



UEFA  
**UNDER21**  
CHAMPIONSHIP  
GEORGIA - ROMANIA  
2023



UEFA  
**UNDER21**  
CHAMPIONSHIP

Official  
Programme  
21 June - 8 July 2023



# CLEANER **AIR** BETTER **GAME**

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TO YOUR HEALTH AND  
TO YOUR GAME.**

## **MAKE A PERSONAL COMMITMENT**

UEFA is encouraging fans around the world to take a step to protect the planet and the game we love.

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- Volunteer – donate your time and skills
- Cut food waste
- Repair & re-use
- Eat more plants
- Walk & cycle more
- Grow some trees





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2023



## Welcome!

Welcome to the 2023 UEFA European Under-21 Championship finals!

Seeing Georgia and Romania working hand in hand to organise this final tournament is formidable. It is well known that collaboration lies at the heart of European football, and it is an absolute pleasure to witness how much great work these two associations have put together to deliver such a prestigious event.

I wish to thank both associations and their presidents, Levan Kobiasvili and Răzvan Burleanu, for their warm hospitality and efforts behind the scenes for what promises to be a spectacular tournament.

For these finals, we will also use football's powerful voice to raise awareness of the

detrimental effects of air pollution on public health while suggesting creative and fun solutions to turn things around. Therefore, I invite all people with football in their hearts to participate in our Cleaner Air, Better Game campaign. Preserving the environment and improving the quality of the air we breathe is a global goal and one we can score only as a team.

The Under-21 tournament is an actual window into the game's future, with the participating teams and their respective squads promising an event for the ages. I can't wait for the ball to start rolling, and I am sure you share the same enthusiasm.

May the best team win!

**Aleksander Čeferin**  
UEFA President

Bine ați venit la finala Campionatului European UEFA Under-21 2023!

Faptul de a vedea Georgia și România lucrând umăr la umăr pentru a organiza acest turneu final este formidabil. Este binecunoscut faptul că colaborarea se află în centrul fotbalului european și este o plăcere absolută să văd cât de multă muncă au depus aceste două asociații pentru a organiza un eveniment atât de prestigios.

Doresc să le mulțumesc ambelor asociații și președinților lor, Levan Kobiasvili și Răzvan Burleanu, pentru ospitalitatea călduroasă și pentru eforturile din culise depuse pentru ceea ce promite a fi un turneu spectaculos.

Pentru acest turneu final, ne vom folosi, de asemenea, de vocea puternică a fotbalului pentru a crește gradul de sensibilizare asupra

efectelor dăunătoare ale poluării aerului asupra sănătății publice, sugerând în același timp soluții creative și distractive pentru a schimba situația. Prin urmare, îi invit pe toți cei care au fotbalul în suflet să participe la campania noastră „Aer mai curat, Joc mai bun”. Conservarea mediului înconjurător și îmbunătățirea calității aerului pe care îl respirăm este un obiectiv global, pe care îl putem atinge doar în echipă.

Turneul Under-21 este o adevărată fereastră către viitorul fotbalului, iar echipele participante și formațiile respective promit un eveniment de excepție. Abia aștept să începă să se rostogolească mingea, și sunt sigur că și dumneavoastră împărtășiți același entuziasm.

Fie ca cea mai bună echipă să învingă!

**Aleksander Čeferin**  
Președinte UEFA

კეთილი იყოს თქვენი მობრძანება UEFA-ს 2023 წლის 21-წლამდელთა ევროპის ჩემპიონატის ფინალში!

სასიამოვნოა, როცა ხედავ, რომ საქართველო და რუმინეთი, ამ ფინალური ტურნირის ორგანიზებისთვის, ხელიხელჩაკიდებულნი მუშაობენ. ცნობილია, რომ თანამშრომლობა ევროპული ფეხბურთის საფუძველია და აბსოლუტური სიამოვნებაა იმის ხილვა, თუ რამხელა შრომა განაამორმასოციაციამ, ასეთი პრესტიჟული ღონისძიების ჩატარებისთვის.

მინდა, მაღლობა გადავუხადო ორივე ასოციაციას და მათ პრეზიდენტებს,

ლევან კობიაშვილსა (Levan Kobiasvili) და რაზვან ბურლეანუს (Răzvan Burleanu), თბილი სტუმართმოყვარეობისთვის და კულისებში გაწეული ძალისხმევითვის, რაც სანახაობრივ ტურნირს გვპირდება.

ამ ფინალებისთვის ჩვენ ასევე გამოვიყენებთ ფეხბურთის ძძლავრ ხმას, რათა ავიმადლოთ ცნობიერება საზოგადოებრივ ჯანმრთელობაზე ჰაერის დაბინძურების მავნე ზემოქმედების შესახებ, ასევე სიტუაციის შესაცვლელად, კრეატიულ და სახალისო გადაწყვეტილებებს წარვადგენთ. ამიტომ, მე ვინვეც ყველა ადამიანს, ვისაც ფეხბურთი უყვარს, მონაწილეობა მიიღოს ჩვენს კამპანიაში

„სუფთა ჰაერი, უკეთესი თამაში“. გარემოს დაცვა და იმ ჰაერის ხარისხის გაუმჯობესება, რომელსაც ვსუნთქავთ, გლობალური მიზანია და მისი მიღწევა მხოლოდ გუნდურად შეგვიძლია.

21-წლამდელთა ტურნირი არის რეალური ფანჯარა თამაშის მომავლისკენ, სადაც მონაწილე გუნდები და მათი შესაბამისი შემადგენლობები, გვპირდებიან ღონისძიებას, რომელიც საუკუნოდ დარჩება. მოუთმენლად ველი, როდის გაგორდება ბურთი და დარწმუნებული ვარ, თქვენც იგივე განწყობა გაქვთ.

დაე, საუკეთესო გუნდმა გაიმარჯვოს!

**ალექსანდერ ჩეფერინი**  
UEFA-ს პრეზიდენტი



EVERY CHILD IS A CHAMPION







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2023



## Welcome!

**Hello and welcome to the 2023 UEFA European Under-21 Championship final tournament, where the best teams on the continent will compete for the title.**

We are particularly proud of the fact that the final of the tournament will be hosted by the Georgian city of Batumi. I believe that our fans will create a special atmosphere for the two finalists.

I am also certain that Georgia will offer an outstanding experience to the visiting fans, whom we will welcome with our famous, unique hospitality and pleasant environment.

**Levan Kobiashvili**  
President, Football Federation of Georgia

მოგესალმებით, კეთილი იყოს თქვენი მომზადება საქართველოში, უეფას 21-წლამდე ევროპის ჩემპიონატის ფინალურ ეტაპზე, სადაც საუკეთესო გუნდები ევროპის ჩემპიონობისთვის იბრძვიან.

განსაკუთრებით სასიხარულო და საამაყოა, რომ ტურნირის ფინალური მატჩი სწორედ ჩვენს ქვეყანაში, ბათუმში იმართება. დარწმუნებული ვარ, სტადიონზე მოსული გულშემატკივარი გამორჩეულ საფეხბურთო ატმოსფეროს შექმნის ფინალში მოასპარეზე გუნდებისთვის.

მჯერა, რომ საქართველო გამორჩეული იქნება ჩამოსული გულშემატკივრისთვისაც, რომლებსაც ჩვენი ქვეყნის უნიკალური სტუმართმოყვარეობით და სასიამოვნო გარემოთი დავხვდებით.

ლევან კობიაშვილი  
საქართველოს ფეხბურთის ფედერაციის  
პრეზიდენტი



**Dear football friends,**

It is my great pleasure to welcome you to Romania to the UEFA European Under-21 Championship! We are very proud to host this event.

We aim to provide unique memories to all the players and supporters. The footballers will be able to enjoy a quality experience at brand new stadiums constructed for EURO 2020.

I would like to tell visitors to Bucharest that they will be thrilled to discover a city that was once known as the Little Paris. Visitors to Cluj-Napoca will not be any less surprised. Although they will be in a medieval citadel, they will certainly feel the contrast offered by the modernity of the city – and most of all, I hope, feel the quality of the sport on show!

Welcome and let's play football!

**Răzvan Burleanu**  
President, Romanian Football Federation

**Dragi prieteni ai fotbalului,**

Este o mare plăcere să vă urez bun venit în România la turneul UEFA EURO U21! Suntem foarte mândri să găzduim acest eveniment.

Ne propunem să oferim tuturor jucătorilor și suporterilor amintiri de neuitat. Jucătorii se vor putea bucura de o experiență fotbalistică la standarde înalte pe stadioane noi, construite pentru EURO 2020.

Aș vrea să le spun vizitatorilor Bucureștiului că vor fi încântați să descopere un oraș care odată a fost cunoscut drept Micul Paris. Vizitatorii Clujului Napoca nu vor fi mai puțin surprinși. Deși se vor afla într-o cetate medievală, cu siguranță vor simți contrastul oferit de modernitatea orașului. Dar, cel mai mult sper în spectacolul sportiv!

Bun venit și hai să jucăm fotbal!

**Răzvan Burleanu**  
Președintele Federației Române de Fotbal







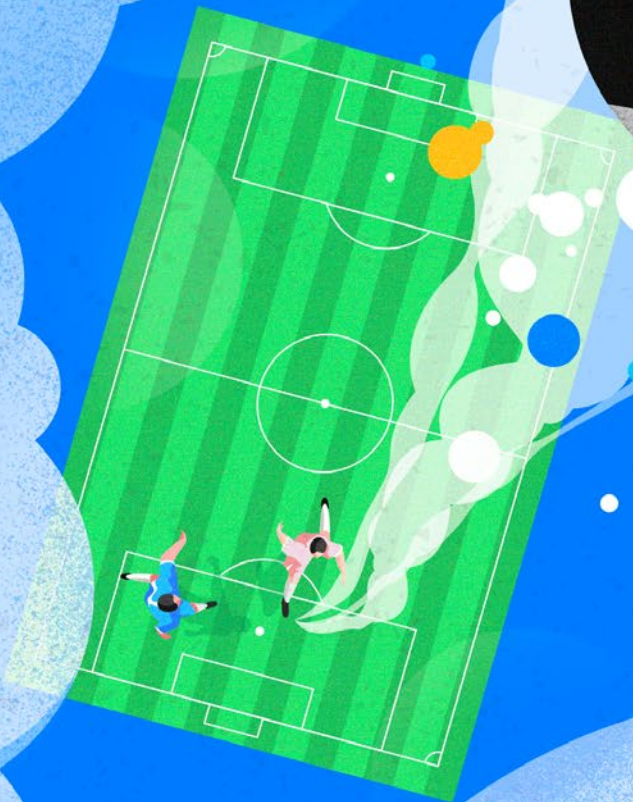


## WINNING FEELING

Showered with celebratory confetti, Germany players and staff, including tournament top-goalscorer Lukas Nmecha, enjoy some post-match fun after winning the 2021 UEFA European Under-21 Championship.

Germany beat Portugal 1-0 in the final in Slovenia to claim the trophy for the third time.





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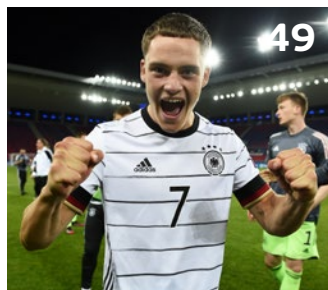
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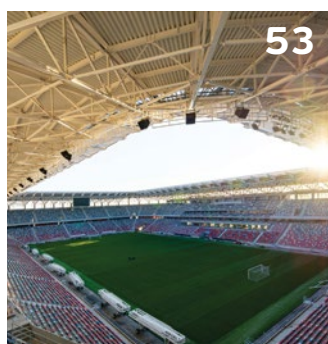
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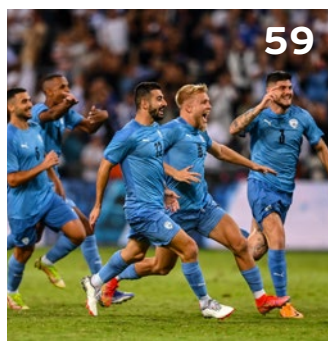
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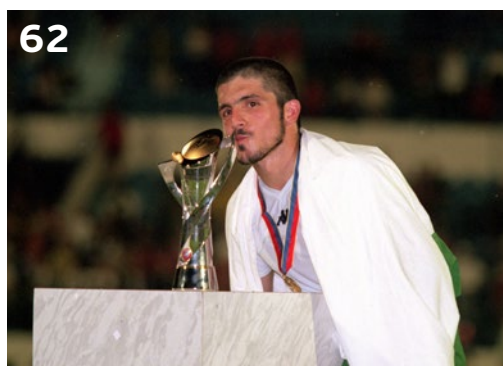
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### EDITORIAL

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### A TOBACCO-FREE TOURNAMENT

A no-smoking policy is in operation at the 2023 UEFA Under-21 Championship. Thank you for respecting the no-smoking policy and enjoy the games.

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## TOURNAMENT SCHEDULE

All the vital match details

## Group A

Wednesday 21 June

Georgia v Portugal

18:00, Paichadze Stadium, Tbilisi

Belgium v Netherlands

18:00, Meskhi Stadium, Tbilisi

Saturday 24 June

Georgia v Belgium

18:00, Paichadze Stadium, Tbilisi

Portugal v Netherlands

18:00, Meskhi Stadium, Tbilisi

Tuesday 27 June

Netherlands v Georgia

18:00, Paichadze Stadium, Tbilisi

Portugal v Belgium

18:00, Meskhi Stadium, Tbilisi

## Group B

Wednesday 21 June

Ukraine v Croatia

18:00, Giulești Stadium, Bucharest

Romania v Spain

20:45, Steaua Stadium, Bucharest

Saturday 24 June

Romania v Ukraine

18:00, Steaua Stadium, Bucharest

Spain v Croatia

20:45, Giulești Stadium, Bucharest

Tuesday 27 June

Croatia v Romania

20:45, Steaua Stadium, Bucharest

Spain v Ukraine

20:45, Giulești Stadium, Bucharest

## Group C

Thursday 22 June

Czech Republic v England

18:00, Batumi Arena, Batumi

Germany v Israel

18:00, Shengelia Arena, Kutaisi

Sunday 25 June

Czech Republic v Germany

18:00, Batumi Arena, Batumi

England v Israel

18:00, Shengelia Arena, Kutaisi

Wednesday 28 June

England v Germany

18:00, Batumi Arena, Batumi

Israel v Czech Republic

18:00, Shengelia Arena, Kutaisi

## Group D

Thursday 22 June

Norway v Switzerland

18:00, CFR Cluj Stadium, Cluj-Napoca

France v Italy

20:45, Cluj Arena, Cluj-Napoca

Sunday 25 June

Switzerland v Italy

18:00, Cluj Arena, Cluj-Napoca

Norway v France

20:45, CFR Cluj Stadium, Cluj-Napoca

Wednesday 28 June

Switzerland v France

20:45, CFR Cluj Stadium, Cluj-Napoca

Italy v Norway

20:45, Cluj Arena, Cluj-Napoca

## Quarter-finals

Saturday 1 July

QF1: Winners Group A v Runners-up Group C

18:00, Meskhi Stadium, Tbilisi

QF3: Winners Group B v Runners-up Group D

21:00, Giulești Stadium, Bucharest

Sunday 2 July

QF2: Winners Group C v Runners-up Group A

18:00, Shengelia Arena, Kutaisi

QF4: Winners Group D v Runners-up Group B

21:00, Cluj Arena, Cluj-Napoca

## Semi-finals

Wednesday 5 July

SF1: Winners QF1 v Winners QF2

18:00, Batumi Arena, Batumi

SF2: Winners QF3 v Winners QF4

21:00, Steaua Stadium, Bucharest

## Final

Saturday 8 July

Winners SF1 v Winners SF2

18:00, Batumi Arena, Batumi

All kick-off times CET. Romania is one hour ahead of CET. Georgia is two hours ahead.

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# PORTUGAL

## AN INTRODUCTION...

**W**ith a history of bringing through some of Europe's brightest talents, Portugal are always one of the teams to watch at the UEFA European Under-21 Championship.

The three-time runners-up will be aiming to make that final step by becoming champions – and they will do so using a squad packed with exciting youngsters.

Great players are nothing new to Portugal. They first made a major impact at the tournament in 1994 when they reached the final with a team containing the likes of Luís Figo, João Pinto and Rui Costa.

They were edged out by an extra-time goal from Italy that year and in the next two decades their best finish was third in 2004. Then, in the Czech Republic in 2015 a new generation of future stars put Portugal in the final again.

By that time, current coach Rui Jorge had been at the helm for five years and he had a settled squad that included Bernardo Silva, João Mário and William Carvalho. Having beaten Germany 5-0 in the semi-final, they fell at the final hurdle as Sweden triumphed on penalties.

Six years later they would suffer final heartbreak for a third time, losing 1-0 to Germany despite boasting the likes of Rafael Leão, Fábio Vieira and Vitorinha in their ranks.

While the supply of talent remains plentiful, Portugal will be hopeful a tournament win is just a matter of time.

### CHAMPIONSHIP RECORD

1978	Did not qualify
1980	Did not qualify
1982	Did not enter
1984	Did not qualify
1986	Did not qualify
1988	Did not qualify
1990	Did not qualify
1992	Did not qualify
1994	Runners-up
1996	Quarter-finals
1998	Did not qualify
2000	Did not qualify
2002	Group stage
2004	Third place
2006	Group stage
2007	Group stage
2009	Did not qualify
2011	Did not qualify
2013	Did not qualify
2015	Runners-up
2017	Group stage
2019	Did not qualify
2021	Runners-up



### THE LEADER Rui Jorge

The Portugal coach is one of the most experienced leaders in international football and his history with his country's Under-21s team goes back a long way.

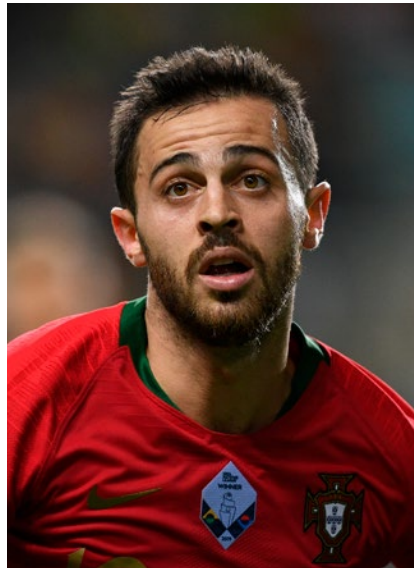
As a player the full-back was called up to the full international squad that played at UEFA European Championships in 2000 and 2004, plus the 2002 FIFA World Cup.

When his playing career ended he moved into coaching and was appointed to his current role in 2010. He first led his players to a Under-21 finals in 2015, where they went all the way to the final before losing to Sweden.

He repeated the trick in 2021, this time finishing runners-up to Germany.

**"Our motivation is to represent our country and the quality of Portuguese players. The results should come if we play our part correctly"**

– Rui Jorge



### HERO OF THE PAST Bernardo Silva

Tricky midfield star Bernardo Silva starred for Portugal as they reached the final of the 2015 UEFA European Under-21 Championship.

Having shone for his country at the 2013 European Under-19 Championship, he had already made his full international debut before the 2015 finals, where he scored a goal in the semi-final against Germany but lost out to Sweden in the final.

Bernardo has since gone on to represent Portugal at two FIFA World Cups and UEFA EURO 2020.

At club level, he made his name at Benfica and Monaco but has spent the last six years at Manchester City, winning multiple honours.



### FACTFILE

#### Home kit:

Red shirt, green shorts, red socks

#### Previous tournament best:

Runners-up (1994, 2015, 2021)

#### Top goalscorer in qualifying:

Gonçalo Ramos (12)

#### Qualification:

Group D winners

### STAR SEARCH Fábio Silva

Striker Fábio Silva is used to making headlines at a young age, and at 20 years old he has already broken several records.

The tall, pacy forward made his name at Porto where he won the UEFA Youth League in 2018/19, then became the youngest player to make his first-team debut for the club at the age of 17 years and 22 days old. He became the youngest player to play in Europe for the club the following month, then became Porto's youngest ever goalscorer in October 2019 after a strike against Coimbra.

Wolverhampton Wanderers spotted his talent and signed him in September 2020, and he became the club's youngest Premier League goalscorer a few months later.

He spent last season on loan at first Anderlecht, then PSV Eindhoven.







# NETHERLANDS

## AN INTRODUCTION...

For a nation with such a proud football pedigree, it is perhaps surprising to know it wasn't until 1988 that two-time winners the Netherlands made their bow in these finals. They reached the last four on that occasion, a stage they would reach again in 1998 before they made their maiden final appearance in 2006.

After finishing runners-up to Ukraine – to whom they lost 2-1 – in Group B, the two teams met again in the tournament's deciding game after the Dutch dispatched France in the semi-finals.

On this occasion the Netherlands triumphed 3-0 thanks to a brace from tournament star Klaas-Jan Huntelaar and a late goal from Nicky Hof.

The *Jong Oranje* successfully defended the tournament on home soil the following year, overcoming Belgium and England on their way to the final, where Otman Bakkal, Ryan Babel, Maceo Rigters and Luigi Bruins were all on the scoresheet as they beat Serbia 4-1.

Rigters was the top scorer of the competition that year with four goals and left-winger Royston Drenthe was named the player of tournament shortly before he left Feyenoord for Real Madrid.

The Dutch have reached the last four on two occasions since then – in 2013 and 2021 – and will no doubt believe they have what it takes to reach the latter stages once again this year.

### CHAMPIONSHIP RECORD

1978	Did not enter
1980	Did not qualify
1982	Did not qualify
1984	Did not qualify
1986	Did not qualify
1988	Semi-finals
1990	Did not qualify
1992	Quarter-finals
1994	Did not qualify
1996	Did not qualify
1998	Semi-finals
2000	Group stage
2002	Did not qualify
2004	Did not qualify
2006	Winners
2007	Winners
2009	Did not qualify
2011	Did not qualify
2013	Semi-finals
2015	Did not qualify
2017	Did not qualify
2019	Did not qualify
2021	Semi-finals





### THE LEADER Erwin van de Looi

Erwin van de Looi has proven to be a talented coach since his playing career was cut short by injury at the age of 30.

Former club Groningen gave him the opportunity to cut his coaching teeth when they handed over control of their Under-21s team in 2008.

They soon promoted him to assistant manager and then manager, and he repaid the club's faith by leading them to Dutch Cup glory for the first time in 2015.

A two-year spell with Willem II followed before he was appointed the Netherlands Under-21 boss in 2018.

The former centre-back led the team to the semi-finals last time around and the experience should stand the Dutch in good stead at this tournament.

**"It is a great challenge to perform as well as possible in the Under-21 Championship and to prepare players for the Dutch national team"**

– Erwin van de Looi



### HERO OF THE PAST Klaas-Jan Huntelaar

The Netherlands had Golden Boot winner Klaas-Jan Huntelaar to thank when they went all the way in the 2006 UEFA European Under-21 Championship.

His goal secured an all-important point against Denmark in the group stage and he was also on the scoresheet in the 3-2 extra-time win against France in the semi-finals.

It was Huntelaar who opened the scoring in the final against Ukraine, and he added another from the penalty spot as his side won 3-0.

His exploits earned him the Golden Player award as well as a place in the official team of the tournament.

The former Ajax, Real Madrid and AC Milan man went on to feature in two UEFA European Championships and two FIFA World Cups for the senior side, scoring 42 goals in 76 matches, and he remains his country's all-time top scorer at Under-21 level with 18 goals.



### FACTFILE

#### Home kit:

Orange shirt, orange shorts, orange socks

#### Previous tournament best:

Winners (2006, 2007)

#### Top goalscorer in qualifying:

Joshua Zirkzee (7)

#### Qualification:

Group E winners

### STAR SEARCH

#### Myron Boadu

Described as a "modern poacher", Myron Boadu has proven to be a prolific goalscorer for the Under-21s since making his debut at this level in 2019.

The boyhood Ajax fan began his career with AZ Alkmaar, where he rose from the youth ranks to the first team, scoring 32 goals in 64 appearances in the Eredivisie.

His goalscoring exploits caught the eye of Monaco, who he joined in 2021 on a five-year deal, the same year he scored a brace against France in that summer's Under-21 quarter-finals.

He has also been called up to the senior side, scoring against Estonia in a UEFA EURO 2020 qualifying match to become the first player born in the 21st century to feature and score for the Netherlands' national team.







# BELGIUM

## AN INTRODUCTION...

One of the world's most feared nations at senior level is making only its fourth appearance in this competition's final tournament.

Belgium didn't make their bow until 2002, when Jean-François De Sart's side beat Greece but failed to progress from a group which also contained France and the Czech Republic.

The country's best performance came in 2007, when a side featuring Thomas Vermaelen, Axel Witsel and Marouane Fellaini progressed to the semi-finals in the Netherlands.

They beat Israel 1-0 in Group A thanks to a late goal from Kevin Mirallas, and draws against Portugal and the Netherlands ensured their progress to the last four before they fell to a 2-0 defeat by Serbia.

A 12-year wait for their next appearance ended in disappointing fashion as they fell to defeats by Spain, Poland and hosts Italy in 2019.

However, with Leipzig's Maarten Vandevoort between the sticks, Wolfsburg's Aster Vranckx pulling the strings in midfield and PSV Eindhoven's Yorbe Vertessen in attack, they have every chance of making a strong impression this time around.

They were also the first team to clinch qualification for this tournament when they drew 1-1 with Denmark in March last year. The match in Herning was one of only two matches the Belgians failed to win in a group which also contained Turkey, Scotland and Kazakhstan.

### CHAMPIONSHIP RECORD

1978	Did not qualify
1980	Did not qualify
1982	Did not qualify
1984	Did not qualify
1986	Did not qualify
1988	Did not qualify
1990	Did not qualify
1992	Did not qualify
1994	Did not qualify
1996	Did not qualify
1998	Did not qualify
2000	Did not qualify
2002	Group stage
2004	Did not qualify
2006	Did not qualify
2007	Semi-finals
2009	Did not qualify
2011	Did not qualify
2013	Did not qualify
2015	Did not qualify
2017	Did not qualify
2019	Group stage
2021	Did not qualify





### THE LEADER Jacky Mathijssen

It is more than two decades since Jacky Mathijssen took his first steps in the world of football management with Belgian Pro League outfit Sint-Truidense VV.

He had seen out his long goalkeeping career at the club before he was appointed in 2001, and he repaid the faith shown in him by leading the team to only their second Belgian Cup final before he departed in 2004.

His nomadic coaching career then took in clubs including Club Brugge, Charleroi SC and Greek Super League side AEL before he joined Belgium's youth set-up in July 2018.

Although he was unable to steer the country to the UEFA European Under-19 Championship the following year, he was promoted to the Under-21s in March 2020 and masterminded Belgium's near-perfect qualification campaign en route to this tournament.

**"I am a very satisfied national coach. I see a lot of enthusiasm in all my players. Everyone is fighting to ensure their place in the team"**

– Jacky Mathijssen



### HERO OF THE PAST Kevin Mirallas

Winger Kevin Mirallas played a big part in helping Belgium achieve their best-ever performance in this competition in 2007.

After a goalless draw against Portugal, it was Mirallas' late strike that secured the Red Devils' victory against Israel. He also opened the scoring in Belgium's 2-2 draw against the Netherlands to help his team reach the last four.

Although he was unable to prevent his country exiting at the semi-final stage, he was named in the team of the tournament and went on to win 60 caps for the senior side, scoring 10 goals.

At club level he is best known for a seven-year stint at Everton, where he made more than 150 Premier League appearances, and was most recently appearing for Cypriot side AEL Limassol.



### FACTFILE

#### Home kit:

Red shirt, red shorts, red socks

#### Previous tournament best:

Semi-finals (2007)

#### Top goalscorer in qualifying:

Lois Openda (7)

#### Qualification:

Group 1 winners

### STAR SEARCH

#### Maarten Vandevoordt

Talented shot-stopper Maarten Vandevoordt became the youngest goalkeeper in UEFA Champions League history – aged 17 years, 287 days – when he appeared for Genk against Napoli in December 2019.

He had made his professional debut only three months earlier and established himself as Genk's No1 midway through the side's run to Belgian Cup glory the following season.

He missed just three of 48 games in all competitions in the 2021/22 campaign, keeping 11 clean sheets, as he continued to rise through Belgium's youth ranks.

Vandevoordt's performances have also caught the eye of Leipzig, who he will join next year after signing a five-year contract with the Bundesliga club.

It surely won't be long before he breaks into the senior national side.







# GEORGIA

## AN INTRODUCTION...

**G**eorgia are making their first appearance in this tournament, which they automatically qualified for as co-hosts.

They are no strangers to playing in major youth competitions, however, having previously also hosted the 2017 UEFA European Under-19 Championship.

They made a respectable impression on home soil despite going out at the group stage, beating Sweden 2-1 in between losses to Portugal and the Czech Republic.

Going further back, they were the surprise package at the 2012 Under-17 finals, when they finished above France and Iceland to reach the last four, where they bowed out 2-0 to eventual winners the Netherlands.

Part of the Soviet Union team until 1992, their only previous qualification came in 1997 – at Under-16 level – when the players representing them at this tournament had not even been born.

The current crop features a strong contingent from Dinamo Tbilisi, the dominant team in the co-hosts' domestic competitions and the reigning Erovnuli Liga champions.

Their players include shot-stopper Luka Kutaladze, centre-back Aleksandre Kalandadze, anchorman Anzor Mekvabishvili and fellow midfielder Gabriel Sigua, who turns 18 during this tournament.

Among the others to watch out for are highly-rated Crvena zvezda left-back Irakli Azarovi, FC Dila midfielder Nika Gagnidze and FK Sarajevo forward Giorgi Gulashvili.

Georgia face tough games against Portugal, Belgium and the Netherlands in Group A but they will be eager to put on a good show in front of the home supporters, and a 3-2 friendly win against England in November 2021 shows they are not to be underestimated.

### CHAMPIONSHIP RECORD

1978	Did not enter
1980	Did not enter
1982	Did not enter
1984	Did not enter
1986	Did not enter
1988	Did not enter
1990	Did not enter
1992	Did not enter
1994	Did not enter
1996	Did not qualify
1998	Did not qualify
2000	Did not qualify
2002	Did not qualify
2004	Did not qualify
2006	Did not qualify
2007	Did not qualify
2009	Did not qualify
2011	Did not qualify
2013	Did not qualify
2015	Did not qualify
2017	Did not qualify
2019	Did not qualify
2021	Did not qualify

\* Georgia was part of the Soviet Union until 1991





### THE LEADER Ramaz Svanadze

Ex-defender Ramaz Svanadze moved into coaching after his playing career was cut short by injury at the age of 24.

His big break arrived a decade ago at former club Dinamo Tbilisi, where he worked as assistant coach for two years before he took on a similar role with Inter Baku in Azerbaijan.

Svanadze was appointed Georgia's Under-19s manager in 2019 and impressed sufficiently to be appointed the senior side's caretaker boss the following year, overseeing a 0-0 Nations League draw against Estonia at short notice following the departure of Vladimír Weiss.

The 42-year-old has been in his current role since 2021, and he masterminded the victory over England before recording wins against Estonia and Romania, as well as a 1-1 draw with Ukraine, last year.

**"For us and for our country, it is a very important tournament. We are not going to miss this opportunity"**  
– Ramaz Svanadze



### HERO OF THE PAST Giorgi Kinkladze

Playmaker Giorgi Kinkladze first came to international attention when he starred for Georgia in a 5-0 win against Wales in 1994.

A move to the Premier League followed with Manchester City, where the midfielder's skill, dribbling ability and spectacular goals made him a cult hero as he won the club's Player of the Year award in two consecutive seasons.

He later joined Ajax before returning to England with Derby County, where he collected another Player of the Year award in 2003.

The former Dinamo Tbilisi man was also named Georgian Footballer of the Year on two occasions – in 1993 and 1996 – and scored nine goals in 57 appearances for the national side, for whom he made his debut as a 19-year-old in 1992.



### FACTFILE

#### Home kit:

White shirt with red trim, white shirt, white socks

#### Previous tournament best:

N/A

#### Top goalscorer in qualifying:

N/A

#### Qualification:

Qualified automatically as co-hosts

### STAR SEARCH Giorgi Guliashvili

Giorgi Guliashvili scored two goals in Georgia's eye-catching win against England in November 2021.

The first was a long-distance volley which showed just how dangerous the deep-lying forward can be when he has sight of the target.

The 21-year-old began his career with Saburtalo, with whom he won the Erovnuli Liga in 2018 and the Georgian Cup in 2019 and 2021, as well as the Georgian Super Cup in 2020.

Overall he scored 11 goals in 79 league appearances for the Tbilisi-based side before moving to FK Sarajevo earlier this year.

He scored his first two international goals at Under-21 level during a 4-1 friendly win against Belarus in May 2021, and was also on the scoresheet in a 1-1 draw against Romania.

before his exploits against England.







# SPAIN

## AN INTRODUCTION...

**C**rowned European champions five times, only Italy can match the level of success that Spain have enjoyed in this competition.

It was the Italians who Spain beat in a penalty shoot-out – the first in the tournament’s history – to secure their maiden triumph in 1986 following a thrilling 3-3 draw in the two-legged final.

A goal from Iván Pérez was enough to beat Greece 12 years later as *La Rojita*, who had the likes of Guti, Michel Salgado and Juan Carlos Valerón in their ranks – won the competition for the second time.

A golden period of success at senior level – two European Championships and a World Cup between 2008 and 2012 – was followed by the Under-21s as they won two UEFA tournaments in a row.

The triumph in 2011 saw a team featuring David De Gea, César Azpilicueta and Juan Mata beat Switzerland 2-0 in the deciding game.

Isco, Álvaro Morata and David De Gea were among the heroes two years later as the Spaniards overcame Germany and the Netherlands before a Thiago hat-trick helped them beat Italy 4-2 in the final.

Their most recent success came four years ago, when they recovered from a defeat in the group stage to reach their eighth final, where a stunning goal from player of the tournament Fabián Ruiz helped them beat Germany 2-1.

### CHAMPIONSHIP RECORD

1978	Did not qualify
1980	Did not qualify
1982	Quarter-finals
1984	Runners-up
1986	Winners
1988	Quarter-finals
1990	Quarter-finals
1992	Did not qualify
1994	Third place
1996	Runners-up
1998	Winners
2000	Third place
2002	Did not qualify
2004	Did not qualify
2006	Did not qualify
2007	Did not qualify
2009	Group stage
2011	Winners
2013	Winners
2015	Did not qualify
2017	Runners-up
2019	Winners
2021	Semi-finals





### THE LEADER Santi Denia

Commonly known as Santi, there are few people who have the ex-Atlético centre-back's experience when it comes to coaching a country's most talented youngsters.

He has been involved with Spain's youth set-up since taking over the reins with the Under-16s in 2009, and led his country to Under-19 glory four years ago.

That followed a playing career in which he won a league and cup double with Atlético, in between two stints with hometown side Albacete Balompié. Capped twice at senior level, he was also part of the side that finished runners-up at the 1996 UEFA European Under-21 Championship.

He returned to Atlético as assistant coach before he joined the Royal Spanish Football Federation, and was promoted to his current role last December following the appointment of his predecessor, Luis de la Fuente, as senior head coach.

**"The goal is to win the European Championship. We want to have possession and play in the opponents' half. We have to keep improving"**

– Santi Denia



### HERO OF THE PAST Juan Mata

Midfield playmaker Juan Mata was already a FIFA World Cup winner when he starred for Spain at the 2011 Under-21 finals.

Operating initially from the left – yet with licence to roam – Spain's No.10 was a hard man to pin down, as the defences of England, Czech Republic and Ukraine in Group B, followed by Belarus and Switzerland in the semis and final, would testify.

The tournament's Golden Player instigated moves and got on the end of them, helping himself to two goals and two assists.

He went on to win the UEFA Champions League with Chelsea the following year before moving to Manchester United and, last summer, Galatasaray.



### FACTFILE

#### Home kit:

Red shirt, blue shorts, blue socks

#### Previous tournament best:

Winners (1986, 1998, 2011, 2013, 2019)

#### Top goalscorer in qualifying:

Abel Ruiz (7)

#### Qualification:

Group C winners

### STAR SEARCH Bryan Gil

Already capped at senior level, Bryan Gil was part of the Spanish sides that won the 2019 Under-19 finals and claimed a silver medal at the Tokyo Olympics two years ago.

The left-footed winger began his career at Sevilla, where he became the first player born in the 21st century to score a goal in La Liga, and he also caught the eye during the side's run to UEFA Europa League glory in 2019/20.

After moving to Tottenham in 2021, he has continued his development with loan spells at Valencia and then back at Sevilla, where he spent the second half of the 2022/23 season.

Few players at this tournament will have as much experience as Gil, who was also a member of the side which reached the semi-finals in 2021, and every team will be aware of the attacking threat he poses.







# ROMANIA

## AN INTRODUCTION...

Co-hosts Romania enter this tournament hoping to gain inspiration from their performances four years ago when they reached the semi-finals.

Defender Alex Pașcanu, future Rangers midfielder Ianis Hagi (son of the legendary Gheorghe) and striker George Pușcaș were among the heroes in Italy, where the Romanians beat England and Croatia to top Group C ahead of France.

In the last four, Mirel Rădoi's men were seconds away from forcing extra time against Germany, but two late goals saw the defending champions go through to the final.

Romania also qualified for the next tournament in Hungary and Slovenia, where they were unlucky to exit in the group stage despite not losing a game. A win against Hungary was sandwiched between draws against the Netherlands and Germany, who both progressed to the knockout stage at Romania's expense thanks to superior goal difference.

The country previously hosted the 1998 Under-21 finals in Bucharest, when they fell at the quarter-finals stage at the hands of the Dutch.

It may only be their fourth appearance in this competition but with the likes of Genoa centre-half Radu Drăgușin and highly-rated FCSB attackers Octavian Popescu and David Miculescu in their ranks, they will be confident of making a strong impression in front of their own supporters.

### CHAMPIONSHIP RECORD

1978	Did not qualify
1980	Did not qualify
1982	Did not qualify
1984	Did not qualify
1986	Did not qualify
1988	Did not qualify
1990	Did not qualify
1992	Did not qualify
1994	Did not qualify
1996	Did not qualify
1998	Quarter-finals
2000	Did not qualify
2002	Did not qualify
2004	Did not qualify
2006	Did not qualify
2007	Did not qualify
2009	Did not qualify
2011	Did not qualify
2013	Did not qualify
2015	Did not qualify
2017	Did not qualify
2019	Semi-finals
2021	Group stage



### THE LEADER Emil Săndoi

Emil Săndoi was appointed Romania's Under-21s head coach for the second time last year.

The former centre-back had previously been in charge between 2006 and 2013, during which time he also briefly oversaw the senior team.

His managerial career began in 1999 at FC Universitatea Craiova, the club where he spent most of his playing days and with whom he won a domestic league and cup double in 1991, and he led them to the Romanian Cup final at the end of his first season in charge.

The 58-year-old had two further managerial spells at the club as his coaching skills were deployed at a variety of teams in his country's domestic leagues, including Pandurii Târgu Jiu, whom he led to the second division championship in 2005.

**"All the strong teams in Europe will be there for this tournament so it will be a top-level competition from this perspective. We are all looking forward to it with great interest"**

– Emil Săndoi



### HERO OF THE PAST George Pușcaș

Romania's run to the semi-finals four years ago was in large part due to the scoring prowess of George Pușcaș.

The then Palermo striker netted seven times in qualifying to help his country reach the tournament in Italy.

At the finals, Pușcaș won the penalty from which he scored the opener in a 4-1 victory over Croatia, and he netted again in the next game against England to become *Tricolorii Mici's* highest goalscorer.

Pușcaș's brace then gave Romania a half-time lead against Germany in the semi-finals, although his efforts eventually proved to be in vain.

Named in the 2019 team of the tournament, the former Inter player joined Reading that summer and spent last season on loan at Serie B side Genoa.



### FACTFILE

#### Home kit:

Yellow shirt, yellow shorts, yellow socks

#### Previous tournament best:

Semi-finals (2019)

#### Top goalscorer in qualifying:

N/A

#### Qualification:

Qualified automatically as co-hosts

### STAR SEARCH Radu Drăgușin

Helping to keep Romania's opponents at bay will be former Juventus centre-back Radu Drăgușin.

A tall and physical defender who models himself on Liverpool's Virgil van Dijk, he left his homeland for Italy at the age of 16 amid interest from Chelsea, Paris Saint-Germain and Atlético.

He made his UEFA Champions League debut against Dynamo Kyiv in December 2020, a few days before making his Serie A bow in a 3-1 win over Genoa.

Drăgușin later enjoyed loan spells with Sampdoria, Salernitana and Genoa, before joining the Ligurian team on a permanent basis at the start of this year.

Having featured for Romania in the 2021 Under-21 finals, he made his first appearance for the senior side the following year, and his experience will be invaluable for the tournament co-hosts.







# CROATIA

## AN INTRODUCTION...

Croatia are making their fifth appearance at this tournament, having now qualified for the past three finals in a row.

The country made its finals debut in 2000, when a squad featuring Juventus defender Igor Tudor, Bayer Leverkusen midfielder Jurica Vranješ and future Benfica forward Tomo Šokota finished bottom of the group despite a credible draw against Spain.

They suffered a similar fate four years later before returning to the tournament in 2019, when defeats by France and Romania saw them make another early exit despite a draw against England.

Their fortunes improved last time out, when they progressed from Group D in second place despite losing to Portugal and England, with a 3-2 win against Switzerland ultimately enough to progress on goal difference.

They faced Spain in the last eight, where they trailed for most of the second half before Luka Ivanušec scored an equaliser deep into stoppage time. However, it was their opponents who eventually prevailed to make it into the quarter-finals.

Croatia qualified for this tournament after beating Denmark on penalties in the play-offs, following a 3-3 aggregate draw, having finished runners-up to Norway in Group A.

Among the players aiming to help them reach the knockout stages once again are Eintracht Frankfurt defender Hrvoje Smolčić, Dinamo Zagreb attacking midfielder Martin Baturina and FC Augsburg forward Dion Beljo.

## CHAMPIONSHIP RECORD

1978	Did not enter
1980	Did not enter
1982	Did not enter
1984	Did not enter
1986	Did not enter
1988	Did not enter
1990	Did not enter
1992	Did not enter
1994	Did not enter
1996	Did not qualify
1998	Did not qualify
2000	Group stage
2002	Did not qualify
2004	Group stage
2006	Did not qualify
2007	Did not qualify
2009	Did not qualify
2011	Did not qualify
2013	Did not qualify
2015	Did not qualify
2017	Did not qualify
2019	Group stage
2021	Quarter-finals

\*Part of Yugoslavia until 1991



### THE LEADER Dragan Skočić

A rich and varied coaching career has brought Dragan Skočić to the Croatia Under-21 set-up just in time to lead the country at this tournament.

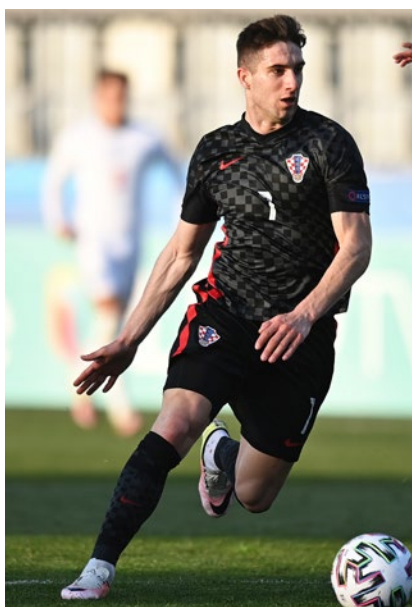
Following Igor Biscan's appointment as Dinamo Zagreb coach in April, Croatia turned to Skočić and his vast experience will help him get to grips with the job as soon as possible.

The 54-year-old's previous job was as the coach of the Iran national team, but having led them to qualification for the 2022 FIFA World Cup, he was replaced on the eve of the tournament.

His coaching career has seen him work in Croatia, Slovenia, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and Iran following a playing career that was based in his homeland, as well as Las Palmas and Compostela in Spain.

**"We really have a lot of talented and quality players, and I look forward to the challenge of helping them realise their potential with my knowledge and experience"**

– Dragan Skočić



### HERO OF THE PAST Luka Ivanušec

Attacking midfielder Luka Ivanušec was one of Croatia's standout performers during his country's run to the quarter-finals two years ago.

He opened the scoring in what proved to be a crucial 3-2 win against Switzerland in their second game.

In the final group fixture against England, he made his 27th appearance for his side to become Croatia's most capped player at under-21 level.

He also scored a consolation penalty in their quarter-final defeat by Spain, and his powerful displays earned him a place in the team of the tournament.

The Dinamo Zagreb player averaged more than a goal every three games for the Under-21s, and he has also represented the senior side on 12 occasions.



### FACTFILE

#### Home kit:

White and red checks shirt, white shorts, white socks

#### Previous tournament best:

Quarter-finals (2021)

#### Top goalscorer in qualifying:

Roko Šimić (7)

#### Qualification:

Play-off winners

### STAR SEARCH Roko Šimić

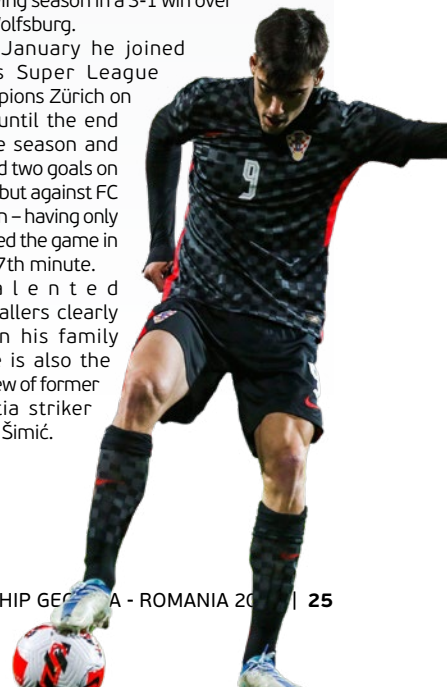
Italy-born forward Roko Šimić scored seven goals in qualifying to fire Croatia to this summer's UEFA European Under-21 Championship.

The son of former AC Milan defender Dario, Šimić was only 16 when he made his first senior professional appearance for Lokomotiva Zagreb in August 2020.

He signed for Austrian side FC Salzburg in the summer of 2021, making his UEFA Champions League debut the following season in a 3-1 win over VfL Wolfsburg.

In January he joined Swiss Super League champions Zürich on loan until the end of the season and scored two goals on his debut against FC Luzern – having only entered the game in the 77th minute.

Talented footballers clearly run in his family as he is also the nephew of former Croatia striker Josip Šimić.







# UKRAINE

## AN INTRODUCTION...

**T**he 2006 UEFA European Under-21 Championship runners-up are making their third appearance at this tournament.

Part of the Soviet Union team until 1991, their debut in these finals was a memorable one as they went all the way to the final.

With Andriy Pyatov – who went on to win 102 caps for the senior team – between the sticks, future Barcelona player Dmytro Chygrynskiy in defence and Dynamo Kyiv’s Artem Milevskiy in attack, there was no shortage of quality in their ranks.

The Netherlands and Denmark were both overcome as Ukraine topped their group, despite a narrow loss to Italy. Then a penalty shoot-out win against Serbia and Montenegro led to a rematch against the Dutch in the final, where they fell to a 3-0 defeat.

Ukraine returned to the tournament five years later but, despite a goalless draw against England, they finished bottom of their group after losses to Spain and the Czech Republic.

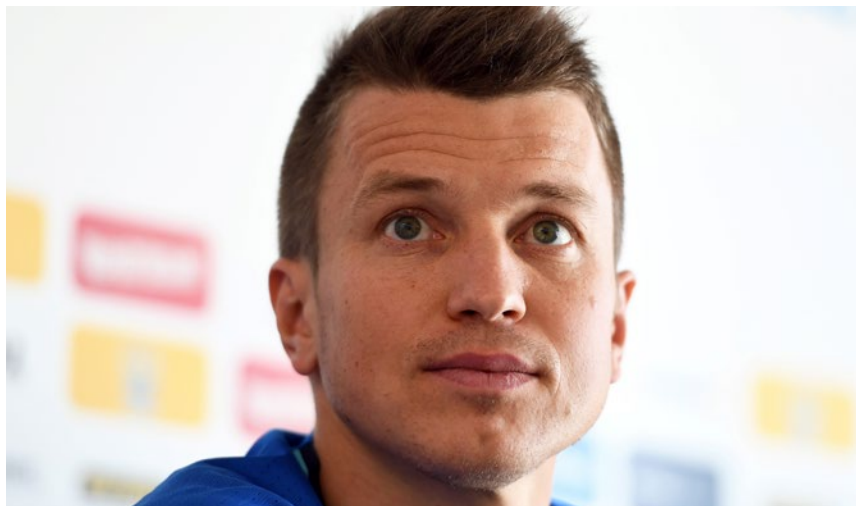
The country has had to wait 12 years before making its return to the finals but the other competing teams will underestimate them at their peril.

Ukraine are the 2019 FIFA U-20 World Cup champions and many members of that squad are eligible for this tournament – including Dynamo Kyiv forward Vladyslav Supryaha and Shakhtar Donetsk striker Danylo Sikan – which they reached after beating Slovakia in the play-offs.

### CHAMPIONSHIP RECORD

1978	Did not enter
1980	Did not enter
1982	Did not enter
1984	Did not enter
1986	Did not enter
1988	Did not enter
1990	Did not enter
1992	Did not enter
1994	Did not enter
1996	Did not qualify
1998	Did not qualify
2000	Did not qualify
2002	Did not qualify
2004	Did not qualify
2006	Runners-up
2007	Did not qualify
2009	Did not qualify
2011	Group stage
2013	Did not qualify
2015	Did not qualify
2017	Did not qualify
2019	Did not qualify
2021	Did not qualify

\*Part of the Soviet Union until 1991



### THE LEADER Ruslan Rotan

A former Dynamo Kyiv midfielder who won 100 caps for his country, Ruslan Rotan has been in charge of the Under-21s since 2019.

He won the domestic double during his first stint in the Ukrainian capital before returning to the team where he started his career, Dnipro Dnipropetrovsk.

Named in UEFA's Europa League squad of the season in 2014/15, when his goal was unable to prevent Dnipro from losing to Sevilla in the final, Rotan was also part of Ukraine's 2006 World Cup and UEFA EURO 2012 squads.

He hung up his boots in 2018, two years after he had been named the Ukrainian Footballer of the Year, and took on the assistant manager's role at FC Olimpik Donetsk before moving to his current position.

The 41-year-old is also the manager of Ukrainian Premier League side FC Olexandriya, a job he was appointed to earlier this year.

**"It is pleasing that our players want to play against the strongest national teams. This shows that the guys are confident in their abilities – they are not afraid to play against anyone"**

– Ruslan Rotan



### HERO OF THE PAST Artem Milevskyi

Striker Artem Milevskyi was named in the team of the tournament after he helped Ukraine reach the 2006 Under-21 final.

The Belarus-born player scored his country's opening goal with a cheeky Panenka-style penalty in a 2-1 win over the Netherlands.

He also scored the winning goal against Denmark that ensured his country's progress to the semi-finals.

Milevskyi – who went on to win 50 caps at senior level, scoring eight times – spent the majority of his career with Dynamo Kyiv and was twice named Ukrainian Footballer of the Year, in 2008 and 2009.



### FACTFILE

#### Home kit:

Yellow shirt, yellow shorts, yellow socks

#### Previous tournament best:

Runners-up (2006)

#### Top goalscorer in qualifying:

Dmytro Kryskiv (4)

#### Qualification:

Play-off winners

### STAR SEARCH Danylo Sikan

Shakhtar Donetsk forward Danylo Sikan arrives at this tournament with a strong pedigree.

A member of the Ukraine team that won the 2019 FIFA U-20 World Cup, he also picked up the Silver Boot in Poland as his four goals helped his country reach the final.

He made his debut for the Under-21s in June 2019 and has already gone on to make several appearances for the senior side, scoring on his debut against Kazakhstan in September 2021 after coming on as a late substitute.

Sikan has continued to represent the Under-21s and led the line during his country's stunning 3-0 second-leg win against Slovakia in the play-off for this tournament.

Following loan spells with Mariupol and German second-tier side Hansa Rostock, he made four UEFA Champions League appearances last season after returning to Shakhtar for the 2022/23 campaign.





# THIS IS HOW IT FEELS

The experience of having won the greatest prize in European Under-21s football



"At the time I don't think I really acknowledged how big an achievement it was. Playing at that level can be a springboard for your whole career"

**MARK HATELEY**  
England, 1984



"Winning in 1980 was unforgettable. We learned we were a match for anybody, and that belief led us to further international success"

**ANATOLIY DEMYANENKO**  
USSR, 1980

"For every professional, the first trophy is unforgettable and I'm no different. We were a tight-knit group and that proved the key to our success"

**LAURENT BLANC**  
France, 1988

"Wearing the Azzurri shirt is an amazing feeling and having the possibility to represent Italy at that age and show what you can do at such an important stage gives you a huge sense of responsibility"

**ANDREA PIRLO**  
Italy, 2000





"We spoke before the game and said how much we wanted to be champions, and I told the players that history only remembers the winners"

**MIROSLAV BERÁNEK**  
Czech Republic, 2002



"After Belarus beat us [in the first group game] I said to myself, 'We will either make it all the way to the end or we'll be out immediately'. Not many were betting on us after the loss but we were patient and it paid off"

**CLAUDIO GENTILE**  
Italy, 2004

"It's been a great experience. We've grown as a team during the tournament. It's a great feeling"



**KLAAS-JAN HUNTELAAR**  
Netherlands, 2006

"This is a moment of pride. They [the players] are very close with each other and I believe they have all of the characteristics any team needs to be successful at the highest level"



"It's like a fairy tale and it's incredible"

**HÅKAN ERICSON**  
Sweden, 2015



**LUIS DE LA FUENTE**  
Spain, 2019



# ბსპი პრეზერს ნიშნავს

რმზა ჟრთად აღვნიშნავთ გემარჯვებას



UEFA  
UNDER21  
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GEORGIA - ROMANIA  
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UEFA  
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GEORGIA - ROMANIA  
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# ENGLAND

## AN INTRODUCTION...

**B**oasting a squad brimming with talent, England are considered among the favourites to lift the trophy they last claimed almost 40 years ago.

The two-time winners may have struggled to make an impact in recent years – going out in the group stage in the last two tournaments – but they look well placed to do better this time around under the leadership of Lee Carsley.

They will be hoping to emulate their 1982 success, when a team featuring Gary Mabbutt, Steve McMahon and Adrian Heath beat West Germany 5-4 over two legs in the final.

Dave Sexton was once again at the helm when the Three Lions retained the trophy two years later, overcoming both France – 7-1 in the quarter-finals – and Italy before beating Spain 3-0 on aggregate.

England reached the last four of the next two tournaments before a barren spell saw them failing to qualify for five successive finals.

In 2007 a team including Gary Cahill, Ashley Young and James Milner reached the semis, where they lost to the Netherlands on penalties, and they went one better at the next tournament before falling 4-0 to Germany in the final.

A semi-final appearance in 2017, under manager Aidy Boothroyd, is as well as England have done since then but few would bet against them going all the way on this occasion.

### CHAMPIONSHIP RECORD

1978	Semi-finals
1980	Semi-finals
1982	Winners
1984	Winners
1986	Semi-finals
1988	Semi-finals
1990	Did not qualify
1992	Did not qualify
1994	Did not qualify
1996	Did not qualify
1998	Did not qualify
2000	Group stage
2002	Group stage
2004	Did not qualify
2006	Did not qualify
2007	Semi-finals
2009	Runners-up
2011	Group stage
2013	Group stage
2015	Group stage
2017	Semi-finals
2019	Group stage
2021	Group stage



### THE LEADER Lee Carsley

The England coach is well-versed in the international game, having won 40 caps for the Republic of Ireland, for whom he was eligible to play through his grandmother's lineage.

Carsley is best remembered for his spells at Derby County, the club he began his career with, and Everton, where he made more than 150 appearances over six years.

The defensive midfielder also played for Blackburn Rovers, Coventry City and Birmingham City before hanging up his boots in 2011.

After moving into coaching, Carsley held youth roles at various clubs including Manchester City, Coventry, Brentford and Birmingham, and had stints as first-team caretaker manager with the latter three.

Carsley joined the England youth set-up as a specialist coach in 2015 before being appointed head coach of the Under-20s in 2020. He was promoted to his current role in 2021, with former England left-back Ashley Cole as his assistant.

### HERO OF THE PAST Mark Hateley

Target man Mark Hateley scored six goals in the knockout stages as England retained their European Under-21 title in 1984.



The Portsmouth striker – also a member of the Three Lions' triumphant 1982 squad – grabbed four goals in the 6-1 demolition of France in the quarter-finals at Hillsborough, adding another in the return leg for good measure.

England held a 1-0 lead going into the second leg of the final against Spain in Sheffield, and it was Hateley – the tournament's Golden Player – who helped put the game out of reach with a goal just after half-time.

His goalscoring exploits later earned him a move to Italian giants AC Milan. Successful spells at AS Monaco and Rangers would follow, as well as 32 senior England caps.

**“We have a great opportunity to help the senior side by developing the best young talent in this country while combining that with the aim of being successful at Under-21 level”**

– Lee Carsley



### FACTFILE

#### Home kit:

White shirt, blue shorts, white socks

#### Previous tournament best:

Winners (1982, 1984)

#### Top goalscorer in qualifying:

Folarin Balogun (6)

#### Qualification:

Group G winners

### STAR SEARCH

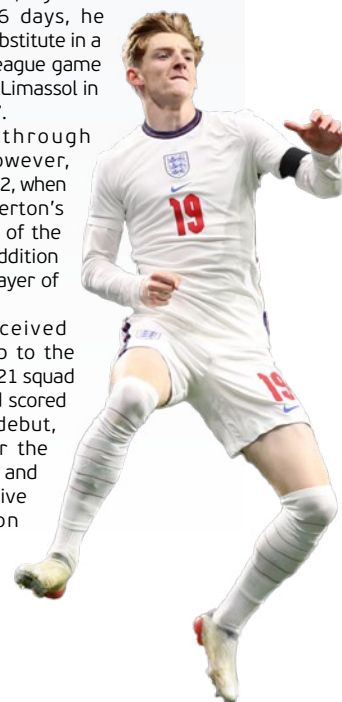
#### Anthony Gordon

Anthony Gordon's big-money move from Everton to Newcastle United was one of the January window's most eye-catching transfers in the Premier League.

The exciting winger became the sixth youngest player to appear for the Toffees' first team when, aged 16 years and 286 days, he came on as a substitute in a UEFA Europa League game against Apollon Limassol in December 2017.

His breakthrough campaign, however, came in 2021/22, when he claimed Everton's Players' Player of the Year prize, in addition to the Young Player of the Year award.

Gordon received his first call-up to the England Under-21 squad that season and scored twice on his debut, a 3-1 win over the Czech Republic, and he is sure to give the opposition plenty to worry about in this tournament.







# GERMANY

## AN INTRODUCTION...

**R**eigning champions Germany are seeking to retain a trophy they have won on three previous occasions. Those triumphs have all come in the past 14 years, with Germany's 4-0 triumph over England in the 2009 final ushering in a period of sustained success at this level. Goalkeeper Manuel Neuer, defender Mats Hummels and midfielder Mesut Özil were among the players who played a part in that maiden win, and the trio who would also later be named in UEFA's all-time best tournament XI. A last-four appearance in 2015 was followed by more silverware two years later, when Germany bounced back from a loss to Italy to reach the final, where they edged out Spain thanks to a goal from Hertha Berlin full-back Mitchell Weiser. The two finalists faced each other again in the 2019 showpiece but, on this occasion, Germany fell to a 2-1 defeat despite having the tournament's top scorer Luca Waldschmidt in their ranks. Two years ago, Stefan Kuntz's side overcame Denmark and the Netherlands to reach the final once again, and this time their journey ended in celebration as Lukas Nmecha's goal gave them a 1-0 win against Portugal. A fourth final in a row would be a remarkable achievement but it is also a realistic ambition for a squad containing the talents of AC Milan defender Malick Thiaw, Leipzig midfielder Tom Krauss and Potsdam-born attacker Kevin Schade.

### CHAMPIONSHIP RECORD

1978	Did not enter
1980	Did not enter
1982	Runners-up
1984	Did not qualify
1986	Did not qualify
1988	Did not qualify
1990	Quarter-finals
1992	Quarter-finals
1994	Did not qualify
1996	Quarter-finals
1998	Quarter-finals
2000	Did not qualify
2002	Did not qualify
2004	Group stage
2006	Group stage
2007	Did not qualify
2009	Winners
2011	Did not qualify
2013	Group stage
2015	Semi-finals
2017	Winners
2019	Runners-up
2021	Winners



### THE LEADER Antonio Di Salvo

Having been part of the coaching team that guided Germany to glory in this tournament on two occasions, Antonio Di Salvo was the ideal man to turn to following the departure of manager Stefan Kuntz in 2021.

A forward during his playing days, he began his career with local club SC Paderborn and was later part of the Bayern Munich squad that won the 2000/01 Bundesliga title.

Di Salvo cut his coaching teeth with Bayern's Under-17s before joining Germany's Under-19s, with whom he became a European champion in 2014 as part of their backroom staff.

He then spent five years as Kuntz's right-hand man for the Under-21s – helping to guide Germany to European success in 2017 and 2021 – and was promoted to the top job after Kuntz left to manage the Turkey national team.

**“We want to have the ball, we want to play up front and create chances on goal. Even in qualification we had a lot of shots on goal and that defines this team”**

– Antonio Di Salvo



### HERO OF THE PAST Manuel Neuer

Regarded as one of the greatest goalkeepers in the history of the game, Manuel Neuer was the man between the sticks when Germany won this tournament for the first time in 2009.

He kept clean sheets against Spain, Finland and Italy on the way to the final, where his country beat England 4-0. In 2015 he was included in UEFA's all-time best XI from the previous Under-21 tournaments.

Described as a 'sweeper-keeper', Neuer currently captains both Bayern Munich and the national side, for whom he won the World Cup in 2014, and has amassed more than 100 caps.

By the start of this year he had collected 10 Bundesliga titles and two Champions League winners' medals, and has been named the UEFA Goalkeeper of the Year on five occasions.



DEUTSCHER  
FUSSBALL-BUND



### FACTFILE

#### Home kit:

White shirt, black shorts, white socks

#### Previous tournament best:

Winners (2009, 2017, 2021)

#### Top goalscorer in qualifying:

Jonathan Burkardt (7)

#### Qualification:

Group B winners

### STAR SEARCH

#### Jonathan Burkardt

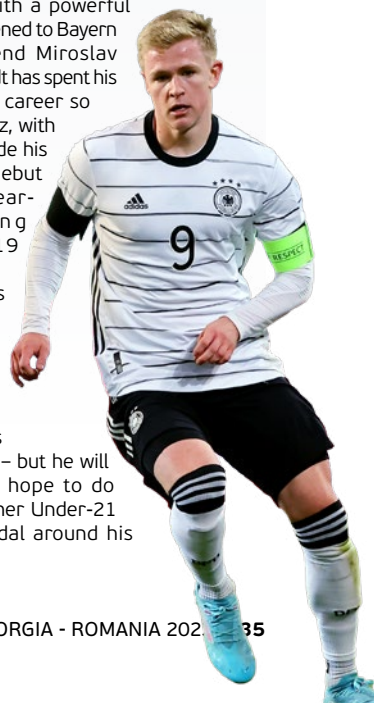
Captain Jonathan Burkardt scored seven goals in qualifying as Germany comfortably finished top of Group B.

The Mainz forward has found the back of the net at a rate of one in every two games for his country since making his Under-21s debut in 2020.

He also scored a crucial extra-time goal against Denmark in the quarter-finals as Germany went on to win this competition last time out.

Blessed with a powerful frame and likened to Bayern Munich legend Miroslav Klose, Burkardt has spent his entire senior career so far with Mainz, with whom he made his Bundesliga debut as an 18-year-old during the 2018/19 campaign.

It appears to only be a matter of time before he is called up to Germany's senior squad – but he will undoubtedly hope to do so with another Under-21 winners' medal around his neck.







# CZECH REPUBLIC

## AN INTRODUCTION...

**F**ormer winners the Czech Republic are making their ninth appearance at this tournament. Previously part of Czechoslovakia, they made their competition bow as a separate nation in 1996, when they reached the quarter-finals.

They made it all the way to the final four years later, when they narrowly lost 2-1 to Italy after beating the Netherlands and Croatia along the way.

However, the Czechs went one better in 2002, when they recovered from a group stage defeat by France to beat the same team in the final.

A squad containing goalkeeping legend Petr Čech, Liverpool forward Milan Baroš and future Wolfsburg midfielder Jan Polák recorded wins against Belgium and Italy en route to their rematch with the French.

The sides couldn't be separated in 90 minutes or extra time, with neither team able to make a breakthrough, so penalties were needed to find the winner – and it was Miroslav Beránek's side that prevailed for a famous triumph.

The country has struggled to hit similar heights since then, although they reached the last four in 2011 and have qualified for four of the past five tournaments.

Their key players on this occasion include Manchester United goalkeeper Matěj Kovář, Sparta Prague's Adam Karabec and his club mate and fellow midfielder Kryštof Daněk.

## CHAMPIONSHIP RECORD

1978	Did not enter
1980	Did not enter
1982	Did not enter
1984	Did not enter
1986	Did not enter
1988	Did not enter
1990	Did not enter
1992	Did not enter
1994	Did not enter
1996	Quarter-finals
1998	Did not qualify
2000	Runners-up
2002	Winners
2004	Did not qualify
2006	Did not qualify
2007	Group stage
2009	Did not qualify
2011	Semi-finals
2013	Did not qualify
2015	Group stage
2017	Group stage
2019	Did not qualify
2021	Group stage

\*Part of Czechoslovakia until 1992



### THE LEADER Jan Suchopárek

A member of the senior Czech squad which finished runners-up at EURO '96, Jan Suchopárek is a highly experienced coach at youth level.

He took his first steps on the coaching ladder 20 years ago with hometown club Kladno, where he had ended his playing career.

The former Slavia Prague and Strasbourg defender spent several years guiding the club's youngsters before taking on the assistant manager's role at Dukla Prague, where he helped the team win promotion to the Czech top flight in 2011.

His country came calling in 2016, when he was recruited to lead the Czech Republic's Under-19s side, and he also had spells in charge of the Under-18s before he was promoted to his current role two years ago.

Suchopárek led the Czechs to this tournament via the play-offs, where they beat Iceland 2-1 on aggregate after finishing runners-up to England in Group G.

**"Our team is based on co-operation and team spirit, not just on the pitch but off it as well. And I think this is what got us to the EURO"**

– Jan Suchopárek



### HERO OF THE PAST Petr Čech

Petr Čech was the Czech Republic's hero as they defeated France 3-1 on penalties to win the UEFA European Under-21 Championship in 2002.

The goalkeeper's superb display ensured the final finished goalless, and he made two more saves in the penalty shoot-out to secure his side's victory, earning a deserved Golden Player award in the process.

Čech left Sparta Prague for Rennes that summer before moving to Chelsea, where he won four Premier League titles and the UEFA Champions League during an illustrious 11-year stay in west London.

Considered one of the finest custodians in history, Čech's individual honours include multiple Premier League Golden Glove awards and being named Best European Goalkeeper on four occasions.



### FACTFILE

#### Home kit:

Red shirt, navy shorts, red socks

#### Previous tournament best:

Winners (2002)

#### Top goalscorer in qualifying:

Daniel Filá, Adam Karabec, Václav Sejk (4)

#### Qualification:

Play-off winners

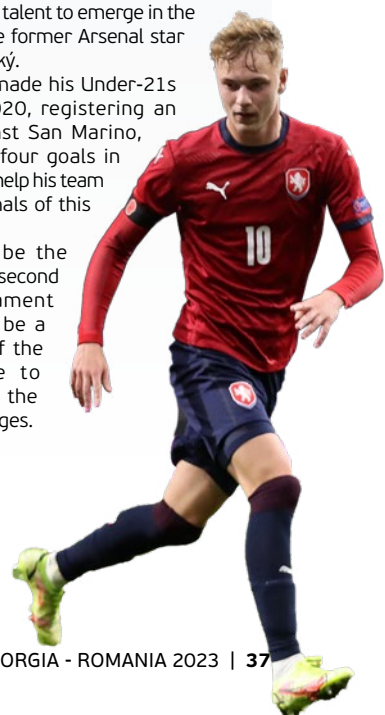
### STAR SEARCH Adam Karabec

Hailed as the future of Czech football, teenage playmaker Adam Karabec has been turning heads since establishing himself in the Sparta Prague midfield over the past couple of years.

Tall and pacy, Karabec is a superb passer and reader of the game. He is capable of playing in several attacking positions and many believe he is the best midfield talent to emerge in the country since former Arsenal star Tomáš Rosický.

Karabec made his Under-21s debut in 2020, registering an assist against San Marino, and scored four goals in qualifying to help his team reach the finals of this competition.

This will be the midfielder's second U21 tournament and he will be a key player if the Czechs are to progress to the knockout stages.







# ISRAEL

## AN INTRODUCTION...

**R**esilience was the key for Israel as they battled through qualification to earn a spot at their third UEFA European Under-21 Championship.

No player exemplified that fighting spirit more than goalkeeper Daniel Peretz.

Israel had finished second in Group B behind a powerful Germany side and a point ahead of Poland, and they were paired with the Republic of Ireland in the play-offs.

It was always likely to be a tight affair and Peretz was kept busy in the first leg in Dublin, making several fantastic saves as Idan Gorno's header helped to earn a 1-1 draw despite Stav Lemkin being sent off in the second half.

The second leg in Tel Aviv was even more tense and a superb late save from Peretz ensured the game ended goalless and went beyond extra time and into penalties.

Peretz would come to the fore again. Not only did he make three saves in the shoot-out, he expertly converted Israel's second kick as the home side claimed victory and sparked huge celebrations.

Peretz isn't the only high-class performer in the Israel side and he will hope with the likes of forward Liel Abada, midfielder Ido Sharah and experienced captain Gil Cohen in the squad, Guy Luzon's side can make a big impression in the finals.

Israel's only other appearances at the UEFA European Under-21 Championship final tournament came as hosts in 2013, and in the Netherlands in 2007.

### CHAMPIONSHIP RECORD

1978	Did not enter
1980	Did not enter
1982	Did not enter
1984	Did not enter
1986	Did not enter
1988	Did not enter
1990	Did not enter
1992	Did not qualify
1994	Did not qualify
1996	Did not qualify
1998	Did not qualify
2000	Did not qualify
2002	Did not qualify
2004	Did not qualify
2006	Did not qualify
2007	Group stage
2009	Did not qualify
2011	Did not qualify
2013	Group stage
2015	Did not qualify
2017	Did not qualify
2019	Did not qualify
2021	Did not qualify



### THE LEADER Guy Luzon

Guy Luzon only took over as his country's Under-21s coach a year ago but his experience in Israeli football is vast.

This is Luzon's second spell in charge of the team, having also led them into the 2013 UEFA European Under-21 Championship, where they beat England but failed to progress from their group.

This time around he succeeded Alon Hazan, who was appointed coach of the senior Israel team, and Luzon guided the Under-21s through the latter stages of their qualifying group, including a play-off victory over the Republic of Ireland.

Luzon's coaching career began early, having been forced to retire as a player through injury at the age of 21. By the age of 26 he was coach of Maccabi Petah Tikva and he's since taken charge of several sides in Israel, as well as Standard Liège and Charlton Athletic.

**"This is a wonderful opportunity to show the progress of Israeli football. We will do everything to represent ourselves honourably"**

– Guy Luzon



### HERO OF THE PAST Nir Bitton

Former SC Ashdod and Celtic star Nir Bitton captained Israel the last time they played at an Under-21 finals.

Bitton, who can operate as a defender or midfielder, actually scored his country's first goal in that 2013 tournament from the penalty spot as they opened with a 2-2 draw against Norway.

Bitton was at the heart of midfield as Israel overcame England 1-0, but a defeat by Italy in between resulted in the hosts bowing out.

Bitton has enjoyed a fabulous career, including winning eight Scottish Premiership titles with Celtic, and remains a full international, having made his debut in 2010.

He now plays for Maccabi Tel Aviv.



### FACTFILE

#### Home kit:

Light blue shirt, light blue shorts, light blue socks

#### Previous tournament best:

Group stage (2007, 2013)

#### Top goalscorer in qualifying:

Omri Gandelman (3)

#### Qualification:

Play-off winners

### STAR SEARCH Liel Abada

There were lots of changes to Israel's team as their qualification period unfolded but there can be no doubt that one of their most important players is Liel Abada.

The forward scored a vital goal in a 2-2 draw with Poland that ultimately helped to secure second spot in the group – and Abada was one of the first names on the team sheet for the crucial play-off second leg with the Republic of Ireland.

Abada is an exciting and powerful player who can operate as a forward or winger, and began his professional career with Maccabi Petah Tikva before moving to Celtic in 2021.

He scored on his Celtic debut in a UEFA Champions League qualifier against Midtjylland and at the end of his first season was named PFA Scotland Young Player of the Year.

He earned his first senior Israel cap against Montenegro in June 2021.







# FRANCE

## AN INTRODUCTION...

It is 35 years since France won their first – and so far only – UEFA European Under-21 Championship.

Laurent Blanc and Eric Cantona were among the young stars who shone for *Les Bleus* as they beat Italy and England en route to a final showdown against Greece. After a goalless draw in Athens, Franck Sauzée's brace helped ease France to a 3-0 victory in Besançon.

The country's best performance afterwards came under Raymond Domenech in 2002. Defender Jean-Alain Boumsong – who would play for Newcastle United and Juventus – and Fulham midfielder Steed Malbranque were part of the squad that overcame Belgium and Switzerland on the way to the final, where they fell to a penalty shoot-out defeat against the Czech Republic.

There have been two semi-final appearances since then, the most recent being in 2019, when Spain ended their first foray in the tournament for 13 years.

France reached the quarter-finals last time out, going out to the Netherlands, and in the years they have qualified they have never failed to progress from the group stage since that round's introduction at the start of the century.

They reached this tournament following an unbeaten qualification campaign and, with a squad featuring the likes of Leeds goalkeeper Illan Meslier, AC Milan defender Pierre Kalulu and Rennes striker Amine Gouiri, they will have every confidence they can reach the latter stages once again.

### CHAMPIONSHIP RECORD

1978	Did not qualify
1980	Did not qualify
1982	Quarter-finals
1984	Quarter-finals
1986	Quarter-finals
1988	Winners
1990	Did not qualify
1992	Did not qualify
1994	Semi-finals
1996	Third place
1998	Did not qualify
2000	Did not qualify
2002	Runners-up
2004	Did not qualify
2006	Semi-finals
2007	Did not qualify
2009	Did not qualify
2011	Did not qualify
2013	Did not qualify
2015	Did not qualify
2017	Did not qualify
2019	Semi-finals
2021	Quarter-finals



### THE LEADER Sylvain Ripoll

Sylvain Ripoll is overseeing his third EURO campaign since taking the helm of France's Under-21s side in 2017.

The former midfielder, who spent almost the entirety of his playing days with Rennes and Lorient, began his managerial career with the latter club in 2014.

He departed the Ligue 1 side two years later before being appointed to his current position. He guided *Les Bleus* to the last four of this tournament in 2019 and to the quarter-finals two years ago, and he was also in charge of France's Olympic football team in Tokyo.

Following the successful qualification campaign for this tournament, during which France won eight games and drew twice to finish ahead of Ukraine in Group H, the French Football Federation showed its faith in Ripoll by extending his contract.

**"Almost every squad can rely on some extremely talented players. Being able to play like a real team is what can allow you to go all the way in a tournament like this one"**

– Sylvain Ripoll



### HERO OF THE PAST Laurent Blanc

Originally an attacking midfielder before becoming one of the classiest defenders of his generation, Laurent Blanc was a revelation as France won the 1988 UEFA European Under-21 Championship.

Although he was missing from the goalless first leg of the final against Greece, he proved an inspirational figure as his side won the return fixture 3-0 in Besançon, and his displays in the competition were recognised as he was named the tournament's best player.

He would go on to gain 97 senior caps for France, winning the 1998 FIFA World Cup and the 2000 UEFA European Championship, during a stellar playing career that also included league title wins with Manchester United and Auxerre.

Blanc has also enjoyed success as a coach, winning the Ligue 1 title with Bordeaux and Paris Saint-Germain, and he managed the national team from 2010 until 2012.



### FACTFILE

#### Home kit:

Blue shirt, white shorts, red socks

#### Previous tournament best:

Winners (1988)

#### Top goalscorer in qualifying:

Amine Gouiri (5)

#### Qualification:

Group H winners

### STAR SEARCH Amine Gouiri

France's top scorer in their qualification campaign, Amine Gouiri certainly knows where the back of the net is.

He has proven to be a prolific marksman at youth level especially, with his seven goals at the 2017 UEFA European Under-17 Championship earning him the tournament's Golden Boot, and he added another five at the U-17 World Cup in India that year.

After starting his career at Lyon, the striker joined fellow Ligue 1 side Nice in 2020 and scored two goals on his competitive debut for the club.

The goals continued to flow at a rate of one every three games over the next couple of years, prompting Rennes to move in for his signature last summer, and five strikes during the campaign to qualify for this tournament show the continued danger he poses in front of goal.







# ITALY

## AN INTRODUCTION...

**T**he only nation to win this competition three times in a row, Italy share the overall record of five titles with Spain.

These successes all came in a stunning 12-year period when the *Azzurrini* established near-total dominance of European under-21 football.

Cesare Maldini – father of the great Paolo – was the man at the helm as Italy triumphed in 1992, 1994 and 1996, beating Sweden, Portugal and Spain in each of those finals.

Goalkeeping icon Gianluigi Buffon, Ballon d’Or-winning defender Fabio Cannavaro and Roma legend Francesco Totti were among the heroes who shone for Italy during this period.

The country failed to qualify in 1998 but they made up for it two years later by reclaiming their crown with the assistance of the tournament’s best player, Andrea Pirlo, who scored both their goals as they edged the Czech Republic 2-1 in the final.

Italy’s most recent success was in 2004, when a squad containing future Juventus defender Andrea Barzagli, Roma midfielder Daniele De Rossi and Golden Boot winner Alberto Gilardino overcame Serbia and Montenegro 3-0 in the decider.

It is a decade since Italy last reached the final, though with the likes of Atalanta goalkeeper Marco Carnesecchi, Nice centre-back Mattia Viti and Juventus midfielder Nicolò Rovella in their ranks, they will certainly be strong contenders on this occasion.

### CHAMPIONSHIP RECORD

1978	Quarter-finals
1980	Quarter-finals
1982	Quarter-finals
1984	Semi-finals
1986	Runners-up
1988	Quarter-finals
1990	Semi-finals
1992	Winners
1994	Winners
1996	Winners
1998	Did not qualify
2000	Winners
2002	Semi-finals
2004	Winners
2006	Group stage
2007	Group stage
2009	Semi-finals
2011	Did not qualify
2013	Runners-up
2015	Group stage
2017	Semi-finals
2019	Group stage
2021	Quarter-finals



### THE LEADER Paolo Nicolato

Head coach Paolo Nicolato returns for another crack at securing a record-breaking sixth European title for Italy.

Though he never played professionally, the 56-year-old has enjoyed a lengthy coaching career which has mainly focused on youth football.

He spent 20 years in various capacities at Chievo before brief spells in charge of lower-league side Lumezzane, and has worked his way up the national set-up since being appointed Under-18s head coach in 2016.

Nicolato went on to guide the Under-19s to the European Championship final and the Under-20s to the World Cup semis before being promoted to his current position four years ago.

He will be hoping to better Italy's performance at this tournament in 2021, when his side were knocked out by Portugal in the last eight.

**"It's a team that has courage, that tries to keep a bit of dominance of the game, and it's a team that generally has a good technique"**

– Paolo Nicolato



### HERO OF THE PAST Alberto Gilardino

Parma forward Alberto Gilardino was the tournament's joint-top scorer as Italy won their fifth title in 2004.

He was relatively quiet in the group stage, scoring once as the *Azzurrini* recovered from losing their opening match to Belarus to qualify for the semi-finals as Group A winners.

However, he exploded into life against Portugal, scoring the first goal and swiftly making the second for Giampiero Pinzi before capping a 3-1 victory with Italy's third near the end. In the final he completed a 3-0 victory in the 84th minute.

He later enjoyed UEFA Champions League glory with AC Milan, claimed more than 50 senior caps for Italy, and won the World Cup in 2006.



### FACTFILE

#### Home kit:

Blue shirt, white shorts, blue socks

#### Previous tournament best:

Winners (1992, 1994, 1996, 2000, 2004)

#### Top goalscorer in qualifying:

Nicolò Rovella (3)

#### Qualification:

Group F winners

### STAR SEARCH

#### Mattia Viti

Inspired by defensive greats Sergio Ramos and Paolo Maldini, Mattia Viti is a left-footed centre-back who isn't afraid to carry the ball forward when the opportunity presents itself.

Having come through the youth system at Empoli, whom he joined at eight years old, Viti broke into the Tuscan club's senior team during their Serie B-winning campaign in 2020/21.

He gained a reputation as one of Italy's most promising young defenders the following season as he helped his side retain their place in the top flight, which prompted Ligue 1 club Nice to pay a substantial fee for his services last summer.

Viti first represented Italy at youth level in 2017 and made his Under-21s debut last year, since when he has established himself as a mainstay in Paolo Nicolato's side.







# SWITZERLAND

## AN INTRODUCTION...

Switzerland come into this tournament hoping they have a crop of players that might one day be compared to the Swiss Under-21 squad of 2011.

Twelve years ago Switzerland came the closest they have ever come to carrying home the impressive trophy after a fantastic showing where they didn't concede a goal until the final, before being defeated by a brilliant Spain side.

One look at the Swiss squad from that tournament provides a few clues as to why they did so well. With Yann Sommer in goal, Timm Klose marshalling the defence, Granit Xhaka and Xherdan Shaqiri in midfield, and Fabian Frei and Admir Mehmedi providing the threat up front, they had a squad full of players who would go on to have marvellous careers in the game.

That team aside, 2002 was the only other time Switzerland had realistic expectations of going all the way, before they lost out at the semi-final stage.

To reach these finals Switzerland finished second in Group E, but qualified as the best performing runners-up with Zeki Amdouni their chief goal threat with six goals in 10 games.

Amdouni isn't the only player to look out for, though, with Basel's Dan Ndoye a real handful up front, while midfielder Alexandre Jankewitz has a lot of experience at this level.

If they finish this tournament being compared to the class of 2011, Switzerland will have had a great tournament.

### CHAMPIONSHIP RECORD

1978	Did not qualify
1980	Did not qualify
1982	Did not qualify
1984	Did not qualify
1986	Did not qualify
1988	Did not qualify
1990	Did not qualify
1992	Did not qualify
1994	Did not qualify
1996	Did not qualify
1998	Did not qualify
2000	Did not qualify
2002	Semi-finals
2004	Group stage
2006	Did not qualify
2007	Did not qualify
2009	Did not qualify
2011	Runners-up
2013	Did not qualify
2015	Did not qualify
2017	Did not qualify
2019	Did not qualify
2021	Group stage



## THE LEADER Patrick Rahmen

You could say that Patrick Rahmen has football – Swiss football in particular – in his blood.

The current Switzerland Under-21s coach took over from Mauro Lustrinelli following the qualifying campaign for this tournament – and he seems the ideal appointment, having had so much experience of youth football, both in and outside of his home nation.

Rahmen's father, Bruno, had a successful playing spell with Basel and later went on to manage the club, and that is where his son spent the early years of his own career, making his debut in 1988.

As his playing days came to an end, he took a player-coach role at SC Dornach and went on to develop his coaching credentials at Hamburg in Germany, then FC Luzern and FC Aarau back in Switzerland, before working at Basel, his final stop before his current role.

**"Individual performances will be important, but the team as a whole will be decisive – we will need a team that is in top form and highly motivated"**

– Patrick Rahmen



## HERO OF THE PAST Xherdan Shaqiri

A league title winner in three countries and two-time UEFA Champions League winner, there can be no doubt that Xherdan Shaqiri has had a fantastic career.

The stocky and supremely talented attacker made a big statement on the international stage at the 2011 UEFA European Under-21 Championship where he scored the winner against Denmark as Switzerland went on to top their group, then beat the Czech Republic in the semi-final before losing out to Spain in the final.

Shaqiri was named in the team of the tournament but by that stage he was already a full international, having made the squad for the 2010 FIFA World Cup.

He now has well over 100 caps for his country.



## FACTFILE

### Home kit:

Red shirt, red shorts, red socks

### Previous tournament best:

Runners-up (2011)

### Top goalscorer in qualifying:

Zeki Amdouni (6)

### Qualification:

Best runners-up

## STAR SEARCH Kastriot Imeri

Midfielder Kastriot Imeri has been around the Swiss national youth teams for many years and his emergence as one of his country's outstanding talents will surprise no-one in their camp.

He was only 16 when he played his first professional match for Servette in 2017, scored his first goal the following year and helped his club gain promotion to the Swiss top flight in 2018/19.

Last summer he moved on to Young Boys and his progress has been such that he made his senior international debut against Italy in 2021.

Often deployed in an advanced midfield role for the Under-21s, he scored two vital goals in qualifying. The first came in a 1-0 win in Bulgaria and the other earned a point in a 1-1 draw in Moldova that helped his side qualify as the best runners-up.







# NORWAY

## AN INTRODUCTION...

They have had a few years in the UEFA European Under-21 Championship wilderness but now Norway are back and ready to show they can compete at these finals once again.

The 2013 edition in Israel is the last time Norway made it to the finals, though they gave a good account of themselves and reached the semi-finals in Israel.

Draws with the home nation and Italy sandwiched a tremendous 3-1 win over England and qualified them for the last four where they ran into eventual champions Spain and lost 3-0.

Before that, Norway fans had to go back to 1998 to see their Under-21s involved in the latter stages of the tournament.

On that occasion a Steffen Iversen goal gave them a quarter-final victory over Sweden. Spain proved to be too strong once again in the semi-finals, though Norway did overcome the Netherlands in the third-place play-off.

Sadly, seeing Norway involved in the finals of this tournament hasn't been a regular enough occurrence in recent years and coach Leif Gunnar Smerud said: "We've tried for many years, so it's really nice to get to finally be part of the draw and the upcoming tournament."

Excitement can now build thanks to a qualifying campaign that saw them top a strong Group A, two points ahead of Croatia, finishing with three wins on the bounce as Jørgen Larsen top-scored with six goals.

### CHAMPIONSHIP RECORD

1978	Did not qualify
1980	Did not qualify
1982	Did not qualify
1984	Did not qualify
1986	Did not qualify
1988	Did not qualify
1990	Did not qualify
1992	Did not qualify
1994	Did not qualify
1996	Did not qualify
1998	Third place
2000	Did not qualify
2002	Did not qualify
2004	Did not qualify
2006	Did not qualify
2007	Did not qualify
2009	Did not qualify
2011	Did not qualify
2013	Semi-finals
2015	Did not qualify
2017	Did not qualify
2019	Did not qualify
2021	Did not qualify



### THE LEADER Leif Gunnar Smerud

Leif Gunnar Smerud has made history by becoming only the third coach to lead Norway to a UEFA European Under-21 Championship finals following the good work of Nils Johan Sembe in 1998 and Tor Ole Skullerud in 2013.

Smerud's side needed to win their last three qualifying games to make it to these finals, and that's exactly what they did.

On a personal level, the road to qualification has been a long one. Smerud was appointed as Norway Under-21s coach in 2014 and it has taken until now to make it to a finals.

His first head coach position came in 2011 after he'd had to retire from playing at the age of 28. By then he had already been assistant coach of Norway's women's team as they reached the semi-finals of UEFA Women's EURO 2009.

**"We have an exciting generation coming through in Norway, and it's very cool that we get to test ourselves at this level against the very best in Europe"**

– Leif Gunnar Smerud



### HERO OF THE PAST Steffen Iversen

The first time Norway made a major impression at an Under-21 finals back in 1998, Steffen Iversen was at the heart of their attack.

First, he helped his country to finish top of their qualifying group, two points ahead of France.

In their first knockout match at the tournament they met Sweden in the quarter-finals and it was Iversen who netted the only goal.

Spain edged their semi-final encounter but in the third-place play-off, a goal in each half from Iversen secured a 2-0 win over the Netherlands.

He enjoyed a successful club career, notably for Tottenham Hotspur and in three spells with Rosenborg, as well as earning 79 senior international caps.



### FACTFILE

#### Home kit:

Red and blue shirt, white shorts, blue socks

#### Previous tournament best:

Semi-finals (1998 third place, 2013)

#### Top goalscorer in qualifying:

Jørgen Larsen (6)

#### Qualification:

Group A winners

### STAR SEARCH Jørgen Larsen

Cometh the hour, cometh the man – and Jørgen Larsen can lay claim to scoring probably the most important goal in Norway's qualifying campaign for this tournament.

A tight group in which Norway finished top by two points, would have turned out differently if a game with eventual runners-up Croatia hadn't included two very late goals.

Trailing at home 2-1, the clock ticked into added time before Jesper Daland grabbed an equaliser. Remarkably, the drama hadn't finished and Larsen scored in the fifth added minute to snatch an unlikely victory.

The fact it was Larsen who scored shouldn't have been a surprise as he top-scored for Norway in qualifying with six goals, netting at least once against each of the other five teams in the group.

Already with several senior international caps to his name, he'll be one of Norway's leaders at this tournament.







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# Under-21 EURO

THE

?

QUIZ

## How well do you know the history of the UEFA European Under-21 Championship?

1

Which former Chelsea defender has made the most individual appearances at final tournaments, doing so for Serbia / Serbia and Montenegro?

2

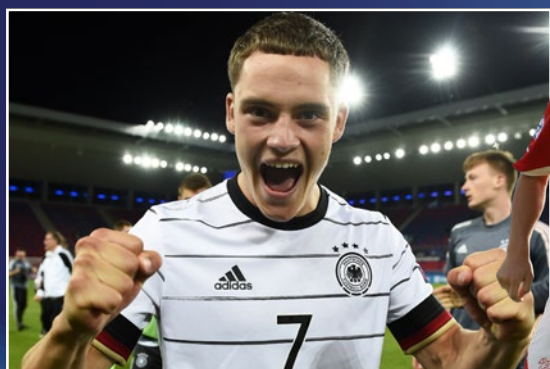
Italy won the competition in 2000, the first time the finals was an eight-team tournament that included a group phase. Slovakia were the hosts but which team were the beaten finalists?

3

Italy also won the trophy in 1992, the last year there was a two-legged final. Which northern European nation did they beat 2-1 on aggregate?

4

Which country has reached the final the most times, doing so on eight occasions?



5

The fastest goal at a UEFA European Under-21 Championship finals was scored two years ago by Florian Wirtz for Germany. Which team did he score it against?

6

Which Czech striker was the top goalscorer in the 2017 competition (including qualifying) with 11 goals?

7

Which English midfielder has made the most UEFA European Under-21 Championship appearances (including qualifying matches) with 32?

8

Romania are joint-hosts of this year's finals, but in which year did they last host the event – 1998, 2002 or 2006?

9

Switzerland have only reached the final once, when a team including Granit Xhaka and Xherdan Shaqiri were beaten by Spain – but in which year?

10

Which country did Italy share hosting duties with in 2019?



ANSWERS: 1. Branislav Ivanović (13), 2. Czech Republic, 3. Sweden, 4. Spain, 5. Netherlands, 6. Patrik Schick, 7. James Milner, 8. 1998, 9. 2011, 10. San Marino.





## UEFA CAMPAIGN AIMS TO HELP TACKLE AIR POLLUTION IN EUROPE

**Following its launch at the last edition of this tournament, 'Cleaner Air, Better Game' again takes centre stage at this UEFA European Under-21 Championship**

The 'Cleaner Air, Better Game' campaign aims to raise awareness of the detrimental effects of air pollution on public health, which the World Health Organization estimates claims over seven million lives annually.

Poor air quality also has a negative impact on footballers' health, with studies showing that higher levels of air pollution can reduce the pace of matches by up to 15 per cent.

UEFA's campaign plays a pivotal role in promoting collective action to monitor and reduce carbon emissions throughout these finals. From national associations to players, fans, volunteers and staff, all stakeholders are encouraged to adopt environmentally-conscious practices through a range of initiatives being organised in the host cities. These initiatives will focus on waste management, community clean-up efforts and programmes to boost sustainable travel to games.

Through the campaign, the message to the football community and beyond is clear: that a cleaner future is not only desirable but achievable with collective action and commitment.

UEFA president Aleksander Čeferin said: "We do not inherit the planet from our ancestors but borrow it from our children. Therefore, we are responsible for leaving it in the best possible shape. And we need to do a better job at it as the conclusions of relevant studies on air pollution are alarming. We will use football's powerful voice to raise awareness of this problem and suggest creative and fun solutions to turn things around."

"I invite all people with football in their hearts to participate in our 'Cleaner Air, Better Game' campaign, not just the ones in host nations Georgia and Romania. Preserving the environment and improving the quality of the air we breathe is a global goal and one we can score only as a team. Because, in the end, our choices and actions are the ones that make the difference, not our skills and talents."

### Monitor, encourage and speak up

Throughout this championship UEFA, alongside the Georgian and Romanian associations, are prioritising environmental, social, and governance principles in their event operations in line with a [strategic approach](#) defined for the tournament.

On the environmental front, the organisers are conducting



analysis of spectator mobility behaviour, closely monitoring the event's carbon footprint, minimising the use of generators for TV broadcasts, and introducing recycling containers to raise awareness about waste separation.

UEFA and local football associations are also organising a climate workshop to share best practices and develop innovative solutions for reducing carbon emissions, providing a platform for dialogue and collaboration on environmental issues in football.

Lastly, the host countries are prioritising governance by publishing UEFA's event sustainability strategy in the local languages, conducting stakeholder consultations, providing training to staff and volunteers on ESG (environmental, social, and governance) topics, launching a communication campaign to raise awareness about air pollution, and disclosing their performance on ESG-focused metrics.



## Stakeholders unite for a healthier future

The campaign has received support from the European Commission, with Executive Vice President Frans Timmermans, and Virginijus Sinkevičius, European Commissioner for Environment, Oceans, and Fisheries, praising the initiative's efforts to promote environmental awareness.

Mr Timmermans said: "Let UEFA's clean air campaign be an inspiration for many more actions against the climate crisis across the world of professional football. Millions of Europeans love football. Watching it and playing it. No matter if we are playing on a football pitch or kicking a ball around on the street, everyone deserves to breathe clean air."

"As fans and players, our individual choices can be of great help as well, for example, by choosing climate-friendly options to travel to a match."

The Georgian and Romanian football associations have also lent their support, emphasising the tournament's potential to raise public awareness about the importance of environmental conservation.

Levan Kobiashvili, Georgian Football Federation (GFF) president, said: "This important tournament is an excellent opportunity to showcase our commitment to environmental protection and sustainability," while Romanian Football Federation (FRF) counterpart Răzvan Burleanu added: "We want to draw people's attention to the need for individual and collective involvement and show what football's contribution to environmental protection can be. I therefore invite you all to be part of this project, not just as mere spectators, but as actors aware of the importance of joint action for the good of future generations."

In December 2020, the UEFA president signed the European Climate Pact, pledging to use football's global reach to raise awareness of the climate emergency and inspire more people to take action to save the planet. Last year, UEFA also committed to reduce emissions as part of the [UNFCCC Sports for Climate Action Framework](#). For more details and insights on our work in the field of sustainability, access the [UEFA RESPECT Report](#).



# Îmi doresc să arăt lumii cât de mare poate fi naționala mică.

**Claudiu Petrilă**  
*România U21*



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# Georgia and Romania

Two countries, eight host venues and one fantastic tournament







# Georgia

## BATUMI ARENA BATUMI

Capacity: 20,035  
Home team: Dinamo Batumi

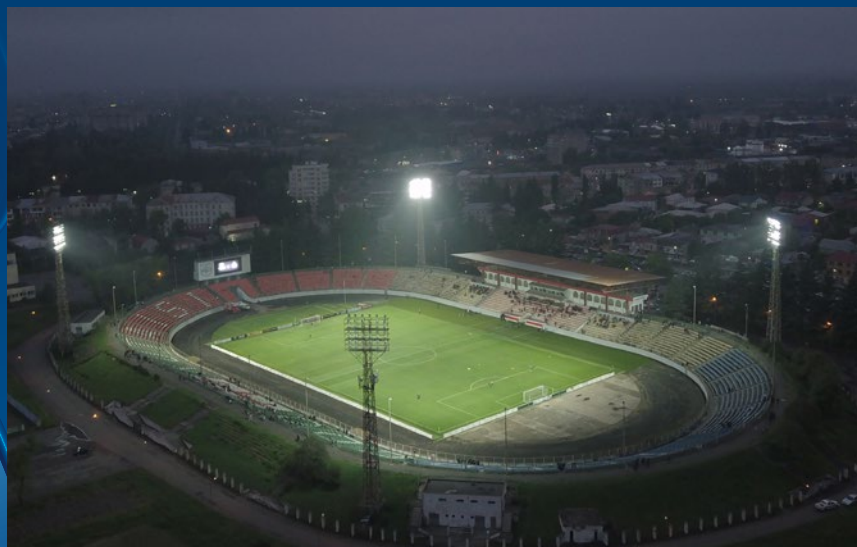
Less than three years old, this modern-looking stadium is home to Dinamo Batumi, a club that celebrates its 100th birthday this year but first won the Georgian title in 2021. It has staged national team football and rugby matches.



## SHENGELIA ARENA KUTAIISI

Capacity: 12,000  
Home team: Torpedo Kutaisi

The Shengelia Arena is named after local football hero Ramaz Shengelia, who represented Torpedo Kutaisi, Dinamo Tbilisi and the Soviet Union at the 1982 FIFA World Cup. Situated in one of Europe's oldest cities, it was opened in 1962 and has been redeveloped twice.



**Georgia is a beautiful country in the east of Europe where the continent begins to meet Asia.**

Situated on the banks of the Black Sea, with Russia to the north and Turkey, Armenia and Azerbaijan to the south and east, it has a rich and varied climate, thanks partly to its position to the south of the Caucasus Mountains.

Indeed, the conditions are right for Georgia to be one of the oldest wine-producing countries in the world.

Georgia is a hotbed of culture and is the home of four UNESCO World Heritage Sites. Those are the Bagrati Cathedral and Gelati

Monastery, the former capital of Mtskheta, which was an important stop on the old Silk Road, plus the ancient villages and towers of the Svaneti region and Colchic rainforests and wetlands.

Another must for tourists is the cave town of Vardzia, built in the 13th century to protect people from the Mongol Empire, much of which still exists today.

The country has a good reputation in international sport, is regularly represented at the Rugby World Cup, and Dinamo Tbilisi is probably their best-known football club, having won the European Cup Winners' Cup in 1981.

**MESKHI STADIUM  
TBILISI**

Capacity: 24,600

Home team: Locomotive Tbilisi

Another versatile venue, the Meskhi Stadium hosts international football and major rugby occasions. It is largely uncovered and was rebuilt in 2001 as Georgia's first all-seater football stadium. Originally opened in 1952 it was redeveloped for the 2017 UEFA Under-19 EURO.



**PAICHADZE STADIUM  
TBILISI**

Capacity: 54,000

Home team: Dinamo Tbilisi,  
Georgia national team

Another stadium named after a Georgian legend of the game – in this case, Boris Paichadze – this is the biggest football venue in the country. It has enjoyed several facelifts since being built in 1935 and in 1979 reportedly attracted a crowd of 110,000 people for a European Cup tie.







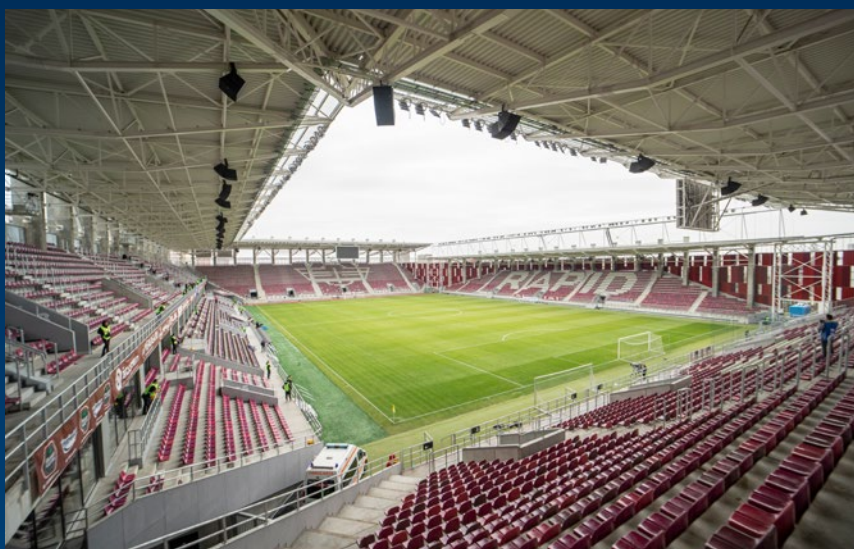
# Romania

## GIULEȘTI STADIUM BUCHĂREȘTI

Capacity: 14,054

Home team: Rapid București

One of Europe's newest venues, the Giulești Stadium was opened in 2022 to become the new home of Rapid București. It has already staged several Romania international matches and its facilities include an athletics track underneath the stands.



## STEUA STADIUM BUCHAREȘTI

Capacity: 31,254

Home team: CSA Steaua București

Another modern arena in Romania's capital city, it was inaugurated in 2021 to become the new home of Steaua București.



**Separated from Georgia by the Black Sea, Romania is located in the south-east of Europe.**

The country shares borders with Bulgaria, Serbia, Hungary, Ukraine and Moldova and has natural beauty, partly owing to the fact that more than a quarter of the country is covered by undisturbed forest.

Another natural feature that adds to the country's character is the Danube Delta that forms in the south before flowing into the Black Sea, and is the perfect habitat for many of the world's bird species.

Among the quirkier facts about Romania is that the world's heaviest building, the Palace of Parliament, is located there, and it is home to 6,000 brown bears.

With a population of around 19 million people, Romania can claim to be one of the fastest-modernising countries in the world and is among the world leaders for broadband speed and therefore internet consumption.

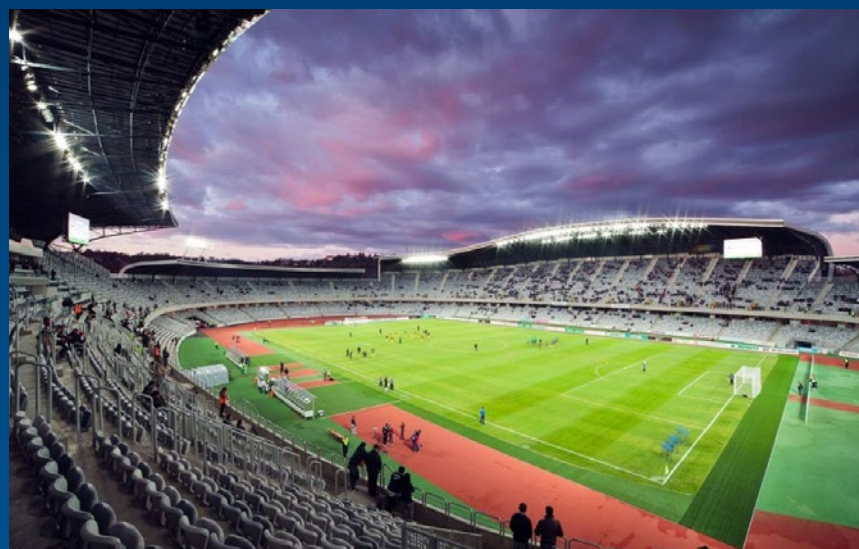
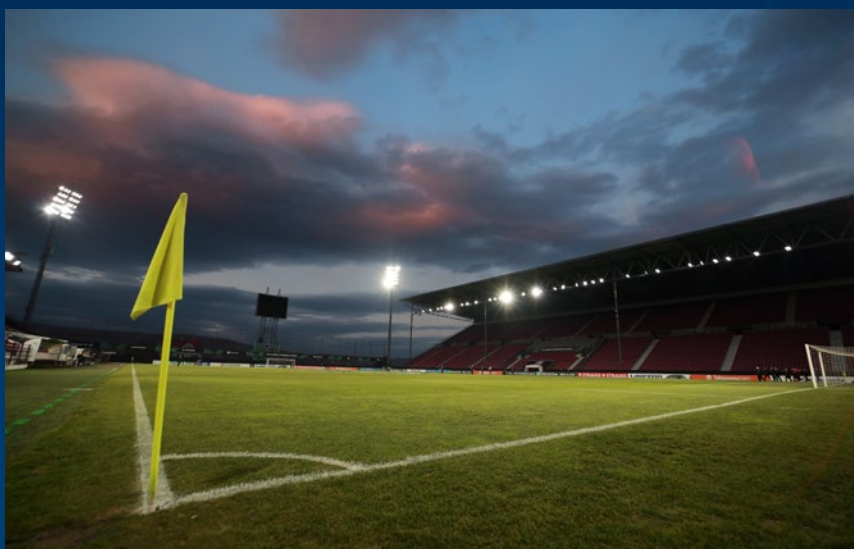
In football terms, Romania has a rich history. Its national team is one of only four countries to take part in the first three FIFA World Cups and Steaua Bucureşti won the European Cup in 1986.

### CFR CLUJ STADIUM CLUJ-NAPOCA

Capacity: 22,198

Home team: CFR Cluj

Located in the centre of Cluj, the stadium was opened in 1973. It has since enjoyed several refurbishments, partly due to CFR Cluj's rise to prominence in European football. It has hosted Romania national team football.



### CLUJ ARENA CLUJ-NAPOCA

Capacity: 30,020

Home team: Universitatea Cluj, Olimpia Cluj

Opened in 2011 on the site of the previous Ion Moina Stadium, this is the current home of Universitatea Cluj and Olimpia Cluj and has hosted several national team matches. It has also staged concerts with Roxette, Andrea Bocelli and UB40 having performed there.





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# HOW THEY GOT THROUGH...

With Georgia and Romania qualifying for this tournament as hosts, that left 14 more spaces to be filled. Nine group winners made it through, along with the best-performing runners-up, Switzerland. Four more routes to these finals were available via play-offs for the remaining second-placed teams. Here's how each team got here...

## Group A

	P	W	D	L	GF	GA	Pts
Norway	10	8	0	2	26	11	24
Croatia	10	7	1	2	25	10	22
Finland	10	6	1	3	18	13	19
Austria	10	5	1	4	22	13	16
Azerbaijan	10	2	1	7	12	24	7
Estonia	10	0	0	10	0	32	0

## Group B

	P	W	D	L	GF	GA	Pts
Germany	10	9	0	1	32	9	27
Israel	10	6	1	3	19	10	19
Poland	10	5	3	2	26	9	18
Hungary	10	4	2	4	16	17	14
Latvia	10	2	1	7	5	19	7
San Marino	10	0	1	9	0	34	1

## Group C

	P	W	D	L	GF	GA	Pts
Spain	8	8	0	0	37	5	24
Slovakia	8	5	0	3	18	10	15
N Ireland	8	2	1	5	8	18	7
Lithuania	8	2	1	5	7	22	7
Malta	8	2	0	6	10	25	6
Russia	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

## Group D

	P	W	D	L	GF	GA	Pts
Portugal	10	9	1	0	41	3	28
Iceland	10	5	3	2	25	7	18
Greece	10	5	2	3	16	10	17
Belarus	10	4	0	6	16	15	12
Cyprus	10	3	2	5	16	16	11
Liechtenstein	10	0	0	10	0	63	0

## Group E

	P	W	D	L	GF	GA	Pts
Netherlands	10	8	2	0	32	3	26
Switzerland	10	7	2	1	22	6	23
Moldova	10	3	3	4	7	12	12
Wales	10	3	2	5	15	14	11
Bulgaria	10	2	4	4	10	11	10
Gibraltar	10	0	1	9	1	41	1

## Group F

	P	W	D	L	GF	GA	Pts
Italy	10	7	3	0	19	5	24
Rep of Ireland	10	6	1	3	16	10	19
Sweden	10	5	3	2	22	8	18
Bosnia & Herz	10	3	2	5	9	16	11
Montenegro	10	3	2	5	14	17	11
Luxembourg	10	0	1	9	2	26	1

## Group G

	P	W	D	L	GF	GA	Pts
England	10	8	1	1	26	7	25
Czech Republic	10	7	1	2	23	6	22
Slovenia	10	4	4	2	11	7	16
Kosovo	10	3	3	4	8	13	12
Albania	10	3	1	6	9	17	10
Andorra	10	0	0	10	1	28	0

## Group H

	P	W	D	L	GF	GA	Pts
France	10	8	2	0	31	5	26
Ukraine	10	7	2	1	20	11	23
Serbia	10	3	3	4	10	11	12
Faroe Islands	10	2	4	4	6	12	10
North Macedonia	10	2	3	5	8	15	9
Armenia	10	1	0	9	7	28	3

## Group I

	P	W	D	L	GF	GA	Pts
Belgium	8	6	2	0	14	2	20
Denmark	8	5	2	1	12	6	17
Turkey	8	2	2	4	7	11	8
Scotland	8	1	4	3	6	10	7
Kazakhstan	8	0	2	6	4	14	2

## PLAY-OFF RESULTS

Croatia 2 Denmark 1  
Denmark 2 Croatia 1  
(3-3 on aggregate,  
Croatia won on penalties)

Iceland 1 Czech Rep 2  
Czech Rep 0 Iceland 0  
(Czech Republic won 2-1  
on aggregate)

Slovakia 3 Ukraine 2  
Ukraine 3 Slovakia 0  
(Ukraine won 5-3  
on aggregate)

Rep of Ireland 1 Israel 1  
Israel 0 Rep of Ireland 0  
(1-1 on aggregate,  
Israel won on penalties)





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# A RICH HISTORY

From the first final in 1978 through to Germany's latest triumph two years ago, here's a reminder of the 23 times the trophy has been won...



**1978**

**Winners:** Yugoslavia

**Runners-up:** German Democratic Republic

"I will never forget those three goals," said Vahid Halilhodžić after a second-leg hat-trick effectively won Yugoslavia the title.

The first final 45 years ago was a two-legged encounter and Halilhodžić was a key player in both games against East Germany.

The first leg in Halle raised few eyebrows as Halilhodžić scored the only goal to give Yugoslavia the advantage.

On home soil it was completely different, finishing 4-4 with seven of the goals coming in a frantic first half, three of them from Halilhodžić. Bogdan Srečko claimed what proved to be the deciding strike.

**Yugoslavia 5 German DR 4 – aggregate score.**



**1980**

**Winners:** USSR

**Runners-up:** German Democratic Republic

It was a case of feast then famine in terms of goals as the final two years later was decided by a single goal over two legs.

But while goals may have been in short supply, there was still plenty of drama as four players were sent off across the tie.

East Germany were the side to lose out once again as they failed to make the most of home advantage in Rostock, drawing 0-0 despite USSR goalkeeper Victor Chanov being sent off.

Valeri Novikov took the gloves for the second match in Moscow and did a great job. Yuri Susloparov scored the only goal but two East Germans and one USSR player were red-carded.

**USSR 1 German DR 0 – aggregate score.**



**1982**

**Winners:** England

**Runners-up:** West Germany

England and West Germany both had stuttering starts to their campaigns but recovered from early group defeats to reach the final.

England had shown their pedigree in the competition by reaching the semi-finals in the previous two editions – and this time they were ready to claim the trophy.

The hard work was done in the first leg as Gary Owen scored twice in a 3-1 win at Bramall Lane.

West Germany still carried hope though and Pierre Littbarski's hat-trick in Bremen gave England an almighty scare – but goals from Mike Duxbury and Paul Goddard were crucial.

**England 5 West Germany 4 – aggregate score.**



**1984**

**Winners:** England

**Runners-up:** Spain

Mark Hateley scored six knockout-round goals for England as they won back-to-back titles by overcoming Spain in the final.

After the drama two years earlier, the two-legged final was a more routine affair, set up by a solid 1-0 first-leg victory in Seville thanks to Mel Sterland's strike.

Hateley, who had spectacularly claimed four goals in a quarter-final match with France, had a say in the final by opening the scoring and Howard Gayle's strike in Sheffield sealed a 2-0 win on the night and a 3-0 victory on aggregate.

**England 3 Spain 0 – aggregate score.**



**1986**

**Winners:** Spain

**Runners-up:** Italy

Penalties were needed to decide who would take home the trophy for the first time in 1986 and Spain held their nerve to claim victory.

Basking in their glory, they might have reflected on a semi-final against Hungary that almost saw them lose the opportunity to play for the title. Spain lost the first leg 3-1 but put on a fabulous performance in the second game to win 4-1 and seal a 5-4 aggregate win.

Having lost out in the final two years earlier, Spain were up against a very talented Italy side that contained players like Walter Zenga, Roberto Mancini, Roberto Donadoni and Gianluca Vialli, who all went on to play at the 1990 FIFA World Cup.

Both sides won their home legs in the final 2-1 and couldn't be separated when time ran out, meaning a shoot-out was required. Spain coped with the pressure best and celebrated a 3-0 win.

**Spain 3 Italy 3 (aggregate score, Spain won 3-0 on penalties).**



**1988**

**Winners:** France

**Runners-up:** Greece

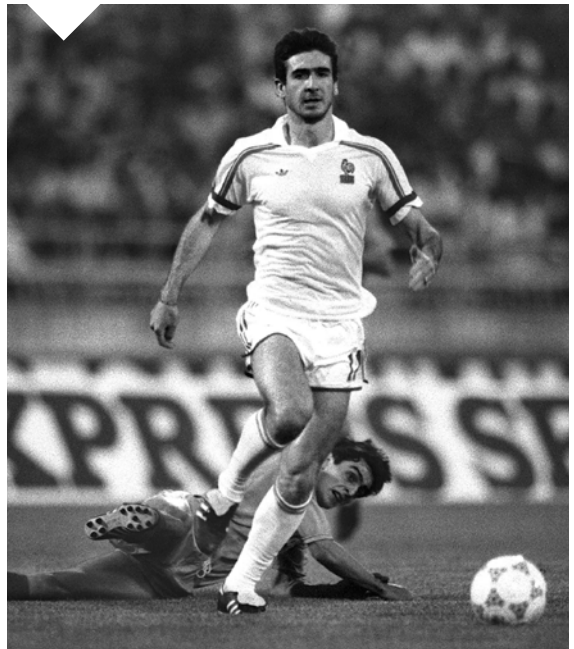
After navigating a tricky run to the final, France carried off the trophy in 1988 after breezing past Greece in the final.

A squad that included Franck Sauzée, Eric Cantona and Golden Player Laurent Blanc had seen off 1986 finalists Italy and two-time champions England in the quarter-finals and semi-finals.

Greece were the surprise package in the final and stunned the Netherlands 5-2 in their semi-final, then had home advantage in the first leg of the final.

They were unable to make the most of it, though, as a solid France outfit claimed a goalless draw to take back to Besançon. From there the result never looked in doubt as two goals from Sauzée and another from Franck Silvestre completed a 3-0 win.

**France 3 Greece 0 – aggregate score.**





## FINALS OF THE PAST



**1990**

**Winners:** USSR

**Runners-up:** Yugoslavia

The 1990 final was a real breeding ground of future stars but it was the USSR who claimed their second title and earned a convincing victory in the final against Yugoslavia.

The USSR beat Sweden in their semi-final with Yugoslavia squeezing past Italy, and the two-legged final was littered with names that would go on to have a huge impact on European football.

Yugoslavia's side contained the likes of Robert Jarni, Zvonimir Boban, Robert Prosinečki, Predrag Mijatović and Davor Šuker while the USSR boasted talents like Andrei Kanchelskis and Valery Karpin.

Šuker would be named the Golden Player but there was little he could do to stop the USSR as they won the first leg 4-2 in Sarajevo before going on to wrap up the tie with a 3-1 victory in Simferopol.

**USSR 7 Yugoslavia 3 – aggregate score.**



**1992**

**Winners:** Italy

**Runners-up:** Sweden

The last final played over two legs was a landmark moment for Italy as they claimed the title for the first time – and it was a feeling they would go on to enjoy on many more occasions.

Their run to the final seemed highly unlikely as they lost a group match 6-0 to Norway – but it proved to be an unusually bad day in an otherwise impressive campaign.

By the time they reached the final against Sweden, both teams were well oiled in defence, neither side having conceded in their semi-finals, and the final was a tight affair.

Second-half goals from Golden Player Renato Buso and Gianluca Sordo decided the first leg in Ferrara. Pascal Simpson gave the Swedes victory in the return leg but Italy clung on.

**Italy 2 Sweden 1 – aggregate score.**



**1994**

**Winners:** Italy

**Runners-up:** Portugal

There were several firsts in the 1994 edition as the final was a single game – and it ended up being decided in extra time.

The semi-finals and final were staged in France and there were lots of big names on show, not least home favourite Zinedine Zidane.

Such was the depth of talent that year that Zidane didn't make it to the final as Italy tried to defend their title against a Portugal team containing the likes of Luís Figo, Rui Costa and João Pinto.

Italy had their own crop of gifted players, though, and a defence that included Francesco Toldo, Christian Panucci and Fabio Cannavaro kept Portugal at bay in the final in Montpellier.

Then, in extra time, Pierluigi Orlandini popped up with the deciding goal.

**Italy 1 Portugal 0 – after extra time.**



**1996**

**Winners:** Italy

**Runners-up:** Spain

Italy made it a remarkable three tournament victories in a row in 1996 but had to be at their most stubborn to claim victory against Spain in the final.

The Italians were up against it anyway, playing Spain in Barcelona in front of nearly 35,000 supporters, and made life a lot more difficult for themselves by having two players sent off in the showpiece match.

They took the lead when Francesco Totti's free-kick was deflected in by Iñigo Idiakez but by half-time the direction of the match flipped in Spain's favour after Nicola Amoruso was sent off and then Raúl González equalised with a sumptuous free-kick.

The match went to extra time but Raffaele Ametrano's dismissal meant Italy had to play the second period with only nine players. But they held on – then won the shoot-out 4-2.

**Italy 1 Spain 1 – Italy won 4-2 on penalties.**





**1998**

**Winners:** Spain

**Runners-up:** Greece

Spain bounced back from the disappointment of two years earlier to claim the trophy for the first time in 12 years.

Their victory was built on a strong defence as a series of 1-0 wins saw them through the knockout rounds and goalkeeper Francesc Arnau won the Golden Player award.

Another 1-0 win was required in the final to overcome a Greece side containing several players – Georgios Karagounis, Traianos Dellas, Ioannis Goumas and Vassilios Lakis – who would go on to win UEFA EURO 2004.

A 65th-minute goal from Iván Pérez secured victory for a Spain squad that included Guti and Michel Salgado.

**Spain 1 Greece 0.**



**2000**

**Winners:** Italy

**Runners-up:** Czech Republic

As much as football is a team game, it was all about Andrea Pirlo as his two goals claimed Italy's fourth title.

At the heart of the Italian midfield, alongside Gennaro Gattuso, Pirlo displayed all his passing poise but decided the final with his set-piece expertise as they faced the Czech Republic in Slovakia.

The Czech fans, who had poured across the border to witness the match, must have feared the worst when Italy were awarded a 42nd-minute penalty and Pirlo converted it with ease.

Tomáš Došek equalised six minutes into the second half but Pirlo had one more deciding piece of magic in his boots. With nine minutes to go, Italy were awarded a free-kick 25 metres from goal which he calmly whipped into the net before running off in wild celebration.

**Italy 2 Czech Republic 1.**



**2002**

**Winners:** Czech Republic

**Runners-up:** France

Andrea Pirlo was still involved for Italy two years after his heroics in Bratislava, but it was the Czech Republic's time to shine as they made up for the disappointment of two years earlier.

Indeed the 2000 finalists met at the semi-final stage in a dramatic contest. The Czechs were two up only for Pirlo to score one of two Italian goals in the final 10 minutes to take the game to extra time, where a Michal Pospisil Golden Goal decided it.

The final against France in Basel was short on incident and needed a shoot-out to decide the destination of the trophy.

The hero of the hour was goalkeeper Petr Čech, who made two fabulous saves which won it for Miroslav Beránek's squad.

France coach Raymond Domenech said: "They had a great goalkeeper – great not only in size but also in the way he played, and that made the difference."

**Czech Republic 0 France 0 – Czech Rep won 3-1 on penalties.**



**2004**

**Winners:** Italy

**Runners-up:** Serbia and Montenegro

Italy peaked at the right time to win title number five and establish themselves as the undisputed kings of European Under-21 football in 2004.

The victory seemed a long way away after their first group match ended in a humbling defeat by Belarus. Rather than feel sorry for themselves, they recovered to top their group, then beat Portugal in the semi-finals.

In the final in Bochum, Germany, they would face Serbia and Montenegro, who had overcome Sweden on penalties to get there, having equalised in added time.

Claudio Gentile's side completed their path to redemption with a comfortable 3-0 win in the final thanks to goals from Daniele De Rossi, Cesare Bovo and Alberto Gilardino, who was named the tournament's Golden Player.

**Italy 3 Serbia and Montenegro 0.**





**2006**

**Winners:** Netherlands  
**Runners-up:** Ukraine

"It's been a great experience. We've grown as a team during the tournament after making a bad start. It's a great feeling."

Those were the words of Golden Player Klaas-Jan Huntelaar after the Netherlands had won their first title in their first appearance at a UEFA European Under-21 Championship final.

In some ways the tournament was a tale of two matches between Ukraine and the Netherlands. The first, in the group stage, was won 2-1 by an impressive Ukraine side.

By the time they met again in the final it was a different story as Huntelaar's third and fourth goals of the competition put the Netherlands in control before Nicky Hofs sealed a 3-0 win in Porto.

Elsewhere, it was a tournament to forget for some of the pre-tournament favourites as Germany, holders Italy and hosts Portugal went out in the group stage.

**Netherlands 3 Ukraine 0.**



**2007**

**Winners:** Netherlands  
**Runners-up:** Serbia

With the scent of victory still in the air from a year before, the Netherlands claimed back-to-back titles, this time lifting the trophy on home soil.

Before Foppe de Haan's appointment as Under-21s head coach, the Netherlands had never won a title at youth or U21 level, but for the second major tournament in a row they won a final by a clear margin.

Serbia were their opponents but could do little to hold back the orange tide as the Dutch swept to a 4-1 win with four different players getting on the scoresheet.

The match was in marked contrast to the Netherlands' semi-final victory over England where they snatched a late equaliser before winning the longest shoot-out in UEFA competition history 13-12.

**Netherlands 4 Serbia 1.**



**2009**

**Winners:** Germany  
**Runners-up:** England

It seems remarkable now that we had to wait until 2009 to see German players lift the UEFA European Under-21 Championship trophy – but when they did achieve it, they did it in some style.

One look at the Germany teamsheet from the final reveals names that make it easy to understand why this was Germany's time to shine. Mesut Özil, Manuel Neuer, Jérôme Boateng, Sami Khedira and Mats Hummels were part of the side that beat England 4-0 in the final in Malmö.

Germany may have taken home the trophy but home interest was kept alive until the semi-final stage and Sweden could celebrate having the Golden Player in their ranks as Marcus Berg top-scored with seven goals.

**Germany 4 England 0.**



**2011**

**Winners:** Spain  
**Runners-up:** Switzerland

Switzerland reached their only final in this competition in 2011 and must have felt this was their year to take the trophy home.

The Swiss navigated the group stage and their semi-final win against the Czech Republic without conceding a goal – and with the likes of Yann Sommer, Xherdan Shaqiri and Granit Xhaka in their side, they had every right to feel confident.

Unfortunately for Switzerland they came up against a supremely talented Spain team in the final in Denmark, where an Ander Herrera header and a sensational free-kick from Thiago Alcântara sealed a 2-0 win. Juan Mata won the Golden Player award.

**Spain 2 Switzerland 0.**



**2013**

**Winners:** Spain  
**Runners-up:** Italy

Spain and Italy met each other in the final for the third time and it was Julen Lopetegui's side that finished victorious.

Spain swaggered their way through the group stage and semi-final with Álvaro Morata scoring in every match to that point.

When it got to the final in Israel, even a resolute Italy side couldn't hold them back as a hero from two years earlier struck again, Thiago Alcântara hitting a hat-trick to supplement another from Isco as Spain triumphed 4-2.

Thiago was named Golden Player and Morata was top goalscorer as Spain swept the board.

Italy could console themselves that talents like Ciro Immobile, Marco Verratti and Lorenzo Insigne would go on to have fantastic careers in the game.

**Spain 4 Italy 2.**



**2015**

**Winners:** Sweden  
**Runners-up:** Portugal

Sweden finally got their hands on the trophy for the first time in 2015 as they got the better of a tight final by winning the penalty shoot-out against Portugal in Prague.

For the Portuguese, their wait to win the competition would have to go on but it was a cruel way to lose the final, especially as the tournament's Golden Player, William Carvalho, missed the crucial spot-kick. Goalkeeper Patrik Carlgrén was the Sweden hero with two shoot-out saves.

Penalties were required after the final had finished goalless, which was a far cry from the semi-finals which had seen 10 goals scored across the two matches.

Portugal had a sensational 5-0 win over Germany with five different players finding the net, while Sweden had four individual goalscorers too in a 4-1 win against Denmark.

**Sweden 0 Portugal 0 – Sweden won 4-3 on penalties.**



**2017**

**Winners:** Germany  
**Runners-up:** Spain

It was a competition of narrow margins for Germany as they collected their second title during a finals that had expanded to include 12 teams.

The tournament took place in Poland, and Germany's group campaign started with two wins before a 1-0 defeat by Italy meant they only scraped into the semi-finals by virtue of having a better goal difference than the other second-place teams.

In the semi-final they faced England in an entertaining encounter that finished 2-2 before a penalty shoot-out went in Germany's favour. The other semi-final was a personal triumph for Saúl Ñíguez, who scored a hat-trick in a 3-1 win over Italy and earned a showdown with Germany.

As often happens when two powerhouses collide, there was little to separate the sides in the final and a Mitchell Weiser header decided it.

**Germany 1 Spain 0.**



**2019**

**Winners:** Spain  
**Runners-up:** Germany

Roles were reversed for Spain and Germany when they met in the final two years later as Spain collected a record-equalling fifth title.

Coincidentally, the other country with five titles was Italy, the joint-hosts of the 2019 tournament with San Marino.

Spain's passage to the knockout rounds wasn't a smooth one as a defeat by Italy left them needing a big win against Poland in their final match to go through on goal difference.

Spain and Germany then hit four goals each in their respective semi-finals against France and Romania.

Luca Waldschmidt scored in every match apart from the final to finish top goalscorer with seven but it was Fabián Ruiz and Dani Olmo who made the crucial interventions in the decider to seal a 2-1 win.

**Spain 2 Germany 1.**





## FINALS OF THE PAST



**2021**

**Winners:** Germany

**Runners-up:** Portugal

Germany reached the final for the third tournament in a row and made it two titles in four years with victory in Hungary and Slovenia.

An ever-expanding competition now had 16 countries taking part in the finals with two teams emerging from each of the four groups.

Just like their previous win in 2017, Germany's path to the trophy was a rocky one. They finished level on points at the top of Group A with the Netherlands and Romania but progressed on goal difference.

After a 2-2 draw with Denmark in the quarter-finals, they won the penalty shoot-out 6-5, then two goals in the first 10 minutes from Florian Wirtz saw them to a 2-1 win over the Netherlands.

Portugal, who produced big wins against Italy and Spain, would be their final opponents – and it took just one goal to decide the contest.

Lukas Nmecha got it, rounding Diogo Costa to slot in and finish as the tournament's top goalscorer.

**Germany 1 Portugal 0.**



## NEXT UP: SLOVAKIA 2025

Slovakia has been appointed as host nation of the 2025 UEFA European Under-21 Championship.

The matches will be played in eight venues in eight different cities across the country.

The 2025 finals will be the third since the expansion to 16 teams, following the 2021 edition in Hungary and Slovenia, and this year's edition in Georgia and Romania.

Hosts Slovakia will be joined in the finals in summer 2025 by 15 teams emerging from qualifying running until late 2024. In the final tournament, teams will play in four groups of four with the top two from each progressing to the knockout phase.

Slovakia previously hosted the 2000 U21 finals, the first to feature a group stage. It was also the venue for the 2022 U19 EURO, the U17 EURO in 2013 and the 2016 Women's U19 EURO.

## GOLDEN PLAYERS

1978:	Vahid Halilhodžić (Yugoslavia)
1980:	Anatoliy Demianenko (USSR)
1982:	Rudi Völler (West Germany)
1984:	Mark Hateley (England)
1986:	Manuel Sanchís (Spain)
1988:	Laurent Blanc (France)
1990:	Davor Šuker (Yugoslavia)
1992:	Renato Buso (Italy)
1994:	Luís Figo (Portugal)
1996:	Fabio Cannavaro (Italy)
1998:	Francesc Arnau (Spain)
2000:	Andrea Pirlo (Italy)
2002:	Petr Čech (Czech Republic)
2004:	Alberto Gilardino (Italy)
2006:	Klaas-Jan Huntelaar (Netherlands)
2007:	Royston Drenthe (Netherlands)
2009:	Marcus Berg (Sweden)
2011:	Juan Mata (Spain)
2013:	Thiago Alcântara (Spain)
2015:	William Carvalho (Portugal)
<b>2017:</b>	<b>Dani Ceballos (Spain)</b>
2019:	Fabián Ruiz (Spain)
2021:	Fábio Vieira (Portugal)



## TOP GOALSCORERS

1978:	Vahid Halilhodžić (Yugoslavia) <b>6</b>
1980:	Ramaz Shengelia (USSR) <b>3</b>
1982:	Pierre Littbarski (West Germany) <b>6</b>
1984:	Mark Hateley (England) <b>6</b>
1986:	Gianluca Vialli (Italy) <b>4</b>
1988:	Aristidis Karasavidis (Greece) <b>5</b>
1990:	Davor Šuker (Yugoslavia), Andrei Sidelnikov (USSR) <b>3</b>
1992:	Renato Buso (Italy) <b>3</b>
1994:	João Pinto (Portugal) <b>3</b>
1996:	Raúl González (Spain) <b>3</b>
1998:	Steffen Iversen (Norway), Nikos Liberopoulos (Greece) <b>3</b>
2000:	Andrea Pirlo (Italy) <b>3</b>
2002:	Massimo Maccarone (Italy) <b>3</b>
2004:	Alberto Gilardino (Italy), Johan Elmander (Sweden) <b>4</b>
2006:	Klaas-Jan Huntelaar (Netherlands) <b>4</b>
2007:	Maceo Rigters (Netherlands) <b>4</b>
2009:	Marcus Berg (Sweden) <b>7</b>
2011:	Adrián López (Spain) <b>5</b>
2013:	Álvaro Morata (Spain) <b>4</b>
2015:	Jan Kliment (Czech Republic) <b>3</b>
2017:	Saúl Íñiguez (Spain) <b>5</b>
<b>2019:</b>	<b>Luca Waldschmidt (Germany) 7</b>
2021:	Lukas Nmecha (Germany) <b>4</b>



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