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WINNING ON AND OFF
THE PITCH
No. 202
BECAUSE EVERY CHILD IS A CHAMPION
From the global audience watching the men’s Champions League final at Istanbul’s Atatürk Olympic Stadium to the record crowds following the Regions’ Cup final tournament in Galicia, UEFA’s competition finals have once again demonstrated our sport’s enduring ability to bring people together from all walks of life.

Of course, popularity brings influence. While it’s unrealistic to believe any sport can single-handedly change society for the better, a community that unites millions of people regardless of ethnicity, gender, age or nationality is a great starting point. The final months of the 2022/23 season have demonstrated how European football is making significant progress in delivering on its enormous potential for social good.

Starting in Istanbul, where the UEFA Foundation for Children teamed up with Türkiye’s Bonyan non-governmental organisation to deliver much-needed respite to children affected by February’s devastating earthquakes in south-east Türkiye and Syria. More than 40 boys and girls were given the chance to join the final training sessions of Manchester City and Inter Milan and meet their players. The foundation is also raising funds to distribute to partner organisations that use sport to help children seriously injured by the earthquakes.

UEFA’s annual grassroots awards, announced in April, provided further evidence of how associations and clubs across Europe make a difference to local communities. The winners include Polish club Amp Futbol Polska, organisers of the first-ever international women’s amputee football event, and the Danish association’s Football Fitness training camp, which uses a modified form of the game as ‘medicine’ to improve the well-being of older citizens.

At the end of June, UEFA staged the Respect forum at the German Football Association (DFB) campus in Frankfurt. In a first for European football, the event gathered more than 200 stakeholders, including social responsibility experts from associations, to share their knowledge and experiences on how to make football a driving force for social and environmental sustainability – in particular, at EURO 2024. In a joint initiative with our partner the UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, the forum also saw 16 teams composed of refugee players compete for the Unity EURO Cup.

On and off the pitch, there can be no doubt that European football is raising its game to embrace the wider social responsibility that comes with its influence.
The Technician

The new UEFA Goalkeeper Coaching publication promotes an integrated and collaborative approach to goalkeeper coaching.

Finals time

From 17 March to 8 July, winning teams lifted UEFA trophies in 12 cities across Europe. We look at who won as well as the long-lasting impact of each competition on football at all levels.

Albârt, the UEFA EURO 2024 mascot, introduces himself to the fans at Germany’s friendly against Colombia on 20 June.

UEFA Congress

The 47th Ordinary UEFA Congress in Lisbon re-elects Aleksander Čeferin as UEFA president and elects members of the UEFA Executive Committee and FIFA Council.

UEFA Football Board

The UEFA Football Board holds its inaugural meeting, gathering a stellar line-up of former footballers and elite coaches at UEFA’s headquarters.

UEFA Foundation for Children

The UEFA president visits a project in Uganda and sees first-hand how sport can change the lives of vulnerable young people.

UEFA Academy

The UEFA Research Grant Programme funds valuable research into football, including two recent studies on children’s participation and volunteering.

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The new UEFA Goalkeeper Coaching publication promotes an integrated and collaborative approach to goalkeeper coaching.
ALEKSANDER ČEFERIN
RE-ELECTED BY ACCLAMATION

The UEFA Congress re-elected Aleksander Čeferin as UEFA’s president for a further four-year term and also held elections for seats on the UEFA Executive Committee and FIFA Council.

At the 47th Ordinary UEFA Congress, held on 5 April in Lisbon, Portugal, UEFA’s 55 member associations elected Aleksander Čeferin as UEFA president for a four-year term by acclamation.

Sándor Csányi (Hungary), Fernando Gomes (Portugal) and Davor Suker (Croatia) were not standing for re-election. Laura McAllister (Wales) was elected for the reserved female member position on the UEFA Executive Committee for a four-year term replacing Florence Hardouin, France, who has finished her term and Hans-Joachim Watzke (Germany) was elected for one member position on the UEFA Executive Committee for a two-year term, both by acclamation.

Elections for the FIFA Council
Debbie Hewitt (England) was elected with 39 votes for the FIFA vice-president position reserved for the four British associations for a four-year term. The second candidate, David Martin (Northern Ireland), received 16 votes. Sándor Csányi was re-elected as a FIFA vice-president for a four-year term by acclamation after Ari Lahti (Finland) had withdrawn his candidature.

Fernando Gomes was elected as an ordinary member of the FIFA Council for a four-year term and Bernd Neuendorf (Germany) as an ordinary member for a two-year term, both by acclamation.

Constitutive UEFA Executive Committee meeting
Laura McAllister and Gabriele Gravina (Italy) were appointed as UEFA vice-presidents at the constitutive UEFA Executive Committee meeting held after the UEFA Congress, replacing Fernando Gomes and Sándor Csányi.

Annual report and finances
The UEFA annual report for 2021/22, the 2021/22 financial statements and annexes, and the budget for the 2023/24 financial year were all approved.

Next UEFA Congress
The 48th Ordinary UEFA Congress will take place in Madrid, Spain, on 8 February 2024.

“Protecting this game is our mission. Our goal. Our purpose. Our raison d’être. We are elected, and we have a duty to set an example. We must never forget this.”

Aleksander Čeferin
UEFA President

“UEFA is delighted to see that the very ones who have shaped the game’s history with their talents and philosophy are gathered again around our common goal – to protect the game of football and its essential values.”

Aleksander Čeferin, UEFA president

**UEFA Football Board**

A stellar line-up of former footballers and elite coaches assembled at UEFA’s headquarters in Nyon, Switzerland, on 24 April for the inaugural meeting of the UEFA Football Board.

The newly formed advisory body will draw on the experience and expertise of its members to provide an institutional but independent voice on key football topics such as the Laws of the Game and referees’ interpretation of the line of intervention, the video assistant referee system (VAR), the handball rule and player behaviour.

The first meeting brought together Eric Abidal, Rafael Benítez, Fabio Capello, Petr Čech, Luis Figo, Robbe Krane, Jürgen Klinsmann, Ronald Koeman, Philipp Lahm, Michael Laudrup, Paolino Maldini, Roberto Martínez, Fabio Milačić, Gareth Southgate, Patrick Vieira, Rudi Völler, Javier Zanetti and Zinédine Zidane. Carlo Ancelotti, Gareth Bale, Rio Ferdinand, Henrik Larsson, Juan Mata and José Mourinho, who were unable to attend in person, were invited to share input on the agenda’s main points of discussion ahead of the meeting.

The board expressed satisfaction with the current standard of refereeing in UEFA’s men’s club competitions, encouraging adoption of the same unified approach across the European game. It also made several recommendations for the 2023/24 season to improve application of the handball rule, stipulating that not every touch of a player’s hand/arm with the ball is an offence.

• UEFA should clarify that no handball offence should be called against a player if the ball is previously deflected from their own body and, in particular, when the ball does not go towards the goal.
• The board recommends that not every handball should automatically lead to a caution after every shot on goal, as indicated by current guidelines.
• The board encourages referees to be more decisive in cautions for unsporting behaviour, especially when attempting to deceive the referee by feigning injury or pretending to have been fouled.
• The board calls on UEFA to launch an initiative towards the International Football Association Board (IFAB) for the amendment of Law 12, which rules that a player should be sent off for denying the opposing team a goal or an obvious goal-scoring opportunity by handball offence. The board feels players should be sent off only if they deliberately and intentionally touch the ball with their hand/arm. In case of other handball offences, players should only be cautioned.

UEFA also updated board members on the international match calendar as well as implementation of post-2024 reforms to men’s senior club competitions. A similar board will be created for women’s football.
The next UEFA Women’s EURO will take place in the heart of Europe after Switzerland was chosen as the host nation by the UEFA Executive Committee at its meeting in Lisbon on 4 April.

T he UEFA Women’s EURO tournament, which set new standards in England in 2022 with a record 574,875 fans attending matches and a further 374 million watching around the world, heads to Switzerland for the first time in 2025.

**Summer 2025 in Switzerland!**

The association’s drive to promote women’s football has seen a steady increase in the number of licensed female players, from 20,000 in 2016 to 25,000 in 2020. The Swiss women’s national team, among the first in Europe to be formed, is a key driver of this impressive progress, reaching two Women’s EUROs and two Women’s World Cups in the past few years.

The decision to bring Women’s EURO 2025 to Switzerland will be a further catalyst for raising standards.

**Women’s football in Switzerland**

Switzerland was an early pioneer of women’s football in Europe, launching a national league in 1970. In 2020, to mark its 50th anniversary, the Swiss FA relaunched the competition, in its present guise as the Women’s Super League, heralding a new era that has brought unprecedented commercial support and a first live television deal.

**Building the future**

The rising popularity of the women’s game is evident in the success of initiatives like UEFA Playmakers, which gives girls aged five to eight a fun first introduction to the beautiful game.

The programme, which currently operates in 44 UEFA member associations, was introduced in Switzerland in April 2021, and since then more than 700 girls have participated in sessions delivered by over 100 coaches in centres across the country.

The Swiss bid, which was up against four other contenders in the running for Women’s EURO 2025, is confident of delivering a successful tournament. For example, match tickets will include 24 hours of free nationwide public transport. In line with UEFA’s recently introduced guidelines, the Swiss approach also embraces circular economy models (reduce, reuse, recycle, recover) to minimise waste wherever possible. Further social responsibility initiatives are planned regarding human rights, inclusion and equality.

Hosting the Women’s EURO is likely to significantly boost the Swiss economy, generating added value for restaurants, hotels and shops. Host venues will organise cultural and entertainment events for the large numbers of foreign supporters expected to attend the tournament.

**Venue**

The 2025 edition will be staged across eight existing stadiums with a combined capacity of more than 175,000 seats: St Jakob-Park (Basel), Stadion Blankdorf (Bern), Stade de Genève (Geneva), Stadion Letzigrund (Zürich), Stadion St Gallen (St Gallen), Lusern Arena (Luzerne), Stockhorn Arena (Thun) and Stade de Tourbillon (Sion). The travel time between paired venues will range from 30 minutes to two hours by road or rail. The Swiss FA aims to sell all of the 700,000 tickets available for the tournament’s 31 matches.

**Bid vision and legacy**

Switzerland, which jointly hosted the men’s EURO with Austria in 2008, is committed to using Women’s EURO 2025 to accelerate the development of women’s football in Europe, launching its Women’s Super League, and building a national team coefficient rankings issued after the conclusion of the group stage of the European Qualifiers phase for Women’s EURO 2025. The four second-placed teams are relegated to League B.

League A

Group A1: England, Netherlands, Belgium, Scotland
Group A2: France, Norway, Austria, Portugal
Group A3: Germany, Denmark, Iceland, Wales
Group A4: Sweden, Spain, Italy, Switzerland

League B

Group B1: Republic of Ireland, Northern Ireland, Hungary, Albania
Group B2: Finland, Romania, Slovenia, Croatia
Group B3: Poland, Serbia, Ukraine, Greece
Group B4: Czechia, Slovenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Belarus

League C

Group C1: Malta, Moldova, Latvia, Andorra
Group C2: Turkey, Luxembourg, Lithuania, Georgia
Group C3: Azerbaijan, Montenegro, Cyprus, Kosovo
Group C4: Israel, Estonia, Kazakhstan, Armenia
Group C5: North Macedonia, Kosovo, Bulgaria

League D

Group D1: Romania, Belgium, Latvia, Turkey
Group D2: Iceland, Wales, Albania, Greece
Group D3: Northern Ireland, Finland, Poland
Group D4: Serbia, Slovenia, Montenegro, Bulgaria
Group D5: Denmark, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania
Group D6: Hungary, Croatia, Greece, Albania

The Swiss FA aims to sell all of the 700,000 tickets available for the tournament’s 31 matches.

**NEW UEFA WOMEN’S NATIONS LEAGUE TAKES SHAPE**

The new UEFA Women’s Nations League kicked off on 2 May with the draw to split the participating teams into groups within three leagues.

T he UEFA Women’s Nations League offers promotion, relegation and a first live television deal.

**Group A**

Group A1: England, Netherlands, Belgium, Scotland
Group A2: France, Norway, Austria, Portugal
Group A3: Germany, Denmark, Iceland, Wales
Group A4: Sweden, Spain, Italy, Switzerland

**Group B**

Group B1: Republic of Ireland, Northern Ireland, Hungary, Albania
Group B2: Finland, Romania, Slovenia, Croatia
Group B3: Poland, Serbia, Ukraine, Greece

**Group C**

Group C1: Malta, Moldova, Latvia, Andorra
Group C2: Turkey, Luxembourg, Lithuania, Georgia
Group C3: Azerbaijan, Montenegro, Cyprus, Kosovo
Group C4: Israel, Estonia, Kazakhstan, Armenia
Group C5: North Macedonia, Kosovo, Bulgaria

League A

The group winners are promoted to League A. The four second-placed teams play against the third-placed teams in each group of League B. The winners of each match play in League A for the European Qualifiers phase; the defeated teams play in League B. The fourth-placed teams are relegated to League C.

League B

The group winners are promoted to League A. The four second-placed teams play against the third-placed teams in each group of League A. The winners of each match will play in League A; the defeated teams will play in League B. The three best-ranked third-placed teams play against the three best-ranked second-placed teams of League C. The winners will play in League B for the European Qualifiers phase; the defeated teams play in League C. The lowest-ranked fourth-placed teams are relegated to League C.

League C

The five group winners are promoted to League B. The three best-ranked second-placed teams play against the three best-ranked third-placed teams of League B. The winners will play in League B for the European Qualifiers phase; the defeated teams will play in League C. The remaining teams stay in League C. All matches are played over two legs, with the ties determined by a draw. The third-placed teams are seeded for the draw and play their respective second-leg matches at home.
Celebrating Europe’s Community Champions

Six European clubs, national associations and initiatives have been honoured for their outstanding work in developing grassroots football.

Each season, UEFA’s grassroots awards turn the floodlights on some of European football’s lesser-known places and people, celebrating the individuals, clubs, associations and initiatives that create opportunities for everyone to play the game, making vital contributions to local communities. “The elite game relies on a strong grassroots base, and that is why it is imperative that we celebrate the lesser-known stars who are bringing the game to people of all ages and abilities across Europe,” said Zvonimir Boban, UEFA technical director and chief of football, before the announcement of this year’s award winners.

Since their launch in 2010, UEFA has handed out no fewer than 127 UEFA Grassroots Awards to winners representing more than 40 European countries. In this special section, we celebrate the achievements of the 2022/23 gold, silver and bronze medal winners in the five categories, as well as the winners of a special award.

The 2022/23 UEFA Grassroots Awards winners

Best Professional Club

*Olympique de Marseille (France)*

Marseille and its OM Foundation helped create La Castellane FC, a grassroots community club in the north of the historic port city. Since its birth four years ago, La Castellane has developed into a pillar of the local community, providing social support and a safe place to play for local children and young people. With 15 teams and more than 130 registered players, the club has grown rapidly, introducing a women’s section for 2022/23. As well as paying fees, donating equipment and training coaches, Marseille also offer Castellane players, staff and volunteers the opportunity to train at the OM campus, with regular invitations to matches and concerts at their iconic Stade Vélodrome home.

Silver: Ayr United Football Academy (Scotland)

Scottish second-tier club Ayr United delivers various projects for local people of all ages. The academy welcomes people regardless of their background or ability to play football and has had a significant positive impact on the local community.

Bronze: NK Istra 1961 (Croatia)

With almost 400 registered players, including 100 with professional contracts, NK Istra is the leading football club in the Croatian region of Istria. The club is heavily engaged in the local community, working with kindergartens and primary schools and creating a handy guide for grassroots coaches.

Best Amateur Club

*Ives (Finland)*

Ives is the largest football club in Finland, with more than 5,000 registered players, offering playing opportunities that cater for young children, seniors and disabled players – living proof that football is for everyone.

Lucie Venet, executive director of the OM Foundation, explained: “We knew that children were playing football, but they didn’t have a football club. So, the purpose was really to give them the opportunity to practise football in a club affiliated to the French Football Federation with qualified coaches. La Castellane is more than just a football club. The purpose is really to offer new opportunities and have a positive impact on the players, not only as players, but as the citizens of tomorrow.”

Matti Anttonen, Ilves FC executive director, said: “The biggest thing we can share is the love of football and futsal and the love of sports. If we can share that message, it’s going to benefit Ives, benefit football in the region and the whole of Finland. We get the message to parents that this is a safe environment and that a healthy lifestyle is one of our main club values – they know this is where they want their kids to grow up.”

UEFA research has demonstrated that lives’ social contribution equates to more than €31m each year in in-kind and direct savings – either through promoting a healthy lifestyle or supporting schools and kindergartens. Each season, the club teaches 1,000 volunteers to become better coaches, physiotherapists and team managers, offering UEFA-level training. In turn, this has seen the club produce elite-level talent – by 2021, more than 50 youth national team players had come through the lives system.

Lucie Venet, executive director of the OM Foundation, explained: “We knew that children were playing football, but they didn’t have a football club. So, the purpose was really to give them the opportunity to practise football in a club affiliated to the French Football Federation with qualified coaches. La Castellane is more than just a football club. The purpose is really to offer new opportunities and have a positive impact on the players, not only as players, but as the citizens of tomorrow.”

The joy of football is celebrated at 2023 UEFA Grassroots Awards winners’ events in Cyprus (left), Marseille (above) and Finland (right).

UEFA Grassroots Awards
Silver: Fontenilles FC (France)
Fontenilles FC is a well-known name in grassroots football through its involvement in many programmes. Even though the club’s financial and human resources are limited, with just one full-time employee for 930 registered members, Fontenilles provides invaluable social support to its members (for example, helping with homework), and promotes solidarity and fair play.

Bronze: Bo’ness United Community FC (Scotland)
Bo’ness provides footballing opportunities and pathways for boys and girls aged from 3 to 18. The club runs many programmes, such as Fun-Friday, midnight league football for teenagers and school sessions for local primary and high schools.

Best Social Initiative
Football Fitness training camp (Denmark)
The Danish Football Association’s Football Fitness training camp uses football as ‘medicine’ to help improve the health and well-being of older citizens, promoting physical health and friendship through a modified form of the game.

The programme, which plans a huge expansion in 2023 for up to 500 players, provided 57 recreational players – a group with an average age of 72 and composed of 42 women and 15 men – with a four-day football fitness camp on the island of Bornholm.

Consisting of two 75-minute training sessions, complete with injury-prevention warm-ups, the camp also offered education sessions on the principles behind football fitness and a barbecue allowing participants to share experiences from life in and out of the game. Peter Krutsrup, professor of sport and health sciences at the University of Southern Denmark, explained: “Football is a very special tool because it combines health promotion with fun and camaraderie that many people can benefit from, regardless of their age, gender and social background. Football training is a fantastic prevention and treatment for lifestyle diseases, both related to cardiovascular diseases, metabolic diseases and musculoskeletal challenges.”

Silver: Backyard Goals Football Rescue Tour (Hungary)
This regional movement was launched in eastern Hungary to engage communities with a passive relationship with football. An exhibition in the local museum of Satoraljaujhely presented the impressions of journalist Péter Csillag in an exploration of Hungarian village football in some 200 locations.

Bronze: Football Girls Leuven (Belgium)
Founded in 2020 as a club exclusively for girls aged 5+ to offer support and improve accessibility, Football Girls Leuven welcomes children from different backgrounds and now boasts 141 members.

Best Disability Initiative
Women’s amputee football (Poland)
In 2022, the Amp Futbol Polska organisation and the Polish Football Association launched Europe’s first women’s amputee football team.

Now boasting a squad of 17, the team holds two-day training camps each month, and hosted the first-ever international women’s amputee football event in March. The initiative is a perfect example of how the beautiful game is for everyone, regardless of age, background or ability. Mateusz Widlak, CEO of Amp Futbol Polska, said: “Sometimes, the way people with disabilities are presented is that they need help, but when we are showing the same people with disabilities in a football context it’s more about respect and about them becoming heroes. Our women’s amputee team can change the perception of people with disabilities. But, also, how people with disabilities are looking at themselves. This project is good for the players, as well as people in society.”

Silver: Football For All – Ibbenbürener Kickers (Germany)
Founded in 2019 and based on inclusivity of players of all genders and ages, Ibbenbürener Kickers is made up of both disabled and non-disabled players. In 2022, the club had nearly 100 regular players.

Bronze: Margam Stags youth club (Wales)
This club is a mini-community dedicated to people with a wide range of disabilities. Several parents, some of whom have disabilities themselves, volunteer as coaches, ensuring a safe, respectful and supportive environment for all participants.

How does UEFA select its grassroots award winners?
The UEFA Grassroots Awards have been celebrating outstanding contributions and achievements in the game since 2010. Focused on football outside the elite game, the awards honour some of the unsung heroes and inspiring initiatives that make football such a vital part of communities throughout Europe.

Candidates are nominated by Europe’s national football associations, with award winners selected by UEFA’s Development and Technical Assistance Committee following recommendations made by the UEFA Grassroots Panel.
Best Participation Initiative
Cyprus Football Association (CFA)
By unifying different elements of grassroots football, the CFA has increased youth participation and created a more positive environment for children to enjoy the game, based less on results and more on enjoyment and fair play.

Four years on, the unification programme has absorbed all 134 academies across the country into its registration system. A total of 1,047 teams now offer more than 10,000 fully registered 5-to-15-year-olds the chance to play football today. 14,000 matches are played each year, each fully funded by the CFA, including event and refereeing costs. Harris Kyriillou, CFA grassroots football manager, said: “We used to have standings, leagues, qualifications and championship finals from Under-12 upwards, but it was like a small war among the teams, coaches and even the fans. Now the only things we have in our grassroots championships below the age of 15 are participation, fun, love of the game and football for everyone. At the end of the year, we have a huge grassroots festival and all the kids are winners.”

Silver: Futboliukas (Lithuanian Football Federation)
The objective of the highly successful Futboliukas programme is the mass participation of children in football-related activities in kindergartens. Over the past year, applications have increased by more than 300%.

Bronze: Active through Football (English Football Association)
This project uses football as a platform to increase the physical activity of specific target groups who would otherwise face obstacles and inequalities, for example adults with learning disabilities and physical or mental health conditions.

Almost all the football clubs in Moldova gave up their training facilities to give the refugees and their children somewhere to sleep. We didn’t have a plan or any budget but we just wanted to help these people. We are all just volunteers who wanted to help.”

Diana Bulgaru, FMF grassroots manager

Special award
Football Association of Moldova (FMF)
In response to the Russian invasion of Ukraine, and by working alongside UEFA, the UEFA Foundation for Children and UNICEF, Moldova’s football community has united to provide support and opportunity for thousands of children and families.

The FMF offered its national training centre and futsal arena as accommodation, providing equipment and supplies, as well as organising a wide variety of football activities for children.

It is estimated that the association has directly helped more than 10,000 refugee children over the past year. Many beneficiaries are now integrated into Moldovan schools and sports clubs, giving them the chance to build a brighter future.

In addition to support at home, the FMF has also sent humanitarian supplies into Ukraine, including three trucks packed with medicines, food, sports equipment and kits. The sports equipment and kits allowed special youth sports events to be held for 3,000 children.

Diana Bulgaru, FMF grassroots manager, explained: “Two days after the war started, we had a lot of refugees coming to our country. It was very hard to see these people crossing the border only in slippers and with a small bag. We started a lot of activities to help them – almost all the football clubs in Moldova gave up their training facilities to give the refugees and their children somewhere to sleep. We didn’t have a plan or any budget but we just wanted to help these people. We are all just volunteers who wanted to help.”

Special award
Active through Football (English Football Association)
This project uses football as a platform to increase the physical activity of specific target groups who would otherwise face obstacles and inequalities, for example adults with learning disabilities and physical or mental health conditions.
The first-ever UEFA Respect Forum brought together stakeholders from across the European football ecosystem with one common goal: “Inspire, activate and accelerate collective action” to respect human rights and the environment.

“With this forum, we want to catalyse the creation of an ever-growing community of sustainability managers and stakeholders who interact in person around a wide range of societal and environmental trends, practices and innovations,” said Michele Uva, UEFA’s director for social and environmental sustainability.

Over the course of the two days, the participants, including 36 speakers, had the opportunity to meet, engage and learn from speakers and panelists representing UEFA member associations, clubs, partners, non-governmental organisations and academic institutions.

The result was an invaluable range of insights and innovative solutions. From the first day, speakers consistently emphasised the importance of collaboration and collective action in driving progress toward sustainability objectives.

Filippo Grandi, UN High Commissioner for Refugees, underscored the role of football in aiding the integration of refugees into host communities and supporting their mental and physical health. “We often say that one of the best ways to protect refugees is to include them in society,” said Grandi. “Sport is a powerful instrument of inclusion and integration.”

The session on leading practices and trends in social and environmental sustainability set the tone by stressing that sustainability should be viewed as a long-term investment by all parties.

This is a central tenet of UEFA’s strategic approach, which has also embedded sustainability into its club competition licensing rules.

Pivotal role of national associations
In a separate discussion, Teresa Romão, general secretary of the Portuguese Football Association (PF), highlighted the pivotal role of European football’s national associations in driving positive outcomes.

Romão explained that the Portuguese federation had evolved from a purely governmental entity into a socially active organisation that engages with its community. In turn, Mach showcased the OFB’s innovative approach to climate action.

Partnerships key to cutting football’s environmental impact
Two separate panels focused on partnerships and events as a means to reduce football’s environmental impact.

Jaz Babada, head of responsible business and sustainability at Just Eat Takeway.com, an official UEFA partner, guided the forum through a road map towards the first fully circular UEFA Women’s Champions League final: Allison Biscor (Centre for Sport and Human Rights), Alessandra Pianete (UN World Tour) and Lene Kryger (Sport Event Denmark) shared insights on how events can transform sustainability risks into opportunities.

“We’re marrying our worlds and that’s the beauty of this partnership,” said Babada. “We know food, we know takeaway, we know packaging. UEFA knows football, they know stadiums, they know events. So, when the two of us come together we can really fuse objectives around UEFA’s and our own sustainability commitments – and push ourselves a little bit further in terms of what actions we can take.”

Football for Refugees
The forum’s first day also included the second Unity EURO Cup, a joint initiative between UEFA and the UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency. Played at the DFB campus, the tournament featured 16 teams, each including eight refugee players, three non-refugee players and a minimum of two women. Finland emerged as the 2023 champions, but, in truth, every one of the 170 players taking part in this unique tournament should be considered a winner (see pages 18-19).

The forum also took time to celebrate standout contributions by European clubs and players to furthering sustainability and anti-discrimination causes, handing out the first-ever FootbALL Awards:

• Regional Belging Football Association: acknowledged for developing a comprehensive football social responsibility strategy.
• Arsenal FC: recognised for the impact of anti-knife crime campaign, No More Red.
• Deutsche Fußball Liga (DFL): praised for its international weeks against racism initiative.
• Lilian Thuram, France’s EURO 2000 and 1998 World Cup winner: honoured for his tireless efforts to fight racism.

Sustainability, part of EURO 2024’s DNA
With Germany due to host EURO 2024 in less than 12 months, the forum dedicated its second day to discussing how the German government, the German Football Association (DFB) and UEFA are making sustainability part of the tournament’s DNA.

Opening the second day with a keynote speech, Nancy Fairier, German federal minister of the interior and community, said: “When we say we want a sustainable EURO 2024, we mean more than reusable cups and renewable energy – we want to create something that lasts.”

“It’s a big opportunity for us to show how sustainability can be a driving force for the event’s success,” said Michele Uva, UEFA’s director of sustainability, whose presentation set out how the tournament’s ESG (environmental, social and governance) targets are all aligned with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Lasting legacy
A range of EURO 2024 stakeholders underlined the tournament’s potential for leaving a lasting legacy, not just for football but wider society.

Célia Šašić, DFB vice-president for diversity and equality, suggested that EURO 2024 presented Europe with an opportunity to discover a “new sense” of who we are amid challenging times.

“This is a chance for Germany and European society to come together to build a new sense of ‘we’. We have war ongoing just around the corner, we had COVID-19 – crises everywhere,” she said. “I think this can be a marker for us, to come together as a community in Europe and decide our values and celebrate the way of life we have.”

Heike Ullrich, DFB general secretary, observed that by gathering diverse views from sustainability stakeholders, the Respect forum represented an early example of EURO 2024’s legacy.

“This forum would not have happened here in Frankfurt if not for EURO 2024, so the legacy has already started by working here with you,” she said.

The forum concluded with a series of workshops diving into practical approaches for football to tackle discrimination, to measure the direct and indirect greenhouse gas emissions it generates, and to advance the development of walking football.
This year’s Unity EURO Cup once again lived up to its promise of inclusion and empowerment for the 16 national teams involved, bringing together male and female refugees and local players from the participating European nations.

At the end of a memorable day marked by a spirit of sportsmanship and inclusion, Finland triumphed 2-1 over the Republic of Ireland in the final of the 2023 Unity EURO Cup.

This unique tournament, staged on 28 June in Frankfurt, Germany, gave the players the opportunity to represent their host country, or the European Union in the case of Team EU, in an international competition.

Finland emerged as the 2023 champions, but, in truth, every one of the 170 players should be considered a winner.
UEFA PRESIDENT SEES FOOTBALL’S FORCE FOR GOOD IN UGANDA

The UEFA president witnessed first-hand how sport can change the lives of vulnerable young people when he visited the Acholi Quarters district of Kampala – home to one of Uganda’s largest slum communities.

Here, the Aliguma Foundation, a non-governmental organisation, is building sports facilities, training coaches and creating social and economic opportunities for some 2,500 children and 850 caregivers. The initiative, known as the Sports for Resilience Foundation for Children, is one way we can do so.”

“Visibly moved by his conversations with youth leaders, the UEFA president said: “It’s not only about elite competitions. Football can also be a force for good.” “This wasn’t just an ordinary visit. It was a game changer,” said Ritah Aliguma, Aliguma Foundation CEO, describing the impact of the UEFA president’s visit to a community where 20,000 people daily live with the challenges of poverty and deprivation.

“This wasn’t just an ordinary visit. It was a game changer.”

Ritah Aliguma, Aliguma Foundation CEO

The UEFA Foundation for Children’s 2023 call for projects requiring financial support runs from 1 to 28 July 2023. Applicants are invited to submit their projects through the dedicated platform on the foundation’s official website: https://uefafoundation.org

UEFA Foundation

The UEFA Foundation for Children has supported over 400 projects worldwide, donated equipment and provided grants – all with the goal of assisting the world’s poorest, most vulnerable children or crisis-stricken regions.

UEFA’s commitment

Since its creation in 2015, the UEFA Foundation for Children has supported over 400 projects worldwide, donated equipment and provided grants – all with the goal of assisting the world’s poorest, most vulnerable children or crisis-stricken regions.

LISBON TO HOST 2025 UEFA WOMEN’S CHAMPIONS LEAGUE FINAL

Among the decisions taken by the UEFA Executive Committee on 28 June were the following:

Host appointments

The Estádio José Alvalade (home to Sporting Clube de Portugal) in Lisbon was appointed to host the UEFA Women’s Champions League final in 2025. The new Arena Kielce Stadium (home to AIK Athens FC) was selected as the venue for the UEFA Conference League final in 2024, with the decision to be confirmed in December following a period of observation, while Stadion Wrocław (home to WKS Spak Wrocław) will host the same event one year later. Finally, Poland will host the European Women’s Under-19 Championship final tournament in 2025.

2026 World Cup

UEFA will recommend a two-stage qualifying format to FIFA – a group phase followed by play-offs – to determine the 16 European teams in the 2026 FIFA World Cup.

UEFA Conference League

The Executive Committee approved the proposed name change to the UEFA Europa Conference League, which will be known as the UEFA Conference League from the 2024/25 season. The change follows research among fans and commercial partners that found that removing ‘Europa’ from the name of the competition would enable its further development as a stand-alone competition.

UEFA Youth League format

The competition will adapt to the new format of the senior UEFA club competitions and include the 38 youth teams of the clubs that qualify for the league phase of the 2024/25 UEFA Champions League (Champions League path). The domestic champions path will be restructured to include the domestic youth champions of all UEFA member associations.

Stronger voice for players and fans

The Executive Committee also decided to integrate the voices of players (via FFPRO Europe) and fans (via Football Supporters Europe) into its decision-making process. These stakeholders will now hold dedicated seats on relevant UEFA standing committees, joining members from national associations, leagues and clubs. Additionally, UEFA has created new, bilateral stakeholder-specific platforms to further increase the opportunity for dialogue and understanding. These action-oriented advisory boards will complement the annual UEFA Convention on the Future of European Football and also forge exclusive channels of communication for each stakeholder group to work directly with UEFA.

The next meeting of the UEFA Executive Committee is scheduled to take place on 26 September 2023 in Limassol, Cyprus.

Sky’s the limit

UEFA HAS TEAMED UP WITH THE European Space Agency (ESA) to go where no sports organisation has gone before. On 8 May, UEFA announced an agreement with the ESA – the first-ever agreement between a sports governing body and an organisation dedicated to the exploration of space. Andrea Traverso, UEFA’s director of financial sustainability and research, said: “We are confident that this partnership with the ESA will bring incredible value to UEFA.”

The pioneering partnership, which will run until 31 December 2025, is the result of the UEFA innovation hub’s efforts to foster cross-industrial collaboration, identifying cutting edge solutions to the ever-changing world of football.

“It is a way for us to address some of European football’s key strategic challenges by leveraging the expertise, network and resources of an innovative pioneer like the ESA and to explore joint collaboration in creating relevant and tangible solutions,” added Traverso. “This partnership underlines UEFA’s ambition to nurture new types of cooperation to adapt ourselves even more rapidly.”

Innovation and technology

To launch the initiative, UEFA and the ESA are prioritising three areas of cooperation:

• Pitch mapping tool

Sourcing socio-economic, weather and health data to improve UEFA’s artificial intelligence (AI) pitch detection tool. This uses data and satellite imagery to plot an accurate map showing all football pitches across UEFA’s 55 member associations.

• Crowd management solutions

Running an open call for tech providers in the ESA network to support two types of crowd management solutions: 1. provide more accurate data on crowd movement around stadiums; 2. access historical crowd data for specific venues.

• Sustainability

Exploring the potential for technologies used in the space industry to develop social and environmental solutions for European football.
Ensuring goalkeepers are viewed as part of the team and not in isolation is one of the key headlines from UEFA’s new goalkeeper coaching publication, launched earlier this year through UEFA’s Share programme.

Produced by members of UEFA’s goalkeeper advisory group, the 33-page document promotes an integrated and collaborative approach to goalkeeper coaching and underlines the importance of starting from the game when designing practice sessions for goalkeepers.

“Being a goalkeeper coach has evolved over the decades and the demands of modern football coaching are now very high,” explains Hans Leitert, a member of the working group for the development of the UEFA Goalkeeper Coaching document. “Since UEFA implemented the UEFA goalkeeping A and B licences, I think all the associations have realised that the requirements to be a goalkeeping coach are different from the age when goalkeeper coaching started and when goalkeeping coaching became a full-time profession.”

How goalkeeper coaching has evolved from a largely isolated and individual pursuit to one that requires integration within the team and overall coaching process is detailed throughout the document. “When goalkeeper coaching first started, it was always related to technical and physical elements,” explains Leitert. “So, historically speaking, goalkeeper coaching was based on how goalkeepers dive, how they kick the ball and how they parried the ball. It was more working on technical guidelines, but very isolated and very distant from the requirements of the game.”

Helping goalkeeper coaches develop a wider view of the game by linking game principles to goalkeeping principles is another key point encouraged in the publication. “We want to develop a common understanding that whatever we coach during the training process should have the game as a foundation,” explains Leitert.

The new UEFA Goalkeeper Coaching publication outlines how goalkeeper coaching has evolved and the importance of integrating the goalkeeper into the team unit.
“Coaches should not be thinking about an isolated approach where it’s one goalkeeper coach and a small number of goalkeepers. Instead, we want people to consider goalkeeper coaching as a main topic and collaborative setting. The work should have the game as the primary idea. Whatever goalkeeper coaches do, it should be for the benefit of the players that have a good game.”

The challenges of moving from an isolated to a collaborative approach

Given the history and culture of goalkeeping, it remains a challenge to move those isolated from an isolated to a more integrated and collaborative approach. “One of the biggest challenges we have is to get coaches thinking ‘from the game’,” explains Packie Bonner, UEFA goalkeeper advisory group member and former Celtic FC and Republic of Ireland goalkeeper. “We want goalkeeper coaches to think ‘backwards’ from the game (when planning the training sessions) and ask themselves: ‘What’s the game telling us and how should that impact how we work with goalkeepers?’”

The document outlines the overall principles of the game of football and how it relate to goalkeepers and goalkeeper coaches. “We felt that was crucial that we gave people something they could actually use (in practice),” adds Bonner.

Although Bonner believes there are many examples where goalkeeper coaches work collaboratively within the wider coaching staff, the picture across Europe is one that can still be improved. “Although we have seen great improvements in this area, there are still lots of goalkeeper coaches working in isolation,” explains Bonner. “To make that step from isolation to collaboration and to work effectively with outfield players and other members of the coaching staff is a big challenge for goalkeeper coaches. It has improved, but, in my belief, it still has a long way to go.”

Raising the profile of goalkeeper coaches and helping individuals to be recognised for their expertise is all part of the process, believes Bonner. “The goalkeeper is obviously a huge part of any team in the modern game and if the head coach can connect the goalkeeper with the team properly, there are so many benefits to be had. The goalkeeper coach is in the best position to do this and must be seen as just as important as the other members of staff.”

“We want goalkeeper coaches to be, first and foremost, recognised as a coach with the speciality of goalkeeping. They have to be recognised as coaches who can work on the pitch with players and other members of staff.”

UEFA coach education and reality-based learning

How goalkeeper coaches work effectively on the training pitch with outfield coaches is a key part of the UEFA goalkeeping A licence and a concept that Bonner hopes will be integrated into the core strand of UEFA coaching courses in the future. “In the past, such as when I went against Roma in Budapest in May, Seville goalkeeper Yassine Bounou punches the ball clear during the UEFA Europa League final against Roma in Budapest in May.

“Being a goalkeeper coach has evolved over the decades and the demands of modern football coaching are now very high.”

Hans Leitert, member of the working group for the development of the UEFA Goalkeeper Coaching publication

UEFA Goalkeeper Coaching

Developing a consistency of language when discussing goalkeeping

Another key issue highlighted in the document is the varied terminology and language used to describe goalkeeping. “Across Europe, coaches and coach educators have their own way of presenting and using words to describe goalkeeping,” says Bonner. “Often it means something to them and within their own country, but translating that out of that country, or from a club or association to another, was sometimes quite difficult.”

“Instead, if we can have a common terminology, we can trigger some direction to our critical thinking. For example, if we are all talking about the same zones on the pitch it will make things a lot easier.”

With many goalkeeper coaches working outside their native country, and also goalkeeper coaches attending goalkeeping courses across Europe, there are many reasons why a consistency in language and approach is required. “The number of staff moving from club to club, from association to association, and even attending courses in different countries is much greater than it was in the past. In the modern game, if you look at the staff working in any country you will see different nationalities and languages. So, I think that is why consistency of terminology is important.”

people to show them that they can coach and control everything that is involved in a session,” explains Bonner. “The modern approach, and the one we have developed our UEFA A goalkeeping licence around, is that the coach must be able to work with other coaches out on the pitch. The goalkeeper coach is a support coach; they are not there as head coach or even as the main assistant coach. But within the support staff, you may have four or five coaches who are all support coaches and they are all finding their position on the pitch.”

“That is no easy task and so we encourage our goalkeeper coaches to take this way of working into their training environment, try it out, work at it and get better at it. That’s why UEFA’s reality-based approach to learning is so important. I’ve seen very good examples of it, but I’ve also seen examples where it doesn’t work and then people revert back to what they are used to doing. So, it’s an ongoing education process.”

THE TECHNICIAN
Evolution of goalkeeping

Specific goalkeeper training started to become a regular feature around the 1970s, roughly a hundred years after the position had been formally established. It was mainly the head coach, and later the assistant coach, who dedicated specific time to providing some drills for the goalkeepers, usually before or after the team training session. These tended to be very repetitive physical exercises of goalkeeper-specific movements focusing on load and intensity rather than on game context.

Consequently, while goalkeepers may have become fitter, their tactical awareness and goalkeeping skills mainly improved through game experience rather than through specific training routines.

However, it would be unfair to judge the choice of training content in former times in the light of our current knowledge. In fact, the constructive intention to work with goalkeepers specifically using exercises that were related to their position should be appreciated, as it constituted a turning point in the evolution of football coaching.

The goalkeepers themselves often determined the content and the progression of the exercises, whereas the coach’s duty and responsibility (whether it was the head or assistant coach) was limited to delivering the exercises in the way the goalkeepers expected.

Next steps: best practice video footage and relevant performance data

Given the speed at which the modern game is evolving, there is acknowledgement that the publication will continue to be updated, with best practice video footage and research ensuring the information remains contemporary and relevant.

“We want to back up the document with some strong video evidence, highlighting good examples from clubs and associations,” says Bonner. “The video footage will help us bring the document to life and also give us some more reference points and examples. We will also be linking to latest research and findings.

“Added to this, we will be measuring the impact of the document,” adds Bonner. “At the end of this year we will review how clubs and national associations are using the document in their work. We are also looking at how we integrate some of the key messages into the core UEFA coaching courses.”

Relevant performance data will also be included in future updates to the publication. “We would like to support all the goalkeeping principles with performance data,” adds Leitert. “We want to include objective data about the frequency of certain actions linked to the goalkeeping principles.

“From a goalkeeping perspective we want to know what happens often and what rarely happens. We also want to know those things that are decisive for the outcome of the game. From there, we can weigh up the importance of certain actions and prioritise what should be considered in the coaching courses and then also in the training programmes on the pitch. So, adding data is something very important.”

The UEFA Goalkeeper Coaching document was developed by Packie Bonner, Frans Hoek, Hans Leitert, Jan Erik Stinessen, Martin Thomas and Marc van Geersom.
From 17 March to 8 July 2023, winning teams lifted UEFA trophies in 12 European cities. The success of each competition extends far beyond the celebrations on the pitch, with a long-lasting impact for football at all levels. We look not just at who won, but also how each of our competitions can inspire generations of players up and down Europe’s football pyramid.

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Italy goalkeeper Gianluigi Donnarumma clears under pressure from the Netherlands’ Nathan Ake during the third-place match in Enschede.

**UEFA Nations League**

**Highest win percentages**

Scotland: 62.5%
Georgia: 61.1%
Portugal: 61.1%
Netherlands: 61.1%
Greece: 61.1%
Belgium: 61.1%
Norway: 58.8%

Spain may have celebrated yet another international trophy, but the teams with the highest all-time winning percentage in the Nations League have connected all levels of UEFA’s and FIFA’s country rankings: first, Scotland, having won 10 of their 16 games, then Georgia, Portugal, Netherlands, Greece and Belgium, each with win percentages of 61.1%.

Winning mindset

UEFA introduced the men’s Nations League in 2018 to boost the competitiveness of its member associations, especially those traditionally smaller or less successful footballing nations. While the first three names engraved on the trophy – Portugal, France and now Spain – undoubtedly represent the heavyweight division of European football, they are far from the only winners, thanks to the added drama, competitive balance and interest introduced by the tournament.

Spain may have celebrated yet another international trophy, but the teams with the highest all-time winning percentage in the Nations League connect all levels of both UEFA’s and FIFA’s country rankings: first, Scotland, having won 10 of their 16 games, then Georgia, Portugal, Netherlands, Greece and Belgium, each with win percentages of 61.1%.

Spain put their World Cup woes firmly behind them by winning the third edition of the UEFA Nations League against a Croatia side seeking their first international trophy.

After only three editions, the importance of the Nations League and the esteem in which fans and players alike hold the new competition is evident. “It would be amazing to lift the trophy… it would be a dream come true,” said Croatian talisman Luka Modrić ahead of the final four, which was contested by the two finalists along with hosts the Netherlands and Italy.

Sadly for Modrić and his team-mates, that dream didn’t become a reality, with Croatia being edged out on penalties after neither side could find a breakthrough goal in the final. The closeness of the match was indicative of how the Nations League is benefitting the wider national team game in Europe.

**Competitive edge**

Of the 55 teams in the Nations League, 33 have earned at least one promotion and 37 have won a Nations League group. Equally, within the groups themselves, the competitive edge provided by the tiered league structure is reflected in the number of close games.

In replacing often meaningless or unbalanced friendlies with competitive fixtures – with the reward and jeopardy of promotion and relegation – the Nations League has succeeded in re-energising the European international calendar. UEFA is seeking to replicate that fresh impetus in the women’s game with a new national team competitions structure, announced in November 2022 and starting in autumn 2023. The new format connects a women’s Nations League with European Qualifiers, plus introduces a three-tier league structure with promotion and relegation (see page 9). It will ultimately lead to qualification for the Women’s EURO and the Women’s World Cup. This new era promises improved competitiveness, gripping narratives and new paths for national associations to reach major international tournaments.

**Champions throughout**

Attentions turned to the showpiece final-four contest in the Netherlands in June, but there were success stories to be told across all levels of the Nations League.
OF MANY WINNERS

A new name was etched into Champions League history in Istanbul as Manchester City claimed their maiden European title with a 1-0 victory over Inter, courtesy of Rodri’s 68th-minute strike. The celebrations of players and fans alike spoke to the unrivalled prestige of European football’s premier club competition, and Pep Guardiola’s side will rightly relish their triumph in answering that question; her club’s development but also the players, coach Arnat Gunnlaugsson. “The money it’s important both financially and for the respect of Icelandic football.”

Winners: Manchester City FC

**Men’s Champions League**

Host city: Istanbul
FC Manchester City – FC Internazionale Milano 1-0

**Winners: Manchester City FC**

Rising attendances and a gripping showpiece game are sure signs that, just two years into its new cycle, the revamp of the Women’s Champions League is delivering – on and off the pitch. Rising attendances and a gripping showpiece game are sure signs that, just two years into its new cycle, the revamp of the Women’s Champions League is delivering – on and off the pitch.

**“It’s one of the greatest competitions in world football,” says AS Roma right-back Elisa Bartoli. “I believe every child dreams about this tournament.” It’s a sentiment shared across the game, with players all over Europe relishing the opportunity to take part.”**

Coupled with rising media interest, the trend looks set to continue. “You can imagine how it’s going to be in five years’ time,” reflects Oshoala. “It’s going to be so, so amazing. You’re going to have amazing sponsorship, you’re going to have such big media outlets who want to invest in this competition. This is just the beginning – there’s so much more to come for women’s football.”

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SEVILLA’S SEVENTH HEAVEN

The unique value of the Europa League was apparent once again as the Spanish side claimed a record seventh title, one that was all the more remarkable for coming at the end of a long and difficult season.

Roma fell one match short of completing a remarkable double in UEFA competitions – winning the 2021/22 Europa Conference League and finishing bottom of their group, there was no sense of despair. “The recurring theme throughout those games was joy,” he says. “We were just seizing the moment. Whatever happened on the pitch, we were super happy we’d get the chance to be there and be the first club from the country to break that barrier.”

Once again we’ve shown what this title means for the club, for us, for our fans,” says Sevilla midfielder Ivan Rakitić. “We say that there is no team who loves this competition as we do, and this saying is not just marketing; we feel it.”

There is no doubt how much it means to the supporters. As the huge banner rolled out in the stands during their home semi-final leg against Juventus declared: “Nobody loves it like we do.”

DARING TO DREAM

This season, teams from three countries that had never before featured in a UEFA club competition group stage took part in the Europa Conference League.

Thanks to the new men’s club competition cycle that started in the 2021/22 season, more European clubs and nations than ever have the chance to experience a UEFA European match night. This was nowhere more apparent this season than in the second edition of the Europa Conference League.

Almost 12 months ago, eventual finalists Fiorentina and winners West Ham lined up alongside Žalgiris of Lithuania, Vaduz of Liechtenstein and Kosovo side Ballkani in the competition draw – all clubs breaking new ground by being the first team from their respective countries to reach the group stages of a UEFA club competition.

Living the dream” was how lifelong Žalgiris fan Jokubas Plytnikas described watching his team in this season’s Europa Conference League. “I’d dreamt of it since childhood. There were people flying in from different continents just to be there.”

Plytnikas attended all six of Žalgiris’s group games and, despite his team finishing bottom of their group, there was no sense of despair. “The recurring theme throughout those games was joy,” he says. “We were just seizing the moment. Whatever happened on the pitch, we were super happy we’d get the chance to be there and be the first club from the country to break that barrier.”

Expanding horizons

Tales like these reinforce UEFA’s rationale behind launching the Europa Conference League: bringing excitement and glory to more fans and fans than ever before, and giving lesser-heralded football clubs and nations a platform on which to shine. Aside from the pride and joy of playing on the continental stage, the enhanced exposure is what makes it too. “A first-time qualification is a memorable event,” says Žalgiris coach Vladimir Chaburin. “It was a present for the club and supporters. It’s very important, it really is.

In order to move forward, we need to achieve something first.”

Alongside that prestige, like all UEFA competition participants, the clubs benefit from the financial rewards. All 32 group-stage sides received €2.94m, with additional payments of €500,000 per win and €166,000 per draw.

These sums help to boost the game at the lower levels of the football pyramid, increasing competitiveness and strengthening the game in many traditionally smaller footballing nations.

As well as Žalgiris, Ballkani and Vaduz, a further six clubs from six different countries made their debut in a European group stage this season: Djurgårdens (Sweden), Dinamo-1 (Ukraine), Pyunik (Armenia), RFS (Latvia), Silkeborg (Denmark) and Slovacko (Slovakia).

With the 2023/24 Europa Conference League qualifying rounds kicking off on 13 July, another chance for more clubs to carve their own slice of history awaits.
**HIGH FIVES FOR FUTSAL**

The Women’s Futsal EURO, the Futsal Finalissima and the Futsal Champions League demonstrate that the five-a-side game is riding the crest of a wave.

"These are exciting times for a sport that is flourishing as a popular attraction for fans across the continent." UEFA president Aleksander Čeferin’s words point to the growing evidence that futsal’s future has never been brighter.

The adage that top-level sport is driven by competitions and competition is certainly borne out by the indoor game. Although the sport is currently dominated by the Iberian rivalry between Portugal and Spain, there are clear indicators that European futsal is becoming increasingly competitive. During a memorable season, the buoyant mood has been fuelled by three hugely successful international events: the ground-breaking Futsal Finalissima, co-organised by UEFA and CONMEBOL in Argentina in September, the UEFA Women’s Futsal EURO in Hungary and the UEFA Futsal Champions League in Spain or, to be more precise, on the Mediterranean island of Majorca – all three staged as final-four tournaments.

An additional boost has been provided by FIFA’s confirmation that an inaugural Women’s Futsal World Cup will be staged in 2024, with longer-term plans also featuring a Women’s Futsal Club World Cup. The intercontinental competitions signify additional incentives for European teams, who currently dispute four UEFA trophies for clubs and national teams.

"Every Women’s EURO brings with it a change of attitude among supporters, media and sponsors. For sure it will increase female participation in our country and, hopefully, more clubs will want to have women’s futsal teams.”

Ana Azevedo
Portugal’s national team captain

Those additional incentives are especially welcomed by female futsal players, who were starved of international football until the Women’s EURO kicked off with qualifiers in 2018 and a first-ever final tournament the following year. In that short time span, the number of participating teams has more than tripled.

**Women’s Futsal EURO**

“We fought for many years to play in competitive matches and each one is very important for us," says Spain captain Patricia González Mola, alias ‘Peque’, who was UEFA player of the tournament at the recent Women’s Futsal EURO – the third of its kind. “For us, the EURO is the most important tournament. Domestically, the Spanish league is growing. But international competitions are the ones that really help. If futsal doesn’t continue to develop internationally, the sport will not be taken seriously.”

Peque lifted the trophy for the third time in the Hungarian city of Debrecen, where Spain’s men’s team had beaten Portugal in the final in 2010. This time, the Iberian derby was a semi-final that Spain won 3-2, going on to a 5-1 victory in the final over Ukraine, who highlighted the increasingly competitive nature of the competition by making a debut in the final, while host nation Hungary had qualified for the final tournament for the first time.

Coach Francesca Salvadori, one of the UEFA technical observers at the EURO in 2010, added: “Every Women’s Euros have contributed to changing the dynamics in the minds of the players and within the associations to which they belong. It has become a goal within the development of women’s futsal and, apart from my own country, I have seen other nations, like Finland and Sweden, who have increased their competitiveness. A World Cup will encourage this even more.”

Ana Azevedo, capped over 100 times by Portugal, added: “Every Women’s EURO brings with it a change of attitude among supporters, media and sponsors. For sure it will increase female participation in our country and, hopefully, more clubs will want to have women’s futsal teams.”

As a testament to her comments and an illustration of the game’s growth, supported by UEFA’s substantial financial backing for men’s and women’s competitions, the number of entries for the inaugural UEFA Futsal Cup in the 2001/02 season. Since then, development at grassroots and community level and the expansion of domestic leagues have been key elements in the growth of the game, supported by funding from UEFA’s Hathrick Programme, with total payments to clubs topping €1m during the season, in addition to financial backing for men’s and women’s national teams.

At the same time, innovations such as home-and-away national team qualifiers instead of mini-tournaments are promoting growth and attracting players and supporters all over the continent. All of which supports the feeling that futsal’s future has never been brighter.

**Women’s Futsal EURO 2023**

Host city: Debrecen
Ukraine - Spain  1-5

**Winners:** Spain

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Ana Azevedo, capped over 100 times by Portugal, added: “Every Women’s EURO brings with it a change of attitude among supporters, media and sponsors. For sure it will increase female participation in our country and, hopefully, more clubs will want to have women’s futsal teams.”

As a testament to her comments and an illustration of the game’s growth, supported by UEFA’s substantial financial backing for men’s and women’s competitions, the number of entries for the inaugural UEFA Futsal Cup in the 2001/02 season. Since then, development at grassroots and community level and the expansion of domestic leagues have been key elements in the growth of the game, supported by funding from UEFA’s Hathrick Programme, with total payments to clubs topping €1m during the season, in addition to financial backing for men’s and women’s national teams.

At the same time, innovations such as home-and-away national team qualifiers instead of mini-tournaments are promoting growth and attracting players and supporters all over the continent. All of which supports the feeling that futsal’s future has never been brighter.

The Women’s Futsal EURO, the Futsal Finalissima and the Futsal Champions League demonstrate that the five-a-side game is riding the crest of a wave.

The fans’ appetite for top-class club football was showcased during the final tournament of the men’s UEFA Futsal Champions League, the first UEFA event for football or futsal to be staged on the island of Majorca. Host team Palma, making a debut in the competition, tore up the form book by winning it. The final against Portuguese favourites Sporting CP illustrated how the game has grown in athleticism and intensity – and tactically, as illustrated by Palma’s use of the goalkeeper as a fifth attacker.

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AN UNBEATABLE STAGE FOR YOUNG PLAYERS TO SHOWCASE THEIR TALENTS

The men’s and women’s European Under-17 Championships, along with the Under-21 Championship, two Under-19 Championships and the UEFA Youth League, give young players outstanding opportunities to showcase their talents while inspiring and developing future generations across all levels of the European football pyramid.

Under-17 Euro: a launchpad for future stars

The men’s European Under-17 Championship has been a springboard to stardom since 2002, with players such as Spain’s Cristóbal Soler and Portugal’s Cristiano Ronaldo all making an impact in the tournament and benefiting from the unique taste of national team football it provides.

As an ambassador for the Under-17 EURO in his home country, former Hungary captain Balázs Dzsudzsák is in no doubt about the benefits young players gain from playing in the event.

“Such tournaments teach you how to keep in shape every third day when there is a match, and how consistent your performance can be during games that are played so close to each other. Besides the physical part, it also teaches you how to handle mental pressure,” explained Dzsudzsák, who represented his nation at the 2003 edition.

“This tournament at such an age is a huge step in a player’s life. If you take into account that huge clubs are scouting at this tournament, it is even more demanding. So with a great performance you can create fantastic opportunities for yourself.”

German’s Paris Brunner did just that in Hungary, winning the player of the tournament award after inspiring his nation to their second Under-17 EURO title, and their first for 14 years.

The new champions defeated 2022 Under-17 EURO winners France in a penalty shoot-out at the Hidegkuti Nándor Stadium in Budapest following a goalless draw.

This exciting crop of German youngsters, spearheaded by Dortmund forward Dzsenifer Marozsán, can now look forward to participating in the 2023 Under-17 World Cup in November and December.

They will be joined by France, semi-finalists Poland and Spain, and England, who won a play-off against Switzerland.

Wales became the 41st current UEFA member to participate in the Under-17 finals, and Cyprus will become the 42nd when they host next year’s edition, illustrating the increasing strength in depth of both the tournament and national team football in Europe.

Women’s Under-17 Euro: inspiring young girls in Estonia

Unlike their male counterparts, France’s Under-17 women’s side were able to go all the way, winning the European Women’s Under-17 Championship for the first time after a 2-1 victory against Spain at the Lilleküla Stadium in Tallinn.

Spain’s player of the tournament, Vicky Lopez, and her fellow joint top scorers Liana Joseph and Maeline Mendy, both of France, were all on the scoreheet in the five-goal thriller.

The final was the climax to an uplifting 12 days during which the Estonian Football Association more than delivered on their vision of using the tournament as a catalyst to unleash a wave of interest in women’s football across the country.

Throughout the event, the hosts ensured that action on the pitch was complemented by a myriad of activities to encourage youth and girls’ participation. These included school visits and matchday festivals featuring mascots and souvenirs, while more than 800 Estonian girls aged five to eight took part in the UEFA Playmakers programme.

The sporting ecosystem in Estonia is fiercely competitive, but some team sports, including women’s football, have in the past been overlooked or underfunded. For the Estonian FA’s secretary general, Anne Rei, who also chairs the UEFA Women’s Football Committee, the tournament represented a shift in perceptions and an opportunity to kick-start a lifelong passion for the game for girls in Estonia.

Working with UEFA, Rei and her team developed a legacy programme covering the periods before, during and after the Under-17 EURO, with the aim of establishing new leagues and teams that will create more playing opportunities for women and girls.

“In Estonia we still must focus on participation numbers, to encourage clubs to take up women’s football,” explains Rei, who is also building up a highly qualified workforce responsible for developing the women’s game in the country.

Schools have been a key part of this drive, with teachers across the country receiving customised education on the benefits of playing football and the pivotal role they can play in promoting female participation.

At these tournaments, they can experience the demands of an international tournament at European level. The impact can be seen with the senior national teams, with many of today’s most prominent players starting their international careers at Under-17 level.”

Inspiring girls who may then sign up for a local club.

Some of those new players may one day feature themselves at a EURO and get the opportunity to take their game to the next level, with Rei eager to stress the value of these youth tournaments for the development of young female players.

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Anne Rei, Estonian FA’s secretary general
BREAKING NEW GROUND AT WEMBLEY

England and Brazil produced a magnificent spectacle in the first Women’s Finalissima in London on 6 April.

The champions of Europe and South America played out the proverbial game of two halves, scoring a goal apiece before a dramatic penalty shoot-out gave England the honour of becoming the first team to win the UEFA-CONMEBOL Women’s Finalissima. A great team attack was rounded off by Ella Toone to put England a goal ahead in a first half they dominated, only for Andressa Alves to equalise in added time at the end of a second half where dominance had changed hands.

“Brazil played two different formations,” England coach Sanna Wiegman commented afterwards. “In the first half, we played very well. They weren’t able to get on the ball and we should have scored a couple more goals. We said at half-time they might switch back to 4-4-2, and they did. They pressed a lot higher. We had a lot of problems getting out of their press and lost the ball a lot. That was a struggle for us, but that’s good for us; it gives us a lot to learn.”

As well as showcasing the popularity of women’s football – 83,312 fans attended the match – the game underlined the strong spirit of cooperation between UEFA and CONMEBOL. The Women’s Finalissima is merely the latest in a series of continental showstoppers pitching European against South American national team champions at senior and youth levels as well as in futsal.

England midfielder Keira Walsh, named player of the match, commented: “For women’s football to have this for the first time and for England to be a part of it is a very special feeling for us and for the fans. It’s a massive step for women’s football.”

CPR training

Ahead of the Women’s Finalissima, staff and players from both teams, along with the match officials, received cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) training, marking the launch of a major initiative by UEFA and the European Resuscitation Council to offer CPR training to over 12,000 people.

The project, set in motion at the UEFA Medical Symposium earlier this year, aims to raise awareness that rapid and effective resuscitation in the event of sudden cardiac arrest doubles the chances of survival and could save over 100,000 lives in Europe every year.

The training has been extended to teams competing in this year’s men’s UEFA Nations League finals, the European Under-21 Championship final tournament and various youth and futsal competitions in addition to staff at UEFA, its 55 member associations and volunteers working at UEFA EURO 2020.

At the Finalissima, England and Brazil players expressed their support. England goalkeeper Hannah Hampton said: “I recommend CPR training to everyone, it’s so important and easy to learn and it can save lives.”

YOUTH COMPETITIONS

By reaching the final of the UEFA Youth League, Hajduk Split made history as the first-ever Croatian finalists of a UEFA club competition. In a sign of the competition’s growing prestige, a 10,000-strong faraway travelled to Switzerland to support them, necessitating a switch to the bigger-capacity Stade de Genève from the competition’s usual final venue in nearby Nyon.

Unfortunately for the travelling fans, their opponents AZ Alkmaar were also chasing a slice of history, and braces from Ernest Poku and Mexx Meerdink led the Dutch club to a 5-0 victory and a switch to the bigger-capacity Stade de Genève.

A total of 18,591 fans attended the final of the UEFA Youth League at the Stade de Genève, while 10,000 strong fans travelled from Evropska liga. Twenty-two young players with learning disabilities from local associations had the chance to train on UEFA’s home pitch in Nyon alongside the Youth League finalists.

To further support this mission, UEFA integrity experts had earlier briefed all four semi-finalists on anti-doping and match-fixing. Players could also continue this education throughout the tournament via the UEFA for Players mobile app.

The young footballers dreaming of a professional football career prepare for the future by offering 15 hours of educational content on diverse aspects of career management. Incentives to take part include monthly prizes such as a Champions League ball.

The initiative organised by the UEFA Foundation for Children was able to lead the Dutch club to a 5-0 victory and a switch to the bigger-capacity Stade de Genève from the competition’s usual final venue in nearby Nyon.

UEFA Youth League: development on and off the pitch

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EUROPE’S PREMIER GRASSROOTS COMPETITION RETURNS

After a four-year hiatus caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, the UEFA Regions’ Cup returned in 2023, providing a unique opportunity for lesser-known regions and amateur players to shine on the European stage.

Open only to players who have never featured at any professional level in the European football pyramid, the Regions’ Cup is a unique contest capturing the essence of the grassroots game. In its 24-year history, more than 6,500 players have appeared in the competition, which is contested by regional-team winners of national amateur tournaments, along with national amateur teams from smaller associations.

Some 595 teams started out in this year’s edition, with the final stage held in the northwestern Spanish region of Galicia between 9 and 17 June. Usually held every two years, this was the first edition of the Regions’ Cup since its cancellation in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Hosts with the most

Galicia represented Spanish football by both hosting and playing in the final stage. Spain has now had a team in a record nine of the 12 Regions’ Cup final tournaments and, since 1999, where Veneto claimed the first Regions’ Cup title on Italian soil, 27 different nations have produced final tournament contenders. The other teams in the final stage of this year’s competition ventured from across Europe: Bavaria (Germany), Zlin (Czechia), Zrenica-Dobo (Bosnia and Herzegovina), Rep. of Ireland Amateur (Republic of Ireland), Lisboa (Portugal), Belgrade (Serbia), and Dolnośląski Region (Poland). None were able to overcome the hosts, however, who became Spain’s third Regions’ Cup winners in front of a final record crowd of more than 4,000 in Vilagarcia de Arousa by beating Belgrade 3-1. Alongside the unprecedented crowds, the remarks of Ivan Cancela, Galicia’s coach, summed up the value of the Regions’ Cup to both fans and teams. “There are no words to describe this moment. This is the best day in the history of Galician football.”

“Being in the finals of this tournament means a lot to me,” added Galicia’s captain, civil engineer Aarón Rama. “It’s the culmination of a long career with my regional squad. For us players, this might be the most important tournament of our lives.”

“The Champions League for amateur players”

Bavaria’s captain, Sebastian Brey, will take a bronze medal back to his watch and jewellery business after his team finished runners-up in Group A behind Galicia. Amateur though the players might be, the competition on the pitch remains full of quality. “The standard of matches at the Regions’ Cup is very high,” remarked Brey. “You have to be at your limit to be successful. As a player, you really want to experience international football, and to have been part of the German team in Bavaria in 2019 was a career highlight for me.

“At the Regions’ Cup, players from small clubs represent their countries, which shows that the efforts of grassroots teams are recognised in the football world. No matter what league you play in, you have to work hard to help your team. You have to respect each other and be sporting in victory and defeat.”

Jim Boyce, who as the chairman of the UEFA Youth and Amateur Football Committee attended the first nine editions of the tournament before his retirement, has seen first-hand the competition’s unique appeal. “UEFA have got to be congratulated for introducing a tournament like this. This is the Champions League for amateur players. These are lads who play at the weekend and play mainly for fun, but they have an opportunity to play in a European competition, come to new countries and make new friends.”

“It’s an opportunity that some Regions’ Cup alumni have used as a springboard to go on to make their mark in the professional game. One recent graduate is Croatian international right-back Josip Juranović, who made six appearances for Celtic in the Champions League group stage in 2022/23, before joining Bundesliga side Union Berlin in January and going on to appear four times in the Europa League knockout phase. Add to that leagues titles in Poland with Legia Warszawa and in Scotland with Celtic and it’s clear that his appearances for Zagreb Region in 2014/15 Regions’ Cup qualifying have paid dividends.

“The Regions’ Cup has produced ten different winners in its first 12 editions

2022/23 Galicia (ESP)*
2020/21 edition cancelled
2018/19 Dolnośląski (POL)
2016/17 Zagreb (CRO)
2014/15 Eastern Region (IRL)*
2012/13 Veneto (ITA)*
2010/11 Braga (POR)*
2008/09 Castilla y León (ESP)
2006/07 Dolnośląski (POL)
2004/05 Basque Country (ESP)
2002/03 Piemonte Valle d’Aosta (ITA)
2000/01 Central Moravia (CZE)*
1999 Veneto (ITA)*

*winners as hosts
ACADEMIC PAPERS INFORM FOOTBALL DECISION-MAKING

The UEFA Research Grant Programme funds valuable research into football – with a recent focus on the grassroots producing studies on both children’s participation and volunteering.

From UEFA’s perspective, it is about the fight against dropout.” The words belong to Laura Finnegan, an academic reflecting on her research project on children’s participation in grassroots football, produced under the aegis of the UEFA Research Grant Programme. Each year the research grant jury awards as many as five grants – of up to €15,000 for an individual project or up to €20,000 for a joint project – to academics working on research to support strategic decision-making in European football.

Finnegan – a lecturer at the South East Technological University in Waterford, Ireland – undertook in 2021/22 her research project titled “Football Club Environments And Their Impact On Participation, Performance And Personal Development (Age 6-12).” This involved a survey of more than 2,000 clubs catering for over 300,000 children from seven countries – the Republic of Ireland, Germany, Italy, Malta, Norway, Portugal and Wales – and it sought to investigate how the environment at clubs affected their ability to achieve positive outcomes regarding participation, personal development and performance. Finnegan’s findings suggest a lack of resources and organisational capacity had a detrimental effect on playing opportunities in over half of the clubs. Meanwhile, 13% of clubs said their physical environment did not meet children’s needs.

Youngsters dropping out is a problem and her study called on stakeholders to “proactively address the football environment provided to children.” People are generally concerned, and for me it speaks to a need for flexible formats and offering football in a different way,” she adds, citing the “autonomy” found in video games as a different way,” she adds, citing the “autonomy” found in video games as an example of one possible remedy.

Medical research grants also available

The research grant programme has now expanded to include a medical research grant programme (MRGIP), which means that academics wishing to analyse football from a medical and health point of view can apply for a separate grant. All grant recipients have nine months to complete their work and they benefit from UEFA’s support in “opening doors in national associations,” as Finnegan puts it. It is a point echoed by two other research grant programme participants – Pamela Wicker from Germany’s Bielefeld University and Larissa Davies from Sheffield Hallam University in the United Kingdom – who delivered a research paper on ‘The value of volunteering in grassroots football: Practical outcomes’.

Understanding the impact and frustrations of volunteering This joint project assesses the impact and value of volunteering in grassroots football across England, Germany, Norway, Poland and Switzerland. UEFA used its social media accounts to publicise the survey, which explored both the effects of volunteering on European clubs and individuals (including social capital, human capital and well-being) and the monetary value of volunteering in different roles.

According to Davies, data gathered from over 20,000 respondents gives an understanding of the positive well-being impacts of volunteering but also the frustrations of volunteers: “What’s unchanged in grassroots football is the need for and importance of volunteering at grassroots clubs. However, a key challenge is not necessarily having less people volunteering but clubs across Europe increasingly struggling to retain volunteers. That could be because motivations have changed over time. “Having insights through our work around well-being impacts and frustrations should help support clubs to retain and grow their volunteer base.”

SOUND FINANCES AND TALENTED PEOPLE TO GROW EUROPEAN FOOTBALL

In May, UEFA, in partnership with the Royal Belgian Football Association (RBFA), hosted the first-ever UEFA Grow conference on finance and HR management.

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There is no way to ensure a competitive, prosperous and trusted European football ecosystem without sound financial management and a skilled workforce invested in its development. This is why UEFA brought together finance and human resource directors from its 55 member associations at a two-day event at the home of Belgian football in Tubize.

"It’s quite clever to combine HR and finance, so that they get an understanding of each other’s area of expertise: you need both the money and the people,” said Graham Fitzgerald, chief operating officer at the Irish Football Association.

Participants discussed specific case studies as well as the results of a UEFA Grow survey assessing associations’ relative performances across both disciplines. The latter showed that, on average, UEFA member associations’ revenue increased by 89% between 2010 and 2021.

The conference placed a strong emphasis on group work, with participants engaging in discussions on both topics, mainly concerning the survey results. Association representatives working in finance and HR committed to increased cooperation.

"It was very interesting to see the data on where other associations stand,” said Rita Galvão, HR director at the Portuguese Football Federation. “But we work with people and we want to go beyond the data and the numbers and continue sharing our experiences of working from home, investment in staff education, performance appraisals and many other issues.”

After listening to an inspiring speech from author, speaker and former BBC HR director Lucy Adams on the future role of HR departments, UEFA’s own HR team underlined the importance of keeping pace with constant change while ensuring staff policies serve the needs of employees and their organisations.
CELEBRATING TEN YEARS OF UEFA MEMBERSHIP

Wednesday 24 May 2023 may have seemed like any other Wednesday to most footballing fans around the world, everywhere except in Gibraltar that is, where the day marked the tenth anniversary of the Gibraltar Football Association (GFA) being admitted as a UEFA member.

By Steven Gonzalez

It was on 24 May 2013, at UEFA’s 37th Ordinary Congress in London that Gibraltar was finally admitted as UEFA’s 54th member association, a journey that had taken more than 20 years, since May 1991, when the then GFA president, Andrew Pereira, had first written to FIFA seeking membership.

When FIFA referred former GFA president Joseph Mulel to UEFA in 1999, a long and arduous process began, which ended up with Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS) rulings in favour of the Gibraltar FA and, finally, UEFA membership being accepted at the UEFA Congress in 2013. The Gibraltar FA president at that time, Gareth Latin, said in his acceptance speech: “What matters most for us has prevailed.”

Becoming a member of UEFA on 24 May 2013 was a milestone in thedevelopment of football and sports infrastructure in Gibraltar. The building process began shortly with the Football Association of Albania and the Albanian government cooperating in the investment. The new stadiums will be built in the cities of Durrës, Korça and Vlora, providing not only sports development but economic development as well. After international competitions in which prestigious design studios took part, the projects for the three stadiums have been selected and everything is set to get going.

By building these three new stadiums, Albania will become the best country in the region in terms of football infrastructure. Based on the investments made, the new projects we are starting, and also the experience gained in organising important international events, the Albanian FA has applied to host the finals of a European youth championship in our country. I am convinced that, in cooperation with the government and taking all other factors into consideration, we will win this bid and bring this important tournament to Albania,” said the president of the Albanian FA, Armand Dukaj.

The Football Association of Albania has done a massive job in terms of infrastructure, building four new stadiums in the last eight years in cooperation with the government, in the cities of Elbasan, Shkodra and Kukës and, recently, the masterpiece Air Albania stadium in Tirana. Thanks to this investment, Albania hosted the historic first final of the UEFA Europa Conference League in Tirana in May 2022, making this event a success story in perfect organisation.

In addition to these new-build stadiums, the Albanian FA has invested in many other stadiums in the country and built dozens of new training grounds. These investments have helped to put Albania on the map of countries with developed infrastructure and persuaded UEFA to entrust it with hosting international youth tournaments.

The construction of three new modern stadiums will boost the development of football and sports infrastructure in Albania. The building process will begin shortly, with the Football Association of Albania and the Albanian government cooperating in the investment. The new stadiums will be built in the cities of Durrës, Korça and Vlora, providing not only sports development but economic development as well. After international competitions in which prestigious design studios took part, the projects for the three stadiums have been selected and everything is set to get going.

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TOURNAMENT DEDICATED TO THE CENTENARY OF HEYDAR ALIYEV

FIRUZ ABDULLA

Ten teams competed in a tournament held at the Baku Olympic Stadium to mark what would have been the 100th birthday of Azerbaijan’s leader and third president, Heydar Aliyev. The teams represented the Association of Football Federations of Azerbaijan (AFFA), the Azerbaijan premier league, clubs, referees, media, volunteers, SOCAR, BOS and partners. The games were played in two groups of five teams, with the two group winners – the premier league and the veterans teams – going through to the final, which the veterans won 6-2. Medals were presented to the tournament winners and runners-up by the AFFA president, Rovnag Abdullayev; the minister of youth and sports, Farid Gaibov; and the AFFA secretary general, Sarkhan Hajiyev. The event was attended by representatives of the sports community, including media, volunteers and fans.

BELGIUM

STAMPING OUT RACISM TAKES PRIORITY

MARIE VERBEKE

Through its action plan Come Together, the Royal Belgian Football Association puts a lot of work into combating racism. Its objective is to make football pitches a place where people can truly come together, and where the golden rule is respect. Come Together is also a hard-hitting publicity campaign that presents insults as face tattoos: a powerful image of the indelible suffering experienced by people who are discriminated against. In addition to its awareness-raising and educational work, the Belgian FA has developed an online reporting tool to enable victims or witnesses of racist acts to report them in complete confidence. An investigation is then conducted, and action taken if necessary. Last year, 129 rulings were issued, with sanctions ranging from fines and suspensions to matches being played behind closed doors. Samia Ahrouch, head of inclusion at the Belgian FA, said: “Unfortunately, discrimination is still a reality that we face every week on and around football pitches. Only the systematic reporting of every incident, mass condemnation and targeted action will enable us to put an end to discrimination in Belgian football.”

LEAGUE AND CUP DOUBLES FOR SFK 2000 SARAJEVO AND HŠK ZRINJSKI

SLAVICA PECKOZA

Two clubs dominated the women’s and men’s premier leagues in Bosnia and Herzegovina in the 2022/23 season: SFK 2000 Sarajevo and HŠK Zrinjski in the men’s competition. SFK 2000 Sarajevo continued their dominance of women’s football by winning the premier league for the 21st time. The only way to describe SFK 2000 Sarajevo is – unstoppable. After lifting the championship trophy, SFK 2000 Sarajevo went on to win the women’s cup as well, beating Emina Gorica, a satellite town near the Croatian capital, Zagreb. In the men’s competition, Mostar club HŠK Zrinjski also clocked up a most impressive season. Under head coach Krunoslav Rendulić, they also won the league and cup double, for the first time in their history.

CROATIA

PLANS TO BUILD A NATIONAL TEAM TRAINING CAMP ANNOUNCED

NIKA BAHTIJADEV

After continued investments in club infrastructure during the past several years, the Croatian Football Federation’s (HNS) top management has recently announced that the federation will soon begin working on the construction of a national team training camp near Zagreb. Representatives of the HNS have met multiple times with the Croatian prime minister, Andrej Plenković, and other government officials to discuss this large infrastructure project, and in late May, the government formally adopted the decision to gift a large plot of land to the HNS for the purpose of building the football camp. “I want to thank the government of the Republic of Croatia for recognising the importance of sports and for demonstrating that it truly recognises the value of the international successes of our national team and the role of football in Croatian society.”

This project is a strategically vital one for the Croatian Football Federation and we’re approaching it with a lot of resolve and with all of our resources behind it,” said the HNS president, Marijan Kustić. The facility will be located in Velika Gorica, a satellite town near the Croatian capital, Zagreb. In addition to meeting with the Croatian government, the HNS president has also met with the mayor of Velika Gorica, Krešimir Ačkar, multiple times and expressed his gratitude for the local government’s collaborative approach.

Member Associations

Azerbaijan

www.affa.az

League and Cup Doubles for SFK 2000 Sarajevo and HŠK Zrinjski

BELGIUM

www.rbfa.be

STAMPING OUT RACISM TAKES PRIORITY

Member Associations

Bosnia and Herzegovina

www.nfhbh.ba

League and Cup Doubles for SFK 2000 Sarajevo and HŠK Zrinjski

Croatia

www.hns-cff.hr

Plans to Build a National Team Training Camp Announced
EUROPEAN WOMEN’S UNDER-17 CHAMPIONSHIP BREAKS RECORDS AND BUILDS A LEGACY

EVA-MARIA KRISSA

In May, Estonia hosted the European Women’s Under-17 Championship final tournament, which ended with France winning the title for the first time. Not only was it the biggest event in the history of Estonian women’s football but it also broke records in the history of the tournament. The spectacular tournament attracted a total of 10,796 spectators. The most popular match was the final at Lilleküla Stadium, where 3,779 spectators set a record for any women’s match in Estonia as well as being the second largest attendance in the tournament’s history.

With a capacity of 14,336, Lilleküla Stadium became the largest stadium to have ever hosted a European Women’s Under-17 Championship match. The tournament was broadcast on TV in 32 countries and was also available worldwide via UEFA.tv. The organising team of over 120 people from UEFA and the Estonian Football Association successfully managed all aspects of the tournament and were supported by about 30 partners and 500 volunteers. The tournament also boosted Estonian tourism and the economy as it brought people to the country for more than 4,000 overnight stays.

An important part of the tournament was its legacy, with a mission to increase participation and the number of qualified coaches in Estonian women’s football. Some 287 girls between the ages of 5 and 12 participated in festivals in Tallinn, Tartu and Võru, where football was introduced to them through fun-based exercises. On the coaching side, 37 coaches took part in a national D licence course and UEFA experts shared their knowledge of women’s football.

REVAMPED FINNISH CUP A RESOUNDING SUCCESS

TARU NYYHOLM

Only a few years ago, the Finnish men’s and women’s cup competitions were down in dumps, with participation levels lower than ever – even in the once popular men’s competition, only 45 teams took part in 2021. The competition format introduced in the 2010s, which involved a winter group stage that was mostly played indoors before the final-knockout stage began, served the top teams’ interests but seemed to make it an unattractive competition for lower league teams.

In 2021, the FA set up a working group tasked with returning the competition to its former glory. Having listened to representatives from clubs, players and supporters, they received a clear message: the vast majority of the Finnish football community wanted the competition to return to its roots. Rapidly, the working group proposed a reform, with the men’s cup competition returning to the traditional knockout format in 2022 and the women’s cup competition following suit this year. The number of participants shot back up immediately. This year, 333 teams signed up for the men’s competition and 64 for the women’s competition – an all-time record.

With additional resources invested in the cup’s marketing, which have resulted in a fivefold increase in visibility, the revamped competitions have met with nearly unanimous acclaim, especially from the smaller clubs all over Finland. Having been drawn against big teams, many have broken their cup attendance records and are now able to dream of their own David versus Goliath stories again.
YOUTH COUNCIL MEETS FOR THE FIRST TIME

SOLEY GUÐMUNDSDÓTTIR

The first youth council of the Football Association of Iceland was established on 27 April this year. The youth council is a result of a youth congress hosted by the association for young people aged between 12 and 18 years playing for any club in Iceland. For this first congress, the association decided to invite every club to send four delegates. In total, 60 delegates took part from 20 clubs from all around the country. Everyone interested could apply for a seat on the new council, which currently consists of 18 members, who all have equal power and rights within the council. The council members will work together for one year at a time and their final duty will be to host the annual youth congress, before handing over to the next council. The current council's emphasis will be on referee matters, mental health and parents' behaviour during and after games. The main goal of the council is to protect the interests of young players in Iceland and be their voice within Icelandic football.

In the future, we hope to be able to host youth congresses without limiting the number of participants per club so that everyone can have an impact and speak their mind.

EDUCATION MINISTRY SALUTES FIGC SCHOOLS PROGRAMME

DIEGO ANTENZO

In Italy, the Italian Football Federation (FIGC) and the education ministry presented the results of the first year of Valori in Rete (Values in the net), a large-scale education project that encourages schoolchildren to be physically active and promotes the values of sport: respect, teamwork and inclusion.

The programme is aimed at all types of school, offering a range of projects for different age groups: Uno, Due, Calci (One, two, shoot!) for preschools; GiocoCalcando (Play and kick) for primary schools; Un calcio ai bullimi (Kick out bullying) for primary and secondary schools; Ragazza in giro (Girls in the game) and Tutti in Goal (All in goal) for lower secondary level; Un Goal per la Salute (A goal for health) for upper secondary level; and L’Arbitro scolastico (The school referee) for pupils aged 14 and up.

“Valori in Rete has played an important role in boosting physical education in schools, encouraging children to participate in activities relating to schoolwork, teamwork and the use of new technologies,” said education minister Giuseppe Valdisera. “Sport is fundamental to the development of our children and teenagers: it supports healthy lifestyles, encourages participation, teaches them to respect their opponents and the rules, and is an effective tool in the fight against school dropout and bullying. It also promotes values such as social cohesion, integration and inclusiveness.”

“Culture, education and training are the three pillars on which school and sport are based,” said FIGC president Gabriele Gravina. “Football, in particular, is an exceptional vehicle for communication because it is direct and it speaks the children’s language. The FIGC and its youth and schools football department have everything they need to convey positive messages to pupils and help them to develop a genuine social conscience.”

Gravina also announced plans to host a football camp at a school in Emilia-Romagna, a region devastated by floods in May.

WORK ON NEW STRATEGY BEGINS

TOMS ĀRMANIS

The Latvian Football Federation (LFF), in cooperation with the UEFA Grow team, has started the process of creating a new development strategy document defining the federation’s long-term goals from 2025. The first LFF development strategy was introduced in 2017 and concludes next year. For its strategy beyond 2025, the federation has already started analysing the current situation, setting up working groups and determining priority areas.

Various stakeholders are involved in the process of creating the new strategy, including members, clubs, fans, the state and the municipalities, so that Latvian football develops based on the suggestions and opinions of the parties involved.

“Currently, we are streamlining LFF processes in several areas within the UEFA Grow programme, and one of the projects is the preparation and implementation of the new strategy. To start with, we have created a working group within the LFF administration, which, together with UEFA and its partners, is carrying out analyses to define, together with the football community, how we want to see Latvian football in the future,” said LFF president, Vaidis Latersko.

“The implementation of the new strategy is an important process for the long-term development of the federation, as well as for Latvian football as a whole. We will create focus groups in different areas, so that everyone is heard and everyone finds a place in the future direction of Latvian football,” added secretary general Arturs Gaidels.
A NEW HOME OF FOOTBALL – FUTBOLAS.TV

VAIDOTAS KAZLAUSKAS

The Lithuanian Football Federation (LFF) took another step forward and at the end of the last year when it launched its new digital platform, futbolas.tv. This new platform has become the home for all the federation’s video production content – starting with live streaming of dozens of games at all levels, including youth competitions and the men’s second division.

“We consider this new platform as another significant step forward in terms of our digital content. With this platform, we are now fully independent of any other platforms and we can develop it anyway we wish,” said the LFF president, Edgaras Stankevičius.

The transition from previous video platforms has been going smoothly and the football community is becoming familiar with the new platform, where they know they will find all the video content they need. The platform has also received positive feedback from other national football associations, who find it useful and easy to use.

And the numbers back it up – the platform generates 10,000 viewers each month. With lots of exclusive content from national teams, top-flight competitions, behind-the-scenes coverage and other inclusive content, the LFF is really satisfied with how the platform has kicked off in its first year and hopes to develop it even more.

NEW GOALKEEPING COACHING PATHWAY LAUNCHED

NIGEL TILSON

The Irish Football Association’s coach education department has introduced a new pathway for goalkeeping coaches. The pathway aims to develop goalkeeping coaching from grassroots through to senior professional level.

Sean-Paul Murray, head of coach education at the Irish FA, said: “The development and introduction of our first-ever goalkeeping coaching pathway has provided courses for those working at grassroots level through to those working at senior professional level. This is an exciting challenge and we are looking forward to rolling out the courses across the country. "Alongside the new pathway, we have also developed and embedded goalkeeping modules within all UEFA outfield courses. We are confident that the combination of these developments will have a positive impact on the standard of goalkeeping coaching at all levels of the game within Northern Ireland.”

Former Northern Ireland goalkeeper Alan Mannus, who was appointed as the Irish FA’s goalkeeping coach educator earlier this year, is keen to support goalkeeping coaches at all levels of the game within Northern Ireland. He said: “The new coaching pathway has been developed with the aim of helping to prepare coaches working with goalkeepers from grassroots up to senior international level, with the goal of increasing goalkeeper participation, progression and performance. Each course has a specific focus on coaching goalkeepers of a certain age and development level.”

FURTHER INVESTMENT IN WOMEN’S FOOTBALL

ZUZANNA WALCZAK

Prize money amounting to PLN 889,000 (approximately €200,000) every season is to be awarded in total to the clubs of the two highest women’s divisions in Poland (Women’s Orlen Ekstraliga and the Women’s Orlen 1 Liga). The money will be distributed based on final positions in the league tables. This is more than half a million Polish zloty (approximately €112,000) more than before.

“This decision aims to make sporting competition more attractive and, at the same time, it is evidence of a gradual improvement in standards in club competitions. The introduction of a similar mechanism at the second level will, in turn, intensify the rivalry for promotion to the top league, while enabling clubs to adapt to the licensing requirements,” said Łukasz Wachowski, secretary general of the Polish Football Association.

Further joint initiatives are currently being developed to help implement the Polish FA’s women’s football strategy for 2022–26 in the four key development areas defined therein.

FIRST-EVER REPUBLIC OF IRELAND WOMEN’S TEAM REUNITED

GARETH MAHER

The first women to pull on the Ireland jersey to represent the women’s national team in official games were reunited at a special event on 4 May.

As part of the Football Association of Ireland’s (FAI) 50th anniversary celebrations of women’s and girls’ football, the trailblazing women who first played for Ireland in 1973 were honoured in Dublin.

Representing eight different counties, the women who helped the Republic of Ireland defeat Wales 3-2 on 15 May 1973 and Northern Ireland 4-1 on 30 June 1973 in Dublin were reunited for the first time in five decades.

At a lunch event, each player received a special gift to mark the occasion, which was attended by the minister of state at the department of tourism, culture, arts, Gaeltacht, sport and media, Thomas Byrne; the lord mayor of Dublin, Caroline Conroy; the FAI president, Gerry Mckeaney; and the FAI CEO, Jonathan Hill. Along with the players, a number of key personnel who helped to create the early foundations of women’s and girls’ football at both domestic and international level in the Republic of Ireland were also present at the event.

The players will be special guests of the current Ireland women’s national team at their international friendly against France on 6 July at Tallaght Stadium – their final home game before the 2023 Women’s World Cup.
EDUCATION HIGH ON THE AGENDA

PAUL ZAHARIA

Education is a concept that has a most high and important value for the Romanian Football Federation (FRF), being a significant chapter and part of its overall development strategy.

Several projects form this concept and even if they are distinct, they are interdependent. For example, creating the FRF national football academy offered various opportunities to educate members of the Romanian football family in several areas and domains, while the classification of the clubs’ academies represents a tool to stimulate the improvement of the activity at the youth level of each affiliated member.

Meanwhile, the recently launched FRF football implementation project is strongly linked to the two aforementioned projects as well as being an extension of the first edition of the football academies project. It is designed to provide mentoring to clubs and is scheduled to run until the end of 2023. The FRF selected six club academies (CSA Steaua București, FC Rapid 1923 București, Universitatea Craiova, FC UTA Arad, FC CFR 1907 Cluj and FC FCSB) to be part of the football implementation project, based on certain principles: previous participation in the football academies project, a final assessment of each academy director at the end of the project and their results in the final exam, the academy’s ranking, the number of players selected for the youth national teams and last, but not least, the academy’s desire to be part of this new project.

Three-quarters of the costs of the new project are financed by the FRF since it entails four two-day visits to each of the six selected academies. The visits are conducted by Lucian Bureaș, director of the FRF coaching school; Ilie Alexe, sports director of the youth national teams, and Vlad Munteanu, national team project manager and operational manager; together with specialists with vast international experience in this area of expertise from top academies abroad or from other national associations. During these visits, various discussions take place with the staff members and with the coaches working in the academies, as well as training sessions on the pitch. The participants discuss, among other topics, the management and the strategic role of an academy, staff management and the links created between all departments, the development of a philosophy at the level of each club, talent scouting and player selection, individual development, transition towards the senior team and practice on the pitch. The aim is for all these discussions to produce concrete results, meaning that at the end of the project each academy will have a well-defined development strategy with results at both local and national level, but also, through the youth national teams, results at international level and improvements in the overall level of Romanian youth football.

The FRF has an external partner for this project, the Belgian company Double Pass, which has gained global experience in this area in the last 20 years, having worked with more than 1,000 clubs, national associations and professional leagues from Belgium, England, Germany, Denmark, Japan, Scotland, the USA and many other countries besides. Since 2020, the company has also been a partner for the FIFA talent development programme.

TO WATCH SAN MARINO

SAN MARINO

THOUSANDS SUBSCRIBE TO WATCH SAN MARINO FOOTBALL STREAMED LIVE

LUCA PELLICIONI

The football season has just come to an end in San Marino and it featured an exciting new development introduced in September 2022.

For the first time ever, every match in San Marino’s domestic championship was broadcast live. The TITANI.TV platform launched by the San Marino Football Federation (FSGC) gave the country’s football fans the opportunity to follow the season from start to finish.

The FSGC is confident about the value of this investment, which involved installing smart cameras that follow the action and transmit the signal to TITANI.TV, with commentary in Italian. Subscribers were able to stream every single domestic match in San Marino’s 2022/23 season free of charge.

The number of subscribers reached almost 10,000 in just a few months, which is a testament to the huge following of San Marino’s football leagues all over the world. It is particularly popular in Argentina, but also in North America, Asia and, of course, Europe, where it is best known.

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EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE SETS STRATEGIC GOALS

MIRKO VREBA

The Football Association of Serbia’s sports centre in Sara Pazova was the venue for the executive committee meeting, chaired by the association’s president, Dragan Đakić, where the committee adopted the Serbian FA’s eight strategic goals for the next four years:

1. Qualification of the national team for UEFA EURO 2024

The success of the senior men’s national team and their qualification for the final tournament in Germany would not only be a result on the field but would also bring significant financial benefits to Serbian football.

2. Infrastructure

Cooperation with the government in infrastructure development, construction of the national stadium and other stadiums throughout the country. There is an idea for the senior men’s national team to play some of their EURO qualifiers outside of Belgrade, in one of the new stadiums, with the aim of increasing the popularity of football and support for the national team.

3. Pitches

Renovation and maintenance of pitches modelled on the best European leagues. UEFA support is expected for this project and FA of Serbia senior management already held several important meetings with UEFA at the UEFA Congress in Lisbon in April.

4. Work with youth categories

Recalling the greatest results and titles won by Serbia’s men’s Under-19 and Under-20 teams at the 2013 European Championship and 2015 World Cup, one of the association’s important goals is to do more work with the youth teams, on which the future of the senior national teams depends.

5. Houses of football in the regions

Construction and modernisation of premises for the regional football associations.

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Renovation and maintenance of pitches modelled on the best European leagues. UEFA support is expected for this project and FA of Serbia senior management already held several important meetings with UEFA at the UEFA Congress in Lisbon in April.

4. Work with youth categories

Recalling the greatest results and titles won by Serbia’s men’s Under-19 and Under-20 teams at the 2013 European Championship and 2015 World Cup, one of the association’s important goals is to do more work with the youth teams, on which the future of the senior national teams depends.

5. Houses of football in the regions

Construction and modernisation of premises for the regional football associations.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE SETS STRATEGIC GOALS

MIRKO VREBA

The Football Association of Serbia’s sports centre in Sara Pazova was the venue for the executive committee meeting, chaired by the association’s president, Dragan Đakić, where the committee adopted the Serbian FA’s eight strategic goals for the next four years:

1. Qualification of the national team for UEFA EURO 2024

The success of the senior men’s national team and their qualification for the final tournament in Germany would not only be a result on the field but would also bring significant financial benefits to Serbian football.

2. Infrastructure

Cooperation with the government in infrastructure development, construction of the national stadium and other stadiums throughout the country. There is an idea for the senior men’s national team to play some of their EURO qualifiers outside of Belgrade, in one of the new stadiums, with the aim of increasing the popularity of football and support for the national team.

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PERIOD INITIATIVE FOR GRASSROOTS CLUBS

ANDREAS NILSSON

The menstrual cycle and its effect on athletes needs more attention. The Swedish FA now runs an initiative called ‘Alla dagar’ (All days) to spread knowledge and initiate discussion on periods. In recent years, some national teams and top clubs have been tracking players’ menstrual cycles and adapted nutrition and training to individual needs, with good results that should now benefit more players.

‘Alla dagar’ wants to break the taboos around periods and make sure that progress made on the issue makes it all the way down to grassroots level. The goal is for players to understand their cycles and perform better, and for coaches to adapt and support their players. Four pilot clubs are already receiving the training programme produced for ‘Alla dagar’.

“Young women should have the same opportunities to participate in football as men, all days and not just some. Understanding and discussing the menstrual cycle can give coaches tremendous insight on how to adapt to players’ individual needs. Some clubs are already there but with this project we can spread the knowledge to where it is needed – which is everywhere,” says Pär Widén, head of education and development at the Swedish FA.

The project started out with a broad survey of female players, asking them how their period affects their football. Relevant research was then gathered, best practice established and the education programme was then compiled. The education programme comes with a menstruation kit for every team (containing pads, tampons, wipes, spare shorts) that should become as essential as their medical kit.

The pilot phase of the project is about to conclude and ‘Alla dagar’ will be made available to every Swedish football club this summer.

DORIS KELLER IN CHARGE OF WOMEN’S EURO 2025

MARTINA KÜPFER

On 11 May 2023, the Swiss Football Association appointed Doris Keller to head the operational management of UEFA Women’s EURO 2025, Europe’s largest women’s sports event.

Keller has been involved in international football for 20 years and has worked on the organisation of matches, tournaments and other major events for FIFA, UEFA and CONMEBOL. She also ran projects associated with the 2016 UEFA Europa League final in Basel, and most recently worked as a venue director on UEFA club competitions.

“I consider it a great responsibility for us to organise a tournament that is sustainable and environmentally friendly yet also profitable and a sporting success, especially for women’s football,” said Keller. “We want as many girls and women as possible to play football in Switzerland in the future. That’s why we will seize this opportunity – before, during and after the tournament – to raise the profile of women’s football in our country once and for all, and make lasting improvements to the conditions in which women play, in particular the infrastructure.”

The Swiss FA and UEFA will establish the organisational structure behind the tournament together. The president of the Swiss FA, Dominique Blanc, the general secretary, Robert Breiter, and the director of women’s football, Marion Daube, will take leading roles alongside Keller.

UEFA Women’s EURO 2025 will be hosted by Switzerland in summer 2025. When the curtain is raised, the best women’s national teams in Europe, including Switzerland, will play in Geneva, Basel, Zurich, Thun, St Gallen, Sion, Berne and Lucerne.
JULY

3–16 July, Malta
European Under-19 Championship: final tournament

5 July, Nyon
UEFA Futsal Champions League: preliminary and main round draws

11/12 and 18/19 July
UEFA Champions League: first qualifying round

13 and 20 July
UEFA Europa Conference League: first qualifying round

18–30 July, Belgium
European Women’s Under-19 Championship: final tournament

20 July – 20 August, Australia and New Zealand
Women’s World Cup

24 July, Nyon
UEFA Champions League, UEFA Europa League and UEFA Europa Conference League: third qualifying round draws

25/26 July
UEFA Champions League: second qualifying round (first legs)

26/27 July
UEFA Women’s Champions League: preliminary round (first legs)

27 July
UEFA Europa Conference League: second qualifying round (first legs)

8/9 and 15 August
UEFA Champions League: third qualifying round

10 and 17 August
UEFA Europa League and UEFA Europa Conference League: third qualifying round

16 August, Athens
UEFA Super Cup

22/23 and 29/30 August
UEFA Champions League: play-offs

22–27 August
UEFA Futsal Champions League: preliminary round

24 and 31 August
UEFA Europa League and UEFA Europa Conference League: play-offs

31 August, Monaco
UEFA Champions League: group stage draw

SEPTEMBER

1 September, Monaco
UEFA Europa League and UEFA Europa Conference League: group stage draws

3–10 September, Poreč
Under-19 Futsal EURO: final tournament

5 September, Nyon
UEFA Youth League – domestic champions path: first and second round draw

6 September
UEFA Women’s Champions League: round 1 semi-finals

7–9 September
EURO 2024: European Qualifiers: matchday 5

7–12 September
2023–25 European Under-21 Championship: qualifying matches

9 September
UEFA Women’s Champions League: round 1 finals and third-place matches

10–12 September
EURO 2024: European Qualifiers: matchday 6

11–20 September
Futsal World Cup: European elite round qualifying matches

15 September, Nyon
UEFA Women’s Champions League: round 2 draw

19/20 September
UEFA Champions League: group matches (matchday 1)
UEFA Youth League – Champions League path: group matches (matchday 1)

21/22 September
UEFA Women’s Nations League: matchday 1

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

26 September
UEFA Women’s Nations League: matchday 2

26 September, Limassol
Executive Committee meeting

AUGUST

1/2 August
UEFA Champions League: second qualifying round (return legs)

2/3 August
UEFA Women’s Champions League: preliminary round (return legs)

3 August
UEFA Europa Conference League: second qualifying round (return legs)

7 August, Nyon
UEFA Champions League, UEFA Europa League and UEFA Europa Conference League: play-off draws

NOTICES

• Dominique Blanc has been re-elected as president of the Swiss Football Association.
• Mehmet Büyükekşi has been re-elected as president of the Turkish Football Federation.
• Philippe Diallo has been elected as the new president of the French Football Federation.
• Mike Mulraney has been elected as the new president of the Scottish Football Association.
• Fredrik Reinfeldt has been elected as the new president of the Swedish Football Association.
• Nikolai Sherstnev has been elected as the new president of the Football Federation of Belarus.
• Pascale Van Damme has been appointed as the new president of the Royal Belgian Football Association.
WELCOME ALL

#FOOTBALL

UEFA