

UEFA



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WELCOME TO KYIV!

Ukraine hosts the Champions League finals

THE TECHNICIAN

Michael O'Neill and the
Northern Ireland miracle

INTERVIEW

Grigoriy Surkis,
UEFA vice-president

#EQUALGAME

Turning lives around
in the Netherlands



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ALL EYES ON THE FINALS

There is always a sense of anticipation in May as the club seasons reach their climax and the first of the summer's youth tournaments kick off.

We are delighted to be returning to Kyiv for the men's and women's Champions League finals, with great memories of EURO 2012 still fresh in our minds. The stunning NSC Olimpiyskiy Stadium hosted the final that year, and it will be a pleasure to be back there, this time to see the European club champions crowned. This season has produced so much drama and excitement already, and the eyes of the world will be on Kyiv to see the final twists and turns.

One abiding memory of Kyiv in 2012 was the carnival atmosphere in the city throughout the tournament, notably at the packed fan zone on Independence Square. With the UEFA Women's Champions League final taking centre stage on 24 May and the Champions Festival keeping fans entertained throughout the build-up to the men's final, Kyiv will no doubt rise to the occasion once again.

The same can be expected of UEFA Europa League host city Lyon. Those fortunate enough to have attended a match at the breathtaking Stade de Lyon during EURO 2016 will know we are in for a treat on 16 May.

At the fan zones in both host cities, children will have the chance to get in on the action, with the emphasis on #EqualGame and access for all as we highlight that football truly is for everyone.

Before that though, we will be taking a glimpse at Europe's footballing future at the men's and women's European Under-17 Championships. The men's event will take

place in England between 4 and 20 May and will give us a chance to gain deeper insight into the terrific youth development work that The FA have been doing, along with another opportunity to congratulate them on their incredible recent run of success.

Tournaments at this level are all about equipping young players with the experience, knowledge and tools they will need to succeed at the top, but there is nothing like lifting a trophy to craft a winning mentality.

Lithuania will host the women's event from 9 to 21 May. It is the first time a Lithuanian women's team competes in a UEFA final tournament and we wish them the best of luck. As with the Women's Champions League final in Kyiv, we hope that staging the tournament will have a lasting impact on women's football in the country long after the tournament. Hosting events like these raises awareness and generates interest in the sport, ultimately encouraging more youngsters to become involved.

Whether you are in Kyiv, Lyon, Rotherham or Marijampolė, or following events from afar, I am sure you will enjoy the action!



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Theodoridis'. The signature is fluid and cursive, written over a light-colored background.

Theodore Theodoridis
UEFA General Secretary



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2 December 2017. The Champions League trophies are handed over in Kyiv by final ambassadors Iya Andrushchak and Andriy Shevchenko, pictured here with the president of the Football Federation of Ukraine, Andriy Pavelko, and the city's mayor, Vitaliy Klitschko.

2018 CHAMPIONS LEAGUE FINALS: THE ROAD TO KYIV

At the end of May, the Ukrainian capital will be the focal point for European football, hosting both the men's and women's Champions League finals.

In addition to the two club competition finals, Kyiv is hosting a meeting of the Executive Committee on 24 May. That same evening, the 2018 UEFA Women's Champions League final will take place at the Valeriy Lobanovsky Dynamo Stadium, kicking off at 19.00 local time. Then, at 21.45 on Saturday 26 May, the UEFA Champions League final will kick off at NSC Olimpiyskiy to conclude the 63rd season of Europe's premier men's club football competition – and the first in which Ukraine has hosted the grand finale.

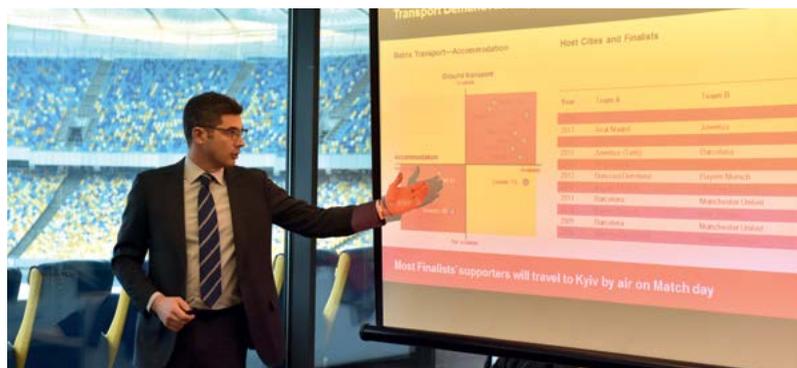
As would be expected for events of this calibre, intensive preparations are under way in the Ukrainian capital to ensure an unforgettable, enjoyable experience for all the fans and everyone else visiting the city for the different events.

Accommodation

UEFA's flagship club competition finals have given a fresh boost to the hotel industry in Kyiv, on account of the great number of fans planning to travel to the city from all over Europe and beyond.

Some 4,500 rooms are required for staff, sponsors and VIP guests alone, while the teams have been offered accommodation right by the stadiums for maximum convenience and ease of access.

Many organisational meetings have taken place in Kyiv.



FFU/ Pavlo Kubanov



A second terminal has been opened at Boryspil International Airport to segregate the supporters of the two finalist teams.

A second terminal will be brought into operation at Boryspil so that the fans of the two Champions League finalists can be segregated, and airports elsewhere in Ukraine will be called on to accommodate planes on standby, to ensure a smooth flow of passengers in and out of the country.

Buses will run from Boryspil airport to the city centre, where fans will be taken to dedicated meeting points – one at Shevchenko Park, and the other on the square in front of the Palats Ukrayina metro station. Both meeting points will provide luggage storage facilities, toilets, charging points and a food court.

Metro stations near NSC Olimpiyskiy will be closed over an hour before the start and end of the Champions League final, but trains will run until 03.00 on 27 May, with a combi-ticket system in place so that match-goers can use all forms of public transport free of charge on matchday. Accredited journalists and volunteers will travel for free throughout the week of the two flagship finals.

Champions Festival

The Champions Festival on Kyiv’s main thoroughfare – Khreschatyk Street – will open on the morning of 24 May, when visitors will have the opportunity to have their photos taken with the iconic UEFA Champions League and UEFA Women’s Champions League trophies.

For four days, visitors to the festival – which is free to enter – will also have the opportunity to win tickets to the finals themselves, and to witness the traditional Ultimate Champions match – an exhibition match involving a great many famous faces, including legendary Ukrainian boxers

the Klitschko brothers. This year UEFA plans to invite more big names than ever and organise an entire mini-tournament on the pitch set up on Khreshchatyk Street.

Volunteer assistance and steward training

Almost 550 volunteers have been recruited to assist with the two finals. They will be assigned – on the basis of their interviews and experience – to various different areas of operation, such as accreditation, hospitality, media operations, ticketing, venue management, social responsibility, spectator services and more.

Meanwhile, NSC Olimpiyskiy hosted a workshop for steward trainers in mid-February, so that they can train and prepare more than 1,000 stewards for these all-important events.

Match balls

The blue and yellow ball specially produced for the men’s final (and used throughout the knockout stages) sports the Ukrainian colours, while retaining the traditional adidas star panel design inspired by the Champions League logo. The ball for the women’s final, meanwhile, was unveiled during the ticketing launch ceremony held at the Football Federation of Ukraine’s headquarters in early March.



Tickets

Tickets for the men’s final were sold exclusively on UEFA.com, with fans able to apply for tickets from 15 to 22 March. Where demand for tickets in a certain category exceeded supply, the applicants were entered in a draw, and all were informed of the results by 6 April at the latest.

Tickets for the UEFA Women’s Champions League final are available on esport.in.ua, the website of the Football Federation of Ukraine’s ticketing partner.

Choice ambassadors

The ambassador for the UEFA Women’s Champions League final, Iya Andrushchak, hopes the showpiece in Kyiv will prove an inspiration for women’s football in Ukraine. Having played in this competition for FC Legenda Chernigiv, WFC Kharkiv and WFC Zvezda-2005, the 31-year-old Ukrainian international knows that a taste of the top leaves you coming back for more. She says: “Hosting a final like this in our country could be a turning point for the development of women’s football in Ukraine. I hope this event attracts attention and changes people’s attitudes and perceptions of women’s football. I would like to see many girls from across the country attending this final – youngsters and adults, professionals and grassroots players – so that they can watch this top-level game with their own eyes, maybe find their first female football idols and, most importantly, start dreaming about playing in a final like this one day.”

The ambassador for the men’s final, Andriy Shevchenko, says the final is eagerly awaited in Ukraine. The 2004 Ballon d’Or winner, who lifted the Champions League trophy with AC Milan in 2003, believes that “this is one of the biggest competitions to come to Ukraine since EURO 2012. It’s been a long time since Ukraine has experienced as huge a football event as the Champions League final. That is why there is great interest among the public, and the country is preparing seriously, as are the city and the football federation. Everybody will do their best to host a final of the very highest level and to make everybody happy – the people, the footballers who will come to the city and, of course, the fans.”

GRIGORIY SURKIS

'WE MUST BELIEVE IN THE TRUE IDEALS OF FOOTBALL'

An elected member of the Executive Committee since 2007, Ukrainian Grigoriy Surkis is currently one of UEFA's six vice-presidents. Here he tells UEFA Direct about his love of football and shares his vision of Europe's number one sport.

We obviously know you as a football administrator, but what's your profession?

Before football became the focal point of my life, I worked in completely different fields. I graduated from the institute of food industry and took up some very solid and responsible positions within Kyiv's municipal authorities. I worked in the food industry and then in the construction industry, before having a spell in commerce. Later, I combined football activities with activities in the Ukrainian parliament.

Were you a football fan from an early age?

I was lucky to be born into a family where football was akin to a religion. My father was a passionate fan, and my grandfather was an honorary member of the Football Federation of the USSR. Real stars of that time – [Lev] Yashin, [Gavriil] Kachalin,

"I really don't want the ball that we play football with to be an 'apple of discord'. On the contrary, it should be the most peaceful 'weapon', one that captivates as many people in the world as possible with its beauty, novelty and uniqueness."

[Nikita] Simonyan, [Konstantin] Beskov, [Mikhail] Yakushin and [Viktor] Maslov – were often guests at his house, along with other outstanding players and coaches of the day. Just being close to them was an honour and, of course, extremely interesting for me.

What is your first memory of football as a youngster?

When Dynamo Kyiv won their first USSR title in 1961. Moscow clubs had dominated previously and, for us, it was a breakthrough. This was the time that Kyiv began to make their mark. I am really happy that Dynamo, who celebrated their 90th anniversary recently, still reverently honour achievements such as this title.

Did you play yourself and did you have any ambitions to make a career as a player? →



INTERVIEW

I was a promising goalkeeper, but I had to say goodbye to my dream of a career at 17, when I suffered a serious knee injury. However, I'm happy to say that my 12-year-old son, Vyacheslav, has followed me between the posts. He won an award for the best goalkeeper while playing for Dynamo Kyiv at an international youth tournament.

Did you have a favourite player and team as a youngster?

I've had a lifelong passion for Dynamo Kyiv. It was impossible not to fall in love with the team that were USSR champions three times in a row, from 1966 to 1968, under the leadership of Viktor Maslov. Valeriy Lobanovskiy, a legendary coach with Dynamo, was also a hero. He was a virtuoso ball player as a footballer, and became an even greater coach – a mentor to a fine generation of players.

What's the best match you've ever seen?

It's hard to choose just one! Two Dynamo Kyiv successes in European Cup Winners' Cup finals stand out – the wins against Ferencvaros and Atlético de Madrid in 1975 and 1986 respectively. I also fondly remember two unforgettable UEFA Super Cup matches against Bayern Munich in 1975, when Oleg Blokhin, with his brilliant left foot, beat the European Cup holders twice over two legs – 1-0 away, 2-0 at home. Blokhin, who went on to win the Ballon d'Or, scored all three goals. Later, when I was president of Dynamo, I watched the birth of another star team under Valeriy Lobanovskiy. In 1997/98, they beat a very good Barcelona side, scoring seven goals without reply over two UEFA Champions League matches. I mustn't forget to mention Andriy Shevchenko either. In 2004, he joined Oleg Blokhin (in 1975) and Igor Belanov (in 1986) as the third Ukrainian to win the Ballon d'Or – Shevchenko represented the independent Ukraine when he won his award.

“In 2004, Andriy Shevchenko joined Oleg Blokhin (in 1975) and Igor Belanov (in 1986) as the third Ukrainian to win the Ballon d'Or.”

Oleg Blokhin

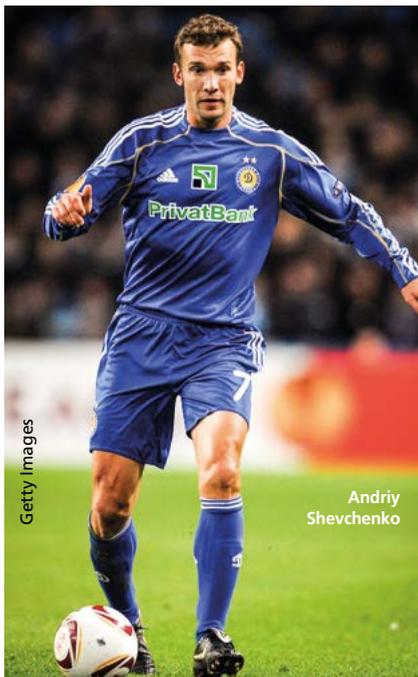


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Igor Belanov



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Andriy Shevchenko

How did you get into the administrative side of the game?

Following the break-up of the USSR, Dynamo Kyiv went through extremely difficult times, especially in financial terms. At this point, together with my business partners, we came to the club's rescue. For me, it was a new challenge – many things had to be rethought, and I devoted many hours to the task. Time would show that we did a lot of things right.

What was your career path from then on?

One of my first tasks as Dynamo Kyiv president was to bring Valeriy Lobanovskiy back to Kyiv. He felt that Ukrainian football had to take a professional path, and eventually a professional football league was created, which I was entrusted to lead. A few years later, I took the helm of the Football Federation of Ukraine. In 2002, I became a member of the UEFA Committee for Professional Football, and two years later I joined the Executive Committee, first as a co-opted member, and then as a member from 2007. I have had the honour to work for the Executive Committee on behalf of football to this day.

Do you still feel a buzz when you enter a football stadium?

I've managed to carry a reverent attitude towards football, from my early childhood and through the years. Football is always new. Each match is a separate story – separate hopes, joys or disappointment. And football stadiums are like temples, with their unique atmosphere of beauty, creativity and inspiration.

Which players and teams excite you today?

I have one passion – Dynamo Kyiv – the most renowned Ukrainian club, one of the symbols of my country. I'm pleased that the club continues to work for the future of our football and unveil interesting players to the world. I'm passionate when I watch Ukraine's national team as well. Andriy Shevchenko leads the team now – his career has passed before my eyes, from when he was a boy in the football school to winning the Ballon d'Or. I like it when Dynamo and Ukraine produce bright, sparkling football, following the example set by teams such as Manchester City, Barcelona, Juventus, Bayern or Paris Saint-Germain.

“Valeriy Lobanovskiy, a legendary coach with Dynamo, was also a hero. He was a virtuoso ball player as a footballer, and became an even greater coach – a mentor to a fine generation of players.”

EURO 2012, co-hosted by Poland and Ukraine, was a great success. What legacy did the tournament leave for Ukraine?

Ukrainians were part of a truly global festival and relished the opportunity to show how hospitable and reliable they are. The event also demonstrated that, amid national specificities, we shared common values with other people and cultures through the power of sport. UEFA's support and trust was absolutely invaluable. Kyiv had the privilege of staging the EURO 2012 final, and will also host the 2018 UEFA Champions League final. This is perceived in Ukraine as proof that our infrastructures meet the highest standards. The stadiums in Kyiv and Kharkiv, which were reconstructed for EURO 2012, and the venue in Lviv, built from scratch, remain in demand, for UEFA tournaments in particular. This football festival featuring Europe's best teams gave us modern stations and hotels, improved highways and railways – and left a wealth of fond memories in the minds, hearts and souls of the Ukrainian people.

What does it mean to Ukraine and Kyiv to be hosting the 2018 UEFA Champions League and UEFA Women's Champions League finals?

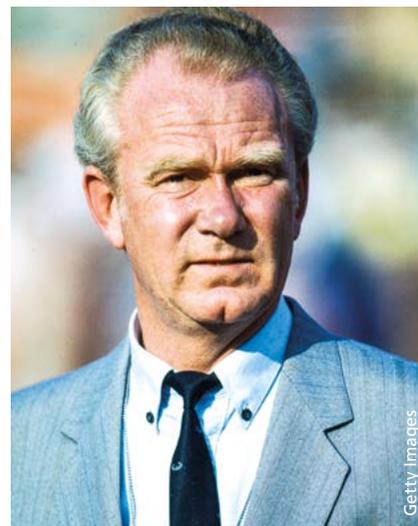
First of all, in my country, it is perceived as an indication of trust towards Ukraine from UEFA and as a step to further developing our relations with the European football community – as another milestone in mutually beneficial cooperation. All the infrastructure that Ukraine received after EURO 2012 was created in close cooperation with UEFA. A great football festival is now coming back to Kyiv. And, of course, it's a great festival for the whole of Ukraine – in terms of prestige, public attention and international image.

Kyiv, 3 June 2003. After winning the Champions League with Milan, Andriy Shevchenko paid homage to his mentor, Valeriy Lobanovskiy.

Are you proud of being able to contribute to UEFA's development, in particular at the highest level as an Executive Committee member and UEFA vice-president?

It's a great honour for me to be involved in the important decision-making process that determines the future of European football. I fully agree with the words of the UEFA president, Aleksander Čeferin, at the recent Congress in Bratislava: “We are in a uniquely privileged position. Millions of fans from all over the world would give anything to be in that position.” He reflected the Executive Committee's priority concern – to protect the values and interests of football. To solve problems and meet challenges, we must take different opinions into account and then come to a common understanding and show unity on our way to achieving our set objectives.

As chairman of the UEFA National Associations Committee, how do you view the importance of UEFA's



long and close relationship with its member associations?

I'll again quote Aleksander Čeferin: “Close connection with our 55 national associations continues to be the foundation of all our activities.” I'm sure that without mutual understanding, mutually beneficial cooperation and mutual respect between UEFA and its member associations, and between the associations themselves, it would be impossible to solve many of the strategic →





As president of the Football Federation of Ukraine, the highlight of the career of Grigoriy Surkis was co-hosting EURO 2012 with Poland.

challenges faced by the European football community. I'm really proud that our committee plays a key role in these processes. National associations are not just major partners, they are the core of UEFA. Their role in the decision-making process is essential. UEFA not only listens to the national associations, but also supports them as much as possible on their paths of development and improvement.

What do you think of football's social role as a force for good?

Football is such an important social phenomenon, not only because it is the most popular sport in the world. The uniqueness of football is that it has the ability to change lives for the better. The importance of this role cannot be emphasised enough, and UEFA is trying to take full advantage of the opportunities that football provides in this regard. Frankly, I'm impressed with the latest UEFA campaigns – #EqualGame and Together #WePlayStrong. #EqualGame's motto – 'Everyone has the right to play football, whoever he/she is, wherever he/she is from, no matter how he/she plays' – perfectly describes our main mission in general.

These campaigns, like UEFA's other important social projects, help to promote the values of diversity, inclusion, gender

equality, tolerance and solidarity. They also help to restore health, confidence and the meaning of life to people such as those who are victims of anti-personnel mines. In this respect, UEFA has been helping the International Committee of the Red Cross with its rehabilitation programme for many years.

What do you think are the major challenges facing football in the future?

UEFA is doing a tremendous job in combatting many negative phenomena, such as match-fixing, doping, stadium violence, homophobia, racism and other manifestations of intolerance and discrimination. The road remains long, however, and not everything should depend on UEFA. We need the coordinated efforts of all members of the football and sports family, state legislative and law enforcement agencies, media, and even ordinary fans. We must believe in the true ideals of football, and strive for a clean and honest game.

Governments and other public authorities remain important partners of UEFA and its national associations – primarily in the context of the development of grassroots football, and also in many other areas related to countering some of the above-mentioned negative phenomena in the game.

"UEFA is doing a tremendous job in combatting many negative phenomena, such as match-fixing, doping, stadium violence, homophobia, racism and other manifestations of intolerance and discrimination."

At the same time, we can't ignore the dangers posed by unscrupulous political forces – both those who are already known and those who are just emerging. This issue has recently become one of the strategic tasks of the committee that I chair. I'm confident that, with joint efforts, we can prevent anyone using football for selfish interests that can be destructive and detrimental to the game.

You have also chaired the UEFA Stadium and Security Committee, and you take a close interest in this aspect.

The issue of security has also always been key for UEFA. In my opinion, it's generally difficult to find a sports organisation that makes the same efforts to create a safe and friendly environment for its competitions. Nevertheless, we're constantly confronted with new challenges connected, to a large extent, to new forms of terrorist threats. Because of its global popularity, football, alas, is increasingly becoming a target for terrorists. And this means that we also need to constantly improve our strategies and approaches to solving safety and security issues.

If you had one wish for football in the future, what would it be?

I really don't want the ball that we play football with to be an 'apple of discord'. On the contrary, it should be the most peaceful 'weapon', one that captivates as many people in the world as possible with its beauty, novelty and uniqueness.

And one wish for Ukrainian football?

I would like both our country and our football to take their place in a variegated but friendly European family – taking the best from others and enriching this community with their presence. 🇺🇦





On 6 July 2016, the Stade de Lyon hosted the EURO 2016 semi-final between Portugal and Wales.

Getty Images



LYON GEARS UP TO HOST THE EUROPA LEAGUE FINAL

France has demonstrated its expertise in staging major events on many an occasion. On 16 May, Lyon is set to perpetuate that reputation when it hosts this season's Europa League final.

Two years after EURO 2016, France is preparing to host another showpiece event in the European football calendar, the UEFA Europa League final, in Lyon on Wednesday 16 May. Since UEFA's decision to award the final to Lyon in December 2016, the local organisers have been working hard to ensure the city is the perfect host.

A working group was set up under the auspices of the French Football Federation (FFF) with representatives of all the stakeholders: the Rhone prefecture (for the government), Lyon's municipal and metropolitan authorities, the town council of Décines-Charpieu (where the stadium is located), Olympique Lyonnais (the stadium owners), the relevant urban transport providers (Sytral and Keolis), Lyon Saint-Exupéry airport and the national rail provider, the SNCF. "The FFF's role has been to organise and coordinate what everyone is doing, in conjunction with UEFA," explains Ludovic Heurley, who is coordinating the project for the FFF under the supervision of its international competitions director, Laurent Georges.

The working group's main focus has been the mobility concept devised by UEFA to enable supporters, the general public, partners, officials and teams to travel to and around the host city as seamlessly as possible. "Everything has to be organised in advance, in great detail, in order to manage the spike in activity on the day of the final as efficiently as possible," Heurley says.

Ambassador Eric Abidal

The working group has also put considerable effort into ensuring the finalists' 24,000 supporters are suitably welcomed. "We have organised a meeting point for each club, with public transport nearby, where the supporters will be able to gather before travelling to the stadium. A partners' village will also be set up in Place Bellecour, in the centre of Lyon," Heurley adds.

Special promotional events in and around Lyon have also been high on the working group's agenda, including the trophy handover to the Lyon municipal authorities by former Olympique

Lyonnais player Eric Abidal, followed by the exhibition of the trophy at the Gadagne museum, which is dedicated to the city's history. A trophy tour has also been organised, visiting hospitals and a number of towns within the metropolitan area. Youth tournaments will also enable four teams to contest two gala matches on a temporary pitch to be set up by UEFA in Place Bellecour on the day of the final.

The city will, of course, be dressed in Europa League colours, as will the 59,000-capacity Stade de Lyon. The stadium, built on the initiative of Jean-Michel Aulas, the Olympique Lyonnais president, is a marvellous showcase perfectly suited for such an event, as witnessed by the six EURO 2016 matches hosted there. Visiting supporters were also won over by the other attractions that Lyon had to offer.

With so much going for it, France's third-largest city is certain to make a lasting impression on players and spectators alike when it hosts the Europa League final. 🏆



Getty Images

NEW CYCLE, NEW FORMATS

The formats of the Champions League and Europa League are set to change from the start of next season.

With the 2018/19 season kicking off a new three-year cycle for the two club competitions, a number of key changes have been made to their regulations.

UEFA Champions League

Group stage

Twenty-six teams will qualify automatically for the group stage as per the access list drawn up from the UEFA association coefficients at the end of the 2016/17 season.

In addition to the UEFA Champions League and UEFA Europa League holders, the top four clubs from the associations ranked 1st to 4th, i.e. Spain, Germany, England and Italy (16 teams in total), will be joined by the top two from those ranked 5th and 6th, i.e. France and Russia (4) and the champions of those ranked 7th to 10th, i.e. Portugal, Ukraine, Belgium and Turkey (4).

- If the Champions League holders qualify for the group stage via their domestic championship, the vacancy will be filled by the champions of the association ranked 11th (Czech Republic), who will otherwise compete in the champions path.

- If the Europa League holders qualify for the group stage via their domestic championship, the vacancy will be filled by the third-placed club from the association ranked 5th (France), who will otherwise compete in the league path.
- An association can have a maximum of five teams in the group stage.
- The final six places will go to the teams that are successful in the qualifying rounds.

Qualifying

There will still be two paths: the champions path and the league path.

The champions path (four group stage places) consists of the champions of the associations ranked 11th and below, and now includes a preliminary round before three qualifying rounds and a play-off round:

- preliminary round (played as a mini-tournament): four participating teams
- first qualifying round: 33 teams plus the preliminary round winner
- second qualifying round: three teams plus the 17 first qualifying round winners
- third qualifying round: two teams plus the ten second qualifying round winners

- play-offs: two teams plus the six third qualifying round winners

All teams eliminated in the champions path between the preliminary round and the third qualifying round will be given a second chance to compete at European level by entering a new dedicated champions path of Europa League qualifying. The four teams eliminated in champions path play-offs will enter the Europa League group stage directly.

The league path (two group stage places) consists of the third-placed teams of the associations ranked 5th and 6th, and the runners-up of the associations ranked 7th to 15th. There are three rounds in all:

- second qualifying round: six teams
- third qualifying round: five teams plus the three second qualifying round winners
- play-offs: four third qualifying round winners

All teams eliminated in the second qualifying round of the league path will enter the third qualifying round of the Europa League league path. Teams eliminated in the league path third qualifying round and play-offs

(six) will enter the Europa League group stage directly.

UEFA Europa League

Group stage

Seventeen teams will qualify automatically for the group stage as per the access list drawn up from the UEFA association coefficients: two teams from each of the associations ranked 1st to 5th (i.e. Spain, Germany, England, Italy and France) and one team from each of those ranked 6th to 12th (i.e. Russia, Portugal, Ukraine, Belgium, Turkey, Czech Republic and Switzerland). Ten teams will enter directly from the Champions League: six teams eliminated in the league path (third qualifying round and play-offs) and four teams eliminated in the champions path play-offs.

Qualifying

From 2018/19, there will be two paths: the champions path and the league path.

The champions path (eight group stage places) consists of teams eliminated in the Champions League champions path between the preliminary round and the third qualifying round. It will comprise the:

- second qualifying round: 20 teams eliminated in the Champions League preliminary round and first qualifying round
- third qualifying round: ten teams eliminated in the Champions League second qualifying round plus ten

winners from the Europa League champions path second qualifying round

- play-offs: six teams eliminated in the Champions League third qualifying round plus ten winners from the Europa League champions path third qualifying round

The league path (13 group stage places) consists of the remaining Europa League entrants from all 55 associations plus teams eliminated in the Champions League league path second qualifying round:

- preliminary round: 16 teams
- first qualifying round: 86 teams plus eight preliminary round winners
- second qualifying round: 27 teams plus 47 first qualifying round winners
- third qualifying round: 15 teams (including the three teams eliminated from the Champions League league path second qualifying round) plus 37 second qualifying round winners
- play-offs: 26 third qualifying round winners

Other changes

After the Executive Committee meeting in Bratislava in February and the decisions taken by football's lawmakers, the International Football Association Board (IFAB), in Zurich on 3 March, several other changes have been confirmed.

These changes, which will apply to the UEFA Champions League, UEFA Europa League and UEFA Super Cup, include:

- From the 2018/19 season, a fourth substitute listed on the match sheet may take part in knockout matches exclusively during extra time. This will not affect the other three substitutions.
- Exceptionally for the Champions League final, Europa League final and Super Cup, 23 players (instead of 18 players for all other matches) may be included on the match sheet. This will allow 12 substitutes (instead of seven) to sit on the bench in these finals.

Regarding the registration of players after a group stage of the Champions League and Europa League, a club may register three new eligible players without any restrictions. This is in line with the existing regulations in the different domestic leagues, which do not impose restrictions on the eligibility of players registered for a new club during the winter transfer window.

As is already the case in the Champions League, from the 2018/19 season, teams that have won the Europa League (or previously the UEFA Cup) three consecutive times or a minimum of five times may also wear a multiple-winner badge on their shirt sleeves.

New kick-off times

Champions League play-offs, group-stage games, round of 16 matches, quarter-finals, semi-finals and the final will kick off at 21.00 CET. However, on every group-stage matchday, two of the Tuesday and two of the Wednesday matches will kick off at 18.55 CET. All fixtures on the last matchday will be played simultaneously. Exceptions to this rule can be set by the UEFA administration.

Europa League matches from the group stage until round of 16 matches will kick off at 18.55 and 21.00 CET. The kick-off times will be decided in accordance with the draw. In principle, games within the same group will be played simultaneously on the last matchday. The quarter-finals, semi-finals and final will all kick off at 21.00 CET. Exceptions can be set by the UEFA administration.

The Super Cup will kick off at 21.00 CET. This already applies to the 2018 Super Cup, which will be played at the Lilleküla Stadium in Tallinn, Estonia, on 15 August. 🌐

From next season, all teams that go out of the Champions League in the champions path between the preliminary round and the third qualifying round will get a second chance to compete at European level by entering a new dedicated champions path of Europa League qualifying.

Getty Images



UNDER-17 FINALS HEAD TO ENGLAND

From 4 to 20 May, England is hosting the European Under-17 Championship finals for the first time.

The tournament, involving Europe's leading 16 Under-17 national teams, will be played at venues across the Midlands and South Yorkshire, with St George's Park at its heart. Burton Albion, Chesterfield, Loughborough University, Rotherham United, St George's Park and Walsall are the six stadiums. Chesterfield will host the opening game and Rotherham United will stage the final.

Following the completion of the elite qualifying round, Steve Cooper's England are joined by holders Spain, Serbia, Sweden, Belgium, the Republic of Ireland, Switzerland, Portugal, the Netherlands, Italy, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Denmark, Slovenia, Israel, Norway and Germany. The draw to determine the groups for the final tournament was made at St George's Park on 5 April.

A perfect platform

The tournament provides the people of the Midlands and South Yorkshire with an opportunity to see the next generation of English and European talent 'right here, right now'. It is a fantastic chance to support and showcase Europe's top football talent on home soil. Wayne Rooney, Eden Hazard, Paul Pogba and Mario Götze are some of the famous names to have appeared at this level in the past, with the competition acting as the perfect platform for young players to showcase their talents.

England won the European Under-17 trophy in 2010 and 2014, and also finished runners up to Spain in 2017.

With ticket prices starting from just £2 for children and £4 for adults, fans of all ages can watch Europe's future stars on their doorstep at affordable prices. In addition to attending matches, there are lots of opportunities for schools, county football associations, local football clubs and families to get involved.

St George's Park, 5 April. Tournament ambassador Wayne Rooney and John Delaney, chairman of the UEFA Youth and Amateur Football Committee, make the draw.

England legend Rooney is an ambassador for this year's tournament. The Three Lions' all-time leading goalscorer conducted the final draw alongside John Delaney, chairman of the UEFA Youth and Amateur Football Committee. Rooney is no stranger to the competition, having burst onto the international stage as the final tournament's inaugural golden player during the Young Lions' third-place finish in Denmark in 2002.

The Everton man is joined in an ambassadorial capacity by Jack Butland and Nathaniel Chalobah, winners in 2010, who have both engaged with communities within the host regions since the turn of the year. What is more, fresh from his Three Lions senior bow at Wembley, Bournemouth midfielder Lewis Cook and Tottenham Hotspur's [on loan at Aston Villa] Josh Onomah, who both lifted the trophy in 2014, are also tournament representatives.

Given his strong connections with the Midlands area and contribution to the England player pathway, current Under-20 skipper and European Under-19 Championship winner Easah Suliman will act as a regional ambassador. 🇬🇧



2017/18 European Under-17 Championship

4-20 May 2018

Group A

England
Switzerland
Italy
Israel

Group B

Slovenia
Norway
Portugal
Sweden

Group C

Republic of Ireland
Bosnia-Herzegovina
Denmark
Belgium

Group D

Serbia
Netherlands
Germany
Spain

Group stage

4-5, 7-8 and 10-11 May

Quarter-finals

13-14 May

Semi-finals

17 May

Final

20 May

'THE GIRLS WILL REMEMBER THIS FOREVER'

As Germany target a hat-trick of European Women's Under-17 Championship titles in Lithuania, success for the hosts will also be measured by the tournament's impact on the women's game in the country.

Holders Germany will be aiming to capture their third straight title when the 2018 European Women's Under-17 Championship finals kick off in Lithuania on 9 May.

Germany have won the competition a record six times and are joined at the finals by the only other two nations to have lifted the trophy – Spain and Poland – as well as England, Finland, Italy, the Netherlands and the hosts.

While Finland and Lithuania will be competing for the first time, Germany and Spain will be resuming an old rivalry. The pair have met in four finals, with Germany coming out on top on each occasion, including in the past two seasons, where they triumphed on penalties both times. Between them the pair have won nine of the ten titles contested so far, with Poland winning the other in 2013.

For the host nation, competing in their first final tournament is a major challenge. But it is one that coach Ieva Kibirskštis is looking forward to, not just for her current crop of players, but for the future of the women's game in Lithuania as a whole.

"It's a great platform for showing that the girls can be strong and dream big, much bigger



2017/18 European Women's Under-17 Championship
9–21 May 2018

Group A
 Lithuania
 Germany
 Finland
 Netherlands

Group B
 Poland
 Spain
 Italy
 England

Group stage
 9, 12 and 15 May

Semi-finals
 18 May

Final/World Cup play-off
 21 May

than they might have imagined," she explains. "It's also a chance to make the case for gender equality. It's a lot of responsibility, but we want to change the perception of women's football – to show that it can be as good.

"The main thing is having fun," adds the Montreal-born Kibirskštis. "There's nothing to lose; they have to enjoy the experience, because the girls will remember this forever."

Kibirskštis offers her own example for young female football lovers. A Lithuanian Under-17 international herself just over a decade ago, today she is in charge of the team. "I'm extremely thankful to the Lithuanian Football Federation for this opportunity," she says. "The past year has been trial and error, constantly trying to find solutions. We'll be coming out of the tournament with an outstanding amount of experience."

Kibirskštis and her Lithuania team have been grateful beneficiaries of UEFA's legacy programme in the two-year lead-up to the tournament. Kibirskštis has received mentoring from Kaan Kahraman, a youth coach at FC Basel 1893, who has provided regular advice during a period in which Lithuania's coach and players have undertaken a rigorous and unprecedented programme of training camps and matches.

"It's very useful to share knowledge and to have someone who can look from a distance and show details in coaching, organising and handling," says Kahraman. Kibirskštis adds: "We haven't had experience at the top level. He knows what it's like. It was a good reference regarding planning and structure. He helped us a lot."

Matches will be played in Siauliai, Alytus and Marijampole, with the final to be staged at the Marijampole stadium, which also hosted the European Under-19 Championship final in 2013. It is the first time that Lithuania will have hosted a UEFA women's national team tournament and the Lithuanian Football Federation president, Tomas Danilevičius, believes "it will serve as an inspiration to young girls everywhere that they should follow their dreams." For Kibirskštis's side that dream becomes reality on 9 May. 🇺🇦



JULES RASOELBAKS – NETHERLANDS

**“WITHOUT FOOTBALL,
I WOULDN'T HAVE MADE IT”**

“I’ve got a way with people, I find it easy to relate to them,” says Jules Rasoelbaks – a respected coordinator with De Hoop, a rehabilitation centre in Dordrecht in the Netherlands that helps former drug addicts and prisoners to reintegrate into society.

Jules has first-hand experience of the difficulties faced in trying to make a fresh start. He was sent to prison on seven occasions and was a drug addict for 22 years. He has now been clean for almost a decade, and his work at De Hoop revolves around three roles: "as a bridge builder, ally and representative.

"I've learned that my biggest weapon is my tongue, daring to talk about the things I think about, about what is going on, how I feel," he reflects. "It's also about showing your vulnerabilities. And I notice that in prison too."

One of his projects revolves around working closely with FC Dordrecht, who play in the second tier of Dutch football. He helps former prisoners to become

matchday stewards, acknowledging that this is "very important to them, as they have to rebuild their lives."

Jules speaks with much enthusiasm when discussing the initiatives De Hoop is undertaking at the football club. "FC Dordrecht has embraced us," he explains. "From the moment we arrived, we were one of them and that is how the guys feel too. To be able to cooperate in such a way that you're simply appreciated, recognised and treated as a fully-fledged person. That just gives a very good feeling to anyone."

Football has always held a prominent position in Jules' life. "I was pretty good at playing football – I had talent," he recalls. Over 35 years on, he is unable to play anymore, as he lives with multiple

sclerosis. "Very occasionally I want to kick the ball around, because I really can't resist."

However, his condition has not stopped him from channelling his energy into helping to prevent others from falling into the same problems he suffered during his youth. "Often these guys come in very depressed. Football gives them the thrills they would otherwise find in drugs or alcohol.

"We have a football tournament every month. It allows the guys to unleash their energy. It gives them some time to unwind and, for a short while, be away from therapy," he explains.

"Everyone plays together, including the staff. It creates togetherness. That shows the power of football."

#EQUALGAME

EQUAL GAME



"I MYSELF HAVE BEEN ON THE RIGHT TRACK FOR NINE YEARS NOW. SO IT MAKES ME GLAD THAT I CAN CONTRIBUTE TO MAKING SOMEONE ELSE'S LIFE BETTER."





EQUAL GAME



"MY WORK CENTRES
ON THREE ROLES:
AS A BRIDGE BUILDER,
ALLY AND REPRESENTATIVE,
I PROVIDE COMPANIONSHIP,
COACHING AND SUPPORT."





**"FOOTBALL IS ABOUT
NOT HAVING TO
THINK ABOUT YOUR
PROBLEMS, SHOWING A
CERTAIN COMMITMENT
TO EACH OTHER,
TOGETHERNESS ..."**





"I HAVE A LOT OF OPPORTUNITIES. I DON'T HAVE ANY DIPLOMAS, BUT WITH THE THINGS I CAN DO, I CAN SAY THAT I AM ENORMOUSLY RESPECTED."



"I THINK EVERYONE MATTERS. FOR ME, FAITH AND LOVE ARE THE MOST IMPORTANT THINGS. IF YOU HAVE NO HOPE, THEN I HAVE IT FOR YOU."



IRISH FOOTBALL MAKES A STATEMENT WITH #EQUALGAME CAMPAIGN

Support for UEFA's diversity and inclusion project stretches across international and domestic football.

The tagline says it all: 'Everyone should be able to enjoy football'. There is no simpler message to deliver and that is why UEFA's #EqualGame campaign was so easy for the Football Association of Ireland (FAI) to endorse.

Terrific work is being done all across the Republic of Ireland to grow the beautiful game and make it more accessible to everyone – from young players starting out through to grandparents giving walking football a go. That inclusive spirit is something that the FAI has always promoted but it has become ever more apparent how important it is to actively ensure that everyone (no matter their level) can take part.

FAI chief executive and UEFA Executive Committee member John Delaney was proud to support the initiative, which has also been embraced by players, coaches, administrators and volunteers. "It is hugely important that we continue to work hard to ensure that everyone gets to enjoy football, at all levels," he said. "This is something that the FAI prides itself on and it is fantastic to see UEFA roll out such a worthwhile campaign.

"At grassroots level, we see people's lives being affected in a positive way by football every day and that is something we must continue to build on. Football should be accessible to everyone. This message of inclusion is crucial to the development of the game."

Ireland – and the rest of the world – celebrated St Patrick's Day on 17 March. And the FAI seized the opportunity – a national holiday in Ireland – to promote the growing link between grassroots and international football through a short video that reached over 75,000 people.

The video featured an array of players representing the many facets of the game, including Karen Duggan (Republic of Ireland women's senior team), Ross Kenny (Wexford FC, SSE Airtricity League), Pearl Slattery (Shelbourne Ladies FC, Continental Tyres Women's National League), Neil Hoey (Ireland amputee team), Eimear O'Sullivan

(Ireland powerchair team), and Dillon Sheridan (Ireland cerebral palsy team).

The FAI does a lot of work in communities across Ireland through its regional development officers (of which there is at least one in every county), schools and third level department, intercultural department, coach education department, referees department, women's football department, club development department, and Football for All department. However, the #EqualGame campaign has helped the association to shine an even brighter spotlight on the inclusive nature of football and on how the game can change people's lives for the better.

A great many players have been eager to get involved. At international level, Republic of Ireland men's senior team captain Seamus Coleman and defender Derrick Williams supported the campaign by wearing the #EqualGame T-shirt, while Under-21 midfielder Josh Cullen and Under-18 defender Calum Doyle both wore the special #EqualGame captain's armband during international friendlies.

At club level, Alan Wall (Shamrock Rovers amputee team), Saoirse Noonan (Cork City Women's FC) and Danny Kane (Cork City FC) also posed for photos in the #EqualGame T-shirt, and many more initiatives are being planned with players and clubs at all levels. ♻️

Terrific work is being done all across the Republic of Ireland to grow the beautiful game and make it more accessible to everyone – from young players starting out through to grandparents giving walking football a go.





Dublin, 15 March. Dillon Sheridan, Eimear O'Sullivan and Neil Hoey (left to right) take part in the inclusion video produced by the FAI.

THE IMPORTANCE OF ENGAGEMENT

Engagement is crucial for national associations to connect with a wider audience and encourage more people to fall in love with football. An association that takes the time to properly engage with its stakeholders can generate a rise in participation and revenues, and an improvement in its image.

Launched in 2015, the UEFA GROW programme has become the central business development platform for national associations to grow the game across Europe in a systematic and strategic manner. UEFA GROW offers tailor-made consultation services to UEFA's member associations in a number of different areas.

Importance of engagement

Football is widely regarded as the world's most popular sport. However, in order to maintain that position, it is important for members of the general public to have the opportunity to play and be involved with the sport, from being digitally engaged to watching their national team in action, whether on television or in the stadium.

This is where the national associations are crucial. They play an important role in helping to engage with all members of society to increase the number of people who want to be connected with football.

The digital revolution has given national associations new tools to engage with the public. However, posting blindly across multiple platforms will not bring the desired results. Instead the national associations need to be clever and develop digital strategies that target specific social media platforms and social groups. In order to know who to target, the association needs to undertake detailed research to find out which platforms and content will best serve its interests.

To help make this a success, UEFA GROW is assisting the national associations with digital marketing and football relationship management (FRM) strategies. FRM is about sending the right message to the right person at the right time and on the right platform so that the target audience is reached.



In order to know who to target, the association needs to undertake detailed research to find out which platforms and content will best serve its interests.



Building relationships

One association that has been embracing closer engagement with its stakeholders is the Football Association of Norway (NFF).

"The NFF has had a very close cooperation with UEFA GROW in the development of our overall strategy and of the individual pillars," says the organisation's general secretary, Pål Bjerketvedt. "We have learned a huge amount from the engagement work in terms of best practices, case studies and planning. This has helped us in improving and focusing our activities with engagement."

Since its collaboration with UEFA within the field of digital marketing, the NFF has been quick to adopt a 'top-down strategy', which means that instead of taking an ad hoc and short-term approach, the association is able to target its overall goals in a structured manner.

This has been emphasised by the NFF's strategy of increasing engagement with its regions to boost interest in football. The association came up with a strategy, which was developed in conjunction with UEFA GROW, and is now applying this to the regional football associations, which will, in turn, pass this expertise on to their local clubs.



Building relationships is crucial for the NFF. Rather than focusing on metrics, such as the number of followers and likes they have on social media, Norwegian football's governing body is taking steps to build lasting relationships.

"It has been important for us to keep the fans in focus, while also finding what is unique for us," says Pearse Connolly, who is responsible for digital services at the NFF. "We have a strategic goal for our fans: 'Make me proud and give me great social experiences'. Staying true to that has really helped."

'Influencers'

Players in Norway's national teams are adored by children in their homeland. To increase engagement, the NFF has come up with the idea to show these stars as 'influencers'. The organisation is involving players from the national teams on social media and is giving the watching public snippets of what goes on in their everyday lives.

"We definitely want to develop a closer relationship between the teams and our supporters," Connolly explains. "Our slogan is '#Sterkeresammen' (#StrongerTogether), which works far better when the players are

deeply involved and feel ownership of the relationship. We are already seeing that the fans are appreciating and reciprocating this involvement."

This collaboration also shows Norway's top stars are human and willing to actively engage with the fans. The NFF now want to take this interaction to another level, using e-sports. Ultimately, the NFF is looking at ways to broaden its fan base and is delighted to embrace anyone who is interested in the sport – either as spectators or as players. Norwegian football's governing body is equally interested in those who play football on the pitch, and those who prefer to play with a game console.

"Ahead of the UEFA Nations League draws we needed to figure out how to reach and engage the 13–30 age group, as they are a very difficult audience to reach," says the NFF's head of social media, Mats Theie Bretvik. "Our e-sports project is one way to reach this target group on their home ground, and a way to talk to them directly by playing with and against them."

Ahead of Norway's match against Slovenia in October, the NFF wants to organise an e-sports tournament, which will give fans the chance to play among themselves and possibly against Norway's international players in the lead-up to the event.

"We know that when people aren't playing football outside, they are consuming football inside, playing FIFA or Football Manager," Bretvik adds. "Why shouldn't we be there too?"

The NFF has shown a desire to actively engage its stakeholders across all levels and is not afraid to experiment to come up with new ideas, even at the risk of some not succeeding. A number have proved successful. Ahead of Norway's recent friendly against Australia, a promotion on Facebook and Instagram aimed at students called 'How to catch a Kangaroo' led to an extra 1,000 tickets being sold, while the organisation's digital team are actively searching for the various trends that are influencing the various age groups across the country.

"We will continue to follow the strategy devised in cooperation with UEFA GROW," says Bjerketvedt. "This will be done by making sure engagement remains a priority in order to help deliver our overall goals, from grassroots to national team level. We want to build broader and deeper relations with everyone who follows and participates in Norwegian football. This will help to ensure that we live up to our vision that football should be enjoyed, as well as creating opportunities and challenges for all." 🌐

Engaging with the fans is crucial for national associations, as demonstrated by Spaniard Luis García at the legends match in Cardiff last June.



CERTIFICATE IN FOOTBALL MANAGEMENT FLIES HIGH

2017 was another hugely successful year for the UEFA Certificate in Football Management (CFM), with eight national courses held across Europe.

Building on an already hugely successful 2016, national CFMs got under way in no fewer than eight UEFA member associations in 2017, including, for the first time, FYR Macedonia, Israel, Poland, Romania and Turkey. England, Finland and France were the other associations involved.

The CFM is based on a blended-learning approach containing online modules and three face-to-face seminars in the host countries. The French course was the first to kick off in 2017, with the initial face-to-face seminar taking place in Paris in January. The courses in Turkey and England followed not long after, with the first face-to-face seminars at the Riva facility of the Turkish Football Federation and St George's Park in England

respectively. Then it was the turn of newcomers Romania, Israel and FYR Macedonia to showcase their credentials, before Finland and Poland got their courses under way.

A range of speakers took part in different seminars last year, including academic experts, UEFA representatives and top national association leaders. Among those who provided an insight into the workings of their national associations were Florence Hardouin (chief executive of the French Football Federation and a member of the UEFA Executive Committee), Timo Huttunen (deputy general secretary of the Finnish Football Association) and Servet Yardimci (first vice-president of the Turkish Football Federation and a member of the UEFA Executive Committee).

Over 700 graduates

More than 40 participants from 24 non-hosting countries around Europe enrolled for different national CFM courses in 2017, showing the continuing interest of UEFA member associations to actively invest in the personal development of their staff. While improving their knowledge and skills, the CFM also provides participants with an opportunity to network and share their ideas.

Staff from clubs and from other football associations and organisations have taken part in the course since it began back in 2010. To date, 55 countries – not all of them in Europe – have been represented and the CFM currently boasts a grand total of more than 700 graduates, the majority (over 500) from UEFA member associations.



As the CFM continues to go from strength to strength, new national courses will be added to the list during 2018 (Latvia, Wales, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Greece and the Netherlands, in chronological order), with many more participants passing through its doors. For more information about the CFM, consult the dedicated page under the education section on UEFA.com or contact the education team directly at universities@uefa.ch.

New programme

The new UEFA Diploma in Football Leadership and Management (DFLM) was launched following the success of the national CFM courses and increased demand from UEFA member associations and their staff for additional educational programmes.

Building on the knowledge gained in the CFM, the DFLM focuses on developing the soft and hard skills needed to succeed in an influential role in European football. Moreover, the project-based learning approach, in which participants develop a project connected with their national association's strategy, ensures hands-on practical experience. The programme is run by UEFA in collaboration with leading academic experts and the Swiss Graduate School of Public Administration (IDHEAP) based at the University of Lausanne. Successful graduates will receive a diploma of advanced studies (DAS) from IDHEAP worth 30 ECTS points, which are acknowledged by all European universities.

The programme lasts a year, with each module and seminar focusing on integral components of football management:

- › project conceptualisation
- › project planning and presentation
- › negotiation
- › leadership

Designed as a blended-learning programme, the DFLM comprises online modules and face-to-face seminars in Switzerland. The online modules enable participants to access the content anywhere and at any time to study without it conflicting with their work commitments.

The knowledge acquired, the networking opportunities and the projects developed will not only further the participants' education and skills, but, in the long run, benefit their national associations as well. 🌐

What is in the CFM?

The UEFA Certificate in Football Management is organised as a collaboration between UEFA and the hosting associations. The certificate is issued through the Swiss Graduate School of Public Administration (IDHEAP) at the University of Lausanne and is worth ten ECTS Credits acknowledged by all European universities. Each nine-month course comprises six mandatory and two optional online modules. Each module focuses on one important aspect of the management of a football association:

- › the organisation of world football
- › strategic and performance management
- › operational management
- › football marketing and sponsorship
- › communications, the media and public relations
- › event and volunteer management
- › stadium management (optional)
- › marketing operations (optional)



Essential reading

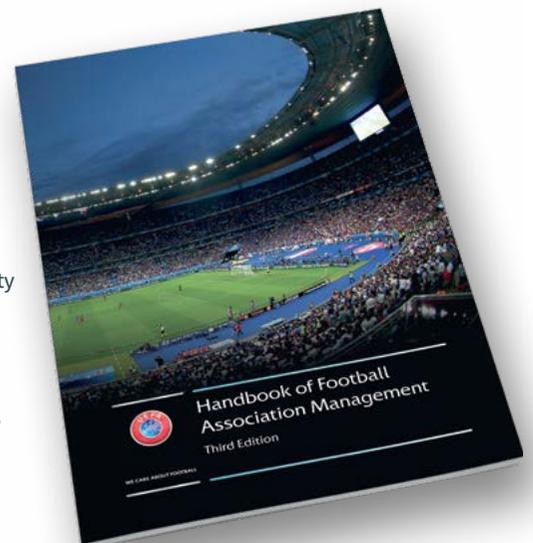
UEFA has published the third edition of the Handbook of Football Association Management to support the online modules of the Certificate in Football Management and the course as a whole.

The handbook – the first to be devoted to football association management – is an excellent reference work for CFM participants as well as a means for UEFA to make the content of the course available to a wider audience.

After an introduction to football association management by co-editors Professor Jean-Loup Chappelet, PhD, IDHEAP, and Dawn Aquilina, PhD, IDHEAP, the book contains chapters on:

The Organisation of World Football by Sean Hamil, Birkbeck College, University of London; Strategic Management of a National Football Association by Professor Mikkel Draebye, SDA Brocconi; Operational Management of a National Football Association by Professor Antonio Davila, IESE Business School in Barcelona; Football Marketing and Sponsorship by Professor Simon Chadwick, University of Salford; Communication, the Media and Public Relations by Professor Raymond

Boyle, University of Glasgow; and Event and Volunteer Management by Professor Alain Ferrand, University of Poitiers. Copies of the book, which costs €40 and is published in English only, can be requested from universities@uefa.ch.



KNOWLEDGE-SHARING FOR PROFESSIONALS

UEFA PLAY is an online football community platform providing access to a rich and growing database of good practice and inspirational content to elevate the management of the game.



In an effort to make UEFA PLAY as useful and user-friendly as possible, new features have recently been added, making it easier for users to navigate the platform and find new content. It also has a forum for users to ask each other questions and exchange ideas and good practices.

New content notifications

Email and online alerts are available to inform users that new documents have been posted. Users can subscribe to notifications on topics of interest by checking the two boxes at the bottom of their profile page.

Contribution from users

UEFA PLAY is based on the principles of community and sharing. While UEFA regularly feeds the platform with new and updated content, for UEFA PLAY to truly reflect the wealth of knowledge and good practices in football, it relies on the engagement of its users. They are therefore invited to share any ideas or resources with the community by contacting universities@uefa.ch.

Accessing the platform

The platform is password-protected and users need to create an account. While mainly intended for staff and national stakeholders of UEFA member associations, access may also be extended to people working in other football organisations. To request access, please contact universities@uefa.ch.

UEFA remains convinced that the sustainable development of the game in Europe lies in part within the capacity and willingness of every stakeholder to learn from the best practices of others and to share their success stories. UEFA PLAY is a step in this direction and should ideally be a partner for everyone working in football throughout Europe. 🌐

The online platform is now easier to navigate and features a notification system to keep users informed of new content, a directory for the alumni of UEFA education programmes, and a forum for members of the football community to exchange ideas.

UEFA is dedicated to developing football and believes that one way to achieve this goal is by sharing knowledge and good practices among the stakeholders. So it set up UEFA PLAY, an online platform to share resources and experience. The platform contains a rich, growing database of more than 2,000 documents, videos and practical guides on a variety of topics, from the technical aspects of the game (coaching, grassroots, refereeing, etc.) to the administrative side of football (event management, marketing, social responsibility, stadiums and security, infrastructure, etc.).

UEFA PLAY is based on the principles of community and sharing. Users are therefore invited to share any ideas or resources with the community by contacting universities@uefa.ch

NEW DONATION OF €100,000 TO THE ICRC



Kevin De Bruyne (Manchester City FC) and UEFA Executive Committee member Peter Gilliéron (left) present a cheque for €100,000 to the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) director of global operations Dominik Stillhart.

On 7 March, ahead of the UEFA Champions League round of 16 second-leg match between Manchester City and FC Basel at the City of Manchester Stadium, Kevin De Bruyne handed over a cheque from UEFA to assist the ICRC's Afghanistan rehabilitation programmes.

UEFA marked 11 years of helping Afghan landmine victims when Manchester City midfielder Kevin De Bruyne presented a cheque for €100,000 to the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). "I want to thank the ICRC for the tireless work they have undertaken to help landmine victims, many of them children. They have shown through their programme in Afghanistan over a number of years that football can make a difference in people's lives," said the UEFA president, Aleksander Čeferin.

The donation supports the ICRC's physical rehabilitation programme for landmine victims and other disabled people in Afghanistan – providing

artificial limbs, physiotherapy and vocational training. About a third of patients are children.

The Belgian international was chosen to present the cheque after being named in the UEFA.com Fans' Team of the Year 2017, which was announced in January. Along with fellow countryman Eden Hazard, De Bruyne had the distinction of being the first Belgian named in the XI, as well as being the first Manchester City player selected.

Over the course of a partnership lasting 20 years, UEFA has donated in excess of €3.5 million to the ICRC to assist disadvantaged people around the world. 🌐

UEFA NATIONS LEAGUE – SOLIDARITY PAYMENTS AND BONUSES

Europe's national teams have their eyes on more competitive assignments, with the UEFA Nations League, designed to enhance the status of the European national team game, set to kick off in September.

The UEFA Nations League is set to give more sporting meaning to national team football. Its introduction follows feedback given to UEFA by national associations, coaches, players and supporters, who were increasingly of the opinion that friendly matches do not provide adequate competition for national teams. As a result, supporters will have the opportunity in future to see their teams play more competitive matches.

The UEFA Nations League will also provide an important source of revenue for the UEFA member associations – as shown by the solidarity payments and bonus fees that will be paid out. A total of €76.25 million in solidarity payments and bonus

fees is earmarked for the 55 associations whose national teams will be setting out in the maiden UEFA Nations League. The solidarity payments per association are scaled according to the different leagues:

- League A: €1.5m
- League B: €1m
- League C: €750,000
- League D: €500,000

The group winners in each league will earn double this amount, as they will be entitled to the following bonuses:

- League A group winners: €1.5m
- League B group winners: €1m
- League C group winners: €750,000
- League D group winners: €500,000

The four group winners in League A will play for the UEFA Nations League trophy in June 2019, for which the following bonus payments have been set:

- Winners: €4.5m
- Runners-up: €3.5m
- Third place: €2.5m
- Fourth place: €1.5m

This means that the maximum amount a League A team could earn in solidarity payments and bonuses would be €7.5 million, with a League B team able to earn up to €2 million, a League C team up to €1.5 million, and a League D team up to €1 million. 🌐



MICHAEL O'NEILL

'WHEN YOU'RE MANAGER OF YOUR COUNTRY, IT'S VERY PERSONAL'

He is the man who has revived the fortunes of Northern Ireland's national team. Prior to his appointment as his country's national coach in 2012, the Northern Irish had not qualified for a major tournament since the 1986 World Cup.

That all changed under Michael O'Neill, the former Newcastle United, Dundee United and Hibernian winger who led his country to EURO 2016 as group winners – and then on to the round of 16 at the finals in France. More recently he guided them to a World Cup qualifying play-off against Switzerland that ended in narrow defeat.

Here, the 48-year-old reflects on the road travelled in football management – from his early days with Brechin City (2006–08) and Shamrock Rovers (2009–11) to the task of helping one of Europe's smaller nations rise up the rankings and to the challenges still to come.

Before becoming a manager, you had a spell outside the game working in finance – how did this help you?

With coaches that come from a playing background, it's almost like a vacuum of football – they're constantly surrounded by football. My experiences outside football helped me in terms of dealing with people,

"My role is to help (a) player step out from his club, sometimes not the most glamorous club, to step on to the pitch against Cristiano Ronaldo. That's where the coach plays a vital role."

and seeing other people's side of things. As a player I always felt aggrieved – 'the manager's not seeing my side of things'. That understanding, that tolerance, is something that I developed away from football. There were also the practical skills – to become proficient with a laptop, with email, with presentations. I worked on the side of the business where we were trying to generate investment and I'd be in a room with 10 or 12 people saying, 'This is why you should invest in this company'. It gave me confidence. Sometimes to develop as an individual is more difficult if you're in the one environment all the time and my experiences outside of football definitely benefitted me.

Your first manager's job was with Brechin City in Scotland. How important was this as an apprenticeship for you?

A lot of people want to start higher up now. I understand particularly the players with the big, big reputations – the English game has become so cut-throat now that managers are [easily] damaged and I can understand big-reputation players not wanting to step outside their comfort zone. But for me you learn the real aspect of the game at the lower level – you learn how to manage people better, you learn how to get people all working together because at the likes of Brechin, so many people at the club weren't working for financial reward; they were working because they loved the club, so you had to get people all pulling in the same direction, which was a big part of it.

During your time at Brechin, you were completing your Pro licence. What is your view about the importance of education for a coach?

I think it's vital. Coach education shouldn't be a case of 'I need to get my coaching badges to get a job'. Many people want to get to the Pro licence in the shortest space of time. I see coaches that go from the A licence straight to the Pro licence but have not actually used the A licence – they've not coached, they've not been managers. Every time you achieve a qualification, it should enhance your career, so you need to bring it into the real life, bring the theoretical side of it into the game.

I also like to look at other sports and listen to other coaches. We don't know everything and the game is constantly changing, so we must evolve with it, and education is the key point in that.

At Shamrock Rovers, you went to a club that had not won honours for so long then won two league titles. How did you change things when you arrived there?

I inherited a squad that had finished seventh. I was fortunate I had a good handle on the Scottish game, which enabled me to access better players at less cost. Players were on all sorts of different contracts, so I brought in a maximum wage and an appearance and bonus structure that was the same for every player so there was uniformity in the group. Some clubs in the League of →

Ireland had two or three times our playing budget, but the first year we finished second and slowly the other clubs started to have financial problems while we were stable. We were champions the next two years but our budget never increased.

Another achievement was to take Rovers into the UEFA Europa League group stage. How do you look back on that achievement?

European football was very important for the League of Ireland clubs because of the financial benefits. We were a little bit unfortunate against FC Copenhagen [in UEFA Champions League qualifying] and were eliminated, but then we dropped into the Europa League and had play-off against Partizan. It was a fantastic achievement for our group of players. We were up against teams who were spending fortunes on players and wages, so it was a fantastic achievement. It did break the ice as Dundalk have done it subsequently, so it let people see it was achievable. It's something I use regularly for our clubs in Northern Ireland. I say to them, 'This is achievable, you can do this but you're going to have to do things better.'

You took the Northern Ireland job in the midst of a 13-match winless run. How did you start changing the culture?

If you'd been walking into a club job in the same situation, you'd have gone, 'Let's get rid of all these guys and start from fresh.' I didn't have that luxury. I had to slowly assess the squad, I had to slowly ease players out. But you need players to come through. There is a process there – 'I might need him for another 12 months.' That was the first part of it. The second part was just trying to build a team that believed they could win. That belief had gone out. So many of our players had played a lot of international football and the experience had not been that positive so it had to become a positive experience, they had to turn up at the ground feeling different about themselves. They had to realise the significance of wearing the shirt and playing for their country and also what a successful Northern Ireland football team means.

Above: 16 June 2016, Stade de Lyon, France. Northern Ireland beat Ukraine and book their place in the last 16 of EURO 2016. Opposite: During Michael O'Neill's two years in the coach's seat, Shamrock Rovers won two League of Ireland titles and played in the UEFA Europa League.



We brought in people from other sports – we brought in Rory McIlroy, we brought in Carl Frampton the boxer, we brought in Gary Lightbody the singer from Snow Patrol. For too long it had been the same old, same old and we had to get away from that.

I played international football in Northern Ireland when perhaps the atmosphere was not so good. There were problems in the stadium as well. But the association has

worked very hard to manage that and the experience for the Northern Ireland supporter and player is so much better. In the past we'd turn up at the stadium and there was nothing for the players to relate to. Now there is positive imagery of the players – there is France, there's history of the team in the past, the 1982 World Cup, the 1986 World Cup. There's a lot of positive branding around the stadium





for the players to relate to as well. Germany and Switzerland are the only two teams to beat us there in four years.

Could you elaborate further on the psychological aspect, and the steps taken to improve self-belief?

I spoke to the players and had a really frank, open meeting with them after the first qualifying campaign [for the 2014 World Cup in Brazil]. We had to refocus the group and make sure the senior players recognised it wasn't just about coming away with the national team, playing and going back with another cap. We had to change that mentality. We had one of the top players in our squad who hadn't played in a winning Northern Ireland team for four years. So we pointed these things out to the players – what do we want from being a national team player? Do we want 60, 70 appearances but it doesn't matter whether we win or lose, or do we want to achieve something as a group? Another thing we did was, we showed them the qualifying group where we'd finished fifth and had seven points. And then we showed them the group of the same ten games after 70 minutes and we had 17 points. So we showed them we weren't that far away.

When you finish fifth it feels like qualification is miles away, but it wasn't – it was 20 minutes away in each game and 17 points would have gotten us third place in that group, which in the new EURO format would have got us a play-off, so we had to create belief that it was achievable because results didn't tell us that.

We'd played better in the World Cup than our results showed. For long periods, the games were very tight but we lost them in the last 15–20 minutes. For the EURO we ended up as the first Northern Ireland team ever to win our qualifying group. We were the first pot 5 team ever to win their group. We went into the EURO's 12 games unbeaten – the longest run Northern Ireland had ever had, with our highest ranking, our highest number of points.

In that EURO qualifying campaign, when did you really start thinking, 'We can do this'?

After winning the first three games, we played Romania in Bucharest and lost the game 2-0. Evans didn't play, [Steven] Davis didn't play, so personnel-wise we were weaker. So the fifth game became so important – we came back in March and played against Finland, and I said, 'If we beat them here we'll put nine points between ourselves and Finland.' We were well ahead of the Faroes already, but if we won that one, we'd be in a group of four. We were second at the time. We won the game and suddenly you could see it in the players. We had to play a game against Romania in June. It was a difficult game because of the timing of it, as normally in June you have all these withdrawals, but we didn't have a single one.

As for the EURO 2016 experience, how do you view it when you look back?

It was a phenomenal experience. I look at it and our games were so tough – we played Poland who were beaten in the quarter-finals on penalties, we played Germany who were beaten in the semi-

finals and Wales who were beaten in the semi-finals, and Ukraine. Ultimately, though, it comes down to disappointment. We didn't deserve to lose against Wales [in the last 16] – it was an own goal that separated the teams. My biggest disappointment is that when we went into the tournament none of our forward players had had good seasons at their clubs, so we didn't have that player who could make a difference attacking-wise.

With a small football nation like Northern Ireland, how did you prepare players tactically for big games like these?

We knew how we'd have to play. We knew we'd have to defend for long periods. We knew we'd have to defend deep. We'd lost Chris Brunt, which meant we lost our left-back, so we worked on playing three at the back. We knew if we had to go to a four we'd have to play Jonny Evans in that position, which we did against Ukraine. We just got them so disciplined: how you stay in the game, how you defend. We had to become a good team without the ball. That was our message from day one – we can't be like Spain. The players have to accept that message and they have to take it on board but they have to have a pride in how they want to play – 'This is how we play, we are different, we take pride in being difficult to beat.' And pride that these big-name players are thinking, 'This isn't going to be an easy game against Northern Ireland.' I remember the German players being complimentary about us and there's no bigger compliment than that.

On the training pitch, for example, we designed games where we created all the emphasis on how we thought Germany would play – we gave them an extra player in each half of the pitch as it made it more realistic because when you play Germany it's as if they have another player in each half of the pitch so we did things like that. We played ten v eight. We gave the eight who had to defend different goals to achieve – how to defend without the ball. →

"If you have a player in a team who's incredibly offensive and you're saying, 'I don't want you to play like that for us', you're asking him to do something that's slightly unnatural for him and you have to give him the reasons behind that because players are inherently selfish. I was exactly the same."



“All our young players at 16 go to England or Scotland. We don’t have any players who go to France or Holland or Germany, which I’d like to see but our players are not of interest to those countries.”

How did the EURO change you as a coach?

It gave me belief that I was capable of working at this level. I took a team to a major tournament and we came away with a lot of credit. It also gave me inspiration to see how we could develop as a team and as a nation. I’ve taken that too from the World Cup [qualifying campaign] where we just missed out. I want us to evolve. I don’t want us to always have to play the way we do. It’s not enough for us to say, ‘This is us’. Yes, this is us, but we want to be better than what we are and that’s the challenge now – to develop as a nation and get to the point where our style of play has changed and developed.

As a general coaching question, what is the difference between club and national team management?

It’s three or four days of team development. Within that you have to do little things with individuals – it’s more about mentally getting them in the right frame of mind to play. There’s always a step in a player’s head when he pulls on a national team shirt and that is a step that the coach has to help him make. My role is to help this player step out from his club, sometimes not the most glamorous club, to step on to the pitch against Cristiano Ronaldo. That’s where the coach plays a vital role.

The other side of it is you have to manage the players who don’t play – the players who play come away, they get an international cap, go back to their clubs and are happy. But the ones who don’t play are the more difficult ones to manage. I know that through my own experience – I had 31 international caps but I was in about 80 squads, so I sat on the bench and in the stand a lot, and I know that’s difficult when a player comes away for seven, eight days and goes back with nothing. You have to manage that aspect closely as well because you need those players – those players are vital for the preparation of the team, you can’t prepare the team with 11, you have to prepare it with your 22 players.

I always say to the players, ‘I know it’s difficult when you come away and don’t play but cherish it.’ When we won the [EURO qualifying] group in Finland, I said beforehand to Steven Davis to get up and thank the players who hadn’t played. It was quite emotional. He said, ‘Look, it doesn’t work unless there are 22 or 25 of us’ and

that was really important to hear it from the captain. Those players are annoyed at me as I’ve not selected them but when your skipper says, ‘It’s so important you’re here’, that message is significant.

Just how important is good communication with players?

You have to find a way where your message is received and understood to the maximum and that’s the most important aspect of man management and understanding players. Not everything works. The same approach will not work for every player. Some players need nothing. Some players need something. Some players will challenge you and you have to deal with that and there’s no problem with that. That man management aspect, from getting in the hotel on a Sunday night to playing a massive game on the Thursday night, it’s about the mental approach more than anything else and communication is vital in that.

The communication when they’re not with me is very important too – watching what they’re doing at their club, texting them, little messages like ‘Well done today’. Constant communication is vital, particularly when they’re maybe not doing so well at their clubs – when they’re not in the team or they’re injured. I do think players put a lot of emphasis on communication like that – the personal side, the human side of management, is more important now possibly than it’s ever been.



In terms of the other work you do to influence a result, can you talk more about the tactical preparations in the build-up to a game?

I have three or four meetings leading into the game in the week. I don't have any meetings that last more than 15–20 minutes because the players do not concentrate. We will have one on the morning of the game where we do set pieces – we always do set pieces twice in the week.

Set plays are very, very important, for and against. There's also if you don't have the ball, when do you press, how do you press? Where is your defensive line going to be? Are you going to be deep? Are you going to press in the middle third? Are you going to try to press the opposition high up? Once the game is in play, you've less control over that. We always work off trying to defend

in a team who's incredibly offensive and you're saying, 'I don't want you to play like that for us', you're asking him to do something that's slightly unnatural for him and you have to give him the reasons behind that because players are inherently selfish. I was exactly the same. The player has to understand what his role in the team is and why that's so valuable to the team.

As Northern Ireland manager, is it possible to have a 'philosophy' of how you want your team to play?

We don't have enough players to have that luxury and we don't have enough players at the same level of club football to do that. We have to be realistic in our approach. I'd love to be in scenario where my team could play the most expansive game possible but national team football is driven by the players. If you don't have the players and you try to impose a style of play on a group

game and integrated it into their own game. They've kept their identity as Germany. But tactically they test you – they've tested us more than any other team we've played. If you block up one area of the pitch, they find a solution. The German players are so good they find a way to set you another problem – just as you've solved one they hit you with something else.

Returning to your own progression as a coach, you extended your contract earlier this year. What does the future hold for you?

I had opportunities to go into the club game, I had opportunities to work for another association as well, but I think there's a lot of scope to develop the game in Northern Ireland. We want to maintain where we are. We don't want to go back to a team that can't compete or challenge for qualification. We want to maintain our level as much as we can. For me the important thing is to develop that pathway for players in Northern Ireland to have good club careers and subsequently good international careers.

In Northern Ireland we have no professional clubs, and so our young players work within the association from the age of 11. For example, our 11 to 13 year-olds work two nights a week within the association and two nights a week with their boys' teams. We don't have the luxury of professional clubs to do that so we have to fill the gap for young players. All our young players at 16 go to England or Scotland. We don't have any players who go to France or Holland or Germany, which I'd like to see but our players are not of interest to those countries, so we have to try to build a better pathway because the English model is so ruthless for our young players.

A lot of my focus is on how we can build a better model and I'd like to see our domestic league play a bigger role in that and see an age category in our league where we should play players under a certain age. It's very difficult with politics to enforce that with our clubs but I can give you an example. In our domestic league the percentage of minutes played by players under 21 was 12%. It's very low for a league with no foreign players, so we have to reduce the age profile in our league, so our domestic league becomes a development league for us and, hopefully, a good grounding for players to go on to England, Scotland or wherever and become international players. 🌱



24 January 2018, Lausanne, Switzerland. The Nations League draw puts Northern Ireland in the same League B group as Austria and Bosnia and Herzegovina.

– we're tight, we're narrow. We're good at defending crosses, it's in our DNA, so we try to force the opposition into that scenario. It's very important your team, the players, know their roles. It's only three or four days and if you play right-back for your club, it might be totally different from what I want, so it's about your players knowing their roles. If you have a player

of players that it isn't suited to, that's bad coaching. As a national team coach you can't afford to have an attitude of 'this is my philosophy' unless you're operating right at the top end. One of the countries I admire the most in terms of style of play is Germany, internationally. I love how the Germans play. I think they've evolved. They've taken the best bits of the Spanish

DANISH FOOTBALLERS TEACH CHILDREN TO READ

Christian Eriksen, Kasper Schmeichel, Andreas Christensen, Pierre-Emile Højbjerg, Jannik Vestergaard, Yussuf Poulsen, Nadia Nadim and Pernille Harder are all national team stars on the football pitch who now also star in their own children's books.

The eight books in the Read with the National Team series published by Carlsen and the Danish Football Association are designed to help children learn to read by encouraging boys and girls who already love football to also develop a passion for reading.

Each book tells the story of how one of the players got into football, what it is like to play for the national team and what their life is like off the pitch.

The proceeds from the books will go to ten school projects that use football as a learning tool. Each project will receive 10,000 Danish kroner. Together with the publisher, the eight players have already decided what projects they would like to support.



LANDMARK REFORMS

At its general assembly on 3 March, the Danish Football Association adopted sweeping reforms of its governance structure, paving the way for improved governance, transparency and diversity. Changes to the structure of the executive board, the introduction of election terms, and increased diversity are among the reforms adopted, which will enter into force in March 2019.

New executive board composition

From 2019, the executive board will consist of seven members in total: the president, two vice-presidents and four ordinary members. The president will continue to be elected by the general assembly for a four-year term.

The two vice-presidents will be elected for two-year terms, and will represent the Danish league and the Danish grassroots organisation respectively. Finally, the four ordinary members will represent the grassroots game (two members), the Danish league (one member) and the Danish women's league association (one member).

These changes will help the board to focus more on long-term strategy, finance, political issues and the general development of the Danish FA.

Election terms

Furthermore, the general assembly adopted term limits for the members of the board: the president can be

elected for three 4-year terms (maximum 12 years), while the vice-presidents and ordinary board members can be elected for a total of six 2-year terms (maximum 12 years).

Increased diversity

Besides these amendments to the Danish FA statutes, the executive board has decided to undertake an analysis – to be followed by concrete proposals – on diversity in Danish football. Specifically, the board wants to increase the diversity in the composition of both the board itself and the committees and panels of the Danish FA. Already, the board has set itself a gender balance target of at least 30% women.

CELEBRATING 120 YEARS

A committee was convened on 15 March 1898 which, 11 days later in Turin, was formally constituted as the Italian Football Association (FIGC).

It was the genesis of a community that has been bound by a common passion and shared principles, through victory and defeat, for the last 120 years.

Today, the FIGC boasts around 1.3 million registered players, coaches, and match and club officials, representing some 70,000 clubs, involved in over 600,000 official matches every year (65% of which involve youth teams).

To celebrate its 120th anniversary the FIGC has planned an eight-month programme of events.

The national broadcaster, RAI, will ensure plenty of coverage through sports, entertainment and news programming, while the busy calendar of events, which concludes on 12 November, will be accompanied by a promotional campaign that will aim to capture the FIGC's broad spectrum of activities.

The campaign includes a new video which delivers the following inspiring message: "We are the rolling ball, the light of victory and the shadow of defeat, the kick-off and the final whistle. We are the laws that level the playing field, and the players that make up the team. We are the 90 minutes that either finish too soon or go on forever. We are the game that people actually play, that brings them together. We are football, and we have been for 120 years."

The celebrations are designed to appeal to people of all ages and from all walks of life.

They include *Calcio per tutti* (Football for everyone) – a family event held in 22 city squares around the country – open days at the FIGC's regional headquarters, and the *Panchina d'Oro* (Golden Bench) awards for the best head coaches in Serie A, Serie B, the Lega Pro divisions and women's football, as voted for by the coaches themselves.

The schedule for April includes a special Italian Football Hall of Fame ceremony at the Palazzo Vecchio in Florence, at which the 2018 inductees will be joined by all the existing Hall of Fame members. Meanwhile, a special wine produced to commemorate the FIGC's 120th anniversary by the Comunità di San Patrignano – a residential community supporting young people with addiction issues – will be presented at the Vinitaly international wine and beverage fair in Verona.

May opens with Women's Football Week, followed by the historical re-enactment of the opening match of the first club 'championship' played under the official aegis of the FIGC, a one-day competition won by Genoa that took place in Piazza d'Armi in Turin. Remaining in Turin, the FIGC will be attending the Turin International Book Fair to present a commemorative volume by Alessandra

Giardini and Giorgio Burreddu, before the historical re-enactments conclude with a conference titled *Dove tutto ebbe inizio* (Where it all began).

Philatelists have two dates to mark in their diaries, with a commemorative stamp marking the FIGC anniversary to be unveiled in May, and another, marking 60 years of the FIGC technical centre at Coverciano, due to be presented in November.

During the summer, Coverciano will also be hosting the KickOff 2018 symposium, a grassroots festival, the Vivo Azzurro Cup – a tournament for fans of the national team – and the Azzurri Partner Cup, which will feature teams representing the various national team sponsors.

Finally, the FIGC is raising awareness of cancer research throughout 2018. Sport can be an effective weapon in the battle against serious illness, including cancer. It is estimated that 200 tumours could be prevented each year in Italy alone through physical exercise, which is why the FIGC is supporting the *Insieme Contro il Cancro* (Together against cancer) foundation through sales of a special edition ball – the *Pallone della Salute* (Health Ball) – at a number of its anniversary events. 🌍



FIGC

NATIONAL TEAM PROMOTES AUTISM AWARENESS CAMPAIGN

GERT GARCANI



The Albanian national team is supporting the campaign of the Albanian Children Foundation to raise awareness of youngsters living with autistic spectrum disorder and help them integrate into society.

Accompanied by vice-president of the Football Association of Albania (FSHF) Edvin Libohova, general secretary Ilir Shulku and national team coach Christian Panucci, the players visited the regional centre for autism near Tirana, where they were hosted by the foundation's president, Liri Berisha, and met children and their parents.

Liri Berisha thanked the FSHF for this strong message of support. "The national team players are our country's best ambassadors for raising awareness and spreading compassion to children."



"We may be the national team, but first and foremost we are people and we are parents," Christian Panucci said. "We want to give these children a smile today, but also bring them hope. We join the call for awareness of autism. Sport has shown it always supports such extremely significant and sensitive issues. We are greatly honoured to have been invited to meet these fantastic children."

After a tour of the facilities, the players improvised a quick football match with the older children and exchanged their team jerseys for the foundation's. The players and foundation staff also encouraged people to join the Light it up Blue campaign, an international symbolic gesture aimed at boosting public and government awareness of autism and calling for more support for individuals affected by this disorder.

25TH ORDINARY CONFERENCE

NUBAR AGHAZADA



The Association of Football Federations of Azerbaijan (AFFA) held its 25th Ordinary Conference at Boulevard Hotel in Baku in March.

It opened with video highlights of the Azerbaijan national team in action, followed by an address by the AFFA president, Rovnag Abdullayev, who

welcomed the delegates, guests and media and gave them a brief overview of the successful work done by the AFFA to develop football in Azerbaijan since the last conference.

The general secretary, Elkhan Mammadov, welcomed the FIFA and UEFA representatives present and invited

FIFA's director of European member associations, Bjorn Vassallo, to take the floor, before he himself gave a comprehensive report on the AFFA's activities.

UEFA Executive Committee member John Delaney also addressed the conference, and the head of AFFA's grassroots department, Jahangir Hasanzada, spoke about the work done to increase grassroots participation throughout the country.

Additional audiovisual footage included a UEFA video heralding the start of the Nations League, in which Azerbaijan looks forward to participating, and an AFFA-UNICEF video showcasing their collaboration off the pitch.

The conference was followed by a meeting of the AFFA executive committee and a press conference with the general secretary.



FC KRUMKACHY FAIL LICENSING PROCESS

ALEKSANDR ALEINIK



A young football club in Minsk, formed in 2014, reached the premier league in only two seasons. During two seasons in the Belarusian top flight, in 2016 and 2017, FC Krumkachy managed to win three points from all major clubs, including FC BATE, FC Dinamo Minsk and FC Shaktyor. Unfortunately, though, the newcomers ultimately lacked consistency and finished 11th in 2016 and 13th in 2017.

Throughout both seasons, there was much news in the local media about debts and financial issues with the club's players and other interested parties. With the club having no infrastructure, its main asset was its first team. At the same time, the stadium rent needed to be paid and money was required for the youth teams. As a result, the second part of the 2017

season started with a strike by the club's leading players, who refused to play in the away match against FC Vitebsk. By means of contract termination and signing players mainly from lower divisions, FC Krumkachy survived and were able to stay out of the relegation zone.

Despite talk of a potential new owner during the off season, the club was not able to deal with its debts, and top players Yauhen Shikauka, Phillippe Ivanou and Aliaksandr Skshinetski all left the team one by one. Because of the ban imposed by the Football Federation of Belarus (ABFF) player status and transfer committee, FC Krumkachy were not able to sign new players in time for their 2017/18 Belarusian Cup quarter-final tie against FC Neman and suffered a forfeit defeat in both legs.

After the matter had been raised at all



ABFF levels, starting with the club licensing committee and ending with the football arbitration tribunal, on account of severe violations of the licensing terms, the club's application for the 2018 Belarusian premier league was rejected. Substantial debts and failures in the licensing procedure do not allow FC Krumkachy to play in first or second divisions this year either. Only time will tell if the young club will rise from the ashes and resume its journey from the lowest tier (third division).

TWO VICTORIES FOR THE UNDER-21S

FEDJA KRVAVAC



In March, the Bosnia and Herzegovina senior national men's team played two friendly matches away from home – against Bulgaria in Razgrad and against Senegal in Le Havre, in France. The friendlies were another opportunity for the team's head coach, Robert Prosinečki, to assess his squad before the start of the UEFA Nations League.

Despite numerous chances on both sides, the match against Bulgaria ended in a 1-0 win for Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The match against Senegal ended in a goalless draw, despite it being a good match with a great number of opportunities, which left Prosinečki pleased with the performance of his players.

Long-time international Haris Medunjanin came on in the 60th minute and made his last national team appearance after announcing his retirement.

The Under-21s continued their European Under-21 Championship qualifying campaign with two victories, against Wales and Liechtenstein. In the first match, played at home in Zenica, coach Vinko Marinović's team beat Wales 1-0 thanks to a 65th minute 30-metre goal from Darko Todorović. Against Liechtenstein, the Bosnia and Herzegovina youngsters performed even better, running out 4-0 winners thanks to goals from Eldar Čivić in the 35th minute, Marin Čavara in the 52nd minute, Kerim Memija in the 71st minute and Amer Gojak in the 90th minute. It was the team's fourth win in a row and the fifth in the European Under-21 qualifying competition, putting Bosnia and Herzegovina in top position in Group 8 with 15 points. Their next match is against Switzerland on 7 September.

The Under-19 national team did not do so well in the elite qualifying round of their European Championship, suffered

three defeats and finished bottom of Group 7 with no points.

Meanwhile, the Under-17s have qualified for their European Championship final tournament for the third season in a row, after finishing their elite round qualifying group in top position with six points.

For their part, the women's Under-17 team finished bottom of their elite round group with only one point to their name. The tournament was played in the cities of Ugljevik and Bijeljina, and, in addition to the hosts, involved the teams of Austria, Poland and Turkey.

Finally, in off-the-pitch news, construction of the new office building of the Football Association of Bosnia and Herzegovina started in Sarajevo in mid-March, with financial assistance from the UEFA HatTrick programme. The new offices should be ready to open in December, providing the staff of the association with much improved working conditions.

CROATIA

www.hns-cff.hr

WOMEN'S FOOTBALL AND CAFE WEEK OF ACTION CELEBRATED

NIKA BAHTIJAREVIĆ



For the Croatian Football Federation (HNS), March was a month dedicated to multiple grassroots efforts. To celebrate International Women's Day, the Croatian FA partnered with female players, doctors and team managers to highlight women's experiences in the football world and reaffirm the HNS's commitment to promoting women's football.

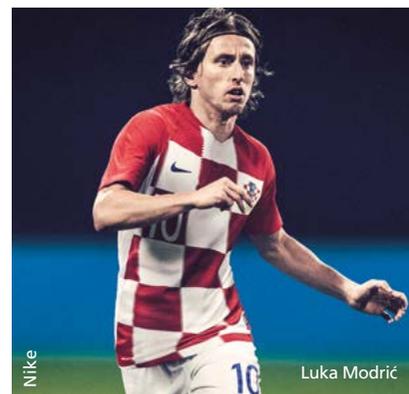
The HNS also gave its support to the CAFE Week of Action, which aims to raise awareness of the difficulties faced by football fans and players with disabilities. As part of this year's event, the HNS joined CAFE in inviting disabled fans to share their experiences at football stadiums around Europe as part of the #ShareYourSightlines campaign.

On the national team front, preparations

were in full swing for the World Cup. Head coach Zlatko Dalić and his squad of 25 headed to the USA for two friendlies, returning home with a loss against Peru and a win against Mexico. The team's US tour was the opportunity to launch Croatia's new kit, featuring a fresh take on the iconic checkers in the form of supersize squares representing the team's high ambitions and immense national pride.

The team is to play two more friendlies before heading to Russia – a recently announced and much anticipated match against Brazil in England, and a home game against Senegal. This gives the team plenty of practice to make sure that when the first whistle blows at the World Cup they are ready to show their full potential

Casting a shadow over the month's many



successes, the Croatian football family was shocked and saddened by the loss of Bruno Boban who was struck down by acute heart failure during a football match at the age of 25. It is heartbreaking to lose one so young, and he shall be greatly missed.

ENGLAND

www.thefa.com

RETAIN THE GAME

SIOBHAN BURKE



The latest affiliation figures for the 2017/18 season show that the number of men's grassroots football clubs and teams is falling in England.

In response, the FA and the Football Foundation have launched the Retain the Game funding scheme, aimed at keeping men's grassroots clubs and teams going. Whereas many grant schemes focus on supporting the creation of new teams, the focus of Retain the Game is on existing clubs.

The £1 million scheme offers up to 1,300 existing men's teams (from Under-17 level upwards, and including veterans' teams) the opportunity to apply for grants of £750 that could be put towards the essential costs of pitch hire, training venues, first-aid courses and kit.

FAROE ISLANDS

www.football.fo

WORLD CUP TROPHY FOR ALL TO SEE

TERJI NILSEN



Poul Michelsen and Christian Karembeu

With the World Cup in Russia getting ever closer, the World Cup trophy has been on tour around the world, and recently stopped off in the Faroe Islands.

The plane carrying the trophy arrived along with 1998 World Cup winner Christian Karembeu and other dignitaries.

After special guests and media had greeted the plane and its special cargo at the airport, the trophy was taken to the Tórsvøllur national stadium in the capital of Tórshavn.

There the trophy was on public display, with several hundred locals taking the opportunity to see it for real and take part in the many football activities organised on the same occasion.

LUXEMBOURG

www.fff.lu

GROWING GRASSROOTS FOOTBALL

JOËL WOLFF



The Luxembourg Football Federation (FLF) has been working very hard to develop grassroots football and has launched an ambitious new programme at the initiative of its new grassroots director, Claude Campos.

The primary aim of the programme is to enable all girls and boys to play football, under the supervision of qualified coaches, if possible.

The FLF ran 17 coaching courses in 2017, as a result of which 162 candidates received 'grassroots basics' training (12 hours of training) to enable them to coach children aged between 6 and 9. A further 73 candidates qualified as 'grassroots 1' coaches for Under-13s



(32 hours), while 48 obtained the FLF C2 diploma (103 hours) to coach players under the age of 19. The number of coaches trained in Luxembourg was much higher in 2017 than in previous years.

Alongside its coach education activities, the FLF frequently organises special grassroots events, including regular competitions for children aged 5 and over, national football days for boys (with more than 3,000 participants) and girls, a regional young footballer competition with various football skills workshops, and fair play competitions for adults and children.

FLF staff also support and run a variety of projects to promote school football, disabled football, health and refugee integration.

We should never forget that, if football is to thrive at elite level, we need to take the grassroots game seriously, which is something the FLF is determined to do.

MALTA

www.mfa.com.mt

CLUBS TO BENEFIT FROM TWO NEW SCHEMES

KEVIN AZZOPARDI



The Malta Football Association (MFA) has unfurled two schemes aimed at helping Maltese clubs improve their organisation and facilities.

Under the first scheme, all clubs affiliated to the MFA will receive financial assistance to engage the services of an MFA-recognised football administrator, while the other scheme, the MFA facilities fund grant scheme, will enable clubs to apply for grants for infrastructural projects, such as pitch improvements, floodlights or dressing rooms, or to install health and safety equipment.

Norman Darmanin Demajo, president of the MFA, outlined the key aspects of these two initiatives during a meeting of the MFA council. "The feedback from the first MFA course in football administration, which concluded recently, has been immensely positive," he said. "A total of 60 candidates have completed this course. Now that we can rely on these administrators with a sound knowledge of the basics of football administration, we are working to introduce a scheme through which clubs will receive financial assistance to employ a football

administrator." The MFA president explained that several clubs had approached the association in recent months seeking assistance for infrastructural projects.

This new fund should go a long way towards helping clubs carry out improvements at their training facilities.

In other news, the second MFA integrity tour kicked off in the first week of March. The information sessions are coordinated by Franz Tabone, the MFA's integrity officer, who is visiting all 53 MFA-affiliated clubs. The first MFA integrity tour was held in 2014.

"These educational and awareness programmes are necessary to assist and equip footballers and officials with the knowledge of how to stay clear of match-fixing perils in football," Tabone said.

First-team, Under-19 and Under-17 players, as well as club officials, are obliged to take part in these educational sessions.



D. Aquilina

16TH ORDINARY CONGRESS

PRESS OFFICE

 The 16th ordinary congress of the Football Association of Moldova (FMF) took place on 7 March at the FMF futsal arena in Ciorescu. The congress, which is the FMF's supreme governing body, meets annually, with delegates discussing and voting on various Moldovan football issues. This year's meeting started, as always, with a moment of silence in memory of the Moldovan football personalities who had passed away since the last congress on 20 January 2017.

The congress was attended by FIFA's manager of development programmes in Europe, Oliver Jung, UEFA's national associations director, Zoran Laković, Moldova's minister of education, culture and research, Monica Babuc, the state secretary of the ministry of education, culture and research, Radu Rebeja, Moldovan Olympic Committee vice-president Nicolae Piatac, the mayor of Ciorescu, Ivan Scripnic, and former FMF presidents Grigore Cuşnir and Constantin Tampiza.

Addressing the congress, the current FMF president, Pavel Cebanu, spoke of various achievements and developments which gave him confidence for the future, while also emphasising a general determination to combat negative elements which still existed.

The report of the FMF president, the FMF executive committee and other committees for 2017, as well as financial matters, including the annual consolidated statement of accounts for 2017, were also discussed and approved by the delegates.

Also on the agenda was a presentation about the new 'healthy young player' project being implemented by the FMF with the support of UEFA and the ministry of education, culture and research.

Last but not least, the FMF order of merit was awarded to Vasile Susan, Mihail Hincu, Alexandra Danilenco, Vasile Railean, Radion Ghilas, Petru Eφος, Mihail Groza, Ion Macari, Vladimir Oleanschi, Iurie Hlîzov, Alexandru Ionaşco and Vasile Dabija for their major contributions to the development of football in Moldova.



LEGENDARY PLAYERS HOST STADIUM TOURS

NIGEL TILSON

 The Irish Football Association's Education and Heritage Centre is running a series of tours hosted by some of Northern Ireland's legendary players.

The centre at the national football stadium at Windsor Park, which has just celebrated its first birthday, has lined up the likes of Pat Jennings and Tommy Wright to lead the Legends Tours.

The tours are being staged on the last Sunday of each month and former Ipswich Town, Southampton and Oxford United playmaker Jim Magilton (52 caps) got the ball rolling at the beginning of March by leading a tour for competition winners.

Keith Gillespie, the former Newcastle

United, Blackburn Rovers and Manchester United star who won 86 caps for his country, was next up, followed by Sammy Clingan, the ex-Nottingham Forest and Coventry City midfielder (39 caps).



St Johnstone manager Tommy Wright (31 caps), who played for Newcastle United and Manchester City, will lead a tour on 27 May. And fellow goalkeeper Pat Jennings, the former Spurs and Arsenal custodian who is Northern Ireland's most capped player with 119 appearances, has agreed to lead a tour later this year.

Ticket holders get to enjoy a walk around the centre and a stadium tour. The experience ends with a Q&A with each legend in the stadium's media centre.

The Education and Heritage Centre tells the story of Northern Ireland football using a variety of media, interactive displays and key artefacts from the 1880s to the present day.

PORTUGAL

www.fpf.pt

FOOTBALL FOR EVERYONE PRIZE

MATILDE DIAS

 The Portuguese Football Federation (FPF) has launched a new grant programme – the Football for Everyone Prize – to support projects that combat discrimination and encourage the social inclusion of disabled children, teenagers and adults.

The programme is open to Portugal-based non-profit organisations, which are invited to apply for funding for projects that harness football's power to foster inclusion, acceptance of diversity and mutual respect while opposing all forms

of discrimination. Projects must be meaningful and feasible, and their results verifiable.

A total of €50,000 is up for grabs and will be split between a number of projects. With this new grant, the FPF aims to encourage and support the efforts of Portuguese non-profits with a genuine interest in anti-discrimination initiatives and firmly believes that doing so is the most effective way to make a difference, in football as in society as a whole.



ROMANIA

www.frf.ro

MAKING DREAMS COME TRUE

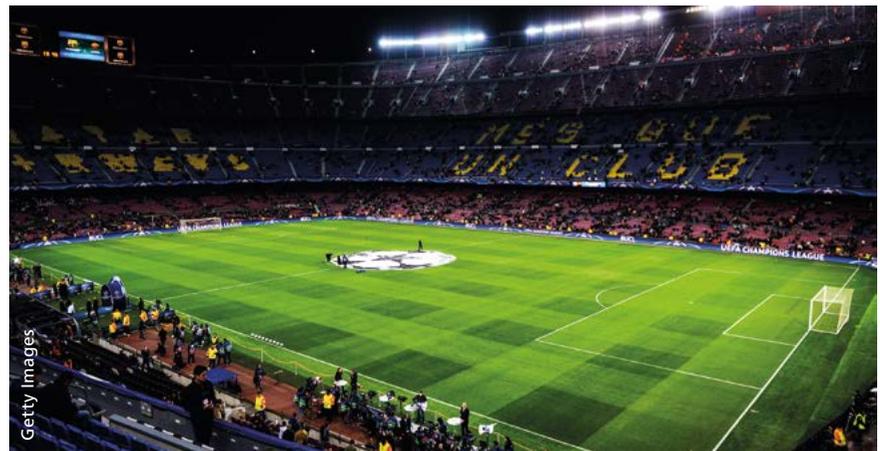
PAUL ZAHARIA

 Attending a match at the legendary Camp Nou in Barcelona would be a dream come true for countless football fans, and hundreds of Romanian children aged between 10 and 14 now have the chance.

They do not have to book or pay for tickets, just demonstrate their football skills and do their best to convince a panel of coaches that they deserve a trip to Barcelona. The lucky winners will not just be spectators, soaking up the unique atmosphere, but will also be put to work in a training session at the famous Ciutat Esportiva Joan Gamper, FC Barcelona's training ground and academy base.

This opportunity of a lifetime is the result of a partnership between the Romanian Football Federation (FRF) and Gillette, that together set up the Performance has a Future project between autumn 2017 and spring 2018 as part of Together we are Football, a much wider FRF grassroots programme – one of the main pillars of the FRF's strategy and activity, coordinated by the football development department.

Performance has a Future builds on a previous project – Transform the Narrow Street into a Stadium – which attracted more than 1,000 children aged 7 to 11 from around the Romanian countryside.



A number of talented players were scouted and the best three attended Romania's matches at EURO 2016.

Performance has a Future is one of 13 different projects currently grouped together under the Together we are Football umbrella, through which the FRF is significantly increasing the number of youngsters who play football, identifying and discovering new talents, and using football as a tool for inclusion and social mobility.

Every region of Romania is participating in the Performance has a Future project, with trials taking place until mid-April

all over the country, with a view to selecting the 11 most talented children who can't wait to see Lionel Messi in action – even if some, such as Alexandru Maxim, admit that their ultimate dream is to meet Cristiano Ronaldo and play for Real Madrid.

The contest remains wide open, but FRF scouting manager and Performance has a Future project ambassador Ion Geolgau can already confirm "the huge passion of all the children, who love to play football, show plenty of promise and are so committed they have turned out come rain or shine to showcase their skills".

KUBAN SPRING IN SOCHI

EKATERINA GRISHENKOVA

 The 15th Kuban Spring international women's youth football tournament was held in Sochi from 16 to 21 March. This year the competition was named after the coach of Russia's 2005 European Women's Under-19 Championship winners, Valentin Grishin.

Four teams took part in the tournament, which has long been a landmark in Russian women's football: cup-holders Russia, Romania, Iran and current U-20 world champions North Korea. The tournament was held in a round-robin format, with each team playing each other once. The 2018 Kuban Spring champions were therefore determined on the results of three rounds.

The Russia team, for which Kuban Spring was one of the main stages in preparation for the European Women's



Under-19 Championship elite round in Scotland from 2 to 8 April, came out top in all three games to claim their fourth win in the tournament's history.

In the first match, Russia prevailed over Iran 2-0, then Romania 6-1. North Korea also beat the Romanians (7-0) and Iranians (3-0). Then, Russia and North Korea went head to head for the trophy. The host team claimed victory with a score of 3-2. Iran came in third by beating Romania 2-1.

"The match against North Korea was tough," said Russian head coach Roman Ezopov. "We analysed their play beforehand and came to certain conclusions. We worked out the approach we needed to take and stayed organised."

"Our opponents were strong and scored first, yet despite the struggle, the girls performed well and applied the coaching plan. Their strength of character helped them win in the end," he concluded.

PRIDE LAB SUPPORTS YOUNG COACHES

MICHAEL LAMONT

 Project Brave has taken a landmark step recently, with the launch of the Pride Lab support network that aims to accelerate the development of Scotland's best up-and-coming coaches.

Designed by the Scottish FA's performance director, Malky Mackay, as well as national youth team coaches Brian McLaughlin and Scot Gemmill, the Pride Lab programme will bring the heads of children's football, youth football and goalkeeping from clubs up and down the country to a series of sessions designed to stimulate debate and discussion.

Mentorship is at the heart of the scheme, with a range of experiences and masterclass opportunities to follow throughout the year.

With a substantial investment from the Scottish FA offering proof of its commitment to raising the bar in the



field of coach education, Malky Mackay was on hand to explain the thinking behind the launch day and the events that follow:

"Through Project Brave and Club Academy Scotland, clubs have been asked to hire certain staff – a head of children's football, a head of youth football, a head of goalkeeping and a head of academy."

"Within the Scottish FA, we've decided that we need to help mentor our younger coaches and this was the start of the Pride Lab year. We'll meet four times through the year and split into three areas. Jim Fleeting will look after the

heads of children's football, Donald Park will take care of the heads of youth football, and Fraser Stewart the heads of goalkeeping. Brian McLaughlin and Scot Gemmill will oversee everything. Together we'll share ideas, talk about the issues within our respective roles and the challenges that lie ahead.

"Along with the rest of the staff, I feel passionate about the need to help these guys help themselves. Over the year, our coaches will go out to visit them at least twice and, by the end, those three key groups will have a bigger toolkit with which to help their young players."

SLOVAKIA

www.futbalsfz.sk

GRASSROOTS FOOTBALL IN THE SPOTLIGHT

PETER SURIN



The Slovak Football Association recently held a special gala evening to present awards in various categories for 2017, with a special focus on the grassroots sector.

The president of the Slovak FA, Jan Kováčik, was in attendance alongside the association's general secretary, Jozef Kliment, and its technical director, Jan Greguš.

Grassroots awards were presented to outstanding players in all categories (girls and boys) of the schools' football project, while the award for the most successful grassroots activity of 2017 went to the CFT (centre for football talents) academy. A special prize was awarded to the Karol Polák cup, which is played between orphanages.

The winning coaches in all youth competition categories were also

honoured, as were the players voted onto the women's football league team of the year.

Tribute was paid to several long-serving players for their services to football and sense of fair play. The award winners in this category were Miroslav Spišiak, Stanislav Seman, Eduard Bugar and Vladimír Hriňák (posthumously), Augustín Šuran (posthumously) and Viktor Zamborský.

The awards for the top scorers of 2017 were another highlight of the evening. Miloš Gallo, a 43-year-old player from FK Baník Štítnik, was the winner in the men's category, having clocked up 55 goals in 15 matches. In the boys' category, the winner was 11-year-old Lubomír Puzder from FK Košice-Barca, who scored 147 goals in 47 matches, and in the girls' category the award went to 13-year-old

Laura Retkešová for her 93 goals in 54 matches.

The evening was a great success by all accounts and received broad media coverage.



Lubomír Puzder and Laura Retkešová

SWEDEN

www.svenskfotboll.se

PARTNERSHIP FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

ANDREAS NILSSON



The Swedish Football Association has struck a partnership with Civil Rights Defenders, an international NGO in Stockholm that defends people's civil and political rights. Civil Rights Defenders (formerly known as the Swedish Helsinki Committee) will educate Swedish FA staff, leaders and players on human

rights issues and also act as the association's advisor on current affairs. The Swedish FA will, in turn, act to support and highlight Civil Rights Defenders' work for the respect of human rights.

"Football constantly needs to relate to situations where human rights are an important factor. It's an issue for us at

home, and even more so on the international scene. We face complex issues, and the expertise of Civil Rights Defenders will be very valuable to us," says Håkan Sjöstrand, general secretary of the Swedish Football Association.

The partnership is built on the mutual stance that football contributes to international exchange and dialogue, which is preferable to boycotts and isolation – even with regard to countries with a poor human rights record. At the same time, football needs to be aware of the problems that exist.

"When football takes a stand on human rights, it means a lot. The fact that the Swedish FA chooses to tackle these questions and increase its knowledge is a boost not just to our organisation – but to all those who risk their lives daily to work for justice and security in the world," says John Stauffer, CEO of Civil Rights Defenders.



SWITZERLAND

www.football.ch

KURT FEUZ – THE SWISS GUY ROUX

PIERRE BENOIT

 No coach has ever worked at the same club for longer than Frenchman Guy Roux, who enjoyed a successful career at AJ Auxerre between 1961 and 2005, albeit with three brief interruptions.

In Switzerland, however, Roux's record is under threat from the coach of a lower-division side who has frequently hit the headlines in cup competitions since taking the helm 33 years ago. Kurt Feuz, who played at the highest level with Young Boys and St Gallen, recently signed a two-year contract extension with Münsingen and looks set to stay in the role for the foreseeable future. The

Münsingen board, chaired by Andreas Zwahlen, jumped at the chance to renew the veteran coach's contract at the club, which is based in the outskirts of Berne.

In the first half of the current season, Münsingen were unbeaten in the league and lost only one competitive match, when the red and blacks battled bravely in a Swiss Cup round-of-16 encounter with giants Young Boys before eventually succumbing to an honourable 3-0 defeat in front of a record home crowd of 6,113 enthusiastic spectators.

It will be interesting to see whether Feuz beats Guy Roux's record. We would not put it past him!

WALES

www.faw.cymru

NEW MUSIC PARTNERSHIP

ROB DOWLING

 The Football Association of Wales (FAW) has partnered with Welsh scheme Horizons/Gorwelion to help promote Welsh music and show the FAW's commitment to sharing more elements of Welsh culture with footballing audiences.

The FAW aims to support up-and-coming Welsh artists by promoting their music on FAWTV, on its social media channels and at FAW events. This partnership will allow Horizons/Gorwelion music to be used as part of FAW-generated content, providing an exciting opportunity to introduce talented Welsh artists to new audiences around the world.

The Horizons/Gorwelion scheme helps to foster new, independent contemporary music. Since its inception in 2014, it has supported over 135 artists from more than 50 towns in 20 counties across Wales. The scheme enables artists to use studio equipment, gives them access to photography and artwork, helps them promote new releases

and produce videos, and assists with touring costs.

BBC radio DJ and Horizons/Gorwelion project manager Bethan Elfyn said: "It's great to be working with the FAW as one of the organisations that are on board to support new music. We've all been inspired by the [national] football team and the cultural activity surrounding them at the FAW, and I was thrilled to discuss this collaboration with the FAW."

A spokesperson for the FAW said: "Music plays an important role in Welsh heritage and culture. The Welsh national anthem, Hen Wlad Fy Nhadau, never fails to send a shiver down the spine of those singing or listening to it, and it continues to be a crucial part of our international matches."

The partnership between the FAW and Horizons/Gorwelion was officially launched on 9 February – Welsh Language Music Day – and several Welsh artists have since featured in FAW match and training highlights videos.

TURKEY

www.tff.org

FOOTBALL FIELDS FOR SYRIAN REFUGEES

EGE ERSÖZ



The Turkish Football Federation (TFF) is building a football field for Syrian refugees in the town of Çobanbey and donating football kits to amateur clubs in the city of Kilis as a part of its Football For Everyone mission.

The TFF president, Yıldırım Demirören, and the board of directors visited Kilis and Çobanbey for the groundbreaking ceremony for the football field. The TFF president used the opportunity to announce that the federation is planning to build a second football field in Kilis, similar to the one built by UEFA at the Zaatari refugee camp in Jordan.

In addition to the two football fields, 25,000 football shirts, 21,000 T-shirts, 10,000 caps, 1,500 scarves, 1,000 balls and 1,500 personal care products are being gifted, along with monetary donations, to amateur football clubs in Kilis.

The TFF board of directors also held their March meeting in Kilis. "We know that football is an important instrument of friendship and brotherhood, unity and cohesion. Hopefully, we will see our young people play together in unity and cohesion on these fields," said Yıldırım Demirören after the meeting.



BIRTHDAYS

Bent Clausen (Denmark, 1 May)
Peter Mikkelsen (Denmark, 1 May)
Vasko Dojčinovski
 (FYR Macedonia, 1 May) **50th**
Alexey Smertin (Russia, 1 May)
Anton Fagan (Scotland, 2 May)
Andrea Montemurro (Italy, 2 May)
Ladislav Gadosi (Slovakia, 3 May)
Vladimir Medved (Slovakia, 3 May)
Olivier Chovaux (France, 3 May)
Haim Jakov (Israel, 3 May) **50th**
Anghel Iordanescu (Romania, 4 May)
Borislav Aleksandrov (Bulgaria, 4 May)
Peter Gilliéron (Switzerland, 5 May)
Christian Welander (Sweden, 5 May)
Goran Mihaljević (Montenegro, 5 May)
Ken Ridden (England, 6 May)
Gudmundur Petursson (Iceland, 6 May)
Karl-Erik Nilsson (Sweden, 6 May)
Marcin Stefański (Poland, 6 May)
Charles Flint (England, 7 May)
Pekka Luhtanen (Finland, 8 May)
Michel Pralong (Switzerland, 8 May)
Marc Dobbeleir (Belgium, 8 May)
Miroslav Tulinger
 (Czech Republic, 8 May)
Dan Vo Quang (France, 8 May)
David Malcolm (Northern Ireland, 8 May)
Aleksandr Keplin (Kazakhstan, 8 May)
Magnus Forssblad (Sweden, 10 May)
Yuri Baskakov (Russia, 10 May)
Jean-Marie Gantenbein
 (Luxembourg, 11 May)
Timo Huttunen (Finland, 11 May) **50th**
Maksym Betsko (Ukraine, 11 May)
Volodymyr Geninson (Ukraine, 12 May)
Gaston Schreurs (Belgium, 13 May)
Henrik Ravnild (Denmark, 13 May)
Muhamed Konjić
 (Bosnia and Herzegovina, 14 May)
Sergey Anokhin (Russia, 14 May)
María Luisa Villa Gutiérrez (Spain, 14 May)
Hans-Jörg Eissmann (Germany, 15 May)
Nikolai Levnikov (Russia, 15 May)
Evzen Amler
 (Czech Republic, 15 May) **60th**
Sotirios Sinnis (Greece, 15 May)
Luis Cuervas del Real (Spain, 15 May)
Knarik Grigoryan (Armenia, 15 May) **40th**
Egon Franck (Germany, 16 May)
Svein Johannessen (Norway, 17 May)
Kadri Jägel (Estonia, 17 May)
Lars Appelqvist (Sweden, 18 May)

Tamara Chichinadze (Georgia, 18 May)
Andreas Morisbak (Norway, 19 May)
Jozef Marko (Slovakia, 19 May)
Gaetano de Gabriele (Malta, 19 May)
Milovan Djukanović (Montenegro, 19 May)
Rune Pedersen (Norway, 19 May)
Raimondas Statkevičius (Lithuania, 19 May)
Michał Listkiewicz (Poland, 20 May)
Sandra Renon (France, 20 May)
Neli Lozeva (Bulgaria, 20 May)
Ewa Gajewska (Poland, 21 May)
Nicolai Cebotari (Moldova, 21 May) **60th**
Paulo Lourenço (Portugal, 21 May)
Costas Kapitanis (Cyprus, 21 May)
Mette Bach Kjær (Denmark, 21 May)
Theo van Seggelen (Netherlands, 22 May)
Rod Petrie (Scotland, 22 May)
Karl Dhont (Belgium, 22 May)
Christian Hockenjos (Germany, 23 May)
Packie Bonner (Republic of Ireland, 24 May)
Ainar Leppänen (Estonia, 24 May)
Teresa Romao (Portugal, 24 May)
Andrzej Zareba (Poland, 24 May)
Semen Andreev (Russia, 25 May)
Hans Cooman (Belgium, 25 May)
Ivančica Sudac (Croatia, 25 May)
Marco Tura (San Marino, 26 May)
Evgeni Giner (Russia, 26 May)
Nikoloz Jgarkava (Georgia, 26 May)
Peter Lawwell (Scotland, 27 May)
Jim Stjerne Hansen (Denmark, 28 May)
Jean-Pierre Escalettes (France, 29 May)
Jacques Antenen (Switzerland, 29 May)
Jozef Kliment (Slovakia, 29 May)
Donel Conway (Republic of Ireland, 31 May)
István Huszár (Hungary, 31 May) **60th**
Arnaldo Cunha (Portugal, 31 May)
Mads Øland (Denmark, 31 May)

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Meetings

2 May, Nyon
 Medical Committee

4 May, Nyon
 National Team Competitions Committee

16 May, Lyon, France
 Finance Committee

NOTICES

- On 3 March, Jesper Møller was re-elected president of the Danish Football Association for a further four-year term.
- On 4 March, Terje Svendsen was re-elected president of the Norwegian Football Association for a further two-year term.
- On 27 March, George Koumas was elected president of the Cyprus Football Association until 2023, succeeding the late Costakis Koutsokoumnis.

24 May, Kyiv, Ukraine
 Executive Committee

25 May, Kyiv
 Club Competitions Committee

30 May, Vaasa, Finland
 European Under-19 Championship:
 final draw

Competitions
1/2 May
 UEFA Champions League: semi-finals
 (return legs)

3 May
 UEFA Europa League: semi-finals
 (return legs)

4–20 May, England
 European Under-17 Championship:
 final round

9–21 May, Lithuania
 European Women's Under-17 Championship:
 final round

16 May, Lyon
 UEFA Europa League: final

24 May, Kyiv
 UEFA Women's Champions League: final

26 May, Kyiv
 UEFA Champions League: final



EQUAL GAME



RESPECT

EQUALGAME.COM