Helsinki's Olympic Stadium on Wednesday 10 August and will stir memories, inevitably, of the clubs' only previous encounter – back in 1960, when Madrid prevailed 7-3 in the European Cup final at Hampden Park, Glasgow.

EINTRACHT FRANKFURT LIFT EUROPA LEAGUE ON PENALTIES

There was a sea of blue at one end of Seville's Estadio Ramón Sánchez-Pizjuán facing a wall of white at the opposite end as the 2021/22 UEFA Europa League concluded on 18 May in front of some of the competition's most fervent fans, who turned the Andalusian city alight with a choreography of colour and passion.

Considering how the 51st edition of the competition had started, with COVID continuing to wreak havoc and limit spectator numbers, such a vibrant, colourful spectacle would have been hard to imagine as Neftçi and HJK got the ball rolling in qualifying on 3 August in Baku – ironically, the venue of the last full-capacity final in 2019. As the season progressed and restrictions were lifted, fans flocked back and, in the case of the two finalists, played their part in their teams' success.

Indeed, estimates range from between 30,000 and 50,000 for the number of Frankfurt fans who turned Barcelona's Camp Nou practically into a home venue for their quarter-final win over the Catalans. "These are the kinds of emotional highlights all the money in

the world cannot buy," said the Bundesliga team's coach, Oliver Glasner. A similar number joined the Eagles on their semi-final trip to London, where West Ham befell the same fate, but it was back in Hessa where the roof was raised in the return leg. "I've never heard a stadium that loud," recalled Frankfurt goalkeeper Kevin Trapp, who was named player of

the match in the final and was selected by UEFA's technical observer panel as the best goalkeeper in the tournament. "That was the highlight of my career."

Rangers' fans were not in the inferiority by any means, though, and some memorable, noisy nights at Ibrox had helped see the Gers eliminate two of Eintracht's Bundesliga rivals, Borussia



Filip Kostić fires the ball into Allan McGregor's net.

50 years of the UEFA Cup/Europa League

This year marks 50 years since the creation of the UEFA Cup, which succeeded the Inter-Cities Fairs Cup and later became the Europa League in 2009. The first UEFA Cup went to Tottenham Hotspur in 1972 (below) after they beat Wolverhampton Wanderers in a two-legged all-English final (this two-legged format was used in all UEFA Cup finals until 1997). Spanish clubs have since dominated, winning in 8 of the last 13 seasons.

Clubs with the most titles
Sevilla FC 6

FC Internazionale Milano, Juventus, Liverpool FC, Club Atlético de Madrid 3

Countries with the most titles
Spain 13
England, Italy 9
Germany 7



Dortmund and RB Leipzig, on their way to Andalusia. They overturned first-leg defeats in Braga and Leipzig with no lack of help from their twelfth man in Glasgow. Fan power was back, and the competition was much the better for it.

Many of those who had not made the trip to Spain filled the Frankfurt Arena back in Germany, while Rangers fans filled the nearby Estadio de La Cartuja – a venue for EURO 2020 – where a game both sets of fans had been waiting far too long for was beamed on giant screens to eager eyes. Ahead of the main event, Seville's iconic Plaza de España rolled the clock back almost 100 years to stage the Europa League fan festival at a site originally built

Final – 18 May in Seville

Eintracht Frankfurt 1-1 Rangers FC
Frankfurt win on penalties (5-4)

for the 1929 Ibero-American Exposition. Throughout the days and hours leading up to the final, fans of every allegiance celebrated together in a carnival atmosphere, with expectations growing and growing as kick-off approached in an historic encounter.

Both clubs had already played their part in a glittered 50-year history of the competition, and both felt glory was overdue.

A long wait for Rangers and Frankfurt

Rangers had last reached a UEFA Cup final in 2008, when they were defeated by Zenit St Petersburg. You have to go back even further, to 1972, for their last European success, with victory over Dinamo Moskva in the final of the European Cup Winners' Cup. Frankfurt's last taste of European glory had come in 1980, when they lifted the UEFA Cup with a win over compatriots Borussia Mönchengladbach. A career-ending injury suffered just months earlier meant Jürgen Grabowski, who played 555 games for Frankfurt – the only club of his career – was unable to play in that game, and his sad passing earlier in 2022 provided even more motivation for the German club to end their 42-year wait for another European trophy. Commemorative white shirts with the wording 'Seviljaaa! now is our time' were ubiquitous, with a sense of destiny surrounding the final act of Frankfurt's fairy tale European campaign.

In the hot and humid Andalusian air, Frankfurt initially struggled to get their free-flowing transition football going, with Rangers' coach Giovanni van Bronckhorst showing he had done his homework by lending James Tavernier some support in dealing with Frankfurt dangerman Filip Kostić, with John Lundstram and Ryan Jack dropping in on the right. Kostić still managed to break free for Frankfurt's first shot, which he flashed across Allan McGregor's goal, but it was Ansgar Knauff – the 20-year-old named the Young Player of the Season – who was finding more space and joy on the opposite flank, albeit with Rangers' formidable defender Calvin Bassey winning four of his five duels in an intriguing match-up.

The Scottish side grew in confidence as they closed the channels and limited the

amount of ball Frankfurt had, all the while seeking Joe Aribo down the centre. With Tavernier rarely able to provide the kind of support that had led to him being Rangers' top scorer with seven goals in the competition, the Nigerian had the thankless task of leading the line alone. Yet he showed his predatory qualities by pouncing on a mistake by Djibril Sow to burst clear and slot a low shot past Trapp to open the scoring with his first goal in the competition this season. The blue half of the stadium erupted.

For the next ten minutes, Frankfurt appeared stunned, but their fans found their voices again and Frankfurt's famous 12th man was back. So too was Kostić, who delivered his sixth assist of this European campaign with one of his trademark low crosses from the left, which Rafael Borré met ahead of Bassey to prod past McGregor for the equaliser. Neither side could snatch a winner, but as the game entered extra time and a penalty shoot-out loomed, Trapp came into his own to thwart a resurgent Rangers, foiling Ryan Kent at point-blank range before turning away a Tavernier free-kick which looked destined for the top corner.

Trapp's memorable performance would continue in the shoot-out, as he stopped Aaron Ramsey's penalty, the penultimate shot from 11 metres for the Scottish side. That was the only spot kick not to hit the back of the net, and as Borré hammered his into the top corner, Frankfurt were confirmed as the seventh German club to win this competition, doing so for a second time and booking a UEFA Champions League group stage place as UEFA Europa League winners. 🏆

ALL ROADS LEAD TO TIRANA

The conclusion of the first-ever UEFA Europa Conference League saw success on the pitch for José Mourinho's Roma side and even greater reward for the development of the wider European game.

As Roma captain Lorenzo Pellegrini raised aloft the UEFA Europa Conference League trophy for the first time in front of a capacity crowd at Albania's National Arena on Wednesday 25 May 2022, it was both a fitting moment for the Italian side to announce their return to the European stage and a chance to reflect on the success of UEFA's newest men's club competition.

It is over 20 years since UEFA held a third men's European club competition. Explaining the thinking behind the change, UEFA president Aleksander Čeferin said European football did not just exist for the elite and spoke of UEFA's duty to give everyone the chance to dream of playing in European competitions.

When the inaugural competition started in 2021, 184 teams – with representation from each of the 55 UEFA member associations – were invited to compete. Flora, Alashkert and Lincoln Red Imps became the first teams from Estonia, Armenia and Gibraltar respectively to play in a UEFA group stage; meanwhile Kairat, Bodø/Glimt, Mura, Randers and Union Berlin all made debuts at this level.

With many smaller inexperienced clubs going on to face bigger clubs with more illustrious European football history, the tournament quickly grew to symbolise opportunity, progress and development for the European club game. "If it wasn't for the Conference League, I don't think we would have played a European tournament," said Thomas Thomasberg, coach of Danish side Randers. "It's been great, it's been a huge experience for the players, for the clubs and everyone involved."

Making UEFA club competitions more inclusive than ever before

Ahead of May's final in Tirana, the UEFA president spoke of the UEFA Europa Conference League's success in making UEFA club competitions more inclusive than ever before with more associations represented in the group stages.

"The UEFA Europa Conference League is destined to make our men's club competitions more open while offering clubs from all our member associations enduring representation in UEFA club competitions," he said.

"For example, I was especially pleased to see NŠ Mura, champions of my home nation, Slovenia, compete on the European stage and secure their financial future by qualifying for the group stage. It gave them the chance to compete on a par with some of Europe's most illustrious clubs."

Former Albanian national team captain and UEFA Europa Conference League final ambassador Lorik Cana agreed, and feels the competition will allow a wider variety of clubs and leagues to grow as a result of European competition.

"I'm personally very happy because I think there's space for it – there's a need for this third competition," said Cana, who played in the top leagues in France, England, Turkey and Italy during his playing career.

"We need to give space to some leagues that aren't always able to compete or go far in Europe. It gives them an opportunity to grow, to develop. They have the chance of playing against other countries and showing off at a European level. I see it as a great initiative." 🌱

Final – 25 May
Roma 1-0 Feyenoord



The National Stadium, Tirana, Albania

It's not just on the pitch where the UEFA Europa Conference League has contributed positively to the development and progression of the European game. The decision to host the first-ever final at the National Stadium in Tirana will have a transformative effect on how Albania is perceived by the rest of Europe, in Cana's view.

"Albania is starting to be put on the map. We're starting to exist on the map of European football and that's a great thing," he explained. "It's not just a great event, it also will give our nation the chance to be excellent hosts. To host the first final of the Conference League, to show the world Albania's natural values – hospitality, warmth – and the quality of our fans. To feel considered and, above all, to feel like we're part of the European and football families."

Cana believes hosting the final at the stylish National Stadium, which has a capacity of 21,690 and was partially funded by UEFA's HatTrick assistance programme, can act as a symbol for the country's fresh and dynamic outlook.

"My country has been isolated for so long and now it's reborn," he said. "Tirana is the symbol of the Albanian nation. It's a very young and dynamic city with a new lease of life. It's a very active city, which is trying to become part of this European family, trying to look forward. And I think sport and football have always been its best ambassadors."

Right: Nicola Zalewski (Roma) outmanoeuvres Guus Til (Feyenoord).

Below: Roma's win makes José Mourinho the first coach to win all four current UEFA men's senior club competitions (Champions League, Europa League, Europa Conference League and Super Cup).





After losing three previous finals, Benfica finally got their hands on the Youth League trophy at a packed Colovray Stadium in Nyon.

Elite football finishing school

This was the eighth season of the UEFA Youth League, a period in which more than 800 players have stepped up from this competition to play in one of UEFA's senior club competitions.

To remind participants of the competition's role as an elite finishing school for educating stars of the future, UEFA ran a special exhibit at its Nyon headquarters showcasing Youth League graduates who have appeared in UEFA Champions League finals. The roll of honour includes Fede Valverde, Mason Mount, Rúben Dias and Serge Gnabry.

For players of the four teams involved, the finals provided educational opportunities off the pitch as well as on it. After the semi-finals, UEFA's chief refereeing officer Roberto Rosetti ran a session on the Laws of the Game, commenting on video clips of handball incidents, player overreactions and mass confrontations, each time making the players mindful of their role in promoting the game's image. The squads also received a briefing from UEFA integrity experts on doping and match-fixing.

Members of each team joined a community session with the UEFA Foundation for Children and PluSport, an organisation which provides sporting opportunities for



Rafael Benítez

people with disabilities – in this case, a blind football team who showcased their game to players and spectators alike.

The significance of the competition for young prospects was spelled out by Rafael Benítez at the UEFA Youth League coaching forum held one week after the finals on 2 and 3 May. "In the Youth League, you go to play against different players, different teams, different countries, different systems and different ways to play," said Benítez, addressing more than 40 coaches and technicians from 2021/22 participating clubs. "You stay in a hotel and it's a different environment from the normal league – everything is totally different and it's really good for the players."

RESUMED YOUTH LEAGUE OFFERS KEY STAGE – AND SPRINGBOARD

Benfica may have taken the big prize but every young participant benefits from the return of the UEFA Youth League.

Restored fully to the calendar in 2021/22, this season's UEFA Youth League brought joy for winners Benfica – having provided significant lessons for many other young players along the way.

By a providing significant development opportunity for Europe's most talented Under-19 players, the competition is one example of how UEFA reinvests revenue from its elite men's club competitions in the future of the game. A total of 64 teams took part in the 2021/22 edition, a campaign which began in September last year and concluded in Nyon, Switzerland, with the finals weekend between 22 and 25 April.

It was a welcome return for the springtime denouement at Colovray

Stadium of a competition cancelled last year owing to the pandemic. Thousands of fans turned out – with an aggregate attendance of over 9,000 for the three matches – and the large and loud Benfica contingent had plenty to celebrate as the Portuguese club lifted the trophy for the first time.

Benfica overcame Juventus 4-3 on penalties after a 2-2 draw in their semi-final on Friday 22 April before overwhelming Salzburg 6-0 in the final three days later. In their record-making 70th match in the competition, the Portuguese side had finally exorcised the ghosts of three past final defeats with a stunning 6-0 victory. After gaining control through goals inside the first 15 minutes by Martin Neto and Henrique Araújo

(the first after just 76 seconds), Benfica ran up a record final victory margin in the second period as Henrique Araújo completed his hat-trick and Cher Ndour and Luís Semedo also found the net.

The sight of Rui Costa, the Benfica president, enjoying the post-match celebrations on the field with Luís Castro's players underlined what the trophy meant to the Lisbon side.

Runners-up Salzburg showcased their impressive youth development work with their second final appearance – five years after beating Benfica in the final. They proved far too powerful for the Club Atlético de Madrid side they swept aside 5-0 in the semi-final, when Roko Šimić scored twice to move level with Midtjylland duo Mads Hansen and Aral Simsir at the top of the competition's scorers' chart – all on seven goals each.

Benefits beyond the final four

The 2021/22 Youth League provided a platform for clubs from 39 of UEFA's 55 member associations – not just the final four teams.

As well as a 32-team group stage for the Under-19 sides of those clubs participating in the UEFA Champions

League, the format includes a parallel 32-team domestic champions path, comprising two knockout rounds. The eight teams to advance from that path then face one of the group-stage runners-up in a play-off, with the winners entering the round of 16 against the group winners.

The teams to progress furthest from this season's domestic champions path were AZ Alkmaar, Midtjylland and Žilina, who all reached the round of 16. There, Alkmaar and Žilina suffered home shoot-out losses to Juventus and Salzburg respectively, while Midtjylland led Benfica twice before succumbing 3-2.

Deportivo La Coruña – whose senior side were competing in Spain's third tier – provided two of the most striking attendances with 12,189 at their 5-1 second-round win over Maccabi Haifa, then 20,115 at the home play-off tie against Dynamo Kyiv, which they lost on penalties. That was the second-highest attendance in the competition's history, and was followed a month later by a quarter-final record turn-out of 19,300 for the Borussia Dortmund v Atlético tie. Further evidence of the UEFA Youth League's growing footprint. 🌱



SEMI-FINALS – 22 APRIL

Juventus	2-2	Benfica (3-4 pens)
Atlético	0-5	Salzburg

FINAL – 25 APRIL

Salzburg	0-6	Benfica
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Fondation Foyer-Handicap

One of the charms of the Youth League lies in the proximity between players and supporters. At UEFA's invitation, residents of the Fondation Foyer-Handicap home in Geneva, which looks after people with brain damage, had the chance to attend this year's final. Spotted by both teams, the residents left with shirts, pennants and other souvenirs. One of the visitors from the home, who hails from Portugal, was thrilled to be offered a Benfica jersey.



DOMINANT BARÇA WIN FOURTH TITLE IN RIGA

Jesús Velasco becomes the most successful UEFA Futsal Champions League coach as Barça set the standard in the final four held in Latvia from 29 April to 1 May.

“It’s not easy to do what we did here,” said Jesús Velasco after becoming the first coach to win the UEFA Futsal Champions League three times. Many of the more than 8,000 spectators inside the Arena Riga may beg to differ after witnessing a dominant Barça side sweep defending champions Sporting CP aside in the final act of the 2021/22 edition, though. “What a night and what a game! It was perfect,” added Velasco, who also lifted the title in 2017 and 2018 with Inter FS.

Barça certainly made victory look easy on the night, showing no ill effects from a physically and mentally exhausting semi-final win over Benfica which had

the spectators spellbound. Indeed, Velasco claimed his side’s recovery from a three-goal half-time deficit even fortified them ahead of the final. “Perhaps the key to this win was the way we won the semi-final,” he said. “We managed to forget any signs of tiredness today and my players were amazing all through the match. We worked so hard to get where we are now and I couldn’t be more proud and happy.”

The top-seeded Barça began their successful bid for the title as part of a field of 55, as the game slowly returned to normality after the COVID pandemic had streamlined the previous edition, which concluded with an eight-team

final tournament in Zadar, Croatia. Barça entered in the second of three rounds of mini-tournaments with 120 games played across the continent in all, and with a cumulative total of over 30,000 spectators in attendance; not one fixture had to be called off, while only one mini-tournament was played behind closed doors.

In the preliminary round, Diamant Linz became the first Austrian side to negotiate a round of UEFA futsal competition successfully, and they were not the only history makers either as ACCS became the first French club to reach a final four after finishing runners-up in their group behind Russia’s Tyumen, who were later suspended.

They were joined in Riga, Latvia, by the titleholders Sporting CP – narrow group winners ahead of Ekaterinburg – and Benfica, who finished six points clear in their group, and provided Barça’s opponents in a semi-final which proved to be a genuine treat, featuring some of futsal’s foremost features: quick, end-to-end attacking, sublime skills, fine finishing and a dramatic denouement. Hossein Tayebi opened the scoring from the penalty spot and Vinicius Rocha added a second before Afonso Jesus stunned Barça with a third. Benfica keeper André Sousa – named in the team of the tournament – played his part too in establishing what looked like an unassailable lead. Barça would hit the woodwork a total of six times, and their persistence paid off in the second half when goals from Matheus Rodrigues, Ferrao and Dyego levelled the match. Dyego then put Barça in front for the first time, but Ivan Chishkala responded within 26 seconds to force extra time, and give the fans an encore they were only too happy to remain in their seats for. Adolfo netted the decider 18 seconds from the end of a game Ferrao summed up in one word: “epic.”

Five finals in six seasons for Sporting

Sporting’s route to the final had been a little less complicated, with their seasoned coach Nuno Dias becoming the first to reach 50 games in this competition with a single club during a 6-2 win over ACCS which saw the Portuguese side become the first team to reach five finals in six seasons, and their eighth in all. Like their compatriots, they also led comfortably at half-time, but they never relinquished control against the final four debutants.

ACCS shook off their apparent opening-night nerves to put Benfica to a stern test in the bronze medal match, but Jacaré and Henmi stripped the Lisbon club of any nerves they might have had after Nelson Lutin had narrowed the deficit to a single goal with three and a half minutes to play, and a first European medal since 2016 belonged to Benfica.

With Pany Varela suspended after picking up a red card against ACCS, Sporting came into the final without a key player and this, according to UEFA’s technical observer Venancio López,

hampered them significantly. The rest of the damage was done by a Barça side who did not allow Sporting’s pivots to get into the game, while Ferrao and Pity were able to strut their stuff with devastating results. When Matheus Rodrigues struck the post, Barça may have felt a sense of semi-final déjà vu, but Sergio Lozano soon wiped any worries away with the opener. Pito made Sporting pay for a mislaid pass by doubling Barça’s advantage before the break, but they had also led 2-0 in Zadar a year ago only to lose and Ferrao confirmed they had been reminded of that ahead of the final: “This only reinforces the fact that, at this level, you need to be totally focused for 40 minutes,” he said, and focused is what Barça were. “Barça were very serious for the whole game,” said Venancio López. “When they scored the first goal, it improved their mentality and security.”

There was no looking back this time and further goals from Ferrao and Didac Plana saw Barça crowned champions for the fourth time, extending the alternation of titles between the two clubs into a fourth year after Sporting’s 2019 win in Almaty, Barça’s 2020 triumph on home soil and Sporting’s 2021 recovery in Zadar. And with a near capacity crowd treated to some formidable futsal entertainment, the welcome return of fans after two COVID-hit years contributed to an event which will long be remembered by all involved, on and off the pitch. 🌟

Pito (Barça) fends off Paco (Sporting) in the Futsal Champions League final.



SEMI-FINALS – 29 APRIL

ACCS Asnières Villeneuve 92 2-6 Sporting CP

Benfica 4-5 Barça (aet)

THIRD-PLACE PLAY-OFF – 1 MAY

ACCS Asnières Villeneuve 92 2-5 Benfica

FINAL – 1 MAY

Barça 4-0 Sporting CP

MOVING UP A GEAR

New format supercharges the Women's Champions League.

The final in Turin provided the climax to a watershed season. The old mixture of qualifying mini-tournaments followed by knockout ties involving 32 teams had been ditched. For the first time, the UEFA Women's Champions League featured a 16-team home-and-away group stage running from October to December leading up to knockout ties involving the top eight.

At the same time, centralised commercial rights paved the way for unprecedented broadcast coverage, with every game available free of charge on DAZN and YouTube. The result was a worldwide audience in excess of 14 million

viewers from 210 countries and territories for the group stage alone. That was just one of many records broken during a season that lifted women's club football to a higher plane.

Statistics for 2021/22 are a far cry from the figures posted when the competition was born as the UEFA Women's Cup just two decades ago. For example, the four semi-final matches in 2002 attracted 13,250 spectators at an average of 3,313 per game. In 2022, the balance reads 179,734 fans / 44,934 per match.

When the competition was relaunched as the UEFA Women's Champions League and the first fully branded final was played

in Spain in 2010, the attendance at the Coliseo Alfonso Pérez in Getafe was 10,372.

Astonishing number of fans

UEFA's chief of women's football, Nadine Kessler, who started for Potsdam against Olympique Lyonnais in that inaugural final, comments: "Big numbers and big moments are what women's football needs." She has been treated to both during the 2021/22 season.

Prior to the 32,257 crowd at the final between FC Barcelona and Olympique Lyonnais in Turin, no fewer than 14 matches had already exceeded the

attendance figure in Getafe. Some of them amply. Three of the five highest attendances ever registered in the competition were posted during the 2021/22 season. The return leg of the semi-final between Paris Saint-Germain and Olympique Lyonnais was watched by 43,255 fans – a record crowd for women's club football in France. On the same day, VfL Wolfsburg's 2-0 victory over FC Barcelona was celebrated by a club-record crowd of 22,057. Overall, stadium audiences totalled well over half a million – 587,930, to be precise – at an average of 9,799 per match.

A set of premieres

In the meantime, the new format had allowed HB Køge, Hoffenheim and Real Madrid to make European debuts; Breidablik became the first team from Iceland to feature in the group stage

of any UEFA club competition; and Swiss club Servette were one of four teams to make the last 16 for the first time. Their midfielder Sandy Maendly told UEFA how much it meant to her and her team-mates: "We felt a bit like little kids before Christmas. It was special for us. To be playing in the Champions League for the first time – with fans – made it even more beautiful. The club did a lot of promotion and publicity in the city for the three matches. There was a lot of talk on social channels and posters in the city; there was a bit of a buzz. People got to know us because of the Champions League so when they realised we had qualified, suddenly people who had never been before came for those matches. Against Chelsea there were over 12,000."

Interest in the Champions League prompted Servette to play their group games in the 30,000-capacity Stade de Genève rather than in their smaller home at the Stade de Marignac. And no fewer than seven of the eight quarter-finalists switched games to larger venues – among them FC Barcelona, whose move from the Estadi Johan Cruyff at the club's training centre to the massive Camp Nou allowed the world record to be smashed twice, with 91,553 watching the defending champions defeat Real Madrid 5-2 and then 91,648 turning up to see them beat Wolfsburg 5-1. Their attacking midfielder Claudia Pina admitted: "When you're a child, you dream of lots of things, but you

Add-ons in Turin

Two significant social responsibility projects added value to the final in Turin. The Barça v OL match marked the debut of an audio-descriptive commentary to a worldwide audience, as opposed to previous FM transmissions only available in the stadium. Commentary, designed for blind and partially sighted fans, is by specially trained narrators who focus on visual colour rather than stats or tactics.

Over in the Aurora district of the city, teamwork by the UEFA Foundation for Children, streetfootballworld and the Lay's RePlay project delivered a pitch (one third from recycled crisp bags) to provide football sessions for young people at risk of social exclusion.

never think those dreams can come true. It was really incredible."

Injecting a group stage into the format was a key component in UEFA's strategic plan for women's football, Time for Action. The record-making stats from the 2021/22 UEFA Women's Champions League confirm that plans for the growth of club football are on the right track. 🍷

FINAL – 21 MAY IN TURIN

FC Barcelona 1-3 Olympique Lyonnais



After bagging their eighth title, Lyon have now won the Women's Champions League twice as many times as their nearest rivals in the title stakes, Frankfurt.

MEASURING AGAINST THE BEST

UEFA Women's Champions League sets benchmarks in club football

An eighth victory for Olympique Lyonnais in the last dozen UEFA Women's Champions League finals hints at a degree of familiarity. But the impression is at odds with the realities of an unfamiliar season. The new format, featuring a 16-team group stage, allowed more players and coaches to measure themselves against top-level opponents. Technicians gave an overwhelming welcome to a system that improved on the previous formula of knockout rounds involving 32 teams, which offered limited exposure to high-calibre opposition.

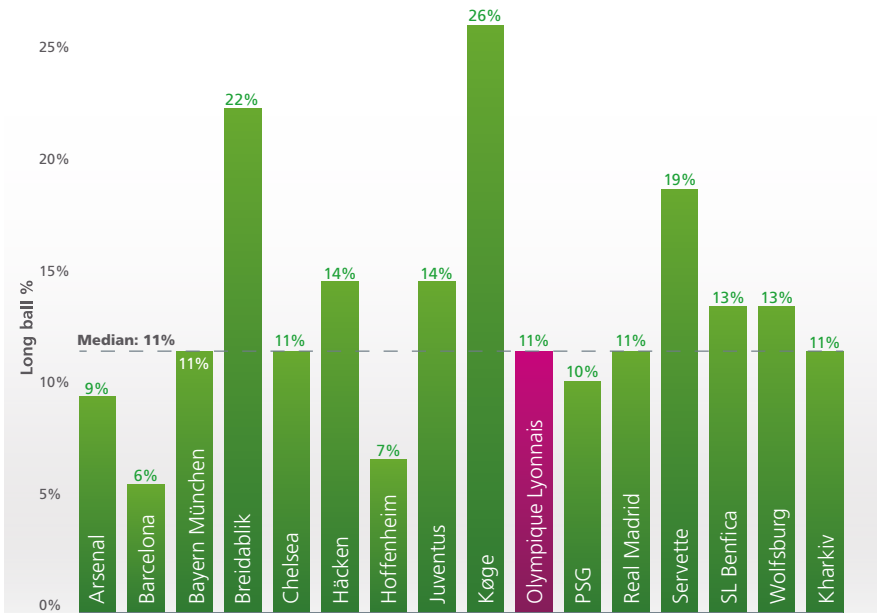
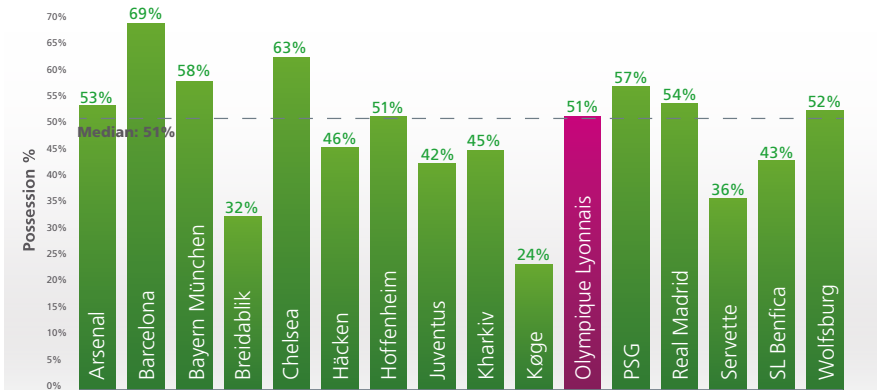
Among the coaching fraternity, a salient feature was a thought-provoking turnover rate. FC Bayern München's Jens Scheuer was alone among the top eight in having a tenure as head coach that pre-dated 2021. There were familiar faces from previous editions who resurfaced at different clubs – for example, Jonas Eidevall (FC Rosengård to Arsenal) and Joe Montemurro (Arsenal to Juventus), while Jonatan Giráldez could claim previous experience as assistant coach to Lluís Cortés when FC Barcelona lifted the trophy in 2021. Another unfamiliar feature in a season with a familiar outcome was that OL's Sonia Bompastor became the first female coach to win the UEFA Women's

Champions League, ending a long wait since Monika Staab and Martina Voss-Tecklenburg won the first and last editions of the old UEFA Women's Cup in 2002 and 2009 respectively. The 2021/22 season demonstrated that the coaching landscape in top-level women's football is changing.

Even though the season enjoyed a return to quasi-normality, coaches were still required to deal with untimely absences caused by COVID protocols – even into the knockout rounds when, for the second leg of the quarter-final against Paris Saint-Germain, Jens Scheuer had only two outfielders on the FC Bayern bench and made only one change during a match that extended into extra time. →

Lyon's eighth Women's Champions League title makes Sonia Bompastor the first to win the competition as a player and as a coach.

Long balls and possession



Some teams were confronted by steep learning curves during a group stage where both teams scored in ten of the 48 fixtures. Ball-possession statistics help to gauge difficulties. Denmark’s HB Køge, for example, averaged 24% in their group alongside Arsenal, Barcelona and Hoffenheim; Iceland’s Breidablik 32% against Kharkiv, PSG and Real Madrid; Servette 36% in their tough group alongside Chelsea, Juventus and Wolfsburg.

Averages, however, can be precarious evidence. Arsenal’s figure of 53% conceals shares of 80 and 76% against Køge, contrasting with 36 and 28% against Barcelona, whose share of the ball in their 11 matches never fell below 60%. As an indicator of contrasting styles, their opponents in the final were not overly

concerned about dominating possession. Against FC Bayern in the group stage, Lyon had 49 and 44%; then 48 and 38% in the semi-final against PSG; and 39% in the final. Their use of the long pass stepped up in relation to previous seasons, reaching 20% during the away leg against PSG and the final in Turin.

Long passing fell into two categories: systematic and enforced. Køge (27%) and Breidablik (23%) fell into the former, with more than one third of the Danish team’s passes against Barcelona covering distances in excess of 30 metres. Chelsea, on the other hand, were persuaded to stray from their habitual modus operandi when they travelled to Wolfsburg in the group stage. Whereas their percentage of long passing had fallen a few decimal points short of double figures in the other

five group games, 21% of the 2020/21 silver medallists’ passing was long during the critical game in Germany, the number of passes fell from well over 500 to 340, and the pass completion rate dropped to 62% overall and 56% in the Wolfsburg half. The 4-0 defeat spelt elimination. Tommy Stroot’s side adopted a similar approach to the away leg of their semi-final against Barcelona, holding a high line, pressing the ball hard and marking individually. The home team, however, remained unfazed and maintained their season-long 5% quota of long passing.

Leading from the front

The final showcased two species of central striker. Lyon’s readiness to exercise the long-pass option was linked to the return to form of target striker Ada Hegerberg,



Ada Hegerberg (Lyon) in action against Barcelona goalkeeper Sandra Paños.

Lyon’s readiness to exercise the long-pass option was linked to the return to form of target striker Ada Hegerberg

while at the other end of the pitch, Jennifer Hermoso’s game was focused on mobility aimed at drawing centre-backs out of position (as she had done

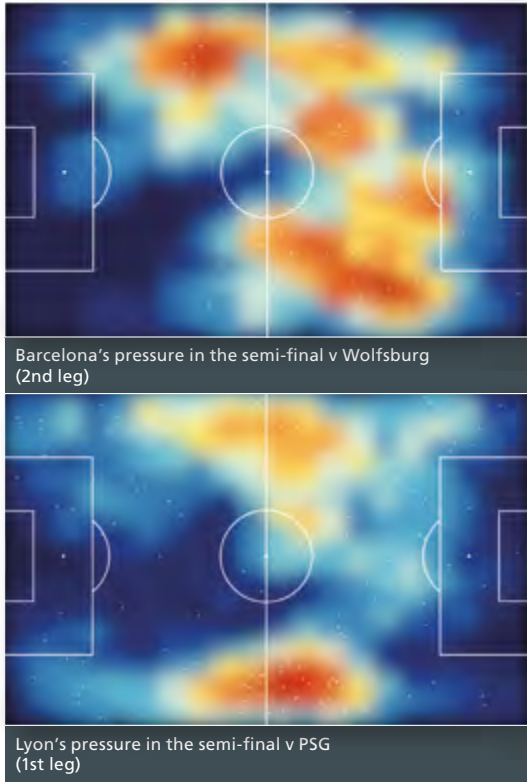
in the home leg of the semi-final against Wolfsburg) and creating openings for the incisive runs from deeper positions by Alexia Putellas and Aitana Bonmatí. After the interval, Giráldez replaced her with Asiat Oshoala, a target striker similar in athletic attributes to PSG’s Marie-Antoinette Katoto.

Arsenal’s attacking format was adjusted after the signing of Stina Blackstenius, after she had played the group phase with BK Häcken. “Generally, Blackstenius would run the line in or beyond the channels,” technical observer Hope Powell observed after watching the home game against Wolfsburg, “while Vivianne Miedema would come short between lines to receive.” Real Madrid also exploited a target striker as a route out of Barcelona’s high press. “The way out was always

Esther González,” commented technical observer Vera Pauw. “She was the target striker who rarely missed out on the early ball forward and played the space behind the defence. She was fast and direct and knew how to make herself free in front of goal or in the build-up. No run was too much for her and when necessary she dropped to help the midfielders defend. She gave the team structure when they were under pressure.”

The higher the better?

Was it coincidence that the final was disputed by the two teams that recorded the highest number of regains in the attacking third? Was it coincidence that Olympique Lyonnais and FC Barcelona then converted ball recoveries in advanced areas into goal attempts? →



The table shows figures for the top teams with the R3 column denoting the average number per match of recoveries in the attacking third and R3+S the average number per game of recoveries that led to a shot on goal.

Team	R3	R3+S
FC Barcelona	12	6
Olympique Lyonnais	11	5
VfL Wolfsburg	8	4
Paris Saint-Germain	7	4
FC Bayern München	7	4

Lyon’s expertise was illustrated by the crucial opening goal in the final, with Amandine Henry snapping into a tackle, coming away with the ball and, a few strides later, hitting an unstoppable shot from distance into the top corner. As Corinne Diacre noted during the semi-final against PSG: “After losses of possession, OL swarmed with density around the ball.” Vera Pauw, observer at the return leg, commented: “After an attack broke down, OL made sure they pressed immediately to give players time to get behind the ball and then pressed as a unit from behind the ball in the opponents’ half, leaving them no opportunity to play in behind their high defensive line.”

“PSG also set out to disturb the OL build-up high up the pitch,” she added, “but often on a more individual basis, with major gaps behind the first line of defence resulting in control for OL. By doing this aspect in a better way, OL were able to create more danger from their immediate transitions to attack.”

“Wolfsburg set out to press Barcelona,” Jorge Vilda remarked after watching the first leg in Spain, “with a very high back line but marking 1v1 on their opponents. As a result they risked being pulled out of shape – and they were 2-0 down within nine minutes.” During the return match, Monika Staab commented: “Barcelona’s defence stayed very high. The team was very compact and did well in duels, with the forwards pressing very high in Wolfsburg’s third in order to get very quickly back in possession.”

FC Bayern, as Corinne Diacre noted: “Sometimes looked for high regains, but often focused their ball winning on slightly deeper areas to give themselves room to counterattack.”

“Real Madrid set up a deep defensive block,” said Vera Pauw after watching

their home game against Barcelona, “and, from this block, would press forward on the player in possession, focusing on a little mistake or inaccurate execution to attack the ball and win it back. This usually happened in midfield.” After seeing Arsenal at home to Wolfsburg, Hope Powell reported: “They pressed high and aggressively in a 1-4-4-2 formation when they could, with Stina Blackstenius leading the press from the front. But when Wolfsburg had comfortable possession, they would focus on recovering shape and balance by retreating to the edge of the mid-third.”

Juventus generally opted for deeper defending. After watching them in Lyon, Jarmo Matikainen commented: “They tried to press early and put pressure on the centre-backs when they wanted to play out. So the front four were important in the defensive structure as the first line of defence. They held a high line at first but were forced to drop deeper – mainly a compact block in midfield but frequently even deeper. And the wide players had the task of defending against

Apart from scoring a superb goal in the final, Amandine Henry pressed hard against Barcelona.



Lyon’s attacking full-backs and needed to cover a lot of ground. So they often had to look for the front four with a long pass.” Still with Lyon, heat maps from the final demonstrate that the team’s average positions on the pitch were higher when out of possession than when the champions had the ball.

Amid the diversity in terms of the how, when and where of pressing mechanisms, Chelsea, eliminated in the group stage, emerged as the team who, as the graphic illustrates, allowed opponents the lowest number of passes (Passes Per Defensive Action) before winning the ball back from them.

Team	PPDA
Chelsea	7.90
FC Barcelona	9.23
Olympique Lyonnais	9.48
FC Bayern München	9.53
Real Madrid	10.03

Physical performance

Athletic conditioning (and climate) evidently need to be factored into a team’s readiness to exert sustained high pressing. And, once again, peak performances in the UEFA Women’s Champions League set the benchmarks. UEFA recently published an

analysis of the physical demands of match play among the top eight teams in the 2019/20 and 2020/21 seasons – which can now be updated with data from 2021/22. In terms of collective effort in distance covered, the curiosity is that the champions posted the lowest figure of the knockout rounds: 103.74km in their away match against Juventus compared with an overall average of just over 110km per game. The codicil is that OL also registered modest statistics in real playing time: 50–52 minutes in three of their four fixtures during the run into the final (the exception being 59’19 in the home leg against PSG). The ball was out of play for 45 of the 101 minutes played during the final, where FC Barcelona collectively ran 5km more than their opponents to post the second-highest total behind FC Bayern München’s 117.58km in the home match against PSG.

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In terms of collective effort in distance covered, the curiosity is that the champions posted the lowest figure of the knockout rounds



With regard to individual parameters, previous studies of the FIFA Women’s World Cups in 2015 and 2019 revealed that, from one final tournament to the other, the amount of high-intensity running increased by 15 and 29% respectively. In the UEFA Women’s Champions League, the study revealed a similar upward trend with, for instance, a 10% rise in high-intensity running in a single season between 2020 and 2021 with sprinting at speeds over 23km/h while out of possession rose by a significant 30%.

The research indicated that, on average, wide players need to be ready to deliver 17 sprints at a mean speed of 28.4km/h. In the knockout rounds of the 2021/22 season, wide midfielders accounted for six of the dozen players who produced sprints in excess of 30km/h, alongside OL right-back Ellie Carpenter. Although her peak speed fell short of 30km/h (29.85km/h to be precise) Wolfsburg’s Tabea Wassmuth delivered 3.16km at speeds between 15 and 30km/h during her team’s home game against Arsenal.

The UEFA analysis also demonstrated that centre-backs are required to produce high speeds when the team is out of possession – with Arsenal’s Leah Williamson and OL’s Kadeisha Buchanan illustrating this by topping the 30km/h mark. Central midfielders, the data confirmed, generally cover a lot of ground (Barcelona’s Aitana Bonmatí ran 12.1km during the final, for example) but rarely find enough space to work up maximum pace. A notable exceptional to this rule was provided by PSG’s holding midfielder Laurina Fazer who, in the away leg of the semi-final against OL, recorded 32.34km/h – second only to Wolfsburg’s wide midfielder Sveindis Jónsdóttir’s run at 32.87km/h during the 5-1 defeat in Barcelona.

A full technical report on the 2021/22 UEFA Women’s Champions League is shortly to be published, based on observations by a team of current or former national team coaches comprising Corinne Diacre (France), Jarmo Matikainen (Finland), Nils Nielsen (Denmark), Vera Pauw (Netherlands), Hope Powell (England), Anna Signeul (Sweden), Monika Staab (Germany) and Jorge Vilda (Spain). 🌱

Centre-backs like Lyon’s Kadeisha Buchanan produced high speeds, exceeding 30km/h.

THE BEST OF EUROPE AND SOUTH AMERICA

In a sold-out Wembley Stadium, Argentina beat Italy 3-0 on 1 June 2022 to become the first side to claim the new CONMEBOL-UEFA Cup of Champions trophy.

This Finalissima match was the relaunch of an idea that brings together the best of European and South American football.

UEFA and CONMEBOL have a long-standing partnership and mutual respect, and they have further strengthened and developed their ties by extending a memorandum of understanding designed to see them cooperate even closer in their bid to advance the cause of global football, including women's football, youth football and futsal, referee exchanges and coach education.



Lionel Messi inspired Argentina to success in the Finalissima.

As part of that understanding, and 29 years after the last match between the champions of Europe and their South American counterparts, Finalissima was as much a celebration of football unity as it was a match between two countries that can boast a total of six FIFA World Cups between them and a whole host of other amazing achievements.

In 1985, it was France – inspired by Michel Platini's 1984 European Championship heroics – who defeated Uruguay 2-0, before Argentina dramatically beat Denmark on penalties in 1993.

The trophy

Back then, the teams were playing for the Artemio Franchi Cup, but this year the successful captain lifted the CONMEBOL-UEFA Cup of Champions, the new name of the trophy. A true work of art, it features two figures representing Europe and South America with the Finalissima icon positioned where their hands meet.

The CONMEBOL-UEFA Cup of Champions trophy is made of brass and coated in silver plating, stands at 45cm in height and weighs 8.5kg. The shape and design are much the same as the original, but the revamped version, designed by Valentina Losa, has a new base with a dark grey nickel-plated finish, which helps to modernise a classic

trophy while not altering its original feel.

Ahead of the Finalissima, the UEFA president, Aleksander Čeferin, said: "We are delighted to build upon our excellent relationship with CONMEBOL, and our strong desire to act jointly for the development of football and its benefits to society. There is a long tradition of cooperation between UEFA and CONMEBOL, as could be witnessed over the years with competitions such as the Artemio Franchi Trophy and the Intercontinental Cup, and it is with great pride that we are relaunching such a prestigious national team trophy to the delight of football lovers across the globe."

The CONMEBOL president, Alejandro Domínguez, reiterated those sentiments. "We are immensely pleased with the fruits we are reaping together with UEFA due to an excellent relationship between our institutions," he said. "By signing this renewal and expanding our memorandum of understanding, we are laying the foundation for this cooperation to grow and develop further."

New intercontinental events

Following the success of the Finalissima, UEFA and CONMEBOL have announced a series of new events involving women's, youth and futsal teams from the two confederations.

First, the youth team of Club Atlético Peñarol from Uruguay (winners of this season's CONMEBOL U-20 Copa Libertadores) will face SL Benfica from Portugal (winners of the 2021/22 UEFA Youth League) at the iconic Estadio Centenario in Montevideo, Uruguay, on 21 August 2022.

After that, the winners of UEFA Futsal EURO 2022, Portugal, and the third-placed team, Spain, will play a final-four tournament with 2022 CONMEBOL Copa América de Futsal winners Argentina and runners-up Paraguay at the Movistar Arena in Buenos Aires, Argentina, between 16 and 18 September 2022.

Finally, once the winners of UEFA Women's EURO 2022 and of the 2022 CONMEBOL Copa América Femenina are known, a UEFA-CONMEBOL Women's Finalissima will be organised in Europe, with the date and venue to be announced in due course. UEFA and CONMEBOL have also agreed to continue with referee exchanges for a variety of competitions and referee courses. Furthermore, UEFA and CONMEBOL are currently working on the mutual recognition of coaching qualifications, with the aim of this coming into effect in the course of 2023, in accordance with an agreed timeline and set of requirements. 🌐



Shared CONMEBOL-UEFA office opened in London

In April, CONMEBOL president Alejandro Domínguez and UEFA president Aleksander Čeferin opened a shared CONMEBOL-UEFA office in London, which will represent the confederations in common projects, including competitions, across various areas.

The creation of a shared office follows on from the memorandum of understanding signed by CONMEBOL and UEFA on 12 February 2020 and its extension signed on 15 December 2021.

Game-changing UEFA Assist

Building on its 2017 launch, UEFA Assist has reinvested UEFA revenue into 200 football development projects in 60 countries worldwide. In addition to helping national teams from around the world take part in boys' and girls' tournaments, Assist initiatives also fund educational programmes, enhancing capacity and professionalism in different areas of football management, and small-scale infrastructure projects, for example, installing floodlights or purchasing utility vehicles. In South America, the programme has delivered a minivan for each of

CONMEBOL's member associations. These serve a range of purposes, from transporting official visitors to ferrying grassroots teams to local competitions.

Since helping the Czech Republic and Croatia youth teams to take part in the 2017 edition of South America's Under-15 youth championship in Argentina, Assist funding has allowed nine CONMEBOL member associations to compete in numerous UEFA Under-16 youth tournaments across Europe. The most recent saw Brazil travel to Wales in April to play the host nation, as well as Spain and Turkey.

The tournaments are just one example of how the UEFA Assist programme has boosted football development not just in South America, but also across football's four other confederations and their respective member associations: the AFC (Asia), CAF (Africa), CONCACAF (North and Central America) and the OFC (Oceania).

This season, Assist launched Football for Women – an educational initiative designed to help South American associations learn from the pioneering example of women's football in Europe. The project kicked off in Paraguay and Venezuela. Topics included attracting more young girls to the game, developing a career pathway for elite players and empowering women through football.



National team legends were in Parma to unveil the kits.

EIGHT ASSOCIATIONS BENEFIT FROM UEFA KIT ASSISTANCE SCHEME

National senior and Under-21 teams from eight European national associations will wear new kits during the next two years – thanks to UEFA’s kit assistance scheme, run in cooperation with Italian kit suppliers Erreà Sport.

On 23 May, the Palazzo Marchi in the Italian city of Parma was the impressive setting for a ceremony to unveil the new kits and training wear created by Erreà Sport for the national teams of Andorra, Belarus, Cyprus, the Faroe Islands, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Malta and San Marino. In December 2020, UEFA and Erreà Sport launched a partnership for the 2022–26 period.

UEFA’s kit assistance scheme celebrates its 15th anniversary this year. It was decided to mark the occasion by holding a joint kit launch for all of the national associations taking part in the project, rather than unveiling the kits separately in the associations’ respective home countries.

The festive ceremony was attended by national association officials and national football legends from the associations taking part in the scheme.

What is the UEFA kit assistance scheme?

UEFA provides kits and training wear for associations’ senior and Under-21 teams free of charge. The kit assistance scheme has a special relevance, given that UEFA

continues to fervently support national team football and its further development.

The scheme enables those associations which lack sufficient bargaining power with kit suppliers to play in top-calibre clothing, featuring bespoke designs linked to each nation’s own rich history, culture and traditions that are certain to excite players and fans alike.

The scheme is purely about assistance rather than sponsorship and is tailored for associations which need help in this area.

UEFA general secretary Theodore Theodoridis said: “National team football is a crucial part of the European football landscape. It is an important source of national identity, creating a bond of unity throughout a country. The national team shirt plays an equally significant role. Players consider it an honour and a privilege to wear the shirt, and fans are proud to identify with their heroes and share in their successes by donning the shirt themselves at the team’s matches.

“We are pleased that the UEFA kit assistance scheme is giving vital help to our national associations by providing them with unique and distinctive national team shirts that reinforce this essential feeling of identity and pride.”

Design consultation

Erreà Sport and the eight national associations joined forces in a comprehensive consultation process last September, which focused on the design of the new national team wear for the 2022–24 period.

Both sides were eager to create customised articles that were not only aesthetically appealing and performing but also the bearers of a sporting and cultural message. For the first time in the scheme’s impressive history, the whole travel range was completely customised, in addition to the match kits.

High-impact material

The material produced for the national team shirts is not only high-performance and impactful, but also certified Standard 100 by OEKO-TEX, an attestation that sets extremely strict limits on substances harmful to health.

Moreover, Erreà Sport is the only major manufacturer producing goods in its own EU factories. This means that there is no third-party ordering and every stage of production, from thread selection to finished garment, is monitored and controlled from the company headquarters. 🌱

FOR THE GOOD OF THE GAME

How competitions help UEFA to fund football development across Europe.

UEFA generates revenue by organising world-class club and national team competitions, including the EURO, Champions League, Europa League and Europa Conference League.

In all, 98% of UEFA’s revenue comes from these elite competitions, which then funds the Women’s EURO and Champions League, the European Under-21 Championship, the men’s and women’s Under-17 and Under-19 Championships, the Youth League, the men’s and women’s Futsal EUROs, the Futsal Champions League, the Under-19 Futsal Championship and the Regions’ Cup.

UEFA’s overheads are kept to a minimum to maximise investment in football, with just 2.3% of net revenue spent on governing expenses. From 2020 to 2024, UEFA will invest more than €1 billion in football development projects across Europe.

Where does UEFA’s revenue go?

Over two-thirds of UEFA’s net revenue is distributed to the more than 200 teams taking part in the men’s club competitions. Payments also go to clubs eliminated in the qualifying rounds, and to non-participating clubs to invest in young players.

UEFA also rewards associations whose national teams take part in the men’s and women’s EUROs, European Qualifiers and Nations League.

Profits specifically from the men’s EURO fund UEFA’s HatTrick programme, which provides associations with, on average, €195 million each season to invest in football development projects, from the grassroots to the elite game. By 2024, HatTrick will have channelled a cumulative €2.6 billion into European football.

In addition, UEFA helps associations to develop all aspects of football. That includes building stadiums and training facilities, growing the women’s game, running coach and referee courses, nurturing young talent, strengthening governance, tackling discrimination, kick-starting social responsibility initiatives – and, above all, giving every European the chance to enjoy football.

FIGURES



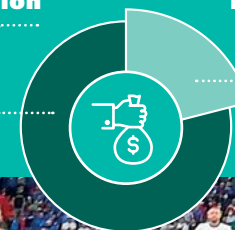
2.3%
of net revenue spent on UEFA governing expenses



HatTrick funding (EURO revenues) for Europe’s national football associations

2004–24
€2.6 billion

2024–28
€935 million
+21%



An even brighter future

Addressing the 46th Ordinary UEFA Congress in Vienna in May, UEFA general secretary Theodore Theodoridis announced a 21% increase in funding through the UEFA HatTrick programme, meaning that Europe’s national football associations will receive a total of €935 million – roughly €17 million each – from 2024 to 2028 to develop the game. 🌱

The elite competitions (like the EURO) fund UEFA’s youth competitions Under-17.

FRANCE CLAIM THIRD UNDER-17 TITLE

France claimed their third European Under-17 Championship in Israel with victory over holders the Netherlands in the first final since 2019.

After a two-year absence of the competition due to COVID-19, France returned to lift the men's European Under-17 Championship in Israel on 1 June. Victory for José Alcocer's side was reward for an impressive tournament campaign that underlined Les Bleus' individual and collective talent in this age category.

Facing holders the Netherlands in the final, Alcocer's powerful and dynamic side recovered from a goal down to triumph. A quickfire second-half double from right-back Sael Kumbedi meant it was those in blue, not orange, that enjoyed wild celebrations on a ticker-tape covered pitch in Netanya at the final whistle. The 2-1 victory confirmed France's third European Under-17 Championship.

Before the tournament, Mischa Visser's Dutch side had been hoping to make it a hat-trick of successes at this level. The Netherlands lifted the trophy in the last two men's Under-17 competitions in 2018 and 2019. And after triumphing over eventual winners France 3-1 in the group stage, Visser's side were hoping for a similar outcome in the final.

However, the Netherlands coach admitted the French were too strong when it mattered, but was proud of his team's overall efforts. "I'm very happy with the performance of my team," said Visser after the final whistle. "You hope the dream of beating France in the final comes true, but we couldn't do that because France were so good. It was almost impossible for us."

Platform for learning and development

Although success was the ultimate aim for the 16 countries competing in Israel from 16 May to 1 June, there are also wider objectives at this level of youth football. These tournaments provide a fresh platform for players, introducing them to new playing styles and different cultures, which helps their

personal development as well as their professional growth.

It is important that UEFA provides these opportunities for male and female players, helping raise the level of elite football and ensuring every player has the chance to reach their potential.

One player who did just that, is the current Israel FA technical director, Yossi Benayoun, who reached the semi-final of the 1996 European Under-16 Championship before going on to enjoy an illustrious playing career with spells at West Ham, Liverpool and Chelsea, among others.

"The development of young players is of course very important and critical for the continuation of their careers," said Benayoun, who captained Israel during his international career. "This is the time to get proper help and proper guidance."

"Tournaments like the Under-17s are significant for any player because it is a great opportunity to show your abilities against teams at the highest level. It's part of building your character and dealing with pressure and expectations, which can give you a lot of confidence for the rest of your career."

Penalties

Managing the pressure and expectation of penalty shoot-outs was one of the key learning opportunities on offer to players. With no extra time involved in the knockout stages, it was always a strong possibility that spot kicks would shape the narrative of the tournament's latter stages.

In the end, both semi-finals were decided from the penalty spot, France overcoming Portugal 6-5 and the Netherlands beating Serbia 5-3. Previously, Alcocer's France side had needed penalties to progress from their quarter-final tie against Germany. After missing their first two penalties, they recovered to run out 3-4 winners.

France's two shoot-out successes owed

as much to preparation as it did to luck, explained Alcocer. "For the last three weeks, all our [training] games have been based on penalties," explained the France coach. "Every time a player scored a goal, they had to take a penalty, either to confirm the goal scored or add an extra point. I followed the advice of previous coaches who told me that it's something not to be neglected, and you have to work on it."

"You have to work on it in a particular context, and I think the players have gained in confidence through working on it, and winning two shoot-outs has given their self-belief a big boost."

Successful hosts

Off the pitch, the Israel Football Association (IFA) continued its tradition of hosting successful youth tournaments. After hosting the European Under-21

Championship finals in 2013 and the European Women's Under-19 finals in 2015, the 2022 edition of the men's Under-17 tournament proved another success for the host nation to celebrate.

"We have learned that such tournaments are a unique platform for introducing players and coaches who, in the near and distant future, will become major and leading factors within European football," said Oren Hasson, IFA president, on the eve of the tournament.

"This dignified and prestigious platform provides them, as well as the spectators, with an extraordinary opportunity to enjoy outstanding football in an atmosphere of camaraderie and sportsmanship." 🇮🇱



Left: France celebrate after their victory in Netanya in Israel.
Below: Dean Huijsen's superb goal for the Netherlands was disallowed for offside.



SEMI-FINALS – 29 MAY

France	2-2	Portugal (6-5 pens)
Netherlands	2-2	Serbia (5-3 pens)

FINAL – 1 JUNE

France	2-1	Netherlands
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BEYOND THEIR YEARS

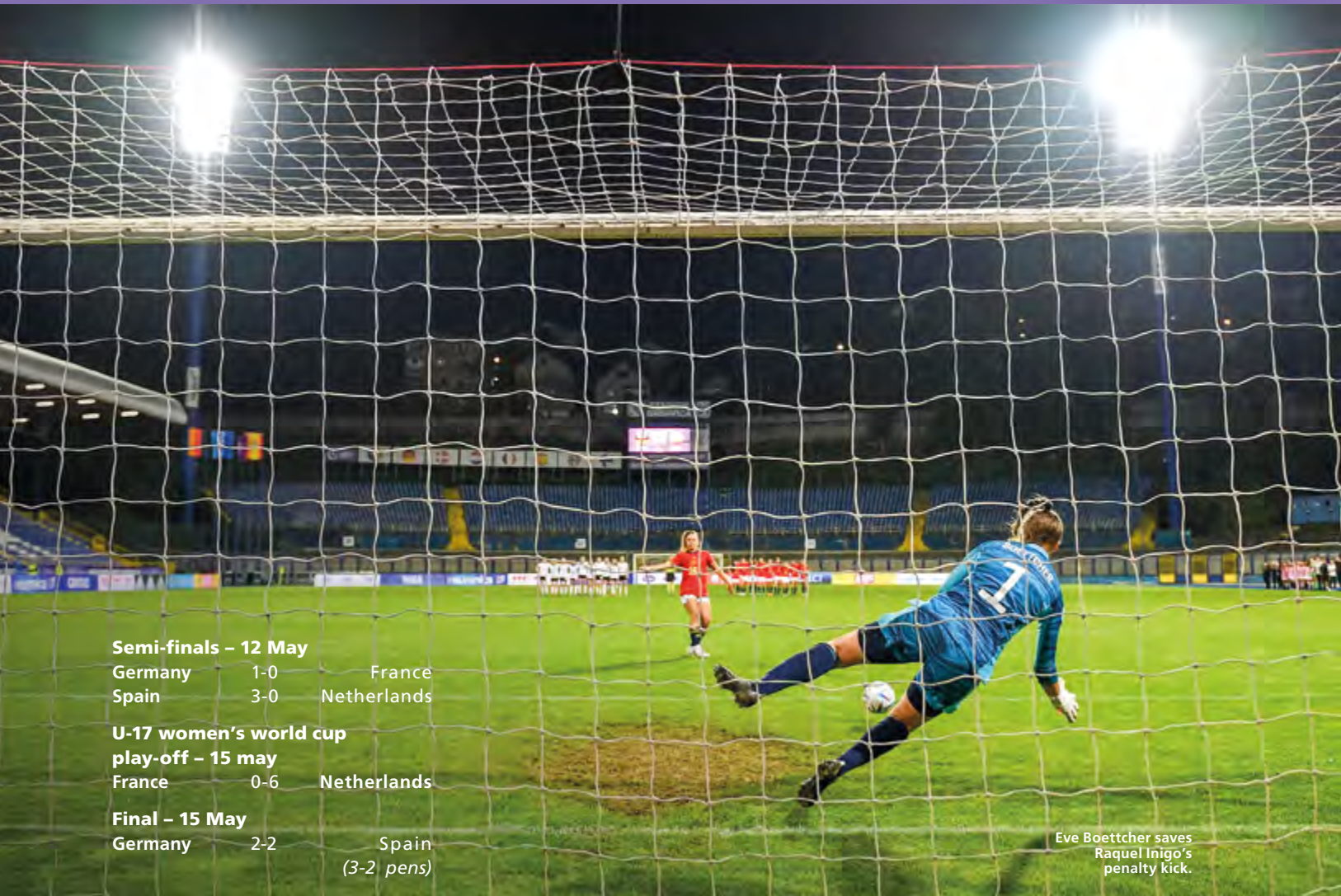
Women's U17 tournament showcases tactical maturity.

Which team has not won a final since 2009 but has lifted the trophy six times in the last nine editions of the competition? Answer: Germany, specialists in drawing finals and winning shoot-outs. Confronted by Spain in five of the last seven finals, Germany have won four – all in shoot-outs. But the 13th edition of the European Women's Under-17 Championship, played in Bosnia

and Herzegovina from 3 to 15 May, was not about footballing trivia. It was about exceptional footballing maturity and a tactical awareness way beyond their years. The final between Germany and Spain produced moments to wonder whether the full moon hanging over the Grbavica Stadium in Sarajevo was blurring the onlookers' vision. It was hard to believe that the match being played by 20 girls



Germany's latest victory takes them to eight titles in 11 editions since 2008.



Semi-finals – 12 May			
Germany	1-0	France	
Spain	3-0	Netherlands	
U-17 women's world cup play-off – 15 May			
France	0-6	Netherlands	
Final – 15 May			
Germany	2-2	Spain	(3-2 pens)

Eve Boettcher saves Raquel Inigo's penalty kick.

born in 2005 and two No10s – strikingly different in physique and footballing qualities – who made major impacts on the tournament but had yet to reach their 16th birthdays. Yet it would be remiss to start with the final of a tournament that went into the annals of UEFA as the first to be staged in Bosnia and Herzegovina with, in addition to Sarajevo, venues in Zenica, Mostar and Široki Brijeg. The event, much-awaited after the pandemic-induced hiatus since the 2019 finals in Bulgaria, allowed the hosts to excel on organisational agendas. But excelling on the field of play was more problematical. For the first time, the qualifying process had been conducted in the new league format which gave teams more match experience against similarly ranked opposition. The final tournament, however, pitted the League B hosts against League A opposition in the daunting colours of Denmark, the Netherlands and Germany. Their head coach, Ilija Lucić, warranted praise for tactical valour against Dutch and Danes. But, after two heavy defeats, he switched to a more conservative approach against Germany, deploying five at the back and, defending stoutly in a compact low block, restricting the eventual champions to a brace of goals – the second in the dying minutes. It completed a hat-trick of 2-0 scorelines for Friederike Kromp's team, leaving Dutch and Danes to contest second place. The latter were the unlucky losers, despite a nice header by Alma Agaard who,

in three games, operated as centre-back, striker and advanced midfielder. The Dutch equalised straight after the break and the 1-1 draw sent Thomas Oostendorp's team through on the basis of two more goals against the hosts. Over in Group B, France and Spain faced Nordic opposition from Finland and Norway. Rampant Spain, effectively blending artistry with commitment and verticality, put four past both, while France were less effective in front of goal and, with both teams already qualified, capitulated 3-0 against Spain while Finland were taking consolation from a 2-1 victory over Norway. **Deceptive scorelines** Semi-final scorelines were deceptive. After conceding in the third minute against Spain, the Dutch wrested control, ticking tactical boxes and forcing Kenio Gonzalo's team to adjust their high-defending mechanisms. As the game wore on, with the Dutch chasing the game, the diminutive No10 Vicky López, switching to the left, began to wreak so much havoc that the 3-0 scoreline could have been more comprehensive. Ditto when Germany restricted France to five goal attempts but failed to build on a strong solo run and potent finish by powerhouse No10 Alara Sehtler to earn a 1-0 victory. A 16th match was injected into the fixture list to determine Europe's third representative at the FIFA U-17 Women's World Cup in 2023 and, against the

Dutch, the mercurial French team showed their best profile in a sparkling first half and preserved their 2-0 advantage with a degree of comfort after the break. And so to the final between two teams which had yet to concede a goal. Germany, whose well-designed game plans had been applied with discipline and efficiency, stifled Spain's middle-to-front talents, clipped their wing play and enjoyed two clear chances before Svea Stoldt's fierce strike after a partial clearance gave them the lead. A set play brought Spain level and, with Gonzalo making two shrewd changes during the interval, substitute striker Carla Camacho's header put them ahead in a second half when Spain dominated possession – they had a 69% overall share – while their neat combinations and rapid switches of play had Germany chasing and flagging. With the clock ticking down, Germany switched to three at the back and were rewarded when Mara Alber found just enough space to bend a right-footed shot from the left inside Sofia Fuente's far post to put 2-2 on the scoreboard. With no extra time, penalties were going to decide the title. Having scored twice from three on-target attempts, Germany took similar efficiency into the shoot-out, converting three of their four spot kicks, while Eve Boettcher saved three of Spain's five to clinch Germany's eighth title thanks to a repeat of the 3-2 shoot-out win that had seen them home against the Netherlands in the previous edition. Plus ça change... 🇩🇪

FIRST UEFA STEPS FOR NEW INTERNATIONAL REFEREES

A group of European referees have taken a major stride forward on what they hope will be a successful journey to the summit of their profession.

Forty-five match officials came to UEFA's headquarters in Nyon, Switzerland, from 8 to 11 May for the latest UEFA introductory course for international referees – for many, their first major contact with the European body after earning the international badge that entitles them to officiate in competitions at international level.

The introductory course serves as a primer for new international referees to prepare them for a new stage in their budding careers – and to help them become acquainted with the UEFA refereeing way of life.

“Joining the UEFA refereeing team is one of the most important moments in a young referee's career,” said UEFA Referees Committee chairman and chief refereeing officer Roberto Rosetti.

“The main purpose of the course is to brief the referees about our concepts, technical guidelines and other requirements,” Rosetti added. “We explain what we want to see from them on the field of play and how they should represent UEFA, and convey UEFA's refereeing values.”

Packed programme

In addition to presentations, the newcomers analysed match clips, took a fitness test and studied aspects such as game and player management, as well as technical

topics such as challenges, penalty-area incidents, handball and offside.

The referees have gained their international badge through their domestic performances, and candidates for the international stage are nominated by their national associations. UEFA maintains close contact with the associations to monitor referees' progress, and many of the officials also gain crucial initial experience in courses at the UEFA Centre of Refereeing Excellence (CORE) in Nyon.

Demanding standards

“It's a new level, a further step up for them,” Rosetti reflected, “because we

“The main purpose of the course is to brief the referees about our concepts, technical guidelines and other requirements.”

Roberto Rosetti
UEFA Referees Committee chairman
and chief refereeing officer

set very demanding standards for them. At their first course, they take the UEFA fitness test to check their physical condition. They also take a video test and a test on the Laws of the Game, and they are given a medical check-up.

“We give them time to adapt within our sphere – they're experiencing one of the greatest times in a refereeing life. It's a great challenge and opportunity for them to develop as referees and as people.”

VAR course

UEFA also staged a course for 30 video assistant referees (VARs) from national associations across Europe, which was aimed at introducing additional video assistant referees into the VAR team responsible for applying the system at matches throughout UEFA's competitions.

Important VAR experience

“We decided to implement this course, and asked associations to provide us with VARs who were not involved in our competitions but who had important experience in their domestic competitions,” Rosetti explained.

The VARs invited to Nyon were given comprehensive instructions and guidance about UEFA's VAR procedures, including the proper interpretation of the ‘line of intervention’ – when an intervention by the VAR is required for an on-field situation. 📺



Left: The most recent UEFA Regions' Cup was in 2018/19, when Poland's Dolny Śląsk beat German hosts Bavaria in the final.

2022/23 UEFA Regions' Cup

THE AMATEUR COMPETITION returns following the cancellation of the 2020/21 edition owing to the COVID-19 pandemic.

In all, 35 associations (Russia excluded) have entered, with Malta and San Marino fielding national amateur teams and the rest to be represented by regional selections that win their country's qualifying competitions.

The teams from the 30 associations with the highest competition coefficients begin in the intermediate round, with the other five (the teams from hosts Azerbaijan, Belarus, Estonia, Georgia and Kazakhstan) taking part in the preliminary round tournament to fill the remaining intermediate round slots in Groups 1 and 3.

Following the preliminary round tournament in Azerbaijan at the end of June, the intermediate round must be completed by 9 December 2022. The eight intermediate round group winners will qualify for the finals – to be held, in principle, in the last two weeks of June 2023.

Clarence Seedorf joins the UEFA Foundation for Children board



THE FOOTBALL LEGEND brings a global profile and more than 20 years' experience of working with charitable projects. Seedorf, who remains the only player to have lifted the UEFA Champions League with three different clubs, has dedicated himself to social projects both during and after his playing career, using the power of sport to inspire positive change.

“We are delighted Clarence is joining the UEFA Foundation for Children family,” said UEFA

president Aleksander Čeferin, who is also chairman of the UEFA Foundation for Children. “Not only does he carry an inspirational story as one of the most successful footballers of his generation; he has continually used his experiences to help make the world a better place for others. Having Clarence on our team will be a huge benefit to the foundation as we work together to improve the lives of disadvantaged children all over the world.”

Seedorf, who speaks six languages and played for the Netherlands 87 times, added: “It's an honour and a pleasure to join the UEFA Foundation for Children. I have followed its activities closely and am very happy to join in support of its work. I think joining the foundation is a nice evolution of my relationship with UEFA, which has been in place for some time, and together we understand the importance that football has in society and in the lives of kids. I've been involved in foundations for over 20 years, and that has given me great insight into what it takes to make an impact and create projects that make a difference.”

Portugal to host Women's Futsal EURO in Gondomar, Porto

THE PORTUGUESE FOOTBALL FEDERATION has been selected to stage Women's Futsal EURO 2022 at the beginning of July, returning to the venue of the inaugural final tournament in February 2019, the Pavilhão Multiusos de Gondomar, previously the setting for the men's UEFA Futsal EURO 2007.

The tournament is finally taking place after first being delayed by a year owing to the pandemic and then first being rescheduled to take place in March. The final draw was held on 28 January at the Martini Plaza in Groningen in the Netherlands at half-time during the men's UEFA Futsal EURO 2022 fixture between Ukraine and Portugal.

In the semi-finals on 1 July, Women's Futsal EURO titleholders Spain meet Ukraine, while hosts Portugal take on Hungary, who replace Russia. The final and third-place play-off take place on 3 July.

DRIVING THE STRATEGIC EVOLUTION OF EUROPEAN FOOTBALL

How exactly are our national associations developing football in each of their countries to ensure a common sustainable and successful future for European football? What strategies, people, plans and processes are in place for football across these 55 differing contexts?

Five years ago, these questions were still open despite the UEFA Grow team providing support and expertise across a range of business development areas to national associations. It became clear that strategic coordination of this support and capacity building would be key in transforming the national associations landscape.

Through a concerted focus on organisation-wide improvement at national association level, the UEFA Grow team has helped drive around an 80% increase in the number of national associations that have a strategic plan. This has proven pivotal in enhancing the performance and effectiveness of the organisations leading football on the national level across Europe. From a more central UEFA perspective, it has provided a remarkable balance of insight and inspiration, a soft and efficient change management approach. Not only has this shed a light on the ways in which national associations preserve and promote football across their respective countries, it has also kick-started greater collaboration across

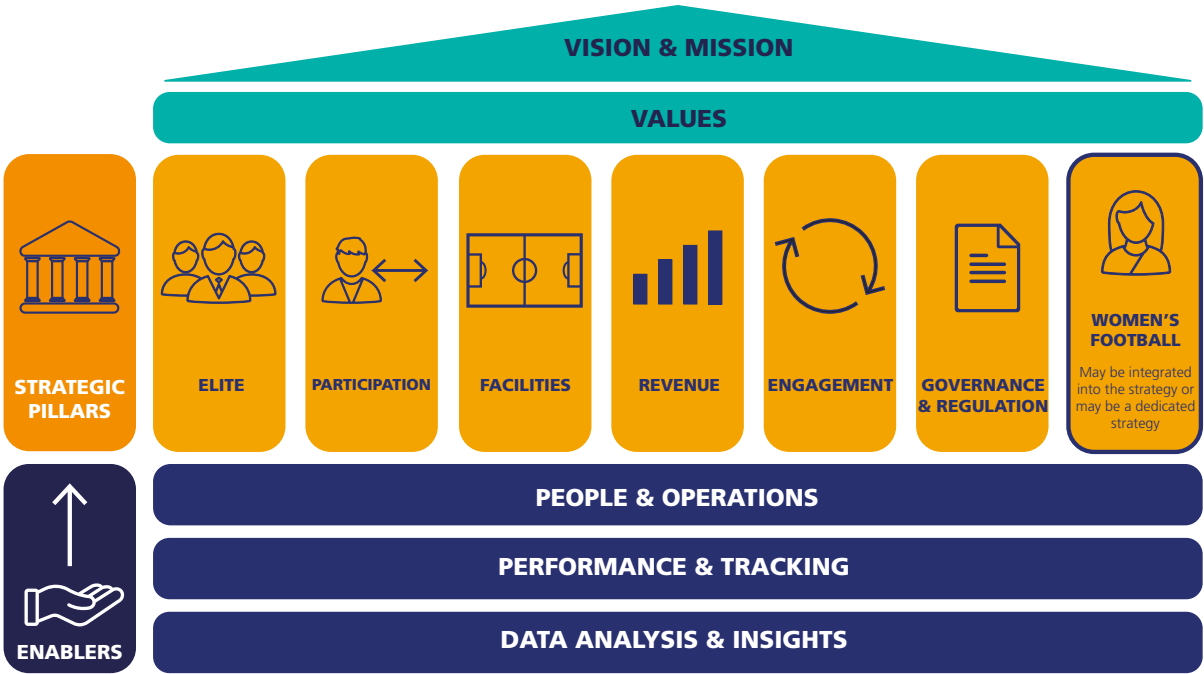
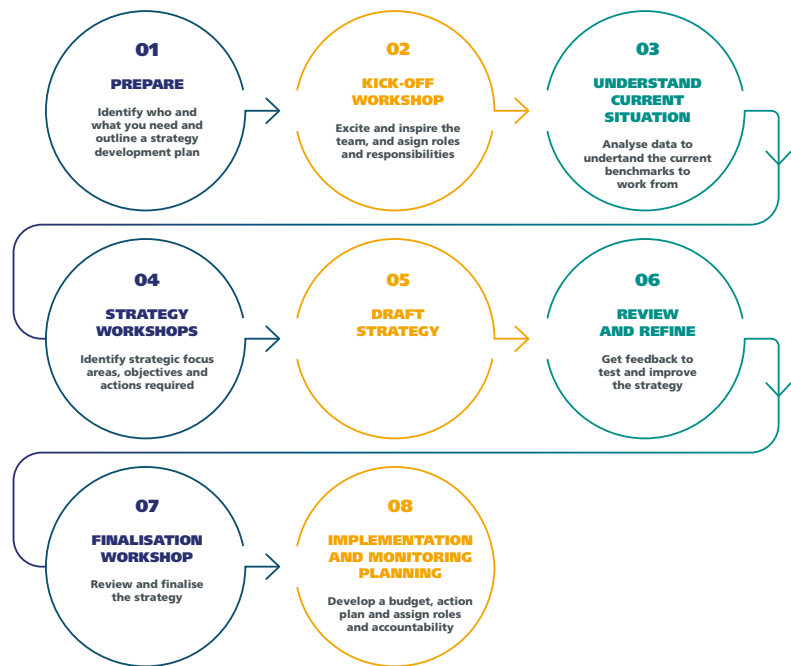
“Thank you for the great support you gave us in developing the 2020–24 strategy for the Lithuanian Football Federation. The process you took us through was exciting, productive and has helped deliver a great experience for all of us.”

Tomas Danilevičius
Lithuanian Football Federation President



Lithuanian Football Federation president Tomas Danilevičius and general secretary, Edgaras Stankevičius present the LFF's strategy.

Strategy development process overview



football stakeholders following the experiences and lessons each national association has been able to share.

In an attempt to preserve this sense of shared purpose in football that the strategy development processes were able to provide, the UEFA Grow team developed a strategic management framework to assist any national association looking to develop a strategic plan.

Highlighting the commonalities, challenges and content that every strategy development process provides, the UEFA Grow team has been able to effectively capture in a video the importance of having a strategic plan. A key component of the framework is stakeholder connection. Whether this is ways to best engage with stakeholders, or the ongoing management of relationships once established, it is now widely recognised, at all levels of the game, that outcomes in football cannot be achieved alone – it is the combination of connected individuals and organisations, across national associations, regions, leagues and clubs that will ultimately cultivate success.

Despite these successes, the single most important success has been the growing understanding that developing a strategic plan is only the first phase of a national association's strategic journey.

Following the plan and stakeholder engagement phase, national associations progress with the execution of their strategy and put in place research

processes to generate insight into their performance against set targets. Subject to the level of performance, national associations can then adjust their approach in order to increase performance. This cyclical approach to strategic management has been effective in highlighting the all-encompassing nature of this area of work, and more importantly, the need for the appropriate time, dedication and resource within national associations, with this long-term approach being the key to unlocking any organisation's potential. Also pivotal to unlocking this potential is the quality of a national association's research and insight. With this in mind, a great deal of UEFA Grow's current and future work is focused on developing the

systems and processes to help national associations generate this on a consistent basis. Insight generated into the effectiveness of national association performance in various strategic domains, staff structures and HR matters, revenues generated and budget allocations have already helped shape a wide range of further UEFA Grow services. It has also helped engage other national associations on this topic by demonstrating the power that any form of research and insight holds.

Developing dashboards and embedding evaluation methods, constant improvement, enrichment of the strategic management framework and tools provide an exciting way forward for both the UEFA Grow team and national associations. 🌐

“It is clear across the data that we have some big challenges to overcome as part of this strategic period, but we look forward to working more closely with both our national and international stakeholders, such as those across the media, to help develop these perceptions in enhancing public knowledge of women's football as a fantastic sport and highlighting the benefits it can provide.”

North Macedonian women's football strategy

A NEW VISUAL IDENTITY FOR THE OFFICIAL LICENSING PROGRAMME

With the participation of business partners, retailers, distributors and the industry media, the Polish Football Association (PZPN) presented the new identity of its licensing programme.

BY KAROL TATAR

The refreshed identity style guide, featuring seven graphic lines tailored to different audiences, responds to the needs of a demanding market and sports marketing trends.

A visual identity with the supporters in mind

The new graphic identity of the licensing programme has been created having in mind the fans of the Polish national team and companies that want to develop products devoted to the most popular sports team in Poland. The guide considers in detail how licensed products are developed and promoted. The fundamental element of the identity is the crown, inspired by the Polish emblem. The shield and its outline were separated from the negative space between the two crowns. The new visual strategy was developed by the PZPN graphic design team.

“Our new identity style guide is the answer to how we want to build relationships with fans and business partners who support our national team all along the way. For the first time ever, we have designed extensive content material, all in order to manage even more effectively the brands and projects of the Polish Football Association,” said Grzegorz Stańczuk, the association’s marketing and sponsorship director.

The new style guide was presented at a meeting of PZPN licensees held in Warsaw, during which representatives of the association summarised previous merchandising-related activities, the functioning of the fan shop, and cooperation with manufacturers of various gadgets and accessories for fans. The vast potential related to the development of national team-themed products was also highlighted, mainly due to the popularity of football in Poland and the upcoming World Cup in Qatar.

A strategic approach to commercialising football’s popularity

The licensing programme of the Polish FA is a collection of products with images of Polish men’s and women’s national team players and recognisable trademarks, including the logo of the national team and the United by Football slogan. It is an offer not only for football fans who want to be even closer to the Polish national teams, but also for producers to create unique products. The PZPN has been working on this project since 2013, constantly collaborating with market leaders in their respective fields. Today, with a portfolio of several hundred products, together with the online shop, the project serves as a model for other European football associations. In 2016, UEFA awarded the PZPN and its licensing programme with the UEFA KISS

[Knowledge & Information Sharing Scenario] Marketing Award in the Best Commercial Partnership category.

“The Polish national football team is by far the most popular sports team in Poland. The 220 million products sold since 2013 is a clear message to us that Poles love football and expect products with the national team brand,” said Karol Tatar, the PZPN’s senior marketing manager.

“All licensed products of the Polish Football Association are marked with a caption reading Official Licensed Product of the Polish Football Association. A product marked in such a way is a guarantee of the highest quality and an assurance that it was manufactured in accordance with the standards of the PZPN. Thanks to the three-stage acceptance of our products, they are tested in many respects: visual, usable and substantive.”



AZERBAIJAN

www.affa.az

CELEBRATING 30 YEARS OF THE ASSOCIATION OF FOOTBALL FEDERATIONS OF AZERBAIJAN

FIRUZ ABDULLA

To celebrate its 30th anniversary, the Association of Football Federations of Azerbaijan (AFFA) organised a special football tournament involving eight teams representing the AFFA, clubs and the premier league, former players, referees, sponsors, fans, media and volunteers. The media and sponsors teams met in the match for the third place, with the media team winning 2-1. The final itself was between the AFFA and former players teams. The decisive match, which was watched by AFFA officials, representatives of

the football community and members of the AFFA executive committee, ended in a 4-3 win for the team of former players.

The awards ceremony held after the final was attended by the AFFA president, Rovnag Abdullayev, executive vice-president Elkhan Mammadov, general secretary Sarkhan Hajiyev, and former AFFA general secretaries Chingiz Ismayilov and Fuad Asadov. Former player and former AFFA general secretary Chingiz Ismayilov presented the medal to the media



team’s captain; another former AFFA general secretary, Fuad Asadov, presented the AFFA team captain with the runners-up medal; leaving the AFFA president to present the trophy to Yunis Huseynov, captain of the team of former players, winners of the 30th anniversary tournament.

BELGIUM

www.rbfa.be

INVESTMENT IN 40 LOCAL MINI-PITCHES

KEN STANDAERT

On 18 May, the Royal Belgian Football Association (RBFA) inaugurated the first of 40 Belgian Red Courts, in Lier. Supported by Proximus, Belgium’s largest mobile telecommunications provider, and the national lottery, this social project is built around renovating old mini-pitches for the benefit of football fans of all ages. “Work will also begin soon in Sint-Niklaas and Waregem, and we’re in the final phase of planning the construction of Belgian Red Courts in a dozen other towns and districts in 2022,” explained Peter Bossaert, the RBFA’s general secretary.

The association announced the creation of these 40 mini-pitches on its 125th anniversary in autumn 2020. Progress was hampered by the pandemic, but with the first pitch now up and running, the project is well under way.

“The Belgian Red Courts project is important to us because it’s a way of using football to help to shape society,” said Robin Cnops, the RBFA’s social responsibility coordinator. “It is also a good opportunity to work with local authorities. The Belgian Red Courts will be

open to everyone, as players or supporters, and we have no doubt that they will bring together people from all walks of life. The towns and districts involved are looking forward to developing activities involving specialised coaches trained by us, but also local youth groups, schools, football clubs and organisations providing social support, with the aim of fostering cohesion within their communities while also promoting football.”

As sponsor of Belgium’s national football teams, adidas will be supporting the coaches and managers of the 40 mini-pitches with training and coaching materials for their various activities. The town of Lier is also looking forward to getting involved.

“We are proud to be pioneering this incredible project,” said Rik Werwaest, mayor of Lier. “We would like to thank everyone involved. We are lucky to have

a fantastic ambassador for our Belgian Red Court in former Red Devil [Belgian men’s international] Jan Ceulemans, one of Belgium’s best-known footballers, who had his first taste of the game right here in Lier. Maybe we will discover the next Jan Ceulemans here too! That said, for us the most important thing will always be the fun that can be had playing football among friends.”

More Belgian Red Courts will be opened between now and 2024 in various other towns and districts that have expressed an interest. Each pitch will have its own ambassador, in the form of a Red Devil, a Red Flame [Belgian women’s international] or a Belgian footballing legend. In addition, the first Belgian Red Courts Cup is planned for next year. This will be a national tournament for boys’ and girls’ teams, including disability and walking football teams. The final will take place at Proximus Basecamp in Tubize, where the national teams train.

Visit the RBFA website for more information about the Belgian Red Courts (www.rbfa.be/en/belgian-red-courts).



BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

www.nfsbih.ba

INVESTING IN FOOTBALL INFRASTRUCTURE

SLAVICA PECIKOZA

The Bosnia and Herzegovina Football Federation held its general assembly in Sarajevo on 19 April. In his opening address, the federation's president, Vico Zeljković, highlighted that:

"One of the main infrastructural projects of our federation is to build pitches with hybrid turf. This is the foundation for the further development of football in Bosnia and Herzegovina and all our national teams. With the support of UEFA, implementation of the project will begin in May. What seemed like a dream will soon become a reality."

In May, Bosnia and Herzegovina hosted the final tournament of the European Women's Under-17 Championship, which Germany won for the eighth time. Not only was it a



"We are here as hosts, so we did not qualify by results. We played against extremely strong national teams, we gave our best, but now we know much better how important each aspect is if you want to play on this prestigious stage. However, it was a very good experience for all of us, so I am sure

memorable tournament for them, but for all the competing teams, especially for our national team.

that this tournament will inspire girls to take up football," said head coach Ilija Lucić.

CROATIA

www.hns-cff.hr

A BOOST FOR PROFESSIONAL FOOTBALL

NIKA BAHTIJAREVIĆ

After a close contest between multiple interested broadcasters, the Croatian Football Federation (HNS) has successfully secured a new broadcasting rights partner for all its competitions, including the Croatian first league and the Croatian cup, as well as signing a new general sponsor for domestic competitions. Through these two contracts, Croatian football will receive €44 million for the 2022–26 period, with the majority of the money going directly to clubs.

"The funding from these contracts will be incredibly important in helping our clubs recover from the pandemic and to grow football in Croatia. We're immensely proud to have secured these deals," said the HNS president, Marijan Kustić.

While the increased funding secured through the new broadcasting and marketing rights contracts is sure to boost professional football in Croatia,



the HNS has also continued to work on other areas of football, including, in particular, youth football. In late spring, the HNS organised its fourth Vlatko Marković international youth tournament, with Croatia's boys' Under-15 national team once again taking the title of tournament winners, defeating Bosnia and Herzegovina in the final.

"It's incredibly important that we continue to nurture this tradition and to honour Vlatko Marković for his lasting contribution to Croatian football and, in particular, to the development of young Croatian players. Our commitment to youth football is the basis for success at all other levels," Kustić said.

DENMARK

www.dbu.dk

DANISH FOOTBALL STANDS TOGETHER WITH UKRAINE

ANNE TJELL

Denmark holds a great amount of sympathy for the Ukrainian people and the millions of children becoming innocent victims of the invasion. The pictures from the country have affected us all and the stories from citizens of Ukraine are unbearable.

Unable to do anything less, the Danish Football Association chose to show the deepest sympathy with Ukraine at all 17 international matches played during the spring, starting with a girls' Under-16 match on 26 March.

The Ukrainian flag has been hoisted at all international matches played in Denmark since. The Ukrainian flag has

also been displayed in stadiums, in the stands, on scoreboards and TV graphics. Simultaneously, a fundraiser was initiated by the Danish FA for the children of Ukraine, announced at the matches and on social media.

To support the fundraiser and to create further awareness, the women's and men's senior national teams wore shirts showing the Ukrainian flag alongside the two usual flags on the chest for their respective home matches. Both Danish national teams also walked on to the pitch in yellow and blue jerseys.

The shirts worn by players with the three flags on the chest were auctioned



after the matches in support of UNICEF's work with Ukraine's children. So far, the two auctions and the fundraiser have raised more than 475,000 kroner (approximately €65,000).

The effort to show sympathy with Ukraine continues, with the now familiar blue and yellow flag to be displayed in the stadiums for matches played in Denmark during the summer as well.

ENGLAND

www.thefa.com

150TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE FA CUP

TOM EVERETT

The FA celebrated the 150th anniversary of the world's longest running domestic cup competition, The FA Cup, by bringing together a notable figure from each of its decades from the 1870s through to the 2020s during its final on Saturday 14 May at Wembley Stadium.

The representatives showcased the enduring values of the competition, and

included a relative of the cup founder, record breakers, legendary goalscorers, giant-killers and famous commentators.

Each representative was a special guest of The FA for the final between Liverpool and Chelsea, and they were all recognised during a presentation to the fans at half-time. They included Chelsea icon Gianfranco Zola and the granddaughter of legendary Liverpool manager Bill

Shankly, who answered questions about the respective finalists.

A selection also gathered at Wembley Stadium beforehand to share stories and memories from their association with the cup. Among them were the great-great-grandnephew of the competition's founder, Charles W. Alcock, last season's winning club captain, Wes Morgan, and broadcasting legend John Motson, who commented on 29 finals.

Ben Watson, scorer of Wigan Athletic's famous winner in the 2013 final, Woking's giant-killing hat-trick hero Tim Buzaglo and Elizabeth Robledo, the daughter of George Robledo, the first South American to play in the final and win the competition, were also present at Wembley.

They were joined by the son of Stan Cullis, who remains the youngest manager to win the cup, the great-grandson of John Cameron, who guided Tottenham Hotspur to victory in the 1901 final, and notable figures from every other decade.




ESTONIA

www.jalgpall.ee

VIDEO-BASED LEARNING PLATFORM FOR REFEREES

MAARJA SAULEP

 RefPal, an innovative learning tool created by Estonian football referees, has significantly supported the development of hundreds of referees over the past five years. Today, RefPal is used by associations in five countries.

Created in 2017 by FIFA referees Kristo Tohver and Sten Klaasen and developed by the Estonian Football Association (EFA), RefPal offers video-based analysis to referees, which helps them to better understand their work and thus increase their confidence and reduce the number of mistakes. At the same time, RefPal is an efficient way for referees to educate themselves – the clips from games can be used by the referee to learn, and in addition to their own matches, referees can also analyse and evaluate situations in colleagues’ matches.

“The strengths of RefPal are its systematic structure and interactive design, as it offers pre-cut clips of the most

important game situations, after which the referees can express their opinion on the best decision,” explained Hannes Kaasik, head of the EFA referees’ department. “The assessment of each referee is compared with the views of other referees and the official position of the EFA. Analysing your own actions and the feedback you receive from other referees is useful for preparing for future matches and growing your knowledge base,” Kaasik added.

The use of RefPal has significantly improved the accuracy of referees’ decisions in recent years, which is reflected in the statistics. For example, the accuracy of red card situations improved by almost 20% in two years and that of yellow cards by 10%. RefPal has also benefited referees in their international careers: after the first year of using the platform, 66% of Estonian FIFA referees improved their FIFA category.



The video analysis service and the innovative referee training platform have been introduced and offered to other football associations. Finland and Kuwait started using it last year, with Latvia and the Faroe Islands joining the list of international customers at the beginning of this year. With the spread of RefPal, the size of the team working on it has also increased. While last year the videos were edited by Sten Klaasen, Joonas Jaanovits, Marko Liiva and Kristo Tohver, this year the team has grown to nine members: local referees Kevin Kaivoja, Karl Kena, Rasmus Maalinn, Tauno Rämson and Thor Vaas also joined the team.

FAROE ISLANDS

www.fsf.fo

UEFA SEMINAR ON WOMEN’S FOOTBALL

TERJI NIELSEN

 In May, the Faroe Islands Football Association hosted a UEFA Share seminar on the organisation and development of women’s football. Nine countries, including the hosts, took part in the seminar: Belgium, Bulgaria, Estonia, Faroe Islands, Liechtenstein, North Macedonia, Portugal, Slovenia and Spain.

“Even though the countries are very different in size, the challenges we face regarding women’s football are very similar. Therefore, it is of great benefit for all of us to get different views on the various challenges – and then maybe find some solutions,” said Pætur Clementsen, technical director at the Faroese FA.

The seminar consisted of a mix of presentations and group work. There was also a visit from one of the biggest clubs

in the Faroe Islands, KÍ Klaksvík, who have dominated women’s football in the islands for many years.

One of the seminar participants was Thomas Jansen, who coaches Belgium’s women’s Under-23 national team. He was very pleased with the experience.

“I am convinced that there is no better place for such a seminar than the Faroe Islands. The enthusiasm of the representatives of the Faroese FA, local players, coaches and others really gave the seminar an extra dimension,” he said.




FINLAND

www.palloliitto.fi

FIRST NORDIC FOOTBALL CONFERENCE

TARU NYHOLM

 The first-ever Nordic football conference, held at the University of Jyväskylä on 11 and 12 May, attracted nearly 200 participants for an academic debate about football. It was also possible to participate virtually.

Held in English and co-organised by the Football Association of Finland and the University of Jyväskylä’s faculty of sport and health sciences, the conference offered a varied programme with guests from 16 different countries representing a wide range of football stakeholders.

The aim of the conference was not only to bring together people from different aspects of the game and provide them with the opportunity to talk to each other, but also to act as a platform for sharing research data about football in a practical way.

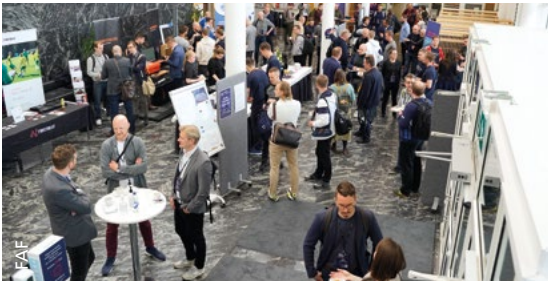
The main themes of the conference were coaching and player development, contemporary issues in football culture,

and the global football system. In addition, two overarching themes – sustainability and evidence-based practices – ran concurrently to form the backbone of the event.

The man behind the conference was its chair, Mihaly Szerovay, professor of practice jointly at the University of Jyväskylä and the Football Association of Finland.

“The different kinds of sessions provided varied types of stimuli for the participants. We have already received a lot of positive feedback on how the event offered a natural way for people from different segments of the game to meet each other. It brought different perspectives, opinions and experiences together, which is a great help in thinking ‘outside the box’,” Szerovay said.

The plenary speakers were associate professor Bruno Travassos (University of Beira Interior), associate professor Bente Skogvang (Inland Norway University of



Applied Sciences) and senior university lecturer Arto Nevala (University of Eastern Finland). Special guest at the conference was the internationally acclaimed football writer Jonathan Wilson.

A follow-up to this highly successful first-ever Nordic football conference is already being planned.


“We see informed practices and accountability as important and topical issues. They were strongly present at the conference, both from the ‘practical’ day-to-day view of the football association and from the point of view of the research community, as cross-cutting themes. The feedback from the participants on this first event has been extremely positive and encouraging,” Szerovay concluded.

GEORGIA

www.gff.ge

NEW IDENTITY FOR THE NATIONAL TEAMS

TAMARA KAPANADZE

 Ahead of our men’s national team’s first matches in the new UEFA Nations League campaign, a new brand platform has been created to unite all our national teams.

Various football-related groups and individuals worked with the Georgian Football Federation to create the new platform. They included current and former players, as well as fans and journalists. The new brand platform was designed by the communications agency Windfor’s.

Comprehensive research, consultation and interviews with the parties involved revealed that in order to form a modern and strong brand for the national teams, a solid ideological foundation was required.

The first step was to develop a brand platform built around the idea of an athlete’s constant personal growth –

after all, it is the unity of the individuals that makes the national teams strong contenders internationally.

The visual identity of the brand was changed as well. The archetype of the brand is a hero – someone who defeats weakness in himself and inspires others with their determination.

A visual portrayal of this philosophy can be found on our country’s coat of arms: St George is a symbol of strength, hope and the fight against evil.

One of the main interpretations of this symbol is the victory over one’s weaknesses – you can defeat any rival once you defeat the weakness in yourself. Thus, a new and modern version of the symbol became the visual identity of the national teams.

Along with the main symbol, a visual style was also developed – a unique pattern

incorporating Georgian characters and symbols into the brand identity.

‘I Am Georgia’ is the new slogan and verbal identity of the brand, which captures the new ideology.

On the one hand, it is the brand that speaks those words as it represents the country in front of the whole world. On the other hand, every player strives to constantly improve themselves, shows the maximum of their capabilities and in this way contributes to the team. Finally, the brand also speaks for the fans who support the national teams in the name of the whole country.

Last but not least, the national team kit was redesigned as well. Three different kits were created based on the new visual identity and modern visual trends.

GIBRALTAR

www.gibraltarfafa.com

SCHOOLS PROGRAMME GETS UP AND RUNNING

STEVEN GONZALEZ

The Gibraltar FA's new school coaching team has been visiting a selection of local schools in recent weeks, delivering fun football sessions for all schoolchildren no matter what their football knowledge and skill levels may be.



Under the guidance of the association's football development officer, Scott Wiseman, the team includes men's national team players Jayce Olivero, Julian Valarino, Anthony Hernandez and Kian Ronan (absent from the photo) alongside Chris Ward, Jake Victor, Kaira Sene, Alan Martin and Dan Bent (also absent from photo). Players from the Gibraltar women's national teams will be joining the programme shortly.

The association's school coaching team have begun regular sessions this term during daily PE sessions at Notre Dame Lower Primary School, Governor's Meadow Lower Primary School, St Joseph's Lower Primary School and Bishop Fitzgerald Upper Primary School, with other schools around Gibraltar joining the programme in the new school year.

As part of the programme, the Gibraltar FA will be providing the schools with equipment such as footballs and bibs for their use.

Scott Wiseman said: "We are delighted that our schools programme is up and running and I would like to thank the schools and the department of education for all of their help and assistance.

"As the new school year starts in September, we want to be able to have our coaches visit all local schools, to make fun and enjoyable football an integral part of the PE curriculum for children of all footballing abilities. And by using our men's and women's national team players as role models, all those aspiring young footballing stars of the future can enjoy being coached by our internationals as well as look up to and dream of one day emulating them.

"I would also like to thank all the teachers, at all the schools we have visited so far, and those we are planning to visit in the future for the amazing welcome they have given all our coaches and integrating our team into their PE sessions."

HUNGARY

www.en.mlsz.hu

FERENCVÁROS WIN THE DOUBLE

MÁRTON DINNYÉS

Ferencváros' men's team won their 24th Hungarian Cup at the Puskás Aréna in May, with the country's most successful side having also earned their 33rd league title this season. The team led by Stanislav Cherchesov – who came in during the winter break to replace Peter Stöger – finished 12 points ahead of east-Hungarian contenders Kisvárdá FC, a club that had never before finished as high as second place in the top division.

Ferencváros won the cup against Paksi FC in style thanks to a first-half goal from Norwegian Kristoffer Zachariassen and two further strikes by Côte d'Ivoire international Franck Boli in the closing stages of the second period. The Magyar Kupa final was watched by a crowd of

40,000 spectators at the national arena, setting the second highest attendance in the cup's history since 1909. Paksi also had their own delight as they saw their international striker Martin Ádám score 31 goals during the season – almost half of Paksi's 75 tally for the season. His achievement is a record in the Hungarian top division since 1980.

With this achievement, Ferencváros make it into the UEFA Champions League qualifiers and will be attempting to go at least as far as they did in 1995 and 2020, when they qualified for the group stage,



while Kisvárdá, Puskás Akadémia (third place in the league) and Fehérvár (fourth place) qualify for the UEFA Europa Conference League.

ICELAND

www.ksl.is

SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY PROGRAMMES

SÓLEY GUÐMUNDSDÓTTIR

KSI The FA of Iceland runs several social responsibility projects every year. Football has a strong voice, and we like to use that strong voice to influence behaviour where we can.

The world of football is still considered masculine. In Iceland, one third of all football players are female, most referees are male and also the majority of coaches, and a large number of employees at local football clubs are male. 'Women in football' is a project that aims to get more women to work in or be active in the world of football. When women give up their playing career, they often drop out of the world of football and build a career outside of the game. We want to change that by encouraging women both from the football community as well as from



Left to right: Borghildur Sigurdardottir, vice-president; Vanda Sigurgeirsdottir, president and Klara Bjartmarz, general secretary.

other parts of society to be a part of the football community in some way.

Our latest addition to the Icelandic FA's portfolio of social responsibility projects is a collaboration with Barnaheill – Save the Children in Iceland. This is a

two-year project which will kick off this coming autumn. The goal is to educate employees and volunteers at every club in Iceland about sexual abuse and sexual harassment aimed at children.

In their early teens, one in ten children is likely to have suffered sexual violence or sexual harassment at some point in their life. We hope to use the strength of football to change this through our collaboration with Barnaheill – Save the Children.

ITALY

www.figc.it

UNITED BY THE SAME COLOURS

DIEGO ANTENZIO

FIGC Physical characteristics of ethnicity such as skin colour all have the same roots in the three primary colours (cyan, magenta and yellow) and black (the combination of all three in equal intensities). Inspired by this truly original concept, the Italian Football Federation (FIGC), in cooperation with the stakeholders in Italian football, launched the anti-discrimination campaign #unitidaglistessicolori ('United by the same colours') on 24 March. Campaign ambassadors have come forward from all branches of the football family: players, coaches and sporting directors, among others.

'United by the same colours' was devised by the FIGC's first anti-discrimination working group, which was set up using funds from UEFA's HatTrick and football and social responsibility programmes, and comprises representatives of Lega Serie A, Lega

Serie B, Lega Pro, the country's amateur league (LND), footballers' association (AIC), referees' association (AIA) and coaches' association (AIAC), and the federation's youth and school football department, technical department, women's football division and Paralympic and experimental football division.

This is the first anti-discrimination project developed and implemented in cooperation with all stakeholders in Italian football. It features a rich programme of initiatives spanning much of 2022, from its launch during the March international break through to the summer end-of-season events.

In Rimini on 18 June, for example, the AIAC and a number of speakers hosted a discussion forum entitled 'The coach's experience', in which participants were invited to share their stories, set new objectives and come up with ways of combating discrimination in all its forms. Other events were held during grassroots



football festivals and the final rounds of the boys' and girls' youth championships organised by the FIGC's youth and school football department in Coverciano (Florence), Turin, Verona, Bari and Ascoli. More than 1,000 young players and over 2,500 spectators attended the events, which comprised educational and interactive activities on the pitch and on social media platforms.


Similar activities were organised at the FIGC's Paralympic and experimental football division finals in Novara and at the Giulio Onesti Olympic Preparation Centre in Rome, which attracted large numbers of athletes and spectators alike.

MALTA

www.mfa.com.mt

NEW VISUAL IDENTITY CELEBRATES MALTA FA'S LONG HISTORY, EMBRACES THE FUTURE

ANGELO CHETCUTI

 Consolidating the commitment set out in the association's strategy entitled We Can Perform Better, the Malta FA presented its new visual identity at its general assembly on 12 April.

The Malta FA's new visual portfolio epitomises its long history and tradition, retaining the eight-pointed Maltese cross at the heart of both the national teams' logo as well as the corporate logo. It aspires to reflect the association's values: being dynamic, socially responsible and trustworthy.

Supported by UEFA, under its Grow programme, the rebranding process represents a bold move by an association that is proud of its history but one that has a strong will and a defined strategy to achieve progress by way of creating a brighter future. In terms of positioning, two separate brands are being used: on one side the national teams (men's, women's and youth), and on the other the Malta FA's corporate identity.

Bjorn Vassallo, president of the Malta FA, said: "The difficulties caused by the COVID-19 pandemic did not dampen our resolve to do whatever it takes to raise the

standards across all areas of Maltese football, driven by our conviction that we can perform better.

"It is with this mindset that we carried out a holistic review of our brand portfolio, culminating in the presentation of the new visual identity. Rebranding is anything but a cosmetic exercise; it means much more than that as it will transform the way we will project ourselves to present and future generations, positioning our association as a dynamic and vibrant organisation.

"The essence of the new visual identity cannot be appreciated if viewed in isolation. On the contrary, we can only maximise the potential of our redesigned brands if these are seen in the context of the key projects being undertaken by the association."

In the newly presented logo, the name of the association has been shortened to Malta FA to create a more informal name, while the foundation year – 1900 – is conspicuous in the bottom part, with the date representing the history and importance of the Malta FA within European football.

The national teams' new branding encapsulates the association's forward-



looking mentality as the Malta FA is striving to move beyond the gallantry and underdog tags, instead promoting competitiveness through hard work and the determination to make the nation proud with excellent performances and better results.

The Malta FA is confident that the new brand portfolio will further enhance the image and profile of our national and development teams, and the synergies between the eight pillars of our strategy, symbolised by the eight-pointed cross. It is also for this reason that the national teams' crest helps form part of the association logo as it reflects a strong connection between the two.


The ultimate objective is to create a strong brand that forges an emotional bond with fans and all stakeholders, attracts more sponsors and complements the association's strategic objectives.

MOLDOVA

www.fmf.md

CONSTANTIN NIȚA FINISHES IN STYLE AS FUTSAL LEAGUE'S TOP SCORER

ION BUGA

 One of the most promising futsal players in Moldova, Constantin Nița, achieved an incredible result in the domestic futsal championship. The Balkan Pharmaceuticals player finished as the top scorer of this season's competition after scoring 31 goals in the last two games of the season! First, he set a record by scoring 18 goals during the game against FC Next, followed by a further 13 against Sporting Nisporeni. Despite the storm of goals, Balkan Pharmaceuticals finished the league only in fourth place.

"It was only at the end of the season that I set myself the goal of becoming the top scorer of the championship. I felt it was possible. Now I have more chances to get to play for a team abroad," Nița said.




The 21-year-old admits that the goals helped him overcome a tragedy in his life and he dedicated them to his grandmother, who recently passed away. The excellent form of the player was also opportune for the Moldovan national futsal team, which qualified for the next qualifying round of the Futsal World Cup after winning their group in the preliminary round. Nița scored his first goals in an official match for the Moldovan national team, in the team's 4-1 win against Switzerland.

NORTHERN IRELAND

www.irishfa.com

PARTNERSHIP WILL ENCOURAGE HEALTHY HABITS FOR KIDS

NIGEL TILSON

 The Irish Football Association has extended its partnership with Safefood to use football to encourage healthy habits among children. The enhanced partnership means more children will benefit from Safefood's football-based On the Ball – Healthy Know-How for Active Kids programmes and events.

The aim of the partnership is to teach the importance of healthy eating habits and being active from an early age to thousands of children and their parents/carers across Northern Ireland.

As well as continuing as the Irish FA's official safe and healthy eating

partner, the extended partnership sees Safefood become an official patron of the Education and Heritage Centre at the national football stadium at Windsor Park where it will provide free nutrition workshops for visiting schools. The On the Ball programmes and events include the roll-out of a series of six-week after-school programmes across dozens of primary schools.

The Irish FA and Safefood, an all-Ireland body with a remit of promoting the importance of good food hygiene in the home and helping people make more informed choices




about the food they eat, will use a mixture of animated presentations, player videos, interactive games and quizzes to encourage children to make healthier choices such as eating more fruit, vegetables and healthy snacks, and swapping sugary drinks for water or milk.

NORWAY

www.fotball.no

PER RAVN OMDAL HONOURED WITH THE ORDER OF ST OLAV

YNGVE HAAVIK

 Per Ravn Omdal, 74, a former UEFA vice-president, has been made a Knight 1st Class of the Royal Norwegian Order of St Olav. He has received this award in recognition of his efforts for women's football. "I would like to thank His Majesty The King for this honorable award, which I perceive as a recognition of the role and importance of football in society," Mr Omdal said after receiving the reward at a reception at Ullevaal Stadion.

"The Order of St Olav is the highest Norwegian decoration awarded for civilian activities. Your efforts have been crucial in giving women opportunities to play football. Your lifelong work and love for football has been of great importance to our society," said head of chancery Mette Tverli.

"Mr Omdal has not only influenced the establishment and development of women's football, but also football in general and football for children and

young people in particular. Among other endeavours, he has put in considerable work to build artificial turf pitches and several thousand mini-pitches all over the country," Ms Tverli added.

"He has been involved in national and international football through many decades. He was president of the FA of Norway from 1987 to 1992 and again from 1996 to 2004, in addition to holding several top positions in both UEFA and FIFA. Mr Omdal has been a part of the FA of Norway since 1974. Football is now by far the largest women's sport in Norway, with more than 100,000 active players. Our women's national team has won the European Championship, the World Cup and the Olympics, and Norway has players who are at the highest level in international football.

"Mr Omdal has also been involved for many years in the FA of Norway's



international commitment to contribute to a more equal society through the education of female coaches and the recruitment of girl players.

"We should be proud that we are involved in 14 countries in the Middle East, Africa and the Balkans with the ministry of foreign affairs and the local football associations as our main partners. Together, we provide training for coaches and contribute to the recruitment of players, who get a completely new everyday life. We are helping to make positive changes in the world, and we must take care of that in the years to come."

REPUBLIC OF IRELAND

www.fai.ie

2,000 COMPLIMENTARY TICKETS FOR UKRAINIAN REFUGEES

GARETH MAHER



The Football Association of Ireland (FAI) allocated 2,000 tickets to the Ukrainian refugee community in the Republic of Ireland for the UEFA Nations League game against Ukraine at the Aviva Stadium on 8 June.

The FAI also committed to donate €100,000 to the Irish Red Cross Ukraine Crisis appeal from the proceeds of ticket sales for the match.

The association made the complimentary tickets available to Ukrainian refugees who have arrived in Ireland as the crisis continues in their country. It is liaising directly with community groups –

especially grassroots football clubs that have recently welcomed Ukrainian refugees into their communities.

“On behalf of the board and staff of the FAI and everyone involved with Irish football, I am delighted to announce that we will invite 2,000 Ukrainian refugees already in Ireland to the game and we look forward to welcoming them and their team to the Aviva Stadium. I am also pleased to confirm a €100,000 contribution to the Irish Red Cross Ukraine Crisis appeal from the ticket sales for the game,” said the FAI’s chief executive officer, Jonathan Hill.



“We have continuously offered our support and solidarity with the Ukraine Football Association, their players and supporters since this crisis developed earlier this year and this donation is, we hope, a welcome gesture on behalf of our game, Ireland supporters and the Irish people.”

ROMANIA

www.frf.ro

VAR READY AND WAITING

PAUL ZAHARIA



Taking into account the modern tendencies in European football, one of the crucial points and aspects of the work of the referees committee of the Romanian Football Federation (FRF) was to prepare the implementation of the VAR system in the Romanian top division from the start of the 2022/23 season, the first round of which is scheduled for 16 July 2022.

However, VAR will actually be used for the first time one week earlier, when FC CFR 1907 Cluj (winners of the championship for the fifth successive time and for the eighth time overall) and Sepsi OSK Sfântu Gheorghe (first-time cup winners) compete for the 2022 Romanian Super Cup.

As was the case in all countries that already enjoy the benefits of the VAR system, the whole process took around ten months. With the chairman of the national referees committee, Kyros Vassaras, as the main VAR, Alexandru Deaconu as project leader and VAR assistant instructor, and Augustus Constantin as VAR training coordinator, everything started in spring 2021, when a clear schedule had been drawn up.

Since the middle of July 2021, 54 match officials have attended specific VAR workshops and courses, while in September they started to practise with two VAR simulators in order to qualify as video assistant referees and assistant video assistant referees at the end of the ten-month project. The simulators displayed FIFA-approved footage from FIFA international matches and top-division matches with various levels of difficulty.

After completing the first mandatory modules, according to the FIFA VAR Implementation Assistance and Approval

Programme requirements, a lot of practical sessions and friendly matches on the field of play took place. Off the field, the referees and instructors continued their training through the use of a web-based platform, video tests, online and in-person meetings.

A number of official Under-19 matches were used as VAR trial matches, as was the Under-16 six nations tournament that took place in Romania from 4 to 10 May 2022 with the participation of Japan, Norway, Poland, Qatar, Romania and Saudi Arabia.

The national referees committee could not have brought the VAR project to fruition without the support and cooperation of the FRF, the professional league and its TV rights holder EAD, and regional teams from the country football associations of Argeş, Bucharest, Buzău, Călăraşi, Dâmboviţa, Giurgiu, Ialomiţa and Prahova.

On 9 July and afterwards from 16 July 2022, a new era in Romanian football will begin, thanks to the hard work carried out in order to implement the VAR system.

SLOVAKIA

www.futbalsfz.sk

TWELFTH MAJOR TOURNAMENT FOR REFEREE MÁRIA SÚKENÍKOVÁ

PETER SURIN



Mária Súkeníková, Slovakia’s most well-known female referee (46), has another top football event ahead of her. Having already officiated at two Women’s World Cups (2015, 2019), one U-20 Women’s World Cup (2012), four U-17 Women’s World Cups (2008, 2010, 2014, 2018), one Olympic Games (2016) and three Women’s EUROs (2009, 2013, 2017), the UEFA Referees Committee has now selected her for Women’s EURO 2022 in England.

“It was a surprise, even though, deep down, I was hoping I would be selected. But it was only when they officially announced it that I believed it,” she told the Slovak Football Association’s official website, futbalsfz.sk. Asked what was key to her nomination for the EURO, she said: “Probably the experience I’ve



gained during my long career. At UEFA, they know me as a diligent referee. Maybe the committee wanted to give me a nice parting gift... This year I am retiring as a referee.”

Valentová and Miroslava Obertová, need a third member for the European matches in the autumn and the Slovak referees committee appoint her, she would go. “Gladly,” she said.

SWEDEN

www.svenskfotboll.se

500,000 LANDMARK FOR GRASSROOTS APP

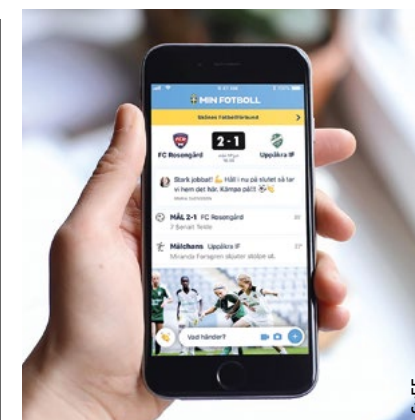
ANDREAS NILSSON



In May, the Min Fotboll app reached a landmark of 500,000 users. The app was launched by the Swedish FA ahead of the 2020 season to provide clubs with their own tool to handle live scores, streaming and user-generated content from games.

“We are very really pleased at the reception of Min Fotboll. We wanted to elevate youth and grassroots football in Sweden, which really is our ‘core business’. The app has been embraced by users and clubs, which makes it a success for us,” said the Swedish FA general secretary, Håkan Sjöstrand.

Min Fotboll was created as a response to a market where a number of companies offered various different services to handle sports fixtures and results. The market fragmented football clubs into different systems, many of



which raised concerns about privacy and lack of GDPR regulation. Min Fotboll is integrated with the Swedish FA’s own competition database and is completely free to use for all clubs. Any money

earned by a club within the app (for advertising, sponsorships or live-stream subscriptions) stays with the club and within the football family.

“It’s great to have half a million Swedes already onboard. The growth is steady, which goes to show the huge interest in youth and grassroots football. We’re happy that we can finally showcase the beauty of what happens on the pitch all over the country every day,” said Håkan Rossberg, the association’s Min Fotboll manager.

Users of the app register with their phone number, which minimises online abuse. Almost 20% of users have contributed user-generated content to the app – such as videos, photos, commentaries or live score reports. To date, more than 205,000 games have had live reporting by users.

SWITZERLAND

www.football.ch

SIGHTS SET ON HOSTING WOMEN'S EURO 2025

MARTINA KÜPPER



In a demonstration of its new strategic direction and its commitment to developing and promoting women's football in Switzerland, the Swiss Football Association has announced that it will bid to host UEFA Women's EURO 2025.

"Hosting a major tournament would be a great opportunity for us to promote women's football and increase its popularity in Switzerland," said the association's president, Dominique Blanc. "We are passionate about this, we are committed, we really hope to make it happen."

Tatjana Haenni, the Swiss FA's women's football director, added: "A women's EURO in Switzerland would be another huge step forward for women's football



in our country. Football as a whole would benefit."

Having declared its interest, the association has until October to submit its final bid. The UEFA Executive Committee is expected to decide on the

hosts in December. In order to ensure broad support for the Swiss bid, the federal, cantonal and municipal authorities will all be involved in the bidding process.

The country's location at the heart of Europe, short distances within the country, multilingualism and modern infrastructure are just a few of the many advantages Switzerland would offer as hosts of Women's EURO 2025.

"Although, with the stadiums we have, Switzerland may look like a bit of an underdog against England and the other bidders, we can guarantee sold-out stadiums and a fantastic celebration of football that would reach far beyond our national borders," said Haenni.

WALES

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GRASSROOTS FACILITIES FUND LAUNCHED

MELISSA PALMER



The Football Association of Wales (FAW) has joined a number of stakeholder investors, including the Welsh government, UK government, Sport Wales, UEFA and FIFA, to create the Grassroots Facilities Fund. The fund was created to deliver both improved and more facilities across Wales.

The Grassroots Facilities Fund focuses on supporting the creation and development of facilities in Wales to achieve a growth in participation in sport and recreational activity, and stronger and more stable community-focused clubs, with more players across all ages and backgrounds, and a particular focus on helping achieve the FAW's target of doubling the women's and girls' game.

The first tranche of funding for the Grassroots Facilities Fund was launched with initial funding of £1.3 million from the UK government matched by a further £1.9 million from the Welsh government via Sport Wales.



The Football Association of Wales CEO, Noel Mooney, said: "We are grateful to see the Grassroots Facilities Fund already making an impact on our football family across the country.

"The initial round of funding marks the beginning of an exciting journey, and the FAW will continue to work closely with all of its stakeholders to create a facilities investment fund in order to deliver a number of impactful projects

across all corners of Wales as we strive to make football inclusive and accessible to all."

With one of the FAW's key strategic objectives being to have inspirational and fit-for-purpose football facilities throughout the country, the association aspires to transform grassroots football and facilities across clubs, parks, and education sites through the Grassroots Facilities Fund.

JULY**1–3 July, Gondomar, Portugal**

UEFA Women's Futsal EURO

5/6 and 12/13 July

UEFA Champions League: first qualifying round

6–31 July, England

UEFA Women's EURO

6 July

European qualifying competition for the FIFA Futsal World Cup: main round draw

7 July

UEFA Futsal Champions League: preliminary and main round draws

7 and 14 July

UEFA Europa Conference League: first qualifying round

18 July

UEFA Europa League and UEFA Europa Conference League: third qualifying round draws

19/20 and 26/27 July

UEFA Champions League: second qualifying round

21 and 28 July

UEFA Europa Conference League: second qualifying round

27/28 July

UEFA Women's Champions League: preliminary round (first legs)

AUGUST**2 August**

UEFA Europa League and UEFA Europa Conference League: play-off draws

2/3 and 9 August

UEFA Champions League: third qualifying round

3/4 August

UEFA Women's Champions League: preliminary round (return legs)

4 and 11 August

UEFA Europa League and UEFA Europa Conference League: third qualifying round

10 August, Helsinki

UEFA Super Cup

16/17 and 23/24 August

UEFA Champions League: play-offs

18 August

UEFA Women's Champions League: round 1 semi-finals

18 and 25 August

UEFA Europa League and UEFA Europa Conference League: play-offs

23–28 August

UEFA Futsal Champions League: preliminary round

21 August

UEFA Women's Champions League: round 1 final and third-place match

25 August, Istanbul

UEFA Champions League: group stage draw

26 August, Istanbul

UEFA Europa League and UEFA Europa Conference League: group stage draws

30 August, Nyon

UEFA Youth League first and second qualifying round draws

31 August

UEFA Women's Champions League: round 2 draw

SEPTEMBER**1–6 September**

FIFA Women's World Cup: qualifying matches

4–10 September, Jaén, Spain

UEFA Under-19 Futsal EURO

6/7 September

UEFA Champions League and UEFA Youth League – Champions League path: group matches (matchday 1)

8 September

UEFA Europa League and UEFA Europa Conference League: group matches (matchday 1)

9 September

FIFA Women's World Cup: play-off draw

13/14 September

UEFA Champions League and UEFA Youth League – Champions League path: group matches (matchday 2)

14 September

UEFA Youth League – domestic champions path: first round (first legs)

15 September

UEFA Europa League and UEFA Europa Conference League: group matches (matchday 2)

19–27 September

European Under-21 Championship: play-offs

20 September, Hvar, Croatia

Executive Committee meeting

20/21 September

UEFA Women's Champions League: round 2 (first legs)

21–27 September

European Under-19 Championship: qualifying round

22–24 September

UEFA Nations League: matchday 5

25–27 September

UEFA Nations League: matchday 6

28/29 September

UEFA Women's Champions League: round 2 (return legs)

NOTICES

- **Mehmet Büyükekçi** has been elected as the new president of the Turkish Football Federation.
- **Panagiotis Baltakos** has been elected as the new president of the Hellenic Football Federation.
- **Răzvan Burleanu** has been re-elected as president of the Romanian Football Federation.
- **Agim Ademi** has been re-elected as president of the Football Federation of Kosovo.

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tricks to protect
the climate.**



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