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BECAUSE EVERY
CHILD IS A CHAMPION





Aleksander Čeferin
UEFA President

DEFENDING EUROPEAN FOOTBALL'S FUTURE

2022 has been another eventful year for UEFA. Together with the European football community, we have striven tirelessly to protect and promote the core values of the sports model that lies at the heart of our game. First and foremost, that includes open competitions based on sporting merit, financial solidarity between the top and bottom of football's pyramid structure and recognition of the game's wider role in society.

No European tournament conveyed these values more in 2022 than the UEFA Women's EURO – a vibrant family festival that broke records galore. The tournament raised the bar for women's football for competitiveness, visibility and value, as well as capturing the imagination of host nation England and the rest of Europe. Cumulatively, more fans than ever attended matches. One in six travelled from abroad. It also demonstrated our sport's enormous capacity for catalysing positive social change – 48% of ticket holders were female, with 30% of them younger than 30.

Reinvesting revenue generated by our elite competitions back into the game has laid the foundations for the growth of both women's and men's football. At our 2022 Congress in Vienna, we announced the expansion of our HatTrick development programme, which channels proceeds from the men's EUROs to projects in all 55 of our member associations. From 2024 to 2028, HatTrick funding will increase by 21%, reinforcing the initiatives that will see football on our continent grow from strength to strength.

UEFA's social heart has beaten with a firm rhythm this year. By using football's phenomenal popularity and influence, we have raised awareness of human rights, environmental and social issues, contributed to the fight against climate change, led campaigns against discrimination, run programmes to foster diversity and inclusion, and promoted healthy lifestyles for young and old.

Of course, none of these achievements would be possible without the club and national team competitions that drive our mission, providing the vital link between professional and grassroots football. Together, they demonstrate the importance of open competitions, where qualification is based on sporting merit and everyone, regardless of age or ability, can dream of playing at the highest level.

In closing, I would like to extend my personal thanks to everyone who has stood together with UEFA to defend the European sports model. Your support will inspire us in 2023, as we redouble our efforts to ensure a healthy and sustainable future for football in Europe.

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GRASSROOTS GAME IN FOCUS AT MADRID CONFERENCE

Europe's grassroots football community came together in Madrid from 13 to 15 September to celebrate recent achievements and discuss further ways to keep developing the game.

The three-day conference was an opportunity for UEFA to reconnect with the national association grassroots community in person after the COVID-19 pandemic, with the Madrid event the first physical meeting since the previous conference in 2019.

Two areas of particular focus at this year's conference were the development of grassroots clubs and how to use flexible formats to create the best playing environments for everyone wanting to take part in the game. During a busy week of panel discussions, workshops and presentations, participants from all 55 UEFA member associations, as well as FIFA and UEFA's sister continental football confederations, also received expert updates and best practice examples on all areas of the grassroots game,

including UEFA's grassroots charter and frameworks, the UEFA Women's EURO legacy programme, strategic development, futsal, disability football and the UEFA Playmakers programme. Grassroots football accounts for all football that is non-professional and non-elite. This includes, but is not limited to, children's football, schools and youth football, amateur football, disability football, football for veterans and walking football. In short, grassroots football is football played by the masses at a level where participation and a love of the game are the principle driving forces. It lies at the very centre of UEFA's vision: making our sport the most played, trusted, engaging and responsible sport in Europe.

The benefits of grassroots football are countless, both on and off the pitch.

It brings communities together, promotes healthier lifestyles and teaches positive values. Above all, it takes the game to everyone, regardless of age, ability, ethnicity, gender, nationality, religion, sexual orientation or other characteristics.

Why UEFA promotes grassroots football

A healthy grassroots game is central to UEFA's strategy to ensure football is the most played, trusted, competitive and engaging sport. Grassroots football:

- **creates** a solid foundation for the game
- **provides** playing opportunities for all
- **promotes** respect, inclusion and equality
- **serves** as a vehicle for educational, sporting and social development
- **promotes** lifelong participation
- **is crucial** to the success of elite football

The UEFA Playmakers programme aims to inspire girls to engage with football in a fun and creative way. So far, 44 UEFA member associations, including Latvia (as pictured here), have introduced Playmakers.



Celebrating success and setting standards

The conference kicked off with European football's technical development community discussing the future of the game, together with a series of workshops, panel discussions and presentations detailing some of the progress made to ensure the game's foundations remain as solid as ever. In his opening video message, UEFA president Aleksander Čeferin said: "When we speak about football the first thing that comes to people's minds is professional football. It makes sense; the level of skill, tactical supremacy and superstars are the things that make this sport so great – however people should remember this is just the tip of the football pyramid that would never reach these heights without a firm base. When you take a long look at this base it is equally fascinating and emotional. This is where the game's roots are. I want to thank our member associations for taking good care of our game's future. Your devotion, energy and enthusiasm are incredible."



Plans for the future include a new UEFA Grassroots Charter, due to be launched in 2024, which will set the standard higher still and lead opportunities for the continued improvement of the game across Europe. All 55 UEFA member associations have signed up to the charter since its introduction in 2004. The sport's power as a vehicle for educational, social, sporting and personal development was a common theme throughout the opening day of the conference.

Rainer Koch, UEFA Executive Committee member and former German Football Association (DFB) president, outlined the importance of the grassroots game in protecting the sport's positive image: "The grassroots football movement is not only by far the biggest sports movement in European sport but also the basis, the heart and the good conscience of our sport," he said. "Without grassroots football – within not very long periods of time – football would become only an entertainment business and football would – in political eyes – quickly lose its reputation as the fundamental sports movement in our societies."

The view was reinforced by UEFA honorary member and grassroots ambassador Per Omdal, who reminded the audience of their obligations as grassroots leaders: "Grassroots football is a big and serious responsibility," he said. "It's our duty to facilitate football for everybody and let them grow with us. "We are teaching kids individual skills, mastering human relations and how to behave in life. We have an educational role and that illustrates football's enormous position as the most important society player that we have. We cannot relax. We have a way to go to create a real equal game, and we will do that together, UEFA and the national associations."

Omdal's compatriot, Lise Klaveness, president of the Norwegian Football Federation, reflected on her early experiences of the game, and how it has helped her career off the pitch: "Football was my first love in life," she said. "Grassroots is where I found the lifelong passion for the game. I was obsessed with learning everything with the ball and took the ball to bed with me as a child. "Playing in the national team, when we lost, I would cry and it took weeks to recover but those losses, and what football does for you, is that you learn to lose and go back again. To me that has been the

The grassroots legacy

This summer's Women's EURO 2022 was a huge success on the pitch and in the stands, but it will also inspire hundreds of thousands of girls and women to take up the game in the coming years.

Louise Gear, the English Football Association's (The FA) head of development, and colleague Stacey Mullock, national tournaments legacy manager, explained how the association's pre-tournament legacy work helped to drive interest and participation, setting it up for future success. "Anyone working in women's football right now should feel immensely proud of the records that were broken and the showcase we put on this summer and we need to all be excited about what's to come," Gear said.

"The connection between the elite game and grassroots football are completely seamless and we think that is key to our success."

As a result of hosting the tournament, The FA will provide opportunities for 120,000 more girls to play football in schools, with 20,000 more women taking part in the game for fun and a further 7,000 registering for grassroots clubs.

most valuable lesson from football. You get resilience and the feeling of how a team can raise you up again when you feel isolated."

Clubs key to enhancing the European grassroots game

A new grassroots club development framework was presented to delegates on the second day of the conference. With good clubs come good experiences, improving the overall standard of the game and promoting a lifelong love of the sport. It is therefore essential that national and regional associations support their clubs in on- and off-pitch activities. →



This has led to the launch of UEFA's grassroots club development framework, which will help national associations create their own vision for improving the quality of the club community and enhancing players' experiences by ensuring a positive, safe and enjoyable environment for participants of all ages and abilities.

There are already many great examples of grassroots club development initiatives throughout Europe, and in Madrid, delegates heard from their Austrian, Dutch, English, Finnish, Norwegian and Swedish colleagues on examples of best practice.

Royal Dutch Football Association (KNVB) director of football development Lennard van Ruiven: "Players are the most important thing, and if you develop the clubs, then you are helping the players reach their potential. If we across Europe can create better clubs, we create a better environment and experience for the players and UEFA is doing important work in helping associations understand why this is important. Most clubs are also centred in their community and play a bigger role than just offering football and we saw during the pandemic how powerful that can be for society. At the KNVB, we work to educate club leaders who sets the standards within clubs of all sizes and safeguarding is an important part of that education. We also help to audit and review the clubs with external experts, providing them with a mirror to assess where they are and how they can develop.

Key pillars of the club development framework



Player-focused development

Developing clubs with a focus on giving everyone the opportunity to play, enjoy and be a part of football.



Environment

Creating inclusive clubs that play an active part in their local communities, contributing to the well-being and fulfilment of their members and wider society.



The game

Supporting the development of a grassroots philosophy, player pathways and flexible football provision to support the local community.



Workforce

Educating volunteers, staff and coaches to build clubs' workforces in support of their administration and activities.

Events like this Grassroots Conference are very important. There is a lot of knowledge in the room and many diverse landscapes, so all the associations can learn from each other. It's a great exchange, and with UEFA setting the standard, we can all move together in the right direction. We have come a long way in the three years since the previous conference, and hopefully we will look back at this one in the future and realise that we have grown even more."

Social responsibility in the grassroots game

Participants also heard from UEFA experts on the topic of sustainability in grassroots football.

UEFA's new football sustainability strategy, Strength through Unity, features 11 key policies to help the game in Europe become more socially responsible and environmentally friendly at all levels. It invites all football stakeholders to collaborate around a shared agenda and using a common language.

One of those policies concerns child and youth protection, which aims to ensure a safe and empowering environment for all children and young people to play football.

The conference presentation outlined UEFA's work with Terre des hommes to create a child safeguarding toolkit, which is available for free and helps stakeholders to develop their own youth protection policies.

The game's benefits in promoting a healthy lifestyle and social opportunities were regularly referenced throughout the conference, and it is UEFA's grassroots mission to ensure that everybody, everywhere can play the game in a safe, positive and enjoyable environment. Delegates heard from experts in disability football, futsal and the UEFA Playmakers programme, which provides a fun introduction to the sport for young girls.

Opportunity and enjoyment for all

The third and final day of the UEFA Grassroots Conference in Madrid focused on the importance of providing football opportunities for everybody who wants to be involved with the game.

As part of its new grassroots football charter, UEFA will introduce new disability football provisions to ensure national associations are developing programmes to create a welcoming environment for all players.

"Disability football is really important

because everybody should be given the opportunity to reach their potential," explained UEFA Grassroots Panel member and disability football expert Jeff Davies. "Fifteen percent of European people live with disability and many of those will want to be involved in football – not just as a player but as a coach, administrator or official – and we should be able to give people a lifelong association with the game.

"It's important that UEFA leads on this because we are the football experts. We may not have technical expertise in disability, but we work with partners who do, and it means the world's number one game can give more people so many life skills, a feeling of belonging and an opportunity to achieve. We can lead the way for sport across the world."

Paul McNeill of the Scottish Football Association shared the secrets of its Para-Football programme, winner of the 2021/22 UEFA Grassroots Award for Best Disability Initiative. "My coach made me understand that those white lines on a football pitch are white lines of safety. They change your life and we never forget that," he said. "The more we talk about Scottish Para-Football, the more people believe in what we are doing. We are making a difference to society, and football is the best thing ever to engage people!"

Spanish international blind footballer Javier Álvaro Ruiz explained how he is able to take part in the game and how it

How futsal raises standards

Michael Skubala, a former England futsal player and head coach, who is now working in football as Leeds United's Under-21 head coach, showcased the benefits of adding futsal into a 'twin-tracking' development programme alongside football. Skubala detailed how futsal players get more regular touches of the ball during games, as well as experiencing more opportunities to attack and defend on a smaller pitch, therefore developing their technical skills more quickly.

benefits his life off the pitch: "If we have clear instructions and someone in charge of safety, someone who guides players, then we can all play," he explained. "Sport has many benefits and there are so many things you can transfer to your daily life. For people with a serious disability like me, that's important. Only a few people can reach professional sport, but it's important that everyone can enjoy his or her life and I'm sure we can do that through football."

Attracting girls to football with UEFA Playmakers

The UEFA Playmakers programme is a sports activity like no other, incorporating imaginative play and Disney storytelling into an introductory course to help girls fall in love with football. It provides a fun, safe introduction to the game for five-to-eight-year-old girls, developing fundamental movement and life skills while offering an innovative environment to support a healthy, active lifestyle.

Since its launch in 2020, the scheme has been a huge success with 44 of UEFA's member associations now offering a Playmakers programme, which has introduced thousands of girls, and new coaches, to the game.

Incredibly, more than 90% of participants in the scheme have reported that they enjoyed the sessions, learnt new skills and wanted to tell their friends about it. In Madrid, delegates discussed how to ensure that once girls have completed the course, there are suitable links between schools and clubs to ensure that they can stay involved with the game and continue enjoying the benefits of activity.

Reflecting and consolidating for future success

The last day's session brought the curtain down on what was a hugely positive and beneficial experience for all participants.

As well as providing a forum for learning about new initiatives and best practice, the conference also offered crucial opportunities for the exchange of ideas and the chance to further develop UEFA's continent-wide network of grassroots experts.

It allowed the community to celebrate recent success and growth despite the pandemic, as well as setting out important plans for the future, such as UEFA's new grassroots charter and the club development framework. 🌟



2021/22 UEFA Grassroots Award winners honoured

The UEFA Grassroots Conference in Madrid offered the perfect opportunity to celebrate the excellent work of the 2021/22 UEFA Grassroots Award winners, with the gold award winners honoured at a special presentation ceremony. The UEFA Grassroots Awards were launched in 2010, and 111 award winners from 40 national associations have been honoured by since then. The awards – gold, silver and bronze – recognise outstanding work below the elite levels of the game, shining a spotlight on projects, clubs and national associations that are raising the standards of grassroots football and providing an important contribution to the communities around them.

2021/22 gold award winners

Best Amateur Club
IK Dien (Belgium)

Best Professional Club
Athletic Bilbao (Spain)

Best Participation Initiative
Football in Schools (Moldova)

Best Disability Initiative
Scottish Para-Football (Scotland)

Best Social Initiative
Discover Football (Germany)



'FOOTBALL BRINGS PEOPLE TOGETHER'

UEFA's recent grassroots conference in Madrid was privileged to welcome Republic of Ireland legend **Robbie Keane** for an in-depth question-and-answer session on the grassroots game and related topics.



Keane, 42, is the most capped player in the Republic of Ireland's history with 146 appearances between 1998 and 2016, and his country's record scorer with 68 goals.

He enjoyed a distinguished 20-year club career with, among others, Tottenham Hotspur, Leeds United, Wolverhampton Wanderers, Liverpool and Coventry City. On the coaching side, Keane has worked as an assistant coach for the Republic of Ireland men's national team.

Keane is working for UEFA in an advisory role, bringing his vast experience to play in the drive to further develop football across Europe, and is a technical observer for UEFA at matches in major European and national team competitions.

When did you start playing football and pick up the 'virus' for the game?

I started in a place called Tallaght in Dublin. A really tough background – you had to look after yourself. But football was always there for anybody. I played football in the streets with my elder brother and our friends. As soon as I came home from school, I put my school bag down and

played football. I played for a local team called Fettercairn – believe it or not, I started off as a right-back – and I was the top goalscorer for the season in that position. So that's how it really started for me.

Why is the grassroots game so important as a stepping stone into the elite game?

Every club academy always wants kids from their local area to play for their teams. You don't go straight into playing for the Barcelona academy. You have to start at a local team in your area like I did, and hopefully climb the ladder. You also hopefully have coaches who can help players develop. It's fair to say that if I hadn't started at grassroots level, I wouldn't be sitting here.

What kind of skill sets did you learn playing on the streets?

I learned my trade from the little tricks I tried to pull off when playing against the gate or playing against a wall. We had a wall outside my house, with little pebble stones. There were loads of different spaces in the wall, so the ball would always move to different areas, and I would always have to move quickly because of the stones. As a player, I was known for my movement, and I got this movement from small things like this.

It's a fine example of perseverance and how you learn to play...

Everything is on the phone now... The importance of just getting outside and kicking a football, if you can, it makes a huge difference. I always say to kids now: 'It takes a few minutes, three to five minutes, to take 500 touches against the wall.' And if you do that every day for one week, you've got thousands of touches of a football, and that will make your touch a lot better.

You have two boys; do they both play football? How would you describe the perfect club environment for youngsters?

My 13-year-old son is at the academy at Shamrock Rovers, a big team in Ireland who are playing in Europe this season. The academy there is extremely good –

they're definitely paving the way for a better future for the young kids. We'll see a lot of young, really talented players coming through. Meanwhile, my six-year-old son has just started playing football.

How important is it, in addition to coaching young players, to also allow time for youngsters to just enjoy playing?

It's extremely important. For example, on Mondays, my son and the other academy players play in the hall for an hour and a half – no coaching, no nothing – five-a-side, free play. I think it's important that you have one day where you just let the kids be kids. Let them enjoy themselves. You ask any kid what their favourite training session is. Almost every one of them would say [the sessions] when they're just free, when they just go and play and express themselves. When I was a kid, it was the same thing.

Did you play football at school?

Yes. I wasn't a big fan of school, and football was my release. The teacher was always wanting to play football games. So, I got off many classes just to play football. I was lucky – the more you play football, inevitably you're going to get better. And, in school, you have interaction with schoolfriends that maybe you wouldn't usually hang around with outside school, and you get this connection on the football pitch.

How would you sum up the values of grassroots football and sport in general?

Well, as I said before, it's given me everything. I was fortunate enough to play for my national team 146 times, score 68 goals, play in England's Premier League, play around the world in all different places. I wouldn't have had that opportunity without coaches and volunteers taking time out of their busy working schedules to help and educate young players from completely different backgrounds. Football brings people together. That's the great thing about sport, whether it's football or anything else. Whether you're the richest guy in the world or the poorest guy in the world, it doesn't matter.

What are the biggest challenges facing grassroots football?

It depends where you're from. Some countries have unbelievable facilities for

young players, but you might not have the same situation in other countries. It's important that we try and financially help those countries that don't have the same resources as the bigger nations. I've travelled with UEFA to a number of countries, and you see that the love of the game in these countries is incredible. Football is one language. It doesn't matter where you're from, or what language you speak. Everyone speaks the same language in football. The more we can get kids out there playing football, the better it will be for football going forward.

What advice would you give to a young boy or girl who wants to start playing football?

Practise as much as you can. I can only speak from my experience, which was practising every day. I was known in football for having a good first touch, and I promise you that this came from just playing against the wall every day; thousands of touches against the wall. Enjoy yourself. If you love it that much, just go for it.

And that basically transfers to normal life as well...

If you're in the street with some kids that you don't really know but who love football, you can become friends with them, no matter what, because you all have this love for the game. Of course, it gives you great joy, and it gives you a great understanding of what friendship with people means.

Would you like to see more elite players get involved in the grassroots game?

I know UEFA are trying to bring in as many ex-players as they can. It just takes one kid to see one player – a big player – and they want to do what that player can do. It just takes one kid to think: "Oh, I can be like that!"

What's your view on the relation between school education and youngsters' passion for football, and the time spent on both?

The chances of a youngster making it are very slim. So what are you going to do afterwards? You can't rely on making it as a football player for one second. You need something to fall back on. You need education. Education is extremely important. I was very lucky that I made it. I didn't like school. I just had a vision of becoming a football player. But if I hadn't become a football player, I genuinely couldn't tell you what I'd have done. It's vital that we drum into kids that education is very important. You don't want to kill their dreams, but they need to know the reality.

Football is a lesson for life – would you agree with that?

Absolutely. Look where I am now from where I came from. It's taught me so many lessons. It's taken me off the streets. I could have gone down a different path than the one I went down. It's taught me values. It's taught me respect for people, understanding different people, different cultures. I've been very fortunate that I've had a long career and met unbelievable people from different walks of life – and football did all that... ☺



CROATIAN SCHOOLCHILDREN TEAM UP WITH FOOTBALL LEGENDS OF THE PAST

On 20 September, UEFA president Aleksander Čeferin and some of Europe’s most famous football legends joined schoolchildren at a special UEFA Football in Schools event on the Croatian island of Hvar.

UEFA and the Croatian Football Federation (HNS) gave 80 schoolchildren a dream chance to test their skills against European legends of the game at a football festival on the island of Hvar.

Local legend Zvonimir Boban, UEFA’s technical director and chief of football, and Nadine Kessler, managing director of women’s football, teamed up with Luís Figo, Davor Šuker, Dejan Savičević, Darijo Srna and Robbie Keane, as well as the UEFA president, Aleksander Čeferin, to play a series of fun and emotional matches with the 12-13-year-olds.

The ‘Football for all’ event brought together Hvar schoolchildren and children from Split who have Down’s syndrome, highlighting football’s power to unite communities around common values such as inclusion, respect and kindness.

The UEFA president said: “Football goes far beyond national teams and club competitions. It is UEFA’s mission to promote the game at all levels, including grassroots. Today, we witnessed great football, the football that we like to see. It is more than sport; it is love.”

The initiative also put the floodlights on UEFA’s Football in Schools development programme – a four-year, Europe-wide initiative designed to promote the benefits of teaching children football’s values – fair play, respect, teamwork and leadership – as well as encouraging a healthy and active lifestyle.

The programme has attracted support from schools, parents and children across Europe, with over 2.4 million children taking part through 45 national football associations. More than 44,000 schools and 100,000 teachers have signed up to the initiative.

What is the UEFA Football in Schools programme?

Alongside coach education and club development, Football in Schools is a key component of UEFA’s Grassroots Football Charter. From 2020 to 2024, European

“Football goes far beyond national teams and club competitions. It is UEFA’s mission to promote the game at all levels, including grassroots. Today, we witnessed great football, the football that we like to see. It is more than sport; it is love.”

Aleksander Čeferin
UEFA President

football’s governing body will channel €11 million in funding to support the initiative – one quarter of the €44 million total that UEFA will invest in supporting grassroots football.

The programme is one example of how UEFA draws on revenue from its European Championships to fund football projects across Europe through its HatTrick development project.

UEFA Football in Schools 2020–24 in Europe (projected numbers)

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



UEFA president Aleksander Čeferin on the field during the Football in Schools event.



Increasing the participation of children, girls in particular, is one of the Croatian Football Federation’s grassroots development priorities.



Case study: UEFA Football in Schools in Croatia



4
grassroots
project
coordinators



More than
30
grassroots
clubs: 16 of 21
county
associations



188
participating
schools



1,855
male and
408 female
participants



18
county-wide
tournaments
before a
semi-national
championship



4
regional
semi-national
championships
and one national
championship

How else is the Croatian Football Federation investing in grassroots football?

1. UEFA Playmakers programme

The HNS recently completed its first season of participating in UEFA Playmakers, a sports initiative that encourages girls aged between five and eight to play football by delivering a fun and safe introduction to learning the game through movement, play and the magic of Disney storytelling.

In its first year, the HNS programme delivered across the field: 80% of the girls who came to Playmakers sessions had never played football before, while approximately 10% have progressed to join local girls’ football clubs. A new season of Playmakers kicked off in Croatia in September, with ten training sessions based on the Disney movie Frozen 2. These will be followed in spring 2023 by sessions based on Moana.

2. Plazma Youth Sports Games 2022

Since 1996, Croatia has hosted the Plazma Youth Sports Games, the largest amateur sports event for children and young people in Europe. In the past 25 years, more than two million children have taken part.

Supported by the UEFA Foundation for Children, the games are held across three countries (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and Serbia) and feature ten sporting disciplines promoting healthy lifestyles, friendship and fair play. In 2022, the Youth Sports Games brought together 230,000 children from the three countries involved.

3. New training pitches

Investing in infrastructure for the future is crucial for the steady growth of Croatian football. The HNS is drawing on HatTrick funds to roll out new training pitches for grassroots clubs in each of the nation’s 21 counties.

“We are investing revenue generated by UEFA’s European Championship into a long-term project to ensure that each of Croatia’s 21 counties has at least five new quality training pitches,” said HNS president Marijan Kustić.

To date, the HNS has funded the construction of 16 pitches in 14 counties, with the remaining seven expected to complete at least one new surface by summer 2023.

By reducing pitch maintenance costs for smaller clubs and allowing training and matches to continue throughout Croatia’s cold, wet winters, the new infrastructure is expected to significantly boost grassroots participation.

ALL CHANGE IN THE NATIONS LEAGUE

Croatia, Spain, Italy and the Netherlands will contest the 2022/23 UEFA Nations League finals in June 2023, mirroring the changing fortunes witnessed in all four leagues during the group stage of the competition.

The finals may still be some time away, but what a treat lies in store. In June 2023, in the Netherlands, 2018 FIFA World Cup finalists Croatia, EURO 2020 semi-finalists and 2020/21 Nations League finalists Spain, EURO 2020 winners Italy, and the Netherlands – less successful in the honours stakes in recent years, but still a team full of flair – will be competing to have their name engraved on the Nations League trophy under those of Portugal (2019) and France (2021), both of which failed to reach the finals this time.

The third edition of UEFA's youngest national team competition has confirmed that there is no room for sentiment, with a constantly changing hierarchy among Europe's footballing nations. During the group phase, played in June and September 2022, there was, as always, plenty to play for in all the leagues: promotion, relegation and places in the EURO 2024 play-offs.

League A: Suspense and surprises in every group

In Group 1, Croatia (first, 13 points) produced a surprise by finishing ahead of Denmark (second, 12 points), thanks mainly to an impressive double (1-0, 2-1) against their Danish rivals. Croatia had been rather disappointing since their appearance in the 2018 FIFA World Cup final, and superstar Luka Modrić and his team-mates began the campaign poorly, winning a solitary point in their first two games. They then strung together four successive wins, including a decisive final victory over Austria (fourth, 4 points). This defeat condemned the Austrians to relegation... and narrowly saved the 2021 winners, France (third, 5 points).

In Group 2, Spain (first, 11 points) qualified for the Nations League finals for the second consecutive time. Needing to beat Portugal (second, 10 points) in Braga

on the final matchday, Luis Enrique's men duly prevailed when an 88th-minute goal by Alvaro Morata secured a 1-0 win. The Spanish also finished ahead of an inconsistent Swiss side (third, 9 points) who followed three initial defeats with a run of three victories, as well as the Czechs (fourth, 4 points) who failed to repeat their form of EURO 2020, when they reached the quarter-finals.

In Group 3, Italy continued their recent roller coaster of results. After triumphing in EURO 2020, but then failing to qualify for the 2022 FIFA World Cup, the Squadra Azzurra (first, 11 points) earned their ticket for the finals by winning in Hungary (0-2) on the final matchday. The impressive Hungarians (second, 10 points) were the only team of the four promoted to League A to avoid relegation, finishing ahead of Germany (third, 7 points) and England (fourth, 3 points). England failed to win a match and dropped to League B for the next edition of the Nations League.

In Group 4, the Netherlands returned to top form as highest scorers in League A (14 goals) and amassed the highest points tally (16 out of 18) of any team in all the leagues. Belgium (second, 10 points) lost twice to the Netherlands, unable to cope with the Dutch team's multitude of attacking options (nine Dutch players scored goals). Poland finished third in the group (7 points), while Wales (fourth, 1 point) suffered five single-goal defeats and will drop back down to League B.

League B: Scotland, Israel, Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina hit the jackpot

Although the League B group winners were not rewarded with a place in the finals, they did enjoy a double benefit: promotion to join the European elite in League A and an additional opportunity to qualify for EURO 2024. Three places at the EURO in Germany will be awarded to the

winners of play-offs involving the 12 teams with the best results in the 2022/23 Nations League that do not directly book a place through the qualifiers. Scotland topped Group 1 (13 points), holding off Ukraine for promotion to the next level for the second time in three editions. Israel also moved up (first in Group 2, 8 points), emerging undefeated in a group from which Russia were disqualified and



Israel (Dolev Haziza in action versus Albania) are on the way up, having been promoted for the first time to League A in the UEFA Nations League.



With 16 points out of a possible 18 in League A, the Netherlands (Kenneth Taylor against Belgium's Dodi Lukebakio) qualified for the finals in style.

automatically relegated to League C.

After relegation from League A in the previous edition, Bosnia and Herzegovina (first in Group 3, 11 points) came out on top of a very tight group. Meanwhile, Serbia (first in Group 4, 13 points) got the

better of Norway in a rivalry that saw their respective goal machines Aleksandar Mitrović and Erling Haaland finish as joint top scorers of all the groups with six goals each. Heading in the opposite direction, Armenia (after two consecutive

SCHEDULE

Semi-finals

14 and 15 June 2023

Final and third-place play-off

18 June 2023

Play-offs for relegation to League D

21–23 and 24–26 March 2024

Play-offs for EURO 2024

21 and 26 March 2024

promotions), Romania and Sweden (relegated for the second time in a row) will join Russia in League C.

Leagues C and D: A clearly established hierarchy

League C was not exactly full of suspense, since the winners of all four groups were known before the final matchday. Turkey (first in Group 1, 13 points) impressed with 18 goals, the highest tally in any of the 14 Nations League groups. At the other end of the pitch, Greece (first in Group 2, 15 points) bolstered their legendary defensive reputation (conceding just two goals, the best defence in the group phase) while maintaining a 100% home record with three victories. It was also thanks to an unblemished home record that Kazakhstan (first in Group 3, 13 points) achieved promotion to League B. Georgia, on the other hand (first in Group 4, 16 points) secured maximum points on the road, thanks in particular to their rising star Khvicha Kvaratskhelia, who scored five times.

Promoted from League D, Gibraltar (fourth in Group 4, 1 point) suffered at the higher level and will need to overcome Cyprus in the relegation play-offs to stay up. Meanwhile, Lithuania and Belarus, who also finished bottom of their groups, will also face off in March 2024, with the winner retaining a place in League C.

In League D, Latvia (first in Group 1, 13 points) gained promotion for the first time by finishing ahead of Moldova on goal difference. Estonia (first in Group 2, 12 points) enjoyed a smoother ride in the three-team group, with doubles over Malta and San Marino ensuring they were the only team in the entire competition to win all their matches. 🇵🇹



For Europe's top football nations, the UEFA EURO 2024 qualifying draw held at Messe Frankfurt's Festhalle exhibition centre on 9 October marked the start of the quest for the continent's ultimate prize. The organisers of the final tournament, to be held in Germany from 14 June to 14 July 2024, are hoping it will be the best yet... and not just on the pitch.

When journalists describe a draw as 'colourful' and 'entertaining', the organisers have generally done a good job. The hour-long show that culminated in the formation of the ten qualifying groups for UEFA EURO 2024 provided an appetising foretaste of this event in the heart of Europe. The draw's motto, WELCOME to GerMANY, with emphasis on 'We' (the hosts and the football community) and 'many' (guests and fans from all over the world), was accompanied by vibrant branding celebrating the diversity of fans that creates a real buzz of anticipation.

The part-German, part-English slogan 'United by football. Vereint im Herzen Europas' epitomises the commitment

shown by the German Football Association (DFB) ever since it launched its bid to host the tournament. At EURO 2024 GmbH, a joint venture created by the DFB and UEFA in Frankfurt's Otto-Fleck-Schneise, the various organisational threads come together. Here, around 70 employees are working in close cooperation with UEFA headquarters in Nyon, Switzerland, to ensure preparations for the EURO run smoothly. The collaboration between the two entities was vital for the success of the draw, paving the way to this first milestone on the road to 2024 and beyond.

When the tournament logo symbolising the UEFA member associations was unveiled in October 2021, the UEFA

president, Aleksander Čeferin, spoke optimistically about what he described as "a special EURO", not least because "it will be a green EURO, very environmentally friendly. It will be a sustainable EURO."

These ambitious words are already being matched by action. In spring 2021, the event's social responsibility strategy was published. And even the match schedule, including the opening match in Munich and the final in Berlin, was designed with sustainability in mind. In particular, the venues are divided into three geographical clusters – north/north-east (Berlin, Hamburg, Leipzig), west (Dortmund, Düsseldorf, Gelsenkirchen, Cologne) and south (Frankfurt, Munich, Stuttgart) – with the aim of minimising

travel during the group stage. Thousands of fans will therefore be able to use buses and trains to travel between matches, substantially reducing carbon emissions.

The sustainability requirements, included in the tournament regulations for the first time in EURO history, provide further evidence that high standards are being met. Teams and organisers are obliged to think sustainably at all times, in terms of environmental, economic and social aspects of their participation.

"For the first time ever in the EURO's history, we have ensured that sustainability objectives, such as respect for human rights and the environment, are fully embedded in the official tournament regulations," said the UEFA president.

"Less than two years before the tournament, we are on the threshold between conceptualisation and implementation. The anticipation is rising. And so is the responsibility for us as organisers," added Bernd Neuendorf, the DFB president.

These ambitious objectives will be all the easier to achieve thanks to a strong group of partners. The tournament steering group convened for the first time ahead of the draw, showing that, just as on the pitch, success depends on a team mentality and an elaborate strategy. The steering group consists of top management representatives from UEFA and the DFB, as well as from the host cities and federal and local authorities.

"Less than two years before the tournament, we are on the threshold between conceptualisation and implementation. The anticipation is rising. And so is the responsibility for us as organisers."

Bernd Neuendorf
DFB President

It will work on planning for the final tournament, with a particular focus on aligning the host nation and the ten host cities, as well as their sporting, organisational and political objectives.

Following the meeting, the steering group members were keen to emphasise their collective goal of a peaceful and festive EURO 2024 in the ten host cities, stadiums, Germany and Europe as a whole.

Further support will be provided by the recently established Stiftung Fußball & Kultur EURO 2024 gGmbH (EURO 2024 football and culture foundation), which has been tasked with initiating, coordinating and promoting artistic and cultural projects (the first application procedure is online at www.fussball-und-kultur2024.eu).

A subsidiary of the Frankfurt-based DFB-Kulturstiftung (DFB cultural foundation), the foundation is funded by the federal government in accordance with a resolution of the German parliament. Its board is chaired by Claudia Roth, minister of state for culture and media, with expert advice provided by a team of art and culture professionals.

The stage has therefore been set for the next EURO to herald a turning point for football. However, while Europe's largest football competition will be a modern and responsible event, the main focus will continue to be on beautiful goals, unforgettable moments and vivid memories.

Here again, new benchmarks will be set. Many people still remember the 2006 World Cup, when fan zones in Germany proved hugely popular. By 2024, 18 years will have passed since that fairy-tale summer and a new generation will have the chance to experience and enjoy a major football event first hand.

Philipp Lahm, who scored the first goal of that 2006 tournament and is now both an honorary captain of the German national team and EURO 2024 tournament director, agrees.

"I'm confident that EURO 2024 will be a very attractive tournament. Many of the world's best teams will compete in a country in the heart of Europe. We can look forward to great games and an exciting tournament in every way. This is what football is all about and, for me, it's what this European Championship is about – unique, emotional experiences that people can enjoy together."

Emotions were also to the fore when Lena, winner of the 2010 Eurovision Song Contest, performed the song Looking for Love during the qualifying draw ceremony. The contribution by one of Europe's leading vocalists certainly provided a foretaste of things to come at EURO 2024, which has been coined a 'EURO for everyone'.

This football festival is set to form the centrepiece of a magnificent summer of European sport and satisfy people's hunger for shared experiences, new encounters and long-lasting friendships. A menu being prepared in Frankfurt and Nyon that will be served up in Germany, at the heart of Europe, in summer 2024, and for which the qualifying draw provided a colourful, entertaining and mouth-watering appetiser. 🍷

QUALIFYING DRAW 	GROUP A SPAIN SCOTLAND NORWAY GEORGIA CYPRUS	GROUP B NETHERLANDS FRANCE REPUBLIC OF IRELAND GREECE GIBRALTAR	GROUP C ITALY ENGLAND UKRAINE NORTH MACEDONIA MALTA	GROUP D CROATIA WALES ARMENIA TÜRKİYE LATVIA	GROUP E POLAND CZECHIA ALBANIA FAROE ISLANDS MOLDOVA
	GROUP F BELGIUM AUSTRIA SWEDEN AZERBAIDJAN ESTONIA	GROUP G HUNGARY SERBIA MONTENEGRO BULGARIA LITHUANIA	GROUP H DENMARK FINLAND SLOVENIA KAZAKHSTAN NORTHERN IRELAND SAN MARINO	GROUP I SWITZERLAND ISRAEL ROMANIA KOSOVO BELARUS ANDORRA	GROUP J PORTUGAL BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA ICELAND LUXEMBOURG SLOVAKIA LIECHTENSTEIN

TOWARDS A MORE SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

UEFA launched its new Sustainable Infrastructure Guidelines at a dedicated event on 16 November at the MEWA Arena in Mainz, Germany.

The event featured panel discussions and presentations by experts on sustainable football venues and facilities, encouraging knowledge transfer and sharing of best practices.

The guidelines, which feature forewords by UEFA president Aleksander Čeferin and European Commission executive vice-president Frans Timmermans, introduce the concept of infrastructure sustainability, structured around the topics of environmental, social and governance (ESG). The guidelines cover key subjects such as purpose, location, design, conception and construction, pitch and landscaping. In addition, they provide insights into the infrastructure management phase, addressing, for instance, the use of embedded technology in stadium infrastructure and pitch quality, the management of event-related waste, and health and safety matters.

Infrastructure sustainability is one of the 11 policies being deployed as part of UEFA's Football Sustainability Strategy 2030, Strength through Unity. The policy's ambition is to continue to raise the bar for European football infrastructure by setting criteria and sharing best practices for a new generation of sustainable football venues.

The UEFA president said: "The best preparation for tomorrow is doing our best today. These guidelines offer many innovative solutions and principles, whether you are planning to build new facilities or refurbish existing ones. If football comes together and bundles its power to drive sustainable change, it will have a powerful and long-lasting positive impact."

Frans Timmermans added: "The solutions showcased in these Sustainability Infrastructure Guidelines are real game changers. Whether it's

construction, transport, waste or energy, it's clear that smart design and operation of football stadiums and sports facilities can make them true champions of climate action."

Embedding ESG practices in the football infrastructure lifecycle

Endorsed by the European Commission, the guidelines will help national football associations, leagues, clubs, stadium and infrastructure managers, local authorities and other football stakeholders to embed ESG practices and generate value across the three stages of the football infrastructure lifecycle by 2030.

Michele Uva, UEFA's football and social responsibility director, said: "Today we kick off a wide-ranging effort to advocate infrastructure sustainability across the European football ecosystem, including through translations across all UEFA languages and dedicated sessions with subject matter experts on environmental, social and governance criteria in the area of football infrastructure."

Mark Fenwick, a partner with Fenwick Iribarren Architects, explained: "The football infrastructure of the future will increasingly link engineering, innovation and sustainability criteria. The guidelines showcase how this mix will provide long-term benefits to operators and strengthen the legacy of common spaces for local communities." The guidelines were developed with the support of external experts (architects, clubs, national associations, operators and academics) and within UEFA (football and social responsibility division, national associations division, European affairs and governance division, football operations unit and UEFA's representative office in Brussels).

The document is designed to be an online working tool and will be updated on a regular basis (including its numerous

case studies) with the latest trends with regard to technology, legislation and stakeholder expectations.



Panel discussion featuring Pietro Chiabrera (senior stadium and football technology manager, UEFA), Stephan Bandholz (stadium manager, 1. FSV Mainz 05 e. V.), Claire Poole (CEO, Sport Positive), Sander van Stiphout (director, Johan Cruyff ArenA, Innovation), John Beattie (director, stadium and facilities, Arsenal), Pedro Pinto (moderator).

Continuous support to national associations and clubs

UEFA will support national association and club sustainability officers in implementing the guidelines by way of dedicated workshops and monitoring of the various activities. Numerous case studies and best practices are included in the guidelines and will be updated regularly.

Road to a sustainable UEFA EURO 2024

The meeting in Mainz concluded by looking ahead to UEFA EURO 2024, to be held in Germany. The ambition is for

this event to be the most sustainable EURO ever and a driving force for sustainable development in German and European football.

The tournament is integrating sustainability dimensions into its tournament requirements and regulations, as well as into the match schedule, and will promote concrete and tangible actions in favour of the environment, social impact and good governance. At the same time, the event's ten designated host cities will rely entirely on existing stadiums and facilities to stage their allocated matches.

Zero Waste Week: UEFA webcast on circular economy solutions in football

Earlier this year, UEFA launched its Football Sustainability Strategy 2030 – titled Strength Through Unity – with the mission to inspire, activate and accelerate collective action to respect human rights and the environment within the context of European football. The strategy contains 11 policies, one of which focuses on circular economy.

Circular economy is a concept that aims to shift from the current consumption model ('take-make-waste') to a circular model that radically reduces the use of raw materials for the manufacturing process; the amount of plastic discharged and food wasted; and the impact on biodiversity.

In a UEFA context, circular economy refers to the optimisation of the consumption and life cycle of products, most notably food, packaging and branded items throughout UEFA operations and events. UEFA's ambition for 2030 is to embed the '4R approach' – built around Reducing, Reusing, Recycling, and Recovering – in all operations to minimise the impact of football on the environment and drive resource efficiency and cost savings.

In conjunction with the celebration of Zero Waste Week around the world, UEFA launched its own Circular Economy Guidelines. The document is divided into three sections: an introduction to the circular economy concept and the 4R framework; best practice and factsheets in the food and beverage domain by various football stakeholders; and an outlook into forthcoming circular economy focus areas – energy and water, apparel and football equipment, and event materials (signage, brand production and furniture, and IT equipment). The guidelines will help national associations, leagues, clubs, event organisers and other football stakeholders start the journey towards the aspirational target of zero plastic waste and food waste – within UEFA, across UEFA events and collaboratively across European football – by 2030.

FOOTBALL STAKEHOLDERS WORK FOR A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

UEFA hosted the latest Convention on the Future of European Football on 9 and 10 November at UEFA's headquarters in Nyon, Switzerland.

Stakeholders from across the entire football community – national football associations, leagues, clubs, players, coaches, fans, agents, commercial partners and policymakers – have held further successful discussions focused on strengthening women's football, competitiveness and governance.

The Convention on the Future of European Football is a consultation process uniting European football to work on long-term policy and governance reforms needed to build a sustainable future for football that benefits everyone. Welcoming representatives, the UEFA president, Aleksander Čeferin, recalled that "football dialogue can only exist where unity, inclusion, solidarity and sporting merit are the common denominators" and highlighted the importance of using momentum from the huge success of Women's EURO 2022.

Opening remarks from the chairman of the European Club Association, Nasser Al-Khelaifi, emphasised the importance of caring for the interests of and the links between all levels of the football pyramid and clubs of all sizes, while stressing the need to uphold football's unique bond with fans and communities.

European Leagues' representative Mathieu Moreuil highlighted solidarity in the football community as paramount and underlined the strength of cooperation between stakeholders through recent crises as reason to be confident in joint

efforts to improve European football's already strong position.

European institutions have offered their support to the convention as an inclusive and representative forum for discussion on the future of European football. MEP and former professional football player Tomasz Frankowski, who co-chairs the Sports Group at the EU Parliament, called for a stop to the attempts to form a breakaway competition and underlined that the organisation of sport in Europe must be based on solidarity and redistribution, with open competitions and sporting merit.

Council of Europe deputy secretary general Bjørn Berge praised the meeting as a good model for modern sports governance, welcomed the demonstration of unity and resolve, and appealed for an end to the distractions and narrow economic self-interest of the 'European Super League' backers.

The participation of many high-level stakeholders demonstrated that the convention is an open and progressive process that is valued and appreciated by those involved. There were positive and forward-looking exchanges among experts during three dedicated working sessions on competitiveness, women's football and governance. Notably:

- It was agreed that the convention will become a permanent feature and evolve into an efficient, innovative and pragmatic platform for discussion.

- It was also agreed that UEFA will work towards creating more stakeholder-centred and action-oriented engagement platforms to allow more contributions from the various stakeholders.
- A strong consensus was reached on the need to take stronger measures to increase gender balance in the higher instances of football's decision-making bodies.
- Competitive trends were analysed both at domestic and European level, and in the face of growing polarisation, vital themes such as financial redistribution/solidarity, quality youth player training and remuneration of training efforts, regulation and control of transfers and agents, and regulation of multi-club investment were intensively discussed, identifying the need to work on all of them.
- The participants were the first to be consulted in the process to develop UEFA's next women's football strategy from 2024 onwards. They provided input as regards the future priorities of European women's football, the calendar, capacity building and structures, access to football, developing the grassroots game, and increasing visibility and commercialisation. The stakeholders also agreed to work closely together on key issues to protect and grow the game to ensure its long-term sustainability.
- The increasing trend towards multi-club investment/ownership was discussed with a view to further protecting the integrity and competitiveness of domestic and European club competitions.
- Similarly, the stakeholders agreed to assess the dynamics behind increasing private capital investment in European football in order to promote transparency, financial sustainability, integrity and good governance.

UEFA and the major European football stakeholders look forward to continuing to work together on their quest to strengthen the foundations of European football and build a sustainable future for football from which everyone benefits. 🌱

TACKLING CHALLENGES OF THE FUTURE

At the beginning of October, Europe's club licensing community came together in Rome to address some of the key changes made to the regulatory framework.

The three-day workshop was the first of its kind since 2019, owing to the COVID-19 pandemic, and brought together representatives of all 55 UEFA member associations, the UEFA Club Licensing Committee, FIFA and UEFA's sister confederations, as well as representatives from clubs and fan groups.

The event was hosted in collaboration with the Italian Football Federation (FIGC) and more than 150 participants discussed the key changes approved in the club licensing and financial sustainability regulatory framework earlier this year. New features focus on enhanced support for youth development and women's football, newly adopted social responsibility measures, ownership structures, raising coaching standards and strengthened financial requirements.

The role of club licensing is to protect the game, including players, coaches, supporters and other stakeholders. The UEFA Executive Committee approved, in April and May 2022, the modernised UEFA club licensing and financial sustainability regulatory framework. Two sets of regulations govern club licensing for UEFA competitions: the UEFA Club Licensing and Financial Sustainability Regulations, applicable to UEFA men's club competitions, and the UEFA Club Licensing Regulations for the UEFA Women's Champions League.

Gabriele Gravina, president of the FIGC and chair of the UEFA Club Licensing Committee, said: "We are particularly happy and proud to host this important workshop in Italy. The event encourages the exchange of ideas and is important to support the implementation of the regulatory framework, which contributes to the solvency, sustainability and stability of European football."

The workshop featured presentations from UEFA, the FIGC and several Italian clubs, including AC Milan, AS Roma and US Sassuolo Calcio. Throughout the event, speakers touched on the important



"The presence of representatives from 55 different countries is key to tackle the challenges of the future. We hope the event will foster the implementation of consistent approaches and regulations, aimed at promoting financial sustainability across all European territories."

Andrea Traverso
UEFA's director of financial sustainability and research

support to women's football, with a case study from the Football Association of Wales, which highlighted the role of club licensing as a tool to drive the development and professionalisation of the game.

Another key aspect addressed during the workshop was the UEFA football sustainability strategy and the implementation of the new football social responsibility chapter in the UEFA Club Licensing Regulations, which is built around human rights and the protection of the environment. AS Roma and AC Milan both shared details of their sustainability initiatives, strengthening the collaboration and exchange of views between stakeholders.

Brian Walker, vice-president of AS Roma, underlined: "Club licensing is critical to a club as we develop our sustainability strategies as it gives us the guidelines we need to adhere to. Licensing is important because it allows all clubs to have the same framework, so when we talk about sustainability in a European football context, we are all speaking the same language."

The workshop concluded with all the participants in agreement on the importance of the forum as an opportunity to exchange and discuss the frameworks and initiatives with all stakeholders to ensure stability and protect the sustainability of European football. 🌱

COACHING COMMUNITY REVIEWS WOMEN'S EURO

National women's team coaches, technical directors and women's football officials from UEFA's 55 member associations came to England's national football centre at St George's Park on 31 October to undertake a far-reaching review of UEFA Women's EURO 2022 from a technical and coaching point of view.

The UEFA Women's National Team Coaches' Conference analysed July's three-week tournament and drew a wealth of conclusions from an event that not only broke overall records across the board, but also took elite women's football to an exciting new level – setting fresh benchmarks for the future in terms of technical skills, tactical intelligence, fitness and coaching acumen.

The conference, run by UEFA's technical department, was considered as an important post-Women's EURO milestone because it brought together key technicians in the women's game for sessions of discussion, feedback and dialogue.

Technical report tells the story

A focal point of the event in the English Midlands was the unveiling of UEFA's technical report on the tournament, compiled by the technical observer team

comprising current or former women's national team or club coaches Gemma Grainger, Margret Kratz, Jayne Ludlow, Jarmo Matikainen, Joe Montemurro, Anne Noë, Vera Pauw, Hope Powell and former England goalkeeper David James, with additional input from fitness expert Stacey Emmonds.

The report – welcomed for its quality and breadth of detail – highlights in facts, figures, statistics and images the key tactical and technical developments observed at the tournament.

Members of the technical team gave specific presentations at the conference on major items contained in the report – focusing on specific findings that had emerged from the 31 matches in England. The aim of the technical team's work is not only to provide expert analysis for keen observers of the women's game, but also to give invaluable insights to coaches and coach educators engaged in women's football.

Coaches' views take centre stage

Highlights of the conference included a presentation by England's title-winning coach, Sarina Wiegman, who explained how she had joined forces with her staff and the team to create the environment and mindset that brought England their first major national team title in 56 years, and Wiegman her second successive Women's EURO crown after her triumph with the Netherlands in 2017 (see page 22 for a detailed account).

An on-stage forum featured three successful coaches at the tournament: Martina Voss-Tecklenburg, who guided Germany to the runners-up spot, and quarter-finalists Irene Fuhrmann (Austria) and Ives Serneels (Belgium).

Examining various technical and general aspects of the EURO, the three coaches agreed that teams had been much better prepared for opposing teams and players than ever before. "These days, you

have such good analysis tools that we actually know everything about the players," Voss-Tecklenburg reflected. "If we take the way we prepared in 2017 and compare it with the way we do it now," Serneels added. "I think that's an evolution that you see in all the teams."

The forum participants expressed the view that it is important for countries across Europe and elsewhere to get players into the top women's leagues to become more acquainted with the increasing intensity of the women's game.

"It's absolutely a success factor for us," Fuhrmann explained, "because they aren't just pushed in competitions, but also during the training week they are challenged against other good players in their teams."

'A month to remember'

The conference also provided an opportunity to review the overall success of the tournament. The chair of the English Football Association's women's football board, Sue Hough, described EURO Women's 2022 as "a month to remember".

"[It] provided a different culture and a genuine family atmosphere," she said. "The product of football was the same, but it was a different experience – one that we all need to build upon."

Looking at the event from UEFA's point of view, UEFA's managing director of women's football, Nadine Kessler, said that standards had been increased in all areas, and that the tournament structure had taken a step forward from previous editions. "It was the best Women's EURO ever," she said. "A EURO that will be remembered for many things. Especially because we set new records one after the other." 🏆



Right to left: Belgium coach Ives Serneels, Germany coach Martina Voss-Tecklenburg and Austria coach Irene Fuhrmann being interviewed on stage by Graham Turner during the Women's National Team Coaches' Conference at St George's Park on 31 October.

Key findings in the Women's EURO technical report



EYE FOR GOAL With **95** goals scored in **31** matches, Women's EURO 2022 averaged **3.07** goals per game – the highest since the 2005 tournament.



SET-PLAY SUCCESS Dead-ball situations accounted for **36%** of the goals scored in England – a percentage considerably higher than the **27%** at the 2019 FIFA Women's World Cup or the **26%** during the 2021/22 UEFA Women's Champions League.



SHARPSHOOTERS Shots per game were up to **27.9** – an increase of **2.5** from 2017.



CLOSER TO THE GOAL The average shot distance was the lowest on record (**15.6m**) as teams looked to work the ball into better positions before shooting.



SHORT GOAL-KICKS IN VOGUE Goal kicks emerged among the tournament's talking points, with the rule permitting outfield players of the team in possession in the penalty area making a significant impact on build-up strategies. Many teams exploited the rule with the aim of controlling build-up play – but outcomes were not always positive, which underlined the relevance of risk-management awareness and fast decision-making.



SUBSTITUTION IMPACT Teams continued to make the most of the new five-substitute rule with each team averaging **3.41** substitutions per game. The final balance reveals that 17 goals were scored by substitutes – seven of them by players who emerged from the England bench, including the two that earned victory in the final, and four by Alessia Russo to push a substitute, unusually, into third place in the tournament's scoring chart.



KEEPERS STEP UP UEFA experts noted an improvement in goalkeeping when compared with 2017 with well-developed, agile athletes covering more space, being better positioned, proactive in their actions and more engaged in the game, even when the ball was further away.



WOMEN'S EURO CHAMPION COACH WIEGMAN

INSPIRING A TEAM...
AND A NATION

Everything that **Sarina Wiegman** touched at the last two UEFA Women's EUROs turned to gold. The Dutch coach found the winning formula at both tournaments, leading the Netherlands and then England to the premier title in European women's national team football.



The bond that united England's team at the Women's EURO shines brightly as coach Sarina Wiegman (left) and player Alex Greenwood celebrate a victory on the way to the title.



In 2017, Sarina Wiegman basked in a sea of orange as the Netherlands captured the EURO crown on home soil. Accepting a new challenge to bring long-awaited success to England's national women's team in 2021, Wiegman savoured glory again in July, guiding the hosts – the Lionesses – to their first-ever Women's EURO triumph and England's first major international trophy, men's or women's, in 56 years.

The recent UEFA Women's National Team Coaches' Conference at England's St George's Park national football centre reviewed this summer's Women's EURO from a technical and tactical viewpoint and gave the European coaching community the opportunity to pay tribute to Wiegman for her magnificent achievement.

Wiegman responded by giving a fascinating presentation to close the conference, explaining how she created the environment with staff and the playing squad to bring England's EURO dreams to fruition.



"In April, we started to talk about winning behaviour, so we asked the players: What do we need to win? Who do we want to be? Why are we here? And how can we win? That's what we were working on all the time."

Sarina Wiegman

'Two of the best moments of my life'

She began by telling the audience how much she is enjoying this moment of professional and personal satisfaction.

"It's incredible what happened," Wiegman reflected. "I've had two of the best moments of my life in sport, and they were winning the EURO with the Netherlands and winning the EURO here with England."

Wiegman explained her targets when she started her work as England coach in September 2021. "It was a short time until the EURO. Working in the Netherlands, everything was very familiar, I lived through the whole football journey in the Netherlands – except for one year in the USA, and then I came back – everything was very organic. My challenge [in England] was to bring people together, to create an environment with the staff, and to see if I could create a team of players that could perform at the highest level as well.

"The story behind football is team development – how you create the team, how you work together. I think when the communication is good, on and off the pitch, then you get a better collaboration, and I think you get better results.

"We asked [initial] questions – what brought us this far? And what do we need to get better? What made England so good that the team made three semi-finals

in a row in final tournaments, and what prevented the team from going to the next stage? How can we take the next step to bring our game to the next level?"

Common commitment

Wiegman stressed the importance of the playing squad and staff working as one committed entity with a common goal. "We needed a structure," she said. "What we did, as a staff, was to create lots of clarity about how we wanted to work off the pitch and on it.

"When you go into a tournament, your collaboration is really intense," Wiegman continued. "We wanted everyone to be committed and attached to what we were doing. We wanted to use all the qualities of the players, as well as all the expertise of the staff."

Honesty and transparency were crucial in the overall approach. "When you talk to each other, you get understanding and acceptance. We wanted a high-demanding environment, then you need constructive feedback, and you have to be honest. I wanted the highest-level people around me, and people that think critically and give me feedback."

Building a winning belief

Wiegman and her staff worked hard to instil a winning belief in the team in the run-up to the EURO. "We desperately wanted to win a tournament," she said,

"but I also felt a little bit like 'do we really believe it?' We saw it in some players, but we also had some players who were actually a little afraid of making mistakes.

"In April, we started to talk about winning behaviour, so we asked the players: What do we need to win? Who do we want to be? Why are we here? And how can we win? That's what we were working on all the time."

Eventually, all of these various elements gelled together as England grew and flourished into a unit that prospered and eventually emerged triumphant. "[There are] lots of leaders in this team," said Wiegman. "I had to get to know the different [personalities]. We had leaders that were visible, but we also had a lot of leaders that weren't visible but had a major role in the team. So [we ended up having] a very mature group of players really desperately wanting to win."

Changing and adapting

How has Wiegman changed as a coach over the years? "When I became a coach, you had to do everything by yourself because there was nothing else. And I was a perfectionist at that time – I really wanted to do well. I think I actually wanted to change the world.

"Then as the development of the game goes [on], you have to adapt to new situations. I did a lot myself and I was still growing too, and I didn't give away as many responsibilities as I do now. I knew that I had to change and adapt a little bit.

"I think I'm so much more of a manager now than just a coach. I'm responsible for the whole picture, but I give lots of responsibilities away. I can observe so much better, which actually gives me more rest. So, when I'm calm and I can really observe, I see so much more. I'm actually involved in everything, but I don't have to execute everything all the time, and we have such incredible experts in our [England] staff team."

Looking back at this summer's successful experience, how does Sarina Wiegman feel when she thinks of her team's remarkable achievement – on and off the field? "I'm really, really proud of them, and proud of the staff too," she reflected.

"Our dream was winning the EURO, our goal was to perform at the highest level, under the highest pressure. And we wanted to inspire the nation... I think we did." 🇬🇧

TECHNICAL DIRECTORS FOCUS ON THE LONG TERM

Technical directors of national associations can play a key role in preparing the future of football if they are afforded the time and support to implement their vision, says former Austria and Israel technical director Willi Ruttensteiner.

"The technical director is responsible for the development of football in their country," explains Ruttensteiner, who has over 20 years' experience as a technical director in national associations. "Their role is to prepare the future of football; therefore, they are a key person in terms of the creation and implementation of long-term projects such as the national football philosophy."

Before long-term plans are developed or implemented, the technical director must take time to analyse and understand the culture and complexity of the country in which they are working, says Ruttensteiner. "When a technical director starts in a country, the first challenge is to analyse the situation and understand 'where they are' as a country," he says. "If that is done well, it's a really good base to move to the second step, which is designing your programme and the national football philosophy."

"As part of this process, technical directors – along with key internal and external stakeholders – must answer: Where do we want to be in five, seven and ten years?"

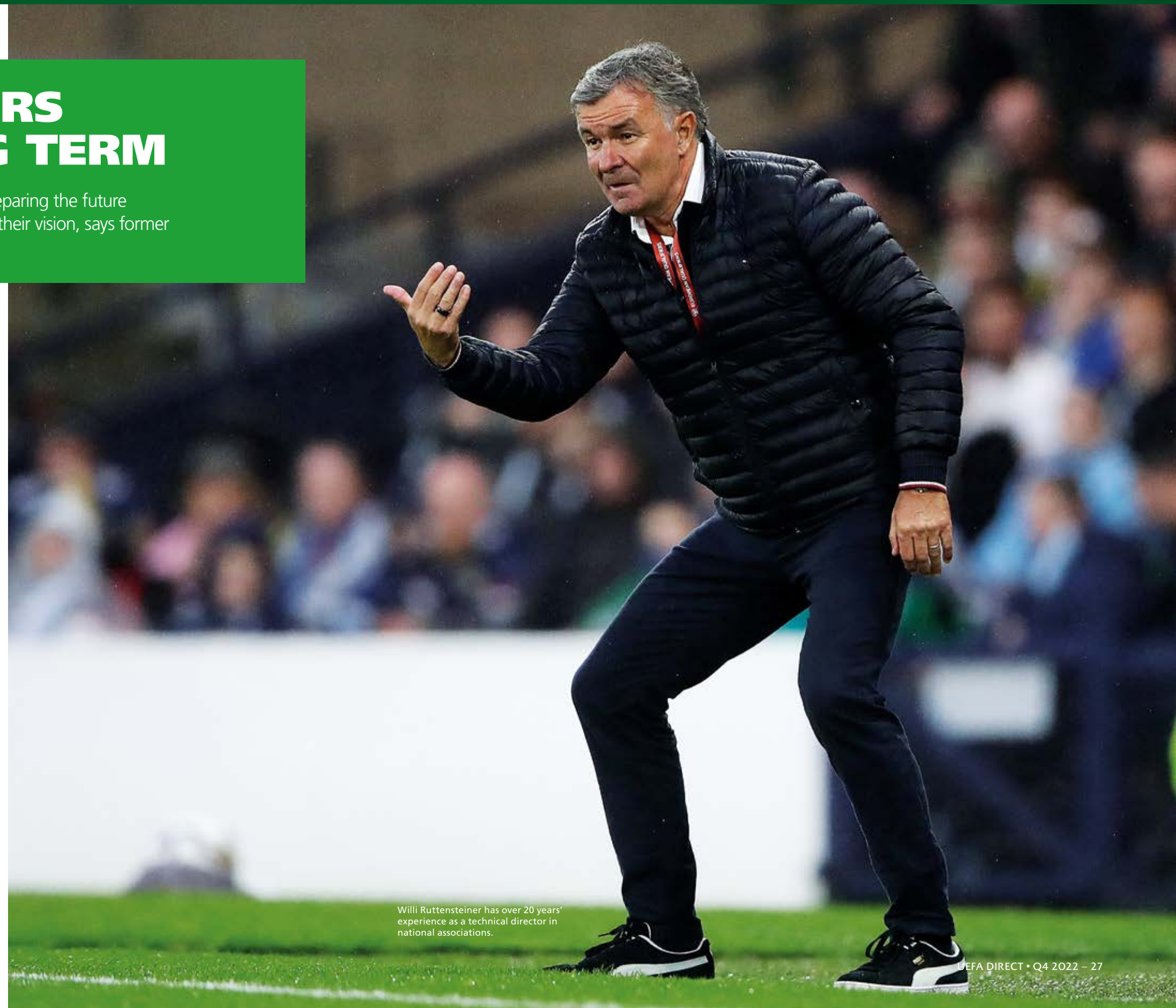
The role and influence of the technical director is critical not only in the national environment but also for the future of European football. The technical director is responsible for creating concepts and structures. Whereas the head coach wants to win the next game, the technical director wants to win the next decade. This focus on the long term has an impact on European football as a whole and, therefore, calls for highly competent technical directors.

Long-term support for a long-term project

Once a plan is created, national associations must give technical directors time and support in order for the plan to become a success. "I believe it should be a minimum to give the technical director a long-term contract because it's a long-term project," says Ruttensteiner. "In only a few years, you cannot see new national team players develop. If you start a talent development programme with children aged 12, they will only be near the national team when they are 18, 19 or 20 years old. So, it's almost eight to ten years as a project. I think one of the biggest problems is that associations quite often change and go away from their strategy, so the success cannot come."

Ruttensteiner's own role with the Austrian Football Association added up to almost 18 years: first as sports coordinator and Under-21 national team coach, then national coach and, finally, as technical director from 2006 to 2018. "I was very lucky, I had the possibility of almost 18 years in Austria," he says. "During that period, we developed the association from around 100th in the world rankings to 10th in 2016. Since then, Austria has always stayed around the first 30 in the world. For a small country, it's an amazing achievement."

Austria's belief in a long-term plan proves that success can be achieved if there is patience and support, says Ruttensteiner. "In all countries where a technical director is supported and assisted in the long term and the national football philosophy is accepted by the board, success comes. Of all the countries that I've studied, success came if they worked in this way. But often this does not happen and so the association does not see the rewards." →



Willi Ruttensteiner has over 20 years' experience as a technical director in national associations.

The varied roles and responsibilities of the technical director

The role of the technical director often looks different from one national association to the next. Responsibilities may include national teams, women’s football, grassroots, coach education, talent identification, talent development and facilities. “Clarifying what is, and what isn’t, part of the role, is key to making it a success,” says Ruttensteiner.

“It’s very important that the technical director clarifies the vision and goals of the technical department. Also, it is crucial that the technical director clarifies what their own role entails, as well as their main tasks and responsibilities.

“For example, is the technical director responsible for finances? What are the expectations of them as an individual? What does the association want from the technical director in the short, medium and long term? If they don’t have this whole picture in their mind, supported by a very good monitoring process to track their work, it is quite easy to fail.

“To be effective across such a broad range of responsibilities, a varied skill set, much wider than football knowledge, is needed,” says Ruttensteiner. “As well as leading the football vision, the technical director also needs to be a sports manager,” he says. “Sports management education is crucial because the role involves working with lots of stakeholders, both inside and outside the organisation.

“It means being an effective leader. If you are a leader, you must know yourself and you must also know how to become better. The leader needs to take responsibility, make decisions, introduce structures, give orders and control and evaluate processes. They must also have the capacity to translate the national football philosophy – the vision, the goals – into reality.”

Ruttensteiner also points to social competence and the ability to form and nurture effective professional relationships as key to success in the role. “In addition to football competence and holding the UEFA Pro licence, I think the competencies a technical director must include personality and social competence,” he says. “They must have an ability to inspire, motivate, engage and also to help people realise their own potential for becoming better.



Scotland’s Andy Gould (top), Finland’s Hannu Tihinen (middle) and Israel’s Jelle Goes (bottom) are technical leaders tasked with developing football in their respective national associations.

“It means they have to have good relationships with colleagues because they can’t do everything alone. They need to create a positive working atmosphere in the technical department.”

Developing an effective relationship with the national coach

One of the key internal relationships for all technical directors to establish is with the head coaches of the senior national teams (men’s and women’s), noting that not every technical director is responsible for the national teams owing to different association structures.

“Where a technical director is responsible for the national teams, one of the most important tasks is to support the head coaches,” explains Ruttensteiner. “The technical director must create a high-performance environment where the national team head coach, along with their players and staff, can do their job to the highest level. This is the process of organisation, logistics, travel and many other areas.

“The second part involves the technical director closely analysing the work of the national team coach and giving really fundamental and open feedback about games, training and the environment around the national team.”

In both Austria and Israel, Ruttensteiner’s role as technical director involved working closely with the head coach of the men’s national team. Developing trust and respect by ‘adding benefit’ was key to developing this relationship, he says.

“While I was with Austria, I worked with the Swiss coach Marcel Koller, who coached Austria for six years and was very successful qualifying for the European Championship for the first time.

“After the games, we went to a hotel or to a seminar room and we analysed the games and the performance. We did this from both the perspective of the head coach and the perspective of the technical director. If, as the technical director, you can bring benefit to the coach, they really appreciate it.

“It was so important to review the game with these ‘four eyes’. If you have the experience and respect, the quality to communicate and you bring a benefit, the head coach will recognise the importance of input from the technical director.

“To summarise, the role of the technical director with the national coach is to give them a high-performance environment and, on the other side, to assist, support and give football feedback at the highest level.”

Understanding country, culture and context

“Each national association has its own unique context and culture, meaning there can be no one single blueprint for the role of the technical director,” says Ruttensteiner, who had to adapt to his new surroundings in Israel while he was technical director there from 2018 to 2020.

“I’m Austrian, so if you are coming to the Austrian Football Association as the technical director, you know a lot of people and you have a better understanding of the situation and the environment,” he explains. “You can go forward quicker because you have observed what you need to be doing. But, when I moved to Israel, it took me around half a year to present the ‘Israeli way’ to the board, because I wanted to understand the association and I wanted to analyse the situation perfectly.”

Understanding the key cultural differences between countries is crucial to implementing successful programmes and building effective relationships, stresses Ruttensteiner. “There are a lot of situations that arise from culture,” he says. “In the Israeli national team we had both Jewish and Arabic players. How the technical director handles this is very important: how they train, how they eat, how you prepare the whole high-performance environment around the culture. So, we set standards to improve. If you can communicate effectively, you can also make positive changes to that culture.”

Respecting the religious calendar when scheduling training and travel is one area technical directors should consider, he explains. “The most important religious day in Israel is Yom Kippur. When I worked in Israel, Yom Kippur was the day before a game. So, you cannot say we have training at 10am or 4pm. You have to accept it.

“I was also in the synagogue because I wanted to see and understand more about the players. I think we did the best out of this situation. I think when you live in a country, you understand more and more.”

UEFA support for technical directors

UEFA has a long history of supporting technical directors working in European associations through its different technical development programmes, such as UEFA Share, and also in connection with other events and seminars (for example, UEFA Pro licence student exchanges and national team coaches conferences). The UEFA Share programme (previously the UEFA Study Group Scheme) is now in its 14th season and has always offered technical directors the opportunity to develop and extend their knowledge and experience. Among other technical topics on the menu, the Share programme is specifically targeting technical directors as part of the current two-year cycle (2022–24). Peer-to-peer discussions and cooperation are essential for the expansion and further development of technical functions and, in addition to facilitating these two aspects, UEFA Share seminars for European technical directors will address topics of common interest such as the technical director’s role in different European environments, technical department structures and stakeholder relationships, as well as self-evaluation processes and competition matters. 🌱

“Sports management education is crucial because the role involves working with lots of stakeholders, both inside and outside the organisation. It means being an effective leader. If you are a leader, you must know yourself and you must also know how to become better. The leader needs to take responsibility, make decisions, introduce structures, give orders and control and evaluate processes. They must also have the capacity to translate the national football philosophy – the vision, the goals – into reality.”

Willi Ruttensteiner





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FREE KITS TRANSFORM FOOTBALL DEVELOPMENT

My Uniform is a unique and revolutionising project that will boost the development of Albanian football.

BY ANDI VERCANI

Just a few months ago, the Albanian Football Association decided to take an important step in supporting children's football by providing free sportswear to every child playing in teams around the country.

Each season from now on, all 6-18-year-olds will receive a playing kit, training kit, tracksuit, rain jacket and kit bag.

The project will cost the Albanian FA around €1.5 million per season, but it is a worthwhile investment that will significantly reduce the financial burden on Albanian families and allow children to play in better conditions.

The association launched this major project at a massive ceremony held at the Air Albania stadium in Tirana in the presence of UEFA's technical director and chief of football, Zvonimir Boban, Albania's sports and education minister, Evis Kushi, football stakeholders, football legends and thousands of children.

"Here we are today, finalising a transformative project for children's football in our country. My Uniform is a tangible reality for the 15,000 children who play football in our country, and for their families. From this season, every parent with children who play football will not need to spend anything on training and match kits," said the Albanian FA president, Armand Duka, at the launch ceremony. "It is really exciting to launch this project, which I hope and am sure will greatly help the development of Albanian football. I am convinced the project will help not only professional football but even more so amateur football. Football is not just a game, it is not just a competition, it is not just professional football, but it is education. We will continue to work hard



Albanian FA president Armand Duka launches the My Uniform project, from which more than 15,000 children will benefit.

to create the best conditions for children, to create the best programmes. Today, about 15,000 children are involved in football and our target is to double that number – an ambitious figure that this project will help to achieve."

Meanwhile, Croatian football legend Zvonimir Boban praised the excellent message the Albanian FA is giving the world of football by implementing this unique project, which is not just providing sportswear for children but is an example of altruism through football.

"What is happening today is a big message for all Albanian people.

It is not a matter of gifts for children. It is not a matter of football kits. The message conveyed by the

Albanian Football Association is much bigger. The message is to think about others, not to isolate ourselves in football. The message is that football is the sport of the people, of children, and this message is priceless because we all live in an increasingly isolated, increasingly selfish, increasingly self-oriented society. This is a message of altruism and of belonging to Albania as a country, belonging to ordinary people who respect and love others. And it is a message that through football, great things can be done," Boban said.

The project is already delivering important results and impacting grassroots football, with the number of children registering with clubs for the first time increasing this season. For the past five seasons, the Albanian Football Association has already been providing free balls to every professional and amateur team in the country, and it has also been paying all the participation fees for children's football competitions for many years, so reducing costs for grassroots football and families. 🌱

Zvonimir Boban, UEFA's technical director and chief of football, was on hand to help launch Albania's My Uniform project.



TUBIZE: THE BEATING HEART OF BELGIAN FOOTBALL

Key milestones are being reached in the Royal Belgian Football Association's (RBFA) ambitious long-term development strategy.

When RBFA president Paul Van den Bulck and CEO Peter Bossaert met UEFA president Aleksander Čeferin and other senior UEFA officials at UEFA headquarters in Nyon, Switzerland, in early September, their talks centred on important developments behind the scenes in Belgian football, including the construction of the RBFA's new headquarters at Tubize, some 25 kilometres south of the Belgian capital, Brussels.

The association's eco-friendly administrative offices are now based on the same site as the impressive RBFA Proximus Basecamp national training centre – meaning that Belgian football's heart now beats entirely within the Tubize campus. UEFA has played a role in this positive development by providing funding via the European body's HatTrick development programme, which helped with the construction of the new association headquarters and national training centre.

Development drive

The centralisation of the RBFA's administrative and sporting infrastructures at one single location brings to fruition a long-term development strategy rolled out by the association to establish a 'centre of excellence' at the service of Belgian football.

"Bringing together all of the Royal Belgian Football Association's activities is part of an overall objective – to make our association a real sports organisation," said Paul Van den Bulck and Peter Bossaert in a joint statement ahead of the meeting with UEFA. "In recent years, our association has evolved a lot to

become a modern organisation where good governance and diversity of profiles prevail, and our new federal building materially symbolises the new era that the association has now truly entered," they added.

Staff offices – training facilities

The Belgian FA's new headquarters include staff offices for over 230 employees, conference rooms, an auditorium, press conference and media rooms, a video assistant referee (VAR) studio and a restaurant.

The Proximus Basecamp training centre is the home of the Belgian national teams and referees, the offices of the sports technical department, support services and management. This 24-hectare centre currently hosts eight pitches (seven outdoor and one indoor), and three more outdoor pitches are under construction. There are also, among other facilities, two pitches for street football, 12 dressing rooms, professional referee offices, a club house, and a four-star hotel to accommodate athletes, partners and guests.

The Proximus Basecamp provides optimal training conditions for Belgian national senior and youth teams, while also hosting preparation matches and international youth team tournaments alongside coach and referee education workshops/conferences and other



football-related events. Belgian and foreign clubs also train and/or organise their courses at the centre.

The new RBFA building is situated in the heart of the training centre – so everyone who comes to the Tubize campus enjoys a constant feeling of close involvement in the evolution of Belgian football. 🌱



'TIME FOR US!' WOMEN'S FOOTBALL STRATEGY LAUNCHED

The management board of the Polish Football Association (PZPN) has approved a women's football strategy for 2022–26.

BY ZUZANNA WALCZAK

Time for us! is the first comprehensive women's football strategy in the history of the PZPN, setting out goals and directions for the development of women's football in Poland.

Women's football has been a focus of the PZPN for many years and is an important part of its overall strategy – one of its four priority pillars. A solid foundation has already been built for the development of the sport in the country. A dedicated women's football strategy was therefore the natural next step and confirms the PZPN's commitment to strengthening the position of women and girls in the world of football.

"We all see the potential and interest in women's competitions around the world growing year by year. The creation of the first strategy in the history of the PZPN entirely dedicated to women's football is a landmark moment for us and a long-term commitment. I am convinced that women's football must be treated as an integral part of football because that is the only way it can reach its full potential. The PZPN will do everything it can to make this happen. All of this is in order to be able to fulfil the dreams of girls and women, as well as our own – those related to the success of our national team and the organisation of an international women's football event in Poland," said the Polish FA president, Cezary Kulesza.

Strategic and research process

The strategy document is the result of comprehensive consultations, research (qualitative and quantitative) and workshops with people representing various stakeholder groups of the football community. The PZPN wanted to involve as many people as possible in order to obtain



The Polish women's national team awaits its historic moment. Participating in and hosting a large women's football event would be catalysts for the development of women's football in Poland.

the most complete assessment. Significant support for the preparation of the strategy was also provided by UEFA and FIFA.

"The development of the strategy is in line with the activities undertaken by the European and world governing bodies in this regard. As part of our research and strategic work, we have collected a range of information from a wide range of people. We see a huge potential in women's football, which, thanks to our conceptual work, we intend to stimulate with actions based on it," explained

Grzegorz Stefanowicz, who heads the PZPN's women's football department.

Committed to action

The PZPN believes that in order to achieve a lasting and positive change that will strengthen the position of women's football in Poland, it is necessary to take action in various fields. Four priority areas have been identified, outlining the most important ambitions and long-term goals to take women's football to the place it deserves.

Priority areas of the strategy and commitments of the PZPN

1

Participation

We will increase the participation of girls and women in different roles in football.

2

Professionalisation

We will raise standards and create professional conditions for the development of women's football.

3

Visibility and Image

We will increase the visibility and create a positive and engaging image of women's football.

4

Education and Awareness

We will provide knowledge on the specificity of women's football and strengthen the role of women in the football community.

Key activities

In each of these areas, the Polish FA has committed itself to implementing a number of new activities by 2026. The key activities include, among others, creating a map of clubs with a football offer for girls and women, organising free football festivals in each region, and educating teachers, coaches, parents, as well as female football players and employees of women's football clubs. In addition to project activities, financial outlays will also be increased, through, for example, a grant programme for regional football associations, doubling the financial rewards for winning the Polish women's championship or finishing in second or third place.

The number of people within the association responsible for scouting in women's football, as well as for promotion and communication in this area, will also increase. A nationwide promotional

campaign addressed at girls and their parents will be implemented. In addition, the current club licensing system in the top women's league, the Ekstraliga, will be developed and implemented at the second level of league competition. And women working in football in Poland will be able to take advantage of development workshops with elements of mentoring and networking.

At the same time as the strategy was approved, the PZPN published a supplement to its national game model, focusing specifically on women's football. This is the first publication of its type in the country dedicated entirely to training in women's football, which shows its specificity and provides coaches with the necessary knowledge in this area.

These are just a handful of the ambitious goals designed, among other targets, to double the number of female players, coaches and referees by 2026.

The 'From the Backyard to the Stadium – Tymbark Cup' tournament was one of the first steps in football for many female players in Poland. It is where Paulina Dudek (Paris Saint-Germain) and Ewa Pajor (VfL Wolfsburg) started their football careers.



Time for us!

Football has great potential to engage and attract girls and women to the game, thanks to its strong roots in Polish culture. Implementing this strategy will definitely help make the world of football more inspiring, empowering and accessible to all girls and women.

"I am very glad that the PZPN has prepared this document, because, just like on the pitch, a well-thought-out strategy is crucial if you want to succeed. I believe that together we will continue and accelerate the positive changes that are taking place in women's football in our country. We want to show how much passion, determination, strength and character there is in us female footballers. It's Time for us!," added Ewa Pajor, captain of the Polish women's national team and player with VfL Wolfsburg. ⚽

AUSTRIA

www.oefb.at

2022 SOCIAL FOOTBALL AWARDS

MICHAEL GRASWALD

 The Austrian Football Association (ÖFB) has announced the winners of this year's ÖFB social football awards, the fifth time it has honoured outstanding achievements and commitment in the social sector in this way. Recognising clubs, fans and all kinds of initiatives for their contribution to society through football, the awards are split into three categories: inclusion/integration, social responsibility and voluntary work.

"Our aim at the ÖFB is to give everyone the chance to take part in football. Through our awards and the winning projects, we want to showcase and pay tribute to Austrian initiatives. Social engagement can only succeed if we do it together, so we are grateful to everyone

who plays their part in it," said Thomas Hollerer, ÖFB general secretary.

The ÖFB is proud of the social and inclusive activities run every day by football clubs and individuals. All these projects promote health and social cohesion in Austria, and highlight the many different ways in which all facets of organised football can contribute to society.

Football is characterised by diversity and has the power to support and help bring about social change. Together with its members, the ÖFB is committed not only to fostering a climate of respect, humanity and tolerance, but

also inclusion in all areas of society. With these awards, the ÖFB is able to express its appreciation to people in Austria who contribute to society through football.



AZERBAIJAN

www.affa.az

CHILDREN'S FOOTBALL FESTIVAL HELD IN NAKHCHIVAN

TORA AKHMEDOVA

 As part of UEFA Grassroots Week, a mini-football tournament for children aged 11–14 was organised in the autonomous republic of Nakhchivan by the Association of Football Federations of Azerbaijan (AFFA) with the support of the Nakhchivan Football Federation

and the professional football club Araz Nakhchivan.

More than 80 children took part in the tournament, split into 16 teams and two age groups. At the end of the day, each participating child was presented with gifts from UEFA and the AFFA. The gifts

were presented by the head of the AFFA grassroots football department, veteran football player Farrukh Ismayilov; the president and vice-president of the Nakhchivan Football Federation, Vugar Abbasov and Sakit Rzayev; and officials from Araz Nakhchivan Football Club.




BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

www.nfsbih.ba

NATIONAL TRAINING CENTRE TO BE REDEVELOPED

SLAVICA PECIKOZA

 Representatives of the Bosnia and Herzegovina Football Federation and the city of Zenica have signed an agreement to continue their joint construction project for the federation's training centre in Zenica.

The first part of the project was successfully completed in 2013, when the training centre was officially opened. The second phase includes the construction of a new accommodation block, a gym, physiotherapy facilities and training facilities that meet FIFA and UEFA requirements. Two new football pitches with natural grass will complete

the extension work, which will certainly help to positively shape the future of football in Bosnia and Herzegovina. "Infrastructure is a strategic priority of the Bosnia and Herzegovina Football Federation, and this agreement with the city of Zenica is an excellent example of what we can achieve in cooperation with the local

community," said the federation's president, Vico Zeljković.




CROATIA

www.hns-cff.hr

LAUNCH OF ONE FAMILY CAMPAIGN TO COMBAT RACISM

NIKA BAHTIJAREVIĆ

 The Croatian Football Federation (HNS) has launched a new promotional campaign that features star players from domestic clubs and focuses on promoting tolerance and stopping racism and discrimination.

The campaign videos feature Croatian national team players Dominik Livaković, Bruno Petković, Mislav Oršić, Lovre Kalinić, Ivica Ivušić, Marko Livaja, and Nediljko Labrović, all of whom currently play in the Croatian men's top division, as well as a long list of players of different nationalities who are currently playing for Croatian clubs. All of the players who participated in the videos voice the same message in their mother tongue: "We are one family."

"I'm very proud of the excellent collaboration between the Croatian FA and our various clubs during the making of this campaign, which I believe is a real testament to the fact that the entire Croatian football family shares the

belief that racism is not welcome at our stadiums and that all forms of discrimination are unacceptable," said the HNS president, Marijan Kustić.

The One Family campaign will run across television channels and social

media during the forthcoming months, and it comes as part of the HNS's broader decision to invest all the money collected from fining clubs for discriminatory or racist fan behaviour into preventative actions.



ESTONIA

www.jalgpall.ee

TOP LEAGUE LAUNCHES VAR

EVA NÖMME

The Estonian Football Association is making another big investment in its Premium Liiga, the highest level of men's club football in Estonia, where starting from



next season video assistant referees (VAR) will be appointed for all matches.

The association's president, Aivar Pohlak, says this is a very important step in the development of the top league. "The Premium Liiga has an important role both as the most professional and watched competition in Estonia as well as preparation for players, clubs and referees for international games. The VAR project will have a great impact on both and will make the league even more attractive," Pohlak said.

From 2023, the Estonian Football Association will appoint a video assistant referee and an assistant video assistant referee for each match in the

Premium Liiga. Three matches can be monitored at the same time from the VAR centre located at the national stadium, A. Le Coq Arena. The association will work with the VOGO system, using a simplified but essentially similar version to the one used for international competitions.

Along with the introduction of VAR, live broadcasts of Premium Liiga matches will continue to develop. According to the international guidelines for VAR, at least four cameras must be used; however, the Premium Liiga will use up to seven cameras.

The introduction of VAR is being carried out according to FIFA's comprehensive guidelines and in close cooperation between the Estonian Football Association and FIFA. The first training course started in November and will last four months. After that, 25 referees will qualify to officiate as VARs.

GERMANY

www.dfb.de

PROGRAMME FOR FEMALE LEADERS

ARNE LEYENBERG

The German Football Association (DFB) recently held its third Future Leaders in Football workshop. This was the second all-women workshop and the first to be held in Qatar, host country of the 2022 World Cup.

In close cooperation with the Qatar Football Association, the Qatar Foundation and Generation Amazing (one of the programmes being run by the Qatar 2022 Supreme Committee for Delivery and Legacy), 20 young women from the Middle East spent five days in Doha developing their skills as responsible leaders.

The German federal ministry for economic cooperation and development (BMZ), a joint initiator of the Future Leaders in Football programme, supported the participation of the young women from its partner countries.

In addition to the BMZ and the German society for international cooperation (GIZ), the workshop, last staged in Jordan in March, once again received strong backing from DFB partner Volkswagen,

which promotes equality in football and society through campaigns such as 'Women play football,' #NotWomensFootball,' the UEFA Assist programme, which supports projects that make a positive contribution to social issues and football development outside Europe, and the German men's national team foundation, Wir für Euch (We for You).

On the final day of the workshop in Doha, Germany's minister of the interior Nancy Faeser, DFB president Bernd Neuendorf and DFB general secretary Heike Ullrich listened with great interest as the participants shared their impressive and inspiring stories about their paths into football and their successes, dreams and aims, as well as their setbacks and the opposition they had overcome to reach this point.



Bernd Neuendorf said: "I am very pleased that this Future Leaders in Football workshop in the country hosting the 2022 World Cup has strengthened women in football in Qatar and the region by giving these women skills and experiences that will help them to move forward in their sports and communities. We are all expecting long-lasting and sustainable improvements from this World Cup. We hope this workshop will contribute to that goal."

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ALL-NEW APP AND TV CHANNEL LAUNCHED

STEVEN GONZALEZ

The Gibraltar Football Association is pleased to announce the official launch of its all-new TV channel and app dedicated to local football. The channel, named Gibraltar FA TV, is available on Gibraltar's TV providers and its live broadcasts make it the new home of the Gibraltar Football League (GFL), with all its matches televised live this season.

As the 2022/23 GFL season unfolds, programming featuring highlights reels and a weekly magazine show reviewing the previous week's action will also be rolled out. To cater for the international market, all live content will also be available to viewers outside Gibraltar on the association's YouTube channel Gibraltar FA TV.

In addition to the TV channel, the Gibraltar FA has launched its official Gibraltar football app. The new app will become the central hub for supporters, players, coaches, admin staff and parents

alike, with all the information, scheduling, live data coverage and links for domestic fixtures from senior football to youth football, right through to covering all of Gibraltar's futsal leagues.

The Gibraltar football app is available on all Android and IOS devices and can be downloaded from the relevant app stores by searching for 'Gibraltar Football'.

Speaking about the launch of the new channel and app, the Gibraltar FA general secretary, Ivan Robba, commented: "The launch of our new TV channel and app marks a new era of digitisation for the association, an industry that is becoming increasingly important in today's world. We have worked on the issues that affected broadcasts of the GFL last season, and we are confident that this season will be a much-improved experience for all, and look forward with excitement to the coverage of our flagship men's competition, the newly rebranded Gibraltar Football League."



"I would like to thank all our clubs, Gibraltar's television providers and the Gibraltar regulatory authority for their help and assistance in getting this amazing project off the ground. Additionally, launching our new Gibraltar football app is a major milestone for the association as we aim to build and strengthen our direct-to-consumer offerings. We are thrilled to deliver a product to all Gibraltar football followers that will bring content, news, information, fixtures, competition tables and player profiles for every registered player on the Rock. We look forward to seeing how the app enhances and personalises the way that Gibraltar football fans engage with domestic football competitions on a daily basis."

HUNGARY

www.en.miszf.hu

UNITED AGAINST RACISM

MÁRTON DINNYÉS

Before the Ferencváros v Zalaegerszegi TE (ZTE) league match in October, the two Hungarian teams held a joint anti-discrimination activity.

This was a clear example of how the football community of Hungary has reacted to recent racist behaviour at some cup and league matches, following which the Hungarian Football Federation's disciplinary committee has ordered stand closures and imposed heavy fines, while some hooligans have been excluded from matches.

UEFA Europa League contender Ferencváros are one of the front runners in the fight against discrimination, making it clear that they accept no

racism or other forms of discrimination at their stadium.

Before the Ferencváros v ZTE match, the entire squad and staff of Ferencváros and the referee team wore green shirts

with the message We Are One, while ZTE wore white shirts with Say no to Racism.

After the line-up ceremony, the two teams came together for a group photo to set an example.



ISRAEL

www.football.org.il

WALKING FOOTBALL TOURNAMENT TO MARK WORLD WALKING DAY

EITAN DOTAN

A World Walking Day event was hosted by the municipality of Petah Tikva in cooperation with the regional football association, the Israel Football Association, the ministry of culture and sports, and the Maccabi Israel sports organisation. The event took the form of a walking football tournament in which former Israel national team players also took part.

Walking football is both a sporting activity and a social gathering, for men and women. The rules are designed to protect the health of the participants – the game is played at a slow pace and physical contact is prohibited, as are hitting and raising the ball above head height, and entering the goalkeeper’s

area. Israel currently has eight walking football teams and they all played in the tournament.

The tournament was held on 28 October at the training ground next to the stadium in Petah Tikva. A total of ten teams took part.

The Malabs Old Boys team won first place at the end of a very close and enjoyable tournament.

Invented in England, walking football is now played in many other countries and is growing rapidly all over the world.

Walking football is a regular sports activity that contributes to posture, flexibility, cardiopulmonary endurance and improving cognitive ability. Also, regular group activity contributes to



mental health and strengthens self-esteem.

KOSOVO

www.ffk-kosova.com

SPONTANEOUS FOOTBALL PROJECT OFFERS OPPORTUNITIES FOR CHILDREN TO PLAY FOOTBALL

MAKI BAJRAMI

The Football Federation of Kosovo (FFK) is continuing to work on the growth of football in the country. Since Kosovo has a young population, the federation is implementing projects to involve young people in football. Also, the growth of Kosovo’s and the world’s favourite sport is one of the FFK’s key priorities. Hence the Spontaneous Football project, otherwise known as Street Soccer, which has just started. Many of Kosovo’s footballers who are successful in the international arena today showed their talent for football by playing with their friends in the neighbourhoods where they grew up, i.e. by playing spontaneous football. The FFK therefore decided to develop this format institutionally.

Recently, the federation has used public spaces in the capital city, Priština,



to offer children the opportunity to enjoy football. In addition to entertaining children, the project also aims to discover and identify new talents.

Cooperation with local institutions is now planned to find adequate spaces where children will have easier access to the game of football.

Over the years, Kosovars have expressed their desire to play football despite a lack of sports facilities. Now, with the support of UEFA, we are fulfilling the conditions for young people to play the game and creating opportunities for new generations to live out their passion for football and perhaps even turn it into a profession. Our goal is to work so that our children’s future is a bright one for football.

LATVIA

www.lff.lv

FAIR PLAY TOPICS DISCUSSED AT A SPECIAL CONFERENCE

TOMS ĀRMANIS

For the second year in a row, the Latvian Football Federation has held a special conference with international speakers covering a wide range of topics related to responsible gambling and fair play principles in sport and football.

This annual conference is a part of the unique cooperation between the Latvian Football Federation and William Hill devoted to highlighting fair play values and principles. It has also seen the Latvian Cup renamed as the Fair Play Latvian Cup.

“The majority of work done in the field of fair play and the fight against match-fixing is not visible to the general public, so a conference such as this is not only a tool that allows us to raise



valuable information and know-how. We are speaking about this problem publicly and openly in order to educate people and be direct in how we tackle the dangers the world of sport is facing,” said Vadims Ļašenko, president of the Latvian Football Federation.

The conference was attended by people occupying various roles in football and other sports, as well as representatives of local authorities and gambling companies. It was also available online to the general public.

awareness of this topic, but also a platform for professionals to obtain

LIECHTENSTEIN

www.lfv.li

FIRST WOMEN’S FOOTBALLER OF THE YEAR CROWNED

ANTON BANZER

Women’s football in Liechtenstein continues to gather momentum. After the national team contested its inaugural match in spring 2021, the country’s first women’s footballer of the year was recently selected, with talented 19-year-old Fiona Batliner picking up the historic award.

In a country with fewer than 40,000 inhabitants, the greatest challenge for women’s football is to steadily increase the number of girls and women playing football. Various schemes have been organised in recent years, ranging from schools football to girls’ camps, in an attempt to achieve this objective.

The first milestone on the road to establishing women’s football in Liechtenstein was the national team’s first match, against Luxembourg on

11 April 2021. Having since played a number of friendlies, the team hopes to take part in a UEFA competition in the not-too-distant future.

Batliner, who plays for Swiss Super League team FC St. Gallen, is an important pillar in the Liechtenstein national team. At the 2022 LFV awards ceremony, she received her women’s footballer of the year award from former Swiss international Lara Dickenmann. National team players Lena Göppel (ULM Warhawks) and Bettina Huber (FC Staad) finished second and third in the poll.

Batliner, a determined all-rounder on the pitch, is one of a small but select number of female players who, having dedicated themselves to the elite professional game, serve as outstanding role models for girls.

LITHUANIA

www.lff.lt

HUGE CELEBRATIONS AS THE BIGGEST STADIUM IN LITHUANIA OPENS

VAIDOTAS KAZLAUSKAS

The long wait in Lithuanian football is over – renovation of the Darius and Girėnas Stadium in Kaunas is complete and the first major event has been held there.

The historic stadium, which was originally built in 1923 in Ažuolynas Park, has undergone quite a few renovations in its time, but the most recent is by far the most impressive.

In recent years, the stadium turned into a huge construction site with many necessary renovations to be made – from expanding the seating capacity to 15,000 to covering it fully with a roof.

The renovation process had its ups and downs, but on 16 October the vision finally became a reality.

An audience of more than 13,000 made their way to the newly renovated shiny stadium, where they watched one of the most magnificent events of 2022 – the official reopening of the stadium.

The evening started with an exciting final of the Lithuanian Cup, in which the underdogs, Hegelmann, took the strong favourites, Žalgiris Vilnius, to extra time, but to no avail, with the green and whites adding another cup trophy to their extensive collection.

After the match, numerous Lithuanian music stars took to the stage (or, rather, to the pitch), where they put on a magnificent show, which many even compared to the famous Super Bowl.

The stadium is finally open again – let the football recommence.



MALTA

www.mfa.com.mt

GRASSROOTS AND TECHNICAL PROJECTS ON TRACK

KEVIN AZZOPARDI

 The Malta FA general assembly cast light on the progress of the various technical projects undertaken by the association as part of its four-year strategy (2020–24). The strategy prioritises the development of football from grassroots to elite level, with the projects aimed at further promoting football in schools and among young girls, talent development and the national teams.

Addressing the assembly, the Malta FA president, Bjorn Vassallo, provided an analytical insight into the progress achieved by the men’s and women’s senior national teams based on results and statistics.

“As Malta FA president, I am satisfied that, at the top of the local football pyramid, we have experienced positive situations that show we are moving in the right direction,” Vassallo said.

“It has been anything but plain sailing, especially when considering the incredible difficulties encountered globally over the past three years, but the association was steadfast in its commitment to implement the projects across the entire spectrum of Maltese football.”

Administrators from the Malta FA technical centre and the Inħobb il-Futbol Foundation (IFF) gave an overview of the ongoing projects, including the elite player performance project, the Enter the Next Level youth programme and plans to further strengthen player development within the technical sector.

In the coach education sector, the number of candidates taking part in coaching courses almost doubled from 155 in 2020/21 to 285 the following season.

Another active sector within the technical centre is grassroots development, which has overseen the



implementation of the Fun Fit Football programme in all primary schools across Malta and Gozo. It has also overseen the successful introduction of regional football hubs, while the UEFA Disney Playmakers programme, intended for girls aged five to eight, has also proved immensely popular.

Women’s football also ranks high on the association’s agenda as one of the main strategic goals is to achieve a 15% increase in the number of girls playing football. This is supported by a number of ongoing projects.

New strategies for women’s football and beach soccer are also in the pipeline, while futsal is on the rise, especially at youth level, thanks to projects to develop the futsal academy and futsal in schools.

REPUBLIC OF IRELAND

www.fai.ie

INTRODUCING SCHOOLCHILDREN TO FUTSAL

GARETH MAHER

 This year, the Football Association of Ireland (FAI) aims to reach over 12,000 schoolchildren through its Futsal in the Yard programme. The programme focuses on introducing participants to the game of futsal, using fun games and activities to improve agility, balance and coordination, while also emphasising important futsal techniques.

During the first year of it being rolled out, the programme engaged 11,998 schoolchildren from 172 schools, including 4,923 girls (41%), and the FAI aims to engage even more children this year. The programme is aimed at third and fourth class pupils (8-11-year-olds) and can be delivered easily by primary school teachers as part of PE, with minimal guidance or coaching required.

The programme was developed from an original concept delivered by the FAI in conjunction with Clare Sports Partnership in May 2021 and was launched nationally by the FAI in September 2021 on a pilot basis. It has been developed further this year, with the introduction of adapted sessions for children with additional needs and those attending special schools. Each participating school receives four futsal balls and a digital resource pack including short video tutorials, simple graphics and a plan of all five weeks of the programme.

Each school also receives an introductory session from their local FAI development officer, which outlines how best to utilise the digital resource pack and the four futsal balls for classes of up to 32 pupils. The sessions are broken

down into warm-up, ball mastery and small-sided games to make it easier for the teacher to deliver.

Speaking about the programme, Cormac Moussally, programme coordinator for schools, said: “We’re excited to see the progress this programme can make after its inception as a pilot programme last year. With the addition of adapted sessions as part of the digital resource pack given to teachers, it will only enhance the inclusivity of the Futsal in the Yard programme as a whole.

“This will allow Futsal in the Yard to be rolled out to both mainstream and special schools with detailed session plans, tutorial videos, and yard layouts given to teachers via the programme’s digital resource pack.”

ROMANIA

www.frf.ro

A NEW VIDEO CONTENT PLATFORM

PAUL ZAHARIA

 Out of a desire to expand the visibility of Romanian football and increase integrity through the live broadcast of matches, as well as to develop an important scouting tool, the Romanian Football Federation (FRF) decided to launch a video content platform, becoming the first football association in eastern Europe to provide football fans with such a communication channel.

In Romania, only matches in the Superliga, as the men’s top division is now called, come under the spotlight of the media and fans.

However, as part of the football development process, the FRF invests vast amounts of money in football at lower levels and organises dozens of competitions, from the grassroots level up to the women’s first league and the men’s second league.

Unfortunately, these competitions do not all get the attention they need and deserve from the media, which means that people in Romania are not as aware as they should be about the opportunities that exist for their children to get involved in the game at local, regional and national levels.

TV is the best and most useful tool to nurture awareness of what the FRF does. Since launching five months ago, no fewer than 40,000 accounts have been created in Romania and worldwide for FRF TV, the online official FRF TV channel that produces and transmits live broadcasts of the more than 500 matches played in the first phases of the men’s domestic cup competition, as well as matches in the men’s second and third leagues, youth leagues, Under-17 elite

league, the futsal and women’s first leagues, the women’s cup competition, as well as friendly and official matches played by Romania’s youth teams.

Free of charge (as proof and a sign that football is and has to be accessible to everyone), anyone who wishes to be part of the big world of Romanian football can create an account for FRF TV, which is available on the web, on phone browsers and on mobile apps. Matches and other content, such as exclusive footage from training camps of the Romanian national teams, can be accessed free of charge.


The main aim of this continually developing product is to bring football as close as possible to the Romanian fans, no matter where they live, in Romania or elsewhere in the world, all for the benefit of Romanian football, its fans and future players, who should have a major contribution in ensuring Romanian football of a place among Europe’s and the world’s elite.

SLOVAKIA

www.futbalsfz.sk

FRANCESCO CALZONA TAKES OVER AS COACH OF THE MEN’S NATIONAL TEAM

PETER SURIN

 The first coach of the Slovak men’s national team not to have been born in Slovakia or the Czech Republic is the team’s new coach, Italian Francesco Calzona.

After the dismissal of coach Štefan Tarkovič, assistant Samuel Slovák, who led the team for two UEFA Nations League matches in June, was temporarily in charge. At the time, the president of the Slovak Football Association, Ján Kováčik, announced that a new long-term coach would be appointed, most likely from abroad.

The favourite for the vacant position quickly became apparent, in the shape of Francesco Calzona, who has been a long-time colleague of top-class coaches Maurizio Sarri, Luciano Spalletti and Eusebio Di Francesco. “For a long time, I

have wanted to get experience that would further my coaching career. So the Slovak FA’s offer immediately attracted me and I accepted without hesitation,” Calzona said at the official announcement of his appointment.

Calzona rarely speaks to the media, not even in Italy, where he has worked as a coach for 18 years, both at lower competition levels and in Serie A. “I often had the feeling that the national team is perceived by the players as a pleasant break from the daily stresses and routines of club activities. Personally, I think every player should consider being called up for their national team as an honour, even a privilege,” he commented with regard to the importance of the national team shirt.

The Slovak men’s national team are not in an easy situation at the moment. They



failed to win promotion to League B of the UEFA League of Nations, which was a fundamental goal for 2022. At the same time, the squad is in the process of being rebuilt after several mainstays, such as Martin Škrtel and Marek Hamšík, recently retired from the national team. Calzona’s ambition, as he says himself, is “to play dynamic football with the Slovak team, while the players led by him must demonstrate pride and enthusiasm in playing for their country.”

And to finish, an interesting statement from the new Italian coach of the Slovak men’s national team: “My favourite national team is Spain. I have a lot of respect for Luis Enrique as a coach and above all as a person.”

SWEDEN

www.svenskfotboll.se

PARAFOOTBALLERS ESCORT SWEDISH AND SLOVENIAN NATIONAL TEAMS

SAMANTHI CARLSSON

 "It was super fun; I want to do it again," said Emil Vila, 11, who plays for IFK Viksjö in Järfälla – his smile as wide as the Friends Arena pitch – after being among the first parafootballers to be a player escort for the men's



national team's UEFA Nations League match against Slovenia on 27 September. Parafootballers from three Stockholm-based clubs, Grödinge SK, IFK Viksjö and Älvsjö AIF, provided the 22 escorts to accompany the players onto the pitch in front of a huge crowd in Solna. Before the match kicked off, a video was shown on the stadium's giant screen in which Dejan Kulusevski and Anthony Elanga were joined by parafootballers to deliver the message that a footballer is a footballer, regardless of ability or disability. "It was fantastic, and it is so important to bring forward children with special needs. It also means a lot to these children," said Gabriel Kvarzell, a coach at IFK Viksjö. "I hope we inspire more people to start parafootball," said Annelie Gigg, manager of the same club.


"These talented girls and boys show that everything is possible with the right conditions, preparation and support," said Grödinge SK coach Kim Johansson. "My aim was to try and raise awareness of parafootball, and what better way to do that than by using the nationwide platform provided by the men's national team," said Samanthi Carlsson, project manager for the Swedish FA. "I was so happy and grateful to get some of the players and national team coach Janne Andersson involved, and you could see what it meant to the parafootballers to be out there on the pitch with them. Hopefully, this will inspire them, but I hope it will also inspire and motivate the many thousands of people around Sweden who put in so much time and effort into making parafootball happen: the coaches, the parents and the players."

SWITZERLAND

www.football.ch

MARION DAUBE APPOINTED WOMEN'S FOOTBALL DIRECTOR

MARTINA KÜPFER

 The board of the Swiss Football Association has chosen Marion Daube as its new director of women's football. She will succeed Tatjana Haenni in the role on 1 January 2023. As director of women's football at FC Zürich for 13 years, Daube was the first full-time general manager in Swiss women's football. Under her leadership, FC Zürich won nine league titles and six cups, qualifying for the UEFA Women's Champions League on multiple occasions. The 46-year-old, who grew up in Zurich but has German roots, has been heading up Switzerland's bid to host UEFA Women's EURO 2025 since January 2022.

"In my mind, it's very important that women's football is treated not as a separate entity within the Swiss FA but as a part of the whole. I would like to bring the whole football community, men and women, closer together and exploit the potential and synergies throughout the association to drive Swiss women's football forward," she said. "With Marion at the helm, we want to become more professional and more successful, improve our structures and get more girls excited about football," said the Swiss FA president, Dominique Blanc, following the appointment. Daube will continue to lead the SFV's Women's EURO 2025 bid until the end of the year, although she is already closely involved in the women's football department at a strategic level and is jointly responsible for the recruitment of a new coach for the women's national team.



UEFA receives three preliminary bid dossiers to host UEFA EURO 2028 and 2032

ON 16 NOVEMBER, UEFA confirmed that it had received three preliminary bid dossiers to host the 2028 and 2032 editions of the men's UEFA EURO. A joint bid dossier was submitted by the football associations of England, Northern Ireland, the Republic of Ireland, Scotland and Wales for UEFA EURO 2028. Türkiye submitted a bid dossier for the 2028 or 2032 edition of UEFA's flagship men's national team competition, while Italy submitted a bid dossier for UEFA EURO 2032. The deadline for submission of the final bid dossiers is 12 April 2023. UEFA will then appoint the hosts of UEFA EURO 2028 and UEFA EURO 2032 in autumn 2023.



Top European club coaches attend UEFA forum

AFTER A TWO-YEAR BREAK due to the COVID pandemic, top European club coaches were back again at the House of European Football in Nyon, Switzerland, on 15 November to exchange views on the main issues affecting UEFA club competitions and discuss various topics and challenges that concern their work. Discussions and presentations at this year's UEFA Elite Club Coaches Forum included competition-related matters such as the new format for UEFA's men's club competitions

from 2024 to 2027 and the evolution of the financial sustainability system for participating clubs. In addition, special attention was put on refereeing matters, covering topics such as the VAR line of intervention, the Laws of the Game, respect and player behaviour, and refereeing statistics. UEFA's technical director and chief of football, Zvonimir Boban, said: "This forum is an excellent platform for coaches to share their views on the game, its challenges and its evolution. We heard various opinions

around the table and many compelling remarks and suggestions that UEFA will consider when discussing the game's future. Their extensive knowledge of the game is much appreciated and should contribute to European football's overall benefit." The star-studded list of Europe's top coaches who participated in the forum includes: Erik ten Hag (Manchester United FC), Carlo Ancelotti (Real Madrid CF), Luciano Spalletti (SSC Napoli), Paulo Fonseca (LOSC Lille), Christophe Galtier (Paris Saint-Germain), Oliver Glasner (Eintracht Frankfurt), David Moyes (West Ham United FC), Roger Schmidt (SL Benfica), Rafa Benítez and Thomas Tuchel. Welcoming the chance to talk with his fellow coaches, Manchester United FC coach Erik ten Hag said: "We met in a little bit more relaxed ambience to talk about the game, coaching, managing and training, and to learn from each other. So, it is really good. It is also good to meet with UEFA, to give opinions and say what's on our minds. It's about making the game better." This was the 22nd UEFA Elite Club Coaches Forum, an annual gathering of Europe's leading coaches that has been staged since 1999. Many ideas and proposals presented at past forums have contributed to the evolution of UEFA club competitions and Laws of the Game, affirming that the voices of the coaches are listened to and appreciated by UEFA.



UNITED APPROACH SPEARHEADS WOMEN'S FOOTBALL GROWTH

GFF

The explosion of women's football in the last decade across Europe has been a great success story – now UEFA and its national associations are working together to not only sustain that growth, but supercharge it.

It is over three years since the UEFA women's football strategy, Time for Action, was unveiled. There may have been steady positive change in the period preceding its launch, but its goals were nevertheless ambitious and wide-ranging. That flagship document also gave an overarching reference point for UEFA's national associations, nurturing and inspiring their own aspirations in the development of girls' and women's football.

Even so, more tailored action would be needed to define the future of women's football across Europe. National association buy-in is vital and can have a direct bearing on all the top-line goals of Time for Action. UEFA's women's football development team has worked alongside UEFA Grow, the national associations strategic development team, together with other key stakeholders and consultants to

produce a strategy development framework that national associations could mould to their needs.

Strategy development framework

Called Developing A National Women's And Girls' Football Strategy, the detailed 113-page document provides a step-by-step guide that has the built-in flexibility to help associations produce a bespoke approach that will maximise their own country's potential. As UEFA Women's Football Committee chair Anne Rei says in the foreword: "Active strategic management is needed at both confederation and national association level to ensure that the sport is enabled to develop in the best and most sustainable way by planning for the future."

The shared will has already started producing results – of Europe's 55

associations, 44 now have a women's football strategy in place, many of which have done so directly in collaboration with UEFA. Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria and the Netherlands are currently going through the process of creating theirs using the framework.

The framework is not a one-stop shop. Strategies are developed to either be in tune with an association's wider corporate strategy and, consequently, where they are in their development journey, or as a dedicated women's strategy in its own right. The first half of the document is dedicated to the process of creating the strategy, with eight recommended steps to be completed over four to six months; the second part is the nuts and bolts of the framework itself with key pillars relevant to developing women's football identified and explained.

Mentor support

The collaborative approach does not end at the UEFA level – and neither does the continuing support. A pool of mentors has been assigned to work with national associations on the development of these strategies, ensuring they are linked to the wider organisational goals and supported by their top management. Mentor to Georgia's, Armenia's and Bulgaria's framework development, Adam Walker, said: "The enthusiasm national associations have shown in this area has made every strategy development process an enjoyable one, and the ongoing commitment across Europe for delivering the stated objectives within these strategies continues to put a smile on my face with the great success stories coming to light."

Once strategies have been finalised, UEFA and the mentors are supporting their implementation, aiming to hit the established objectives and setting up the associations to prepare for the next strategic cycle. "I hope these successes provide the key to securing the further engagement and investment this part of the game deserves, and I look forward to supporting more national associations on their exciting journey in growing women's football for many years to come," Walker added.



Success stories

Having come a long way between 2016 and 2021 – including the creation of a national league – Georgia wanted to take the next step in its women's football development journey. Your Time Is Now utilised the framework, with the mentorship of Walker, to establish a clear vision, mission, set of values and objectives

for the country. While these objectives were centred around tangible outcomes – such as increasing girls' participation across all programmes to 4,000 by 2024 – there was a less concrete but no less important overall aim the strategy would strive to achieve. Association vice-president Nikoloz Jgarkava explained: "We understand the huge role of female empowerment in the overall development of our society and culture, and we strongly believe that football can contribute to this higher purpose for a stronger and unified nation."

The adaptability of the framework is demonstrated by the Scottish Football Association's strategy, Accelerate Our Game. With their women's national team having already qualified for major tournaments, the Scottish approach contained six game-changing objectives to build on recent success. "We aim to capture hearts and minds," it states, "inspire the next generation of football fans and empower girls and women to reach further than ever before in a culture where diversity and inclusivity are celebrated".

Throughout the development of these strategies – at UEFA level, to the associations and within the organisations – the spirit of shared will and collaboration has resulted in a highly effective delivery of these tailored strategies, giving women's football a plan and impetus to go from strength to strength. ⚽



GFF

GRADUATION TIME FOR FORMER STARS

Ex-internationals including Kaká, Kolo Touré and Lise Klaveness have completed the UEFA Executive Master for International Players, which helps former players prepare for a second career off the pitch.

Twenty-six former professional players received their diplomas from UEFA president Aleksander Čeferin at the house of European football in Switzerland on 2 November, coming together to toast their success in the third edition of the UEFA Executive Master for International Players (MIP) programme, alongside alumni from its first two editions.

Over the past three years, the graduates have all acquired knowledge and experience that prepares them for a second career after playing, bridging the gap between the technical skills gained on the pitch and the administrative expertise required to occupy senior positions within football organisations. The UEFA president addressed the graduates: "Today is a special day in

many regards. Only you know how much was sacrificed throughout these three years, how difficult it was to put the right balance between your education, private and professional life. Your dedication and work ethic, which defined your successes on the pitch, were tested. And, once again, you came out as winners. "You are joining a prestigious group of former football players who decided to



Lise Klaveness and Kaká spoke at the graduation ceremony.

take this exciting pathway. The skills you gained during your career and the knowledge you gained during the UEFA MIP will benefit you and the game we all love. You will not leave today only with the diploma but also with another powerful asset – your friendship. Your classmates were not here only to support you throughout the course; they will be the basis of your future business network. So, cherish these relationships. "This mix of academic and professional expertise ensures that you have the right toolkit to succeed in the second half of your career as you did in the first. UEFA values your experience and expertise, and we want you to play the game of your lives in a new role. So please, set an example for others to follow and always protect the core values of our beautiful game."

some are huge stars. It's like jumping into the deep end of the pool; you have never been there, [but] we are all going to have this as a great memory and a great foundation for our future careers." Having set out on their journey in late 2019, the group's progress was halted due to the COVID-19 pandemic, but they have been able to complete their studies a year later than scheduled. During the course, students enjoyed a series of week-long gatherings which helped to instil a confidence and understanding of the wider football industry and create a familiar camaraderie. "Nobody can have the experience that we have on the field. When you put all the tools that we have after the programme, with this experience here, you create this unique person," said Kaká.

From the top of the league to top of the class

Stars like Brazilians Kaká and Júlio César, France's Florent Malouda and Germany's Clemens Fritz and René Adler are all well accustomed to lifting trophies and performing in front of thousands of fans on the pitch, but going to university to prepare for life after playing was a more daunting prospect than you might imagine! "I didn't go to university, I started to play early when I was 17," César explained. "On the induction day, I was so scared, believe me!" Kim Källström, a veteran of 131 Sweden appearances, added: "You go into that room with all these former players;

So what comes next?

Some graduates are already working in the industry, such as Lise Klaveness, who is now president of the Norwegian Football Federation, and Källström, who used his thesis on national training centres as part of his role as a consultant with the Swedish Football Association. Others, such as former Senegal international Khalilou Fadiga, are assessing their next steps. "I want to be part of the future leaders of world football," he said. The ambition is clear. And now, they are well prepared for their second career within the game. Applications for the next edition are currently open on www.uefamip.com.



What is the UEFA Master for International Players (MIP)?

The MIP equips top international players with the tools required to transfer their playing strengths into effective management skills that will also benefit the game. Graduates from its first two editions include former stars such as Éric Abidal, Youri Djorkaeff, Luis García, Gilberto Silva and Nuno Gomes. The course comprises seven week-long sessions staged in major global cities. To help provide a comprehensive overview, each session examines a different aspect of the administration and governance of a football organisation. In addition, players not already working within a sports body must complete a three-month work placement to ensure they have hands-on, day-to-day experience. Modules are designed to give ex-pros a broad range of skills recognised as essential to succeeding in a second career. The MIP is organised in close collaboration with the CDES at the University of Limoges and Birkbeck College at the University of London.



The latest UEFA disciplinary workshop brought together the members of UEFA's disciplinary bodies and representatives of the European Club Association, Football Supporters Europe and the Fare network.

The Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS) jurisprudence involving UEFA in the 2018–22 period and the main challenges in this regard were presented and discussed, as were CAS cases related to anti-doping violations.

Participants also benefited from the presence of representatives of the European Club Association, Football Supporters Europe and the Fare (Football Against Racism in Europe) network, who had the opportunity to address and share their views with workshop participants.

Meanwhile, the members of the Control, Ethics and Disciplinary Body, the Appeals Body and the Ethics and Disciplinary Inspectors worked in breakout groups to examine subjects of specific relevance to their work.

Following on from their discussions, UEFA and the participating stakeholders explored ways of strengthening cooperation in disciplinary matters.

UEFA disciplinary workshop strengthens cooperation

THE NINTH UEFA disciplinary workshop took place at the headquarters of the Portuguese Football Federation in Lisbon, Portugal, on 13 and 14 October.

UEFA's disciplinary bodies – the Control, Ethics and Disciplinary Body and Appeals Body, as well as the Ethics

and Disciplinary Inspectors – were briefed about the new provisions contained in the 2022 UEFA Disciplinary Regulations. The new format of the UEFA men's club competitions from the 2024/25 season was also presented.

Fight the Fix: preserving European football integrity

THROUGH JOINT efforts with its member associations, clubs, other sports governing bodies and national and international authorities, UEFA is increasing the focus on competition integrity by introducing a new anti-match-fixing course.

Building on its long-standing integrity work, UEFA recently launched Fight the Fix, a new academic education programme tackling match-fixing issues in sport.

Organised in collaboration with the School of Criminal Justice of the University of Lausanne in Switzerland, the programme helps national football associations' integrity officers and representatives of institutions involved in fighting match-fixing to examine in depth each essential aspect of the fight: detection, intelligence and prosecution.

Fight the Fix provides participants with intelligence-gathering and investigation skills needed to successfully identify, investigate and prosecute match-fixing cases. It focuses on hands-on practice, with participants solving a fictitious match-fixing case, following the full intelligence and investigation process from identification to prosecution before a mock court simulating sports arbitration proceedings.

The first session, held in early November at UEFA headquarters and the University of Lausanne, focused

on the detection phase, laying the foundation for anti-match-fixing and establishing theoretical frameworks and the analytical landscape. The second session will take place online and focus on intelligence, while the last session is set to be hosted by the Italian Football Federation (FIGC) in Rome, with the emphasis on prosecution matters.

A joint effort at European level

UEFA last year approved a new action plan to fight and prevent match-fixing, multiplying initiatives and partnerships to increase expertise, collect intelligence and support integrity officers from its 55 member associations and other key stakeholders, including national and international authorities, in their work to preserve the integrity of football.

Working hand in hand with the Council of Europe, the International Olympic Committee, Interpol and Europol, UEFA also co-organised a conference on sports competition manipulation in the digital era in Strasbourg, France, in October.



This summer's Women's EURO in England (Kateryna Monzul refereed the final between England and Germany) was one of the topics on the programme at the referees' course in Nice.

REFEREES FACE EXCITING CHALLENGES

UEFA has been looking back and looking forward with its top female match officials.

A pre-season course in Nice, attended by 40 elite and first-category female referees, provided a perfect opportunity to assess this summer's Women's EURO in England, as well as to set the course ahead for an intensive UEFA Women's Champions League programme.

A key target for the coming season will be for Europe's referees to strive to match the bar that is being raised by the growing number of outstanding players in UEFA's elite women's football competitions.

EURO memories and impressions

Special focus in Nice was devoted to July's Women's EURO from a refereeing viewpoint. "UEFA had plenty of cause for satisfaction at the referee teams' performances at the tournament in England – especially given the heightened exposure and pressures posed by a high-calibre event which attracted huge global attention, set new benchmarks and enjoyed record attendances," UEFA refereeing officer Dagmar Damková

reflected in analysing the referees' contribution to the EURO.

Keeping pace with the game's evolution

UEFA's chief refereeing officer, Roberto Rosetti, continued on this theme. He stressed the need for Europe's top-level female referees to keep pace with the constantly evolving technical and tactical development of the elite women's game. "From a footballing point of view, the EURO was fantastic," he said. "And our top referees are aware that they must also constantly improve, so that they can match these standards – especially in terms of fitness, mental strength and pre-match technical preparation."

Referee-player dialogue reinforced

A new departure for UEFA in its female refereeing activities saw two former top players – England's Karen Carney and New Zealand's Rebecca Smith – attend the pre-season course to exchange opinions and ideas with referees and UEFA refereeing leaders. The presence of two

iconic figures with a combined total of over 200 appearances for their respective national teams proved to be instructive and inspirational, and reinforced UEFA's overall refereeing objective to further develop dialogue between referees and experienced footballers who have played at the highest levels.

Associations urged to step up referee support

With the dust settling on the Women's EURO, a crucial next stage in ensuring a lasting legacy from the event is to improve the quality and quantity of female referees at all levels across Europe. Damková called upon national associations throughout the continent to strengthen their referee support and development work. "UEFA will give its own backing through our referee development work," she said, "and we've assured the associations that doors are open and opportunities are available for match officials in every country to reach the top levels – but it's also up to the associations to help their referees to realise their full potential." 🌟

FIVE YEARS OF GLOBAL FOOTBALL DEVELOPMENT

The UEFA Assist programme has contributed to over 400 projects across all five of UEFA's sister confederations since its launch in 2017.

In November 2017, two European teams, Croatia and Czechia, journeyed to Argentina to compete in the Under-15 Copa Sudamericano alongside all ten CONMEBOL nations.

It was the first project of the new UEFA Assist programme, created to help develop football outside Europe and strengthen ties between UEFA and its sister confederations.

The Royal Dutch Football Association supporting football in St. Maarten with UEFA Assist

That debut event allowed young players to travel outside their country, discover new cultures and compete against other playing styles, reflecting the aims of a programme that features four key goals:

- Building capacity
- Developing youth football
- Strengthening infrastructure
- Supporting UEFA member associations to create their own solidarity programmes

Since then, Assist has supported more than 400 projects in 120 countries on five continents, with many of Europe's 55 member national associations contributing their own resources on top of UEFA funding to help raise the global game to its highest possible levels.

Here, we take a closer look at five examples that highlight the invaluable impact of Assist, both on and off the pitch.

Asian Football Confederation (AFC)

Thanks to expert guidance and examples from UEFA, as well as the Estonian Football Association and the Football Association of Wales, since 2021, 18 Asian football associations have improved their marketing, communications and commercialisation, focusing on important topics such as sponsorship, social media and data collection.

The programme featured a series of pandemic-proof online marketing and income-generation workshops, where participants could also learn from each other, exchange best practices and share success stories.



Portugal's Under-15s had the opportunity to take part in a top-level international tournament outside Europe when they travelled to Florida to play in the 2018 CONCACAF Girls' U-15 Championship.

"This collaboration has proven invaluable to developing our member associations," says Vahid Kardany, AFC deputy general secretary. "The online group format has been an excellent way to share best practices between our members and to enhance their capabilities with the support of European associations and UEFA Assist experts."

Confederation of African Football (CAF)

Since 2019, Assist has worked with 15 African national associations to help improve their existing league organisation and structures, and develop the professionalism of clubs and their commercial strategies, sharing the best of European knowledge and experience.

"A standard operations plan with four main goals of governance, club development, league development and marketing and income generation was adopted by all Zambian premier league clubs," explains Joseph Chimpampwe, Zambian FA deputy general secretary. "This approach shall greatly enhance performance management as we professionalise and commercialise the league in line with FIFA club licensing regulations. Better days are coming for the ZPL!"

Confederation of North, Central America and Caribbean Association Football (CONCACAF)

"We feel so lucky as a national association. UEFA is complementing the tremendous work that CONCACAF is doing to raise the capacity of its member associations," says Wayne Forde, president of the Guyana Football Federation (GFF).

The GFF has received support across all four pillars of Assist, with league development programmes benefiting elite men's and women's football, participation in European tournaments for elite youth players and two new minivans to help transport grassroots teams.

Additional support has come from the Danish Football Association, which purchased equipment for the new women's league and took international striker Martin Braithwaite, who has Guyanese heritage, to the country for a special ambassadorial visit.

Alongside Guyana, almost all of CONCACAF's 41 member associations have benefited from Assist initiatives or events.

South American Football Confederation (CONMEBOL)

Assist successfully piloted its Football for Women programme in Paraguay and

Venezuela following a successful roll-out in Asia.

In Venezuela, the initiative will generate ten nationwide grassroots festivals for girls, create more girls' teams and promote the existing women's league with branding toolkits, social media campaigns and digital marketing strategy guidance.

"This is an important step for the development of women's football in our member associations," says Fabimar Franchi, CONMEBOL head of sustainability and women's football. "Combining our efforts to develop this programme has brought clear benefits to everyone involved."

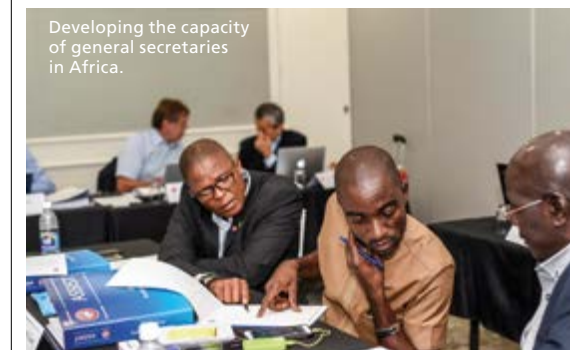
"Football for Women has had a huge impact. Increasing the number of women in football both on and off the pitch is a key priority of CONMEBOL and we look forward to implementing this programme in more of our member associations."

Oceania Football Confederation (OFC)

Two important projects have helped secure a bright future for Oceania's 11 member associations. Financial backing from Assist for a new HQ, Te Kahu o Kiwa (The Home of Football), provides a new base for OFC staff, who are already enjoying their new home as well as two state-of-the-art synthetic pitches, which will help to better prepare Oceania's teams for top-level competition.

Assist has also shared the experience and know-how of European football's educational arm, the UEFA Academy, to help launch OFC Learn – a new online platform for learning.

"Watching these projects come to life has been one of my highlights at OFC," says general secretary Franck Castillo. "Together, the Home of Football and OFC Learn will create many invaluable opportunities to develop players, coaches, officials and administrations across the region." 🏆



Developing the capacity of general secretaries in Africa.



FUTSAL HAT-TRICK FOR PORTUGAL

On 18 September, world and European futsal champions Portugal won the inaugural Futsal Finalissima tournament after beating Spain in a penalty shoot-out.

Portugal were crowned as the inaugural winners of the Futsal Finalissima after seeing off Spain on penalties in the final. The tournament brought together Futsal EURO 2022 winners Portugal and third-placed team Spain in a four-nation knockout tournament with 2022 Copa América de Futsal winners Argentina and runners-up Paraguay at Parque Roca in Buenos Aires, Argentina. Paraguay pipped the hosts to bronze.

In the semi-finals, Portugal produced a trademark comeback to defeat Paraguay 2-1 despite having trailed at the break. Two Raúl Campos goals then helped Spain see off Argentina.

In the final, Spain stepped on the gas later in the first half and Portugal goalkeeper André Sousa made a string of saves to keep them out. Just before the break, however, Spain won a corner and coach Fede Vidal called a time-out – the move promptly proved successful as Antonio Pérez’s ball was played perfectly for Miguel Mellado to ghost in and strike.

Portugal levelled due to a rare slip from Spain; Pol Pacheco’s pass inside his own half was cut out by Afonso Jesus, who

advanced and chipped in over Spain’s second-half keeper Didac Plana. The game eventually went to extra time. The extra ten minutes produced no goals, meaning a penalty shoot-out. Specialist Edu came on in goal for Portugal and he stopped Spain’s second effort from Chino. Portugal were converting all their kicks and victory was sealed when Edu got in the way of Raúl Campos’s try to spark yet more Portuguese celebrations.

Paraguay defeated Argentina for bronze to at least partly avenge February’s Copa América final defeat. Richard Rejala and Julio Mareco gave Paraguay a 2-0 lead before Cristian Borruto pulled one back ahead of the break. Arnaldo Báez got Paraguay’s third and, although Alan Brandi responded, the hosts were denied in a frantic finish.

Portugal’s Pany Varela and Spain’s Adolfo in action in the final of the inaugural Futsal Finalissima in Buenos Aires.



World-class matches

The Futsal Finalissima is part of the expansion of the cooperation between UEFA and the South American football confederation, CONMEBOL, which includes, among other areas, women’s football, futsal and youth football, referee exchanges, coach education and the men’s football Finalissima, which pits the winners of the European Championship (UEFA EURO) against the Copa América holders. Argentina beat Italy 3-0 in the first Finalissima earlier this year. In addition, UEFA Youth League winners Benfica beat Peñarol 1-0 in the Under-20 Intercontinental Cup in front of a 40,570 crowd at Estadio Centenario in Montevideo, Uruguay. England and Brazil will meet next year in a football Women’s Finalissima.

15 September

Semi-finals		
Portugal	2-1	Paraguay
Argentina	0-3	Spain

18 September

Third place play-off		
Argentina	2-3	Paraguay
Final		
Spain	1-1 (aet, 2-4 pens)	Portugal

U21 final tournament draw made



- Group A**
Georgia, Portugal, Belgium, Netherlands
- Group B**
Romania, Spain, Ukraine, Croatia
- Group C**
Czechia, England, Germany, Israel
- Group D**
Norway, Switzerland, France, Italy

AT THE 2023 UEFA European Under-21 Championship final tournament draw in Bucharest on 18 October, the 16 finalists (co-hosts Georgia and Romania, the nine qualifying group winners, the best runners-up and the four winners of the play-offs contested on 23 and 27 September) were split into four groups of four. The top two in each group will qualify for the knockout stage.

The final tournament will be held in Georgia and Romania from 21 June to 8 July 2023.

Europe’s three places in the 2024 Olympic men’s football tournament will be awarded to the three best teams at the U21 finals, excluding France, who qualify automatically, and England, who cannot qualify for the Olympic Games. If necessary, a play-off will take place in Bucharest.

UEFA Regions’ Cup

THE UEFA REGIONS’ CUP is back after the 2020/21 edition was cancelled due to the pandemic.

In all, 35 associations entered this edition, with Malta and San Marino fielding their national amateur teams and the others represented by regional selections that won their country’s qualifying competitions. The teams from the 30 associations with the highest competition coefficients began in the intermediate round, where they were joined by the two teams that came through June’s preliminary round tournament in Azerbaijan.

In the intermediate round, the teams competed in eight mini-tournaments held in eight different countries. Each group winner qualified for the finals, which are due to be held in June 2023 in a country to be chosen from among the finalists. The following have qualified: Zenica-Doboj (Bosnia and Herzegovina), Dolny Śląsk (Poland), Lisboa (Portugal), Zlin (Czechia), Bavaria (Germany), Republic of Ireland Amateur, Galicia (Spain) and Belgrade (Serbia).

Four bids to host UEFA Women’s EURO 2025

UEFA HAS CONFIRMED that it received four final bids to host UEFA Women’s EURO 2025 by the deadline of 12 October.

The national associations of France, Poland and Switzerland submitted individual bids, while those of Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden submitted a joint bid.

The UEFA Executive Committee will appoint the host association(s) in January 2023.



2023 Women’s World Cup

THE 2023 FIFA WOMEN’S WORLD CUP will be held in Australia and New Zealand from 20 July to 20 August, with 11 European teams already assured of their places.

Qualifying group winners Denmark, England, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Spain and Sweden have been joined by the play-off winners, the Republic of Ireland (who have qualified for the first time) and Switzerland. The play-off winners with the third-best record, Portugal, will hope to become the 12th UEFA nation at the finals by qualifying through the inter-confederation play-offs in New Zealand from 18 to 23 February.

The final tournament draw took place in Auckland on 22 October and produced the following groups:

Group A: New Zealand, Norway, Philippines, Switzerland
Group B: Australia, Republic of Ireland, Nigeria, Canada
Group C: Spain, Costa Rica, Zambia, Japan
Group D: England, play-off Group B winner, Denmark, China
Group E: United States, Vietnam, Netherlands, play-off Group A winner
Group F: France, Jamaica, Brazil, play-off group C winner
Group G: Sweden, South Africa, Italy, Argentina
Group H: Germany, Morocco, Colombia, South Korea

Inter-confederation play-offs

Group A: Portugal, Cameroon, Thailand
Group B: Chile, Senegal, Haiti
Group C: Chinese Taipei, Paraguay, Papua New Guinea, Panama



UEFA
UNDER-19
FUTSAL
EURO
SPAIN 2022

SPAIN DO IT AGAIN

The finals of the second European Under-19 Futsal Championship, held in Jaén, Spain, from 4 to 10 September 2022, were contested by Croatia, France, Italy, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Spain and Ukraine.

Spain's 6-2 victory over Portugal in the final quite rightly saw Albert Canillas's side receive the plaudits for their impressive trophy-retaining performance. However, the success story of the second edition of the men's Under-19 Futsal Championship extended far beyond the tournament winners. Thirty-two countries started out in the 2021/22 championship, underlining UEFA's support for futsal development and the importance of creating development pathways for young talent. During both the preliminary and main qualifying rounds, a number of nations gained invaluable first experience of the game at this level. Estonia, San Marino and Wales all enjoyed competition debuts in the preliminary qualifying round, while Andorra's progression to the main qualifying round was their first-ever qualifying-stage success in any UEFA or

FIFA futsal or football national team competition at any level.

An important development pathway

Although every game, at every stage, was well contested, Portugal's head coach, José Luís Mendes, summarised perfectly the purpose of the Under-19 tournament for young players. "For all of them, it will be their first major international experience," he said. "Competing with the best from other countries will have a significant impact on improving their qualities and skills. At the end of the tournament, I honestly think all of them will be better players and certainly realise that they still have a long way to go, that they will have to continue to work hard and be persistent in order to become better players."

The development ethos of the tournament was also underlined by

Spain's coach, Canillas. "Our goal is not just to win titles," he said. "Our main aim is to develop these young players and to help them make the step into the senior team, like [2019 winner] Antonio Pérez, who has been a regular in the senior squad recently. For us, the Under-19 team is very important because our players begin to learn the philosophy of the Spanish national team, acquire the right values, such as effort, commitment, humility and discipline, and begin to adapt to our model."

Portugal give Spain a run for their money

Winners Spain were widely recognised as the strongest side of the final tournament. Although they scored a record 33 goals across five games, it was not all plain sailing. Spain twice led in the final against Portugal, only for the score to stand at 2-2

More than 3,000 spectators attended the U19 Futsal EURO in Jaén.

after 40 minutes. However, in extra time, the hosts' superior quality and finishing skills were fully rewarded, with Spain scoring four times to secure the trophy, to the delight of the 3,067 fans inside Jaén's Olivo Arena – a new competition record.

"Spain were stronger in every position," said UEFA technical observer Benny Meurs after the final. "Even when Spain made changes with the substitutions, they were still stronger in each position. Their win was well deserved," he added.

"Both finalists continued with the attacking and defensive strategies that had guided them to the final," Meurs explained. "Both teams approached the game in a similar way: by trying to get high pressure on the ball. Portugal, at times, did this very well and it meant Spain had a few little difficulties with that. But in the end, the strongest team came through. When Portugal equalised to make it 1-1, it should have been 3-0 for Spain already. During the first period of extra time and once Spain's third goal was there, Portugal had to take risks and they paid for it in the 6-2 result."

Watching his young side navigate a number of tough challenges on their way to tournament success was particularly satisfying for Spain coach Canillas, who also coached Spain's futsal Under-19s to victory in 2019. "This was a hard-fought victory," said Canillas after the final. "The overall standard is rising and I'm really proud of how the players handled the difficult moments along the way. We played very well but today's game still could have gone either way; they had a great chance at the far post late on at 2-2, which they didn't take."

Spain captain Adrian Rivera also highlighted his side's ability to cope with difficult moments as key to their success. "We knew that the first two games didn't reflect how tough it was going to be to win this EURO, and we had to work really hard in each of our last three games," he said. "With it being level at full-time, like in the semi-final against Poland, we had to keep our heads, remember that we were in good enough shape to go the distance and make the breakthrough in extra time, which is what we did." 🏆

Group A – 4, 5 and 7 September					
Ukraine	6-4	Croatia			
Spain	9-0	Romania			
Romania	2-5	Ukraine			
Croatia	1-11	Spain			
Croatia	8-0	Romania			
Spain	2-2	Ukraine			

Group B – 4, 5 and 7 September					
Poland	2-4	Portugal			
France	0-3	Italy			
Italy	1-4	Poland			
Portugal	2-1	France			
Poland	3-2	France			
Italy	1-6	Portugal			

Semi-finals – 8 September					
Portugal	4-1	Ukraine			
Spain	5-2	Poland (aet)			

Final – 10 September					
Spain	6-2	Portugal (aet)			

Standings		P	W	D	L	Pts
1	Spain	3	2	1	0	7
2	Ukraine	3	2	1	0	7
3	Croatia	3	1	0	2	3
4	Romania	3	0	0	3	0

Standings		P	W	D	L	Pts
1	Portugal	3	3	0	0	9
2	Poland	3	2	0	1	6
3	Italy	3	1	0	2	3
4	France	3	0	0	3	0



2023 edition

A record 36 teams have entered the 2023 UEFA European Under-19 Futsal Championship with 35 set to compete to join hosts Croatia in next September's finals at Žatika Arena in Poreč.

Among the contenders are two debutants in Germany and Malta, while England, Kosovo and Lithuania return after taking part in the inaugural 2019 edition. Spain will aim to continue their domination after winning the first two editions in 2019 and 2022.

The preliminary round will run from 17 to 22 January 2023 and the main round between 21 and 26 March, deciding Croatia's seven rivals for the finals.

UEFA DOCTOR EDUCATION PROGRAMME BACK IN BUSINESS

At the beginning of September, the Royal Netherlands Football Association (KNVB) and its training centre at Zeist played host to doctors from UEFA's 55 member associations at the first workshop of the UEFA Football Doctor Education Programme (FDEP) since the programme's activities restarted.

The event immediately emphasised UEFA's commitment to enhancing the standard of football doctors in providing emergency treatment throughout Europe. Topics at the workshop including sudden cardiac arrest, spinal injuries and general emergency care.

The UEFA Football Doctor Education Programme:

- consists of a three-part programme teaching doctors from all 55 UEFA member associations the key skills of the modern football doctor;
- links three specific face-to-face workshops on emergency medicine, injury diagnosis/treatment and protecting the player (nutrition, anti-doping, fatigue/recovery, psychology), where doctors learn and practise techniques – with an online e-learning support platform containing instructional videos, tests and process guidelines for doctors to refer to at any time;

- operates an online forum allowing course participants to discuss and resolve key issues between themselves outside of the workshops;
- is delivered by recognised international experts and members of the UEFA Medical Committee, many of whom have years of experience working as team doctors for their senior national teams.

"The Football Doctor Education Programme covers all main aspects of football medicine and helps to increase medical standards across Europe," said Tim Meyer, chairman of the UEFA Medical Committee.

Workshop evaluation tests

Participants in Zeist underwent the testing process that takes place at the end of each FDEP workshop to evaluate the skills and knowledge they have acquired. This evaluation is important because, as well as learning key skills, one of the unique

aspects of the FDEP is that all participants are taught how to cascade their own version of the course for doctors in their own country.

This cascading process ensures that only those participants who demonstrate competence in the topic area are authorised to pass those skills and knowledge on to their peers.

UEFA is creating a network of skilled medical tutors to disseminate the skills learned during the programme across Europe's wider football community. This means that increasing numbers of doctors are being trained to apply techniques and use equipment that could make the difference between a life being lost and a life being saved.

The Zeist workshop featured two different groups: the first group had already successfully organised at least one cascaded course the previous season, while the second group comprised participants who have not yet organised a cascaded course. The content of the workshops was adapted slightly to reflect the differences in the participants' experience, teach them the essentials of emergency treatment and provide them with the content and tips to replicate the same workshop in their country.

To support this objective, UEFA provides all participants with the course material (presentations, case studies, assessments, etc.). Additionally, all national associations are invited to apply via the UEFA HatTrick development programme for the ringfenced FDEP incentive of €10,000 to support them in the running of their own workshops.

The target for the 2022/23 season is for most of the UEFA member associations to apply for HatTrick funding for the FDEP workshop on emergency medicine, after two seasons complicated by the COVID-19 pandemic, when many associations were not in a position to seek funding. 🌐



JANUARY**17–22 January**

European Futsal Under-19 Championship: preliminary round

20 January, Nyon

UEFA Women's Champions League: quarter-final and semi-final draws

25 January, Nyon

Executive Committee meeting

31 January–2 February, Frankfurt

UEFA Medical Symposium

FEBRUARY**7/8 February**

UEFA Youth League: play-offs

13 February, Nyon

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

14/15 and 21/22 February

UEFA Champions League: round of 16 (first legs)

16 February

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

23 February

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

24 February, Nyon

UEFA Europa League and UEFA Europa Conference League: round of 16 draws

28 February–3 March

UEFA Youth League: round of 16

MARCH**1–8 March**

European qualifying competition for the FIFA Futsal World Cup

7/8 and 14/15 March

UEFA Champions League: round of 16 (return legs)

9 March

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

10 March

FIFA Futsal World Cup: play-off draw

14/15 March

UEFA Youth League: quarter-finals

16 March

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

16–19 March, Debrecen

UEFA Women's Futsal EURO: finals

17 March, Nyon

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

21/22 March

UEFA Women's Champions League: quarter-finals (first legs)

21–26 March

European Futsal Under-19 Championship: main round

23–25 March

European Qualifiers for UEFA EURO 2024: matchday 1

26–28 March

European Qualifiers for UEFA EURO 2024: matchday 2

29/30 March

UEFA Women's Champions League: quarter-finals (return legs)

NOTICE

Paul Philipp has been re-elected as president of the Luxembourg Football Federation.

**SEASON'S
GREETINGS
FROM UEFA DIRECT**

**BEST WISHES
FOR 2023**



ONLINE ABUSE LEAVES A SCAR

#REALSCARS



RESPECT