BECAUSE EVERY CHILD IS A CHAMPION
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.
The Technician
National women’s team coaches come together at St George’s Park in England to review UEFA Women’s EURO 2022, and champion coach Sarina Wiegman describes how she brought England’s EURO dreams to fruition.

Grassroots football in focus
The UEFA Grassroots Conference meets to discuss ways to continue developing the grassroots game; on the pitch, a special Football in Schools event is held in Croatia.
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, competitive and engaging sport. Grassroots football
• creates a solid foundation for the game
• provides 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

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 opportunities for all
• promotes respect, inclusion and equality
• serves as a vehicle for educational, sporting and social development
• promotes lifelong participation
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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 Ceferin 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 is rooted. 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 basic, 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 grassroot leaders: “Grassroots football is a big and serious responsibility,” he said. “It’s our duty to facilitate football for everybody. We work, we train 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 Kleveland, 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 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. →
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 way to integrate 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 in the future and realise that we have grown even more.

**Social responsibility in the grassroots game**

Participants also hear 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 are key references 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 girls**

The third and final day of the UEFA Grassroots Conference in Madrid focused on the importance of providing football opportunities for girls, with UEFA experts highlighting the 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.

**How futsal raises standards**

Michael Skubala, a former England full-back 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 multi-sports development programme alongside football, Skubala detailed how futsal players get more regular touches of the ball during games, as well as experiencing more competitive pressure and defend on a smaller pitch, therefore developing their technical skills more quickly.

**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 healthy, active lifestyles.

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.

**How it 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.”
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.

INTERVIEW

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.

Keane is working for UEFA in an advisory role, bringing his vast experience to major European and national team competitions. On the coaching side, Keane has worked as an assistant coach for the Republic of Ireland, Manchester United, Manchester City, and Everton.

Keane is known for his movement, and I got this movement from small things like this. 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, and win the UEFA Champions League. From this, you learn to play…

As a young boy, I went outside every day with a football. I played against the wall every day; and I promise you that this came from the stones. As a player, I was always known for my movement, and I got this movement from small things like this.

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, and 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 young footballers? 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 is there extremely good –

Every club academy always wants kids from their local area to play for their team. 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 is 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 could not 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 dream their careers, 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 and the 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…

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 older 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 Fettercarc – 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? That’s the club academy. The club academy is there exceptionally 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 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, nonothing – five-a-side, free play. I think it’s important that you have one day where you just let the kids be kids and 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 friends 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, 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, and 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 unhelpful 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 those 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? Practice as much as you can. I can only speak from my experience, which was practising every day. I was 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!’
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 Jadranka Kessler, managing director of women’s football, teamed up with Luis Figo, Davor Suker, Dejan Savicevic, Darijo Srna and Robbie Keane, as well as the HNS 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, to play a series of fun and emotional matches with the 12-13-year-olds.

The Football 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.

UEFA president Aleksander Čeferin at the Football in Schools event.

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’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.

“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

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 100,000 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 grassroots 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,” 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.

Case study: UEFA Football in Schools in Croatia

- More than 30 grassroots clubs: 16 of 21 county associations
- 1,855 male and 408 female participants
- 188 participating schools
- 18 county-wide tournaments before a semi-national championship
- 4 regional semi-national championships and one national championship

18

1,855

408

188

18

4

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

<table>
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<th>Component of UEFA’s Grassroots Football Development</th>
<th>Total Investment</th>
<th>National associations</th>
<th>Governments and other institutions</th>
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<td>€11m+</td>
<td>€6.5m+</td>
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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, 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 the noses of Portugal (2019) and France (2021), competing to have their name engraved on the honours stakes in recent winners Italy, and the Netherlands – less successful 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 the noses of Portugal (2019) and France (2021), competing to have their name engraved on the honours stakes in recent years.

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 UEFA 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 supplier Luke Akinola and his team-mates began the campaign poorly, winning only a 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 rollercoaster of results. After triumphing in EURO 2020, then failing to qualify for the 2022 FIFA World Cup, the Squadra Azzurra (first, 11 points) earned their ticket to 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, 5 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, 12 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, 3 points) suffered two decisive 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 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 B (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, 13 points), emerging undefeated in a group from which Russia were disqualified and automatically relegated to League C.

After relegation from League A in the previous edition, Bosnia and Herzegovina (first in Group 4, 13 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 Mitrovic and Erling Haaland finish as joint top scorers of all the groups with six goals each. Heading in the opposite direction, Armenia suffered two consecutive 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 ful 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 16 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 their victories. It was also a thank’s 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, 15 points) secured maximum points on the road, thanks to particular to their rising star Khocha Kwardkeliya, 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 in the competition. Meanwhile, Estonia (third) and Belarus, who also finished bottom of their groups, will also face off in March 2023, with the winner earning 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.

SCHEDULE

Semi-finals
14 and 16 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

With 14 points out of a possible 18 in League A, the Netherlands’ Ryan Taylor against Belgium’s Dodi Lukebakio (qualifying for the Euros in style).
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 was ‘a special EURO’, not least because “it will be the first time ever in the tournament’s history that the host nation will co-host the matches.”

A menu being prepared in Frankfurt and various European cities, stadiums, Germany and Europe will ensure that the EURO 2024 experience is not just 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.

“This will be the first time ever in the tournament’s history that the host nation will co-host the 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-Heck-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 EURON run smoothly. The collaboration between the two entities was vital for the success of the draw, paving the way for this milestone on the road to 2024 and beyond.

When the tournament logos symbolising the UEFA member associations were unveiled in October 2021, the UEFA president, Aleksander Ceferin, 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 EURON 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 UEFA 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 football as it is 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.”

Emotions were also to the fore when Lena, winner of the 2010 Eurovision Song Contest, performed the song ‘EURO for everyone’. At the 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 serve 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.
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 Ceferin 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 insights into the 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.”

The event’s ten designated host cities will rely entirely on existing stadiums and facilities to stage their allocated matches. The policy focuses on embedding circularity and sustainability dimensions into its 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.”

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 regularly and will be updated regularly.

Road to a sustainable UEFA EURO 2024

The meeting in Mainz concluded with 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.

Continuous support to national associations and clubs

UEFA will support national association and club sustainability offices 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.

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

Earlier this year, UEFA launched its Football Sustainability Strategy 2030 - tiskel 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 prop, RF) 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 collectively 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 polymakers – 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 Ceferin, 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 all 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.

Boyntz

- 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 address 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 Udinese Calcio. Throughout the event, speakers touched on the important 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.
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-Nele Vera Pauw, Hope Powell and former England goalkeeper David James, with additional input from fitness expert Stacey Limmonds.

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 Joe Montemurro (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,” Serres 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 team.”

‘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.”

Key findings in the Women’s EURO technical report

- **FOUR GOAL-KEEPERS** 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 in the USA during the 2021/22 UEFA Women’s Champions League.
- **SHARPSHOOTERS** Shots per game were up to 7.9 – 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.
- **SUBEAT 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 player who emerged from the England bench, including the two that earned victory in the final, and four by Alexia Rios 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.

I n 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.

“The story behind football is team development – how you work together, 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.”

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, then you get a better collaboration, communication is good, on and off the field, then you get a better understanding, and we also had a lot of 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.”

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

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.”

26 – UEFA DIRECT • Q4 2022
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. “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,” Ruttensteiner says. “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 competences 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.”

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 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 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.”

“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

“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.”

Understanding country, culture and context

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.”

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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.
Since its first edition in April 2002, UEFA Direct has showcased European football’s most powerful stories.
FREE KITS TRANSFORM FOOTBALL DEVELOPMENT

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

BY ANDI VERCAI

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 chief of football, Armand Duka, at the launch ceremony.

“It is an exciting day, 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 who has 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 truly 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 us take our first steps towards becoming a modern organisation with good governance and diversity of profiles prevalent, and our new federal building materially symbolises the new era that the association has now truly entered,” they added.

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 Aleksandar 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.

The project is already delivering transformative results and impacting grassroots football. Within 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.

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, 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.”

Armand Duka, chief of football, said.

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

**BY ZUZANNA WALCZAK**

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 Polish FA president, Cezary Kulesza, said: “We all see the potential and interest in women’s football, which, thanks to our organisational work, we intend to stimulate with actions based on it,” explained Grzegorz Stefanowicz, who heads the PZPN’s women’s football department.

**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 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!”

**Key activities**

In each of these areas, the Polish FA has committed itself to developing 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, which, thanks to our conceptual work, we intend to stimulate with actions based on it, 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.

**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.

**Strategy 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 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 Ewa Pajor, captain of the Polish women’s national team and player with VfL Wolfsburg.
**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 projects promote health and social cohesion in Austria, who contribute to society through football. 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.” 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.

The ÖFB is committed to recognising outstanding projects and outstanding initiatives for their commitment to football. In addition, the ÖFB honours the best football player and the best local football tournament.

**CHILDREN’S FOOTBALL FESTIVAL HELD IN NAKHCHIVAN**

**TORA AKHMEDOVA**

As part of UEFA Grassroots Week, a mini-football tournament for boys and girls 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 Farnur Amayyov, the president and vice-president of the Nakhchivan Football Federation, Vugar Abbasov and Sakit Rzayev; and officials from Araz Nakhchivan Football Club.

According to the AFFA, the festival is part of the Football for All campaign that the AFFA has been running in Azerbaijan since 2018. The campaign has been positively received by the population of the autonomous republic and the football governing bodies of the region.

The AFFA is planning to organise similar festivals in other regions of the autonomous republic.
TOP LEAGUE LAUNCHES VAR

EVA NÕMMÉ

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, Arav 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 VDSO 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.

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 Neundorf and DFB general secretary Heike Ulrich 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 Neundorf 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.”

UNITED AGAINST RACISM

MARTON DÍNNYES

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.

GIBRALTAR

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.

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MEMBER ASSOCIATIONS

MEMBER ASSOCIATIONS
WALKING FOOTBALL TOURNAMENT TO MARK WORLD WALKING DAY

ETIEN DOTAN

A World Walking Day event was hosted by the municipality of Pethai Tiku in cooperation with the regional football association, the Israeli Football Association, the ministry of culture and sports, and the Maccabi Israel sport organisation. The event took the form of a walking football tournament in which former Israeli 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 tripping 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 Pethai Tiku. A total of ten teams took part.

The Malabs Old Boys team won first place after a tense penalty shoot-out 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.

SPONTANEOUS FOOTBALL PROJECT OFFERS OPPORTUNITIES FOR CHILDREN TO PLAY FOOTBALL

MARIK BAJKRAN

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 Football.

Recently, the federation has used public spaces in the capital city, Pristina, 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.

FAIR PLAY TOPICS DISCUSSED AT A SPECIAL CONFERENCE

TOMIS ARMANIS

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.

“Fair play” is a part of the everyday language of football, which is an important pillar in the Latvian football culture.

In a country with fewer than 40,000 inhabitants, the greatest challenge for women’s football is to steadily increase the number of female players who, having had the opportunity to play football, will 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 friendly games, 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.

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GRASSROOTS AND TECHNICAL PROJECTS ON TRACK
KEVIN AZZOPARDI

The Malta FA general assembly cast light on the progress of various technical projects undertaken by the association as part of its four-year strategy (2020–24). The strategy prioritises the development of football at grassroots 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, added 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.

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 allow all the action 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,” said Paul Zaharia, head of the video content platform for the FRF.

During the first year of it being rolled out, the programme engaged 11,998 schoolchildren at local primary 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 successful first year. We’re confident that the programme will improve the skills of the pupils 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.”

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE FUN FIT FOOTBALL PROGRAMME
KEVIN AZZOPARDI

The Malta FA general assembly cast light on the progress of various technical projects undertaken by the association as part of its four-year strategy (2020–24). The strategy prioritises the development of football at grassroots 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, added 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.

Grassroots and Technical

The FAI technical centre and the Frockib-I Football 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 oversaw the introduction 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 Dirty 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.

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**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 – he smiles as wide as the Friends Arena pitch – after being among the first parafootballers to be a player escort for the men’s matches against Slovenia on 27 September.

Parafootballers from three Stockholm-based clubs,Grödinge SK, IFK Viksjö and Alvik AIK, 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 Kurzell, a coach at IFK Viksjö.

“I hope we inspire more people to start parafootball,” said Annelle Gigg, manager of the same club.

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 develop the club into an excellent platform for coaches to share their views on the game, its challenges and 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 paid to 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 (SV Bertica), Rafa Benitez and Thomas Tuchel.

Welcome the chance to talk with his fellow coaches, Manchester United FC coach Erik ten Hag said: “We met in a little bit more relaxed ambiance 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.

**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 women’s football forward,” she said.

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FOOTBALL GROWTH SPEARHEADS WOMEN’S SUCCESS STORY – now UEFA and its national associations are working together to not only sustain that growth, but supercharge it.

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 their exciting journey in growing women’s football for many years to come,” Walker added.

As we have seen, 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 across Europe. National association buy-in is vital and can have a direct bearing on their exciting journey in growing women’s football for many years to come,” Walker added.

Mentor support

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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 Japakava 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.

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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.

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 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."

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, 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.

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 Fatiga, 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 Eric 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.
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.

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 expert intelligence and support integrity officers from its 55 member associations and other key stakeholders, including national and international authorities, in their work to prevent the integrity of football.

A joint effort at European level

The latest UEFA disciplinary workshop brought together member of UEFA disciplinary bodies – the Ethics and Disciplinary Body, Appeals Body and the Ethics and Disciplinary Inspectors – to examine subjects of specific relevance to their work.

Meanwhile, the members of the Control, Ethics and Disciplinary Body, the Appeals Body and the Ethics and Disciplinary Inspectors worked in breakout groups to discuss 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.

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.

The Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS)

It focuses on hands-on practice, with participants identifying, investigating and prosecuting match-fixing cases. 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.

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

REFEREES FACE EXCITING CHALLENGES

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

UEFA disciplinary workshop strengthens cooperation

REFEREES FACE EXCITING CHALLENGES

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 Damkova reflected in analysing the referees’ contribution to the EURO.

Keeping pace with the game’s evolution

UEFA’s chief refereeing officer, Roberto Rosotti, 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 Rebca 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 step in ensuring a lasting legacy from the event is to improve the quality and quantity of female referees at all levels across Europe. Damkova 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 associations to help their referees to realise their full potential.”

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 offices to strengthen their intelligence-gathering and investigation skills needed to successfully identify, investigate and prosecute match-fixing cases.

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

Fight the Fix: preserving European football integrity

UEFA provided a unique opportunity to a new generation of referees and key refereeing officials to learn in an environment conducive to the development of the elite women’s game.

UEFA NEWS

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Fight the Fix: preserving European football integrity

This summer’s Women’s EURO in England (Europe v. Germany) was one of the topics on the programme at the referees’ course in Nice.
FOOTBALL DEVELOPMENT
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.

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 profile of their sport, 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)

That 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 digital marketing strategy guidance. The GFF has received support across 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.

“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 Ford, 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.

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

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“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 – a new online platform for learning – 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.”

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.

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Puerto were crowned as the inaugural winners of the Futsal Finalissima after seeing off Spain 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 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 Camps goals then helped Spain see off Argentina. In the final, Spain stepped on the gas 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 Portugal goalkeeper Diádac 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 Claudio. Portugal were through and Paraguay were denied in a frantic finish. 

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

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

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

Portugal advanced and shipped in over Spain’s second-half keeper Diádac 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 Claudio. Portugal were through and Paraguay were denied in a frantic finish.

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, refereeing 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 football.

The Futsal Finalissima was played perfectly move promptly proved successful as coach Fede Vidal called a time-out – the break, however, Spain won a corner and Portugal were denied in a frantic finish. Just before the break, however, Spain won a corner and Portugal goalkeeper Diádac 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 Claudio. Portugal were through and Paraguay were denied in a frantic finish.
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’ 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 editions in 2019 and 2022, 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 rounds, a number of nations gained

**An important development pathway**

Although every game, at every stage, was well contested, Portugal’s head coach, José 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 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. “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 Adrián 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.”

More than 3,000 spectators attended the U19 Futsal EURO in Jaén.
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’s 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 included 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.
ONLINE ABUSE LEAVES A SCAR

#REALSCARS

RESPECT