

UEFA

DIRECT

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43RD ORDINARY CONGRESS

Aleksander Čeferin re-elected
for four years

THE TECHNICIAN

Vladimir Weiss – Taking
Georgia forward

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Kosovo's
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Aleksander Čeferin
UEFA President

LOOKING AHEAD TOGETHER – FOR THE FUTURE OF FOOTBALL

It was a great honour to be re-elected UEFA president for a full term at the 43rd Ordinary UEFA Congress in Rome. That honour comes with great responsibility – leading European football over the next four years, and building for the future of our sport in challenging times.

Significantly, the congress also approved the implementation of the UEFA Strategy 2019–24: Together for the Future of Football, which will provide the guiding principles for my presidency.

My – indeed our – mission is to keep football the world's most played, trusted and engaging sport. Yet, this is not just for UEFA, but also for everyone involved in football, and we should all rally together.

The product of hard work and inspiration by the UEFA Strategy Working Group, the new approach takes into account the perspectives of our member associations and stakeholders, including leagues, clubs and players. It centres on an understanding that European football requires a unity of purpose in a changing and challenging landscape.

The strategy is built on four pillars: football, trust, competitiveness and prosperity. As the world evolves and behaviours change, we need to anticipate any threats to the stability of the European sports model and its principles of solidarity, integrity, democracy and respect. This is why we need a strategy that reminds us of those fundamentals, and a roadmap to navigate these times.

Touching briefly on the four principles – we will put football first in everything we do; we must have trust and faith in our institutions, in our integrity, and in each other; we must maintain competitiveness by keeping our competitions dynamic, entertaining and effective; and we must adapt to changing environments to create new opportunities and ensure that UEFA – and the football community – remains commercially dynamic, innovative and prosperous.

Our priorities for the next five years include the continued long-term growth of women's football, better governance, a better competitive balance with incentives for investment, and improving direct engagement with fans, who are the lifeblood of the game.

With the new strategy to guide us, we will work to ensure that European football remains united, and will strive to make European football resist, rather than follow, the trends we see in Europe today.

I look forward to leading this evolution for UEFA and European football, and to laying a solid, secure and successful foundation on which future football generations can build.

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ALEKSANDER ČEFERIN RE-ELECTED

Aleksander Čeferin's re-election for a second term of office as UEFA president, elections for the UEFA Executive Committee and the FIFA Council, and the unveiling of UEFA's new strategy for 2019–24 dominated the agenda at the 43rd Ordinary UEFA Congress in Rome on 7 February.

Aleksander Čeferin, elected to the helm of European football's governing body in September 2016, was confirmed in office by acclamation for another four years by delegates from UEFA's 55 member associations. The 51-year-old Slovenian declared himself "touched and honoured" by the trust placed in him.

In his opening address to the UEFA Congress at the Roma Cavalieri Hotel, Mr Čeferin described his election two and a half years ago as "a jump into the unknown".

"At that time," he said, "football, at both world and European levels, was being rocked by the most serious governance crisis in its history – and yet you decided to entrust the keys to the UEFA house to a virtual unknown."

The objective since then, the UEFA president said, had been to use the crisis "to change for the better", and to strengthen unity. UEFA had bolstered its relationship with the member associations, with record funding now being allocated to them.

In addition, relations had flourished between UEFA and European football stakeholders – clubs, leagues and players' bodies – with representatives of the European Club Association (ECA) and the European Leagues now full members of the UEFA Executive Committee.

New good governance measures, the UEFA president went on, had reinforced UEFA's foundations. Financial fair play measures had stabilised European club football's finances. UEFA's assistance was helping football develop in other parts of the world. More resources than ever were being devoted to women's football. UEFA social responsibility campaigns were making their mark. The new UEFA Nations League had given fresh energy to the national team game. And more clubs would be able to dream of European glory with the introduction of a third UEFA club competition from 2021.

UEFA, Mr Čeferin insisted, was determined to maintain its forward momentum. "The most dangerous thing we could do," he said, "is rest on our laurels and bask in our current situation. In a world of constant, increasingly rapid change, where time seems to go ever faster, and every day brings a fresh challenge, we are going to have to do more than simply adapt.

"Please don't expect any miracles," the UEFA president told the Congress after his re-election. "What I can promise is that, during this next term of office, we will work together to ensure that European football remains united, that European football remains respectful, respectable and respected, and that European football continues to demonstrate solidarity and bring hope."

New UEFA strategy

The new UEFA strategy, "Together for the Future of Football", was presented in Rome (see page 8). The strategy covers 2019–24, and is based on four main pillars: keeping football first; building trust; ensuring competitiveness and increasing prosperity. It aims to ensure that UEFA remains true to its core values and is able to drive progressive initiatives and programmes over the next five years.

Honorary UEFA membership for Grigoriy Surkis

In other UEFA Congress decisions, Nasser Al-Khelaifi was ratified as a European Club Association (ECA) representative on the

UEFA Executive Committee, while Grigoriy Surkis (Ukraine), who has retired from the Executive Committee, was made a UEFA honorary member.

The 2017/18 annual report, the 2017/18 financial statements and the 2019/20 budget were all approved, while Petra

Stanonik Bošnjak, Thomas Cayol, Polly Handford and Antonio García Alcaraz were ratified as new members of the UEFA organs for the administration of justice. The next Ordinary UEFA Congress will be held in Amsterdam on 3 March 2020. ☕

Elections

Alongside the re-election of Aleksander Čeferin, elections to the UEFA Executive Committee saw Florence Hardouin (France) re-elected by acclamation to the female position on the UEFA Executive Committee for a four-year term. Elections were also held for seven seats on the UEFA Executive Committee for 2019–23, and the following members were (re-)elected for four-year terms:

First ballot (absolute majority – more than half of the valid votes cast):

- Sándor Csányi (Hungary) – 49
- Luis Rubiales (Spain) – 47 (new)
- Davor Šuker (Croatia) – 47
- Fernando Gomes (Portugal) – 45
- Jesper Møller Christensen (Denmark) – 40 (new)
- Armand Duka (Albania) – 36 (new)
- Andrii Pavelko (Ukraine) – 27 (new)

The following candidates were not elected:

- Borislav Mihaylov (Bulgaria) – 25
 - Elvedin Begić (Bosnia and Herzegovina) – 15
- Kairat Boranbayev (Kazakhstan) withdrew his candidature prior to the elections.

At its post-Congress constitutive meeting, the Executive Committee appointed Sándor Csányi (Hungary) as a UEFA vice-president to succeed the departing Grigoriy Surkis. Mr Csányi was also re-elected by the Congress by acclamation as a FIFA vice-president for 2019–23.

The FIFA vice-president position reserved for the four British associations (England, Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales) saw Greg Clarke (England) elected for 2019–23. Reinhard Grindel (Germany) was re-elected by acclamation as a European member of the FIFA Council for 2019–23, while two European members of the FIFA Council were elected by acclamation for 2019–21: Fernando Gomes (Portugal) and George Koumas (Cyprus).





A JOINT MISSION FOR THE EUROPEAN GAME

The UEFA Strategy 2019–24 is a collaborative process to protect the European football model and ensure a firm pathway towards a bright and prosperous future.

UEFA

Our mission is to keep football the most played, trusted and engaging sport. This is not just a mission for UEFA but for everyone involved in football, and we should all be united in this mission."

These are the words of the UEFA president, Aleksander Čeferin, and they capture the essence of the new UEFA strategy, a five-year undertaking that European football's governing body believes will benefit the sport for many years to come.

It is an undertaking involving the cooperation of the whole European football family – one that takes into account the perspectives of our member associations and stakeholders, including leagues, clubs and players – and it will be built on four key pillars: football, trust, competitiveness and prosperity.

The UEFA president adds that this will be a strategy "not only for UEFA but an inclusive one to help guide the soul of European football – football itself – into these new times." This inclusive approach

is driven by a desire for consensus, and an understanding that European football requires a unity of purpose in a changing and challenging landscape.

"As the world evolves and behaviours change, we need to anticipate any threats to the stability of the European sports model and its principles of solidarity, integrity, democracy and respect," the UEFA president says. "Therefore, we need a strategy and a plan that reminds us of those fundamentals and gives us the roadmap to navigate these times."

Sounding out stakeholders

The process began with internal consultation in 2017, led by Andrea

Traverso, UEFA's managing director of football sustainability and research, before selected Executive Committee members embarked on a period of dialogue and debate under the umbrella of the UEFA strategy working group. "It was essential that we sought the input of the UEFA administration because it will be fundamental to the successful implementation of the strategy," notes Traverso.

Reaching out in 2018, UEFA opened the discussion to all 55 member associations, as well as the European Club Association, European Leagues and FIFPro. With this collaborative approach, UEFA strived to accommodate the viewpoints of stakeholders whenever feasible in the crafting of the strategy, which was presented at the 43rd Ordinary Congress in Rome on 7 February prior to implementation.

Keeping football first

The first of the strategy's four fundamentals is to maintain football's growth and ensure

UEFA's strategic priorities for 2019–24 will be: women's football, good governance, competitive balance, and fan engagement

that future generations remain engaged by keeping the sport accessible to all. Key aspects are developing the women's game and promoting inclusivity and cultural awareness. There is also a determination to strengthen grassroots football and encourage participation from players and volunteers alike.

John Delaney says: "The vulnerable and disadvantaged, men and women, young and old, rich and poor, all have a seat at the football table. Football is a facilitator and common bond through which we can further integrate excluded and marginalised populations within our communities. We must continue to support the amateur and grassroots game and promote child protection policies in order to hold coaches and administrators accountable to high standards and values."

UEFA will also support individual member associations with business development assistance and will work with all stakeholders, in conjunction with local governments and authorities, to enforce modern standards in football facilities. In the push for better infrastructure, it will target appropriate funding and secure proper and transparent distribution of resources.

Building trust

UEFA is determined to protect the integrity of football and will strive to promote good governance principles among its member associations. For UEFA's own part, it will introduce a new cost culture for its administration to provide greater efficiency. "The UEFA administration must and can lead by example," says Karl-Erik Nilsson, "and this will mean a commitment to publishing financial, organisational and procedural information, and transparency on financial flows, especially regarding solidarity payment programmes."

UEFA strategy working group

Executive Committee members:

Karl-Erik Nilsson (Sweden), Michele Uva (Italy), John Delaney (Republic of Ireland) and Florence Hardouin (France)

Member association presidents and general secretaries:

Gudni Bergsson (Iceland), David Martin (Northern Ireland), Kadir Kardas (Turkey), Jozef Kliment (Slovakia) and Alexander Alaev (Russia)

remain strong and exciting. We want everyone to have something to play for in football, for fans to have hope of winning – the game must have meaning."

To this end UEFA will look to provide more opportunities for teams to play meaningful matches – hence, for instance, the creation of a third UEFA club competition for the 2021–24 competition cycle, as approved by the UEFA Executive Committee in December. The Executive Committee will also examine the feasibility of new financial measures to maintain and improve the competitive balance of UEFA competitions and consider how additional earnings and benefits from any new sporting initiatives can be shared fairly and proportionately.

Additionally, there is a strong wish to cooperate with stakeholders to support domestic football, incentivise youth player development, and protect and support financial sustainability and professionalism at all levels. Measures will include encouraging a more transparent procedure and flow of transfer funds, working to simplify and expedite training compensation and solidarity payments, and pushing for more transparency and regulation with regard to agents.

Increasing prosperity

"To safeguard our future and secure the next generations of fans, we must look for new opportunities so that UEFA remains commercially dynamic and innovative," says Florence Hardouin of the fourth and final pillar of the UEFA strategy.

It is an approach that will entail growing and diversifying revenue streams to ensure the continuation of solidarity payments down the football pyramid. UEFA is also eager to maintain its progressive media and digital strategy, which helps fans, particularly those sizeable sections of the digital fan community based outside Europe, to engage with European football.

Increasing UEFA's international image and global awareness of European football, Hardouin concludes, is another priority – and so too is promoting innovation, research and development. "Let's work to support the use of modern technologies and techniques to better exploit data, integrate science, and optimise intelligence to deepen our knowledge for better decision-making," she says. ☑



UEFA's strategy for 2019–24 is set out in a brochure that can be found on UEFA.com.



UEFA and ECA representatives following the signing of the memorandum of understanding

UEFA and ECA sign memorandum of understanding

The positive relationship between UEFA and the European Club Association (ECA) took another step forward when UEFA president Aleksander Čeferin and ECA chairman Andrea Agnelli signed a renewed memorandum of understanding in Rome on 6 February.

THE MEMORANDUM runs until 2024 and seeks to build on the close cooperation established between the two organisations in recent years. It outlines their strong willingness to continue to work together with mutual trust and clarity of objectives, to ensure the well-being and stability of European football.

The agreement reaffirms the commitment of UEFA and the ECA to protect football's

integrity and preserve the game from negative influences such as violence, match-fixing and doping.

Football's long-term viability is addressed by a shared willingness not only to further develop financial fair play, but also to improve the international match calendar beyond 2024, with a view to ensuring enhanced harmonisation and separation between club and

national team competitions, and especially an overall release of pressure, allowing players proper rest and training periods.

As far as good governance at both national association and club levels is concerned, UEFA's commitment in this respect is confirmed by having club representatives appointed to a number of additional UEFA committees, thereby furthering clubs' participation

in UEFA's decision-making process. Two ECA representatives are full members of the UEFA Executive Committee under recent UEFA good governance reforms.

The financial reward recognising the contribution of clubs to the success of UEFA national team competitions has also been updated to fully include the EURO 2024 competition cycle.

Executive Committee meeting

THE UEFA EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE met in Rome on 6 February, under the chairmanship of UEFA president Aleksander Čeferin.

The committee decided to increase from 12 to 16 the number of teams taking part in the final tournament of the 2019-21 UEFA Under-21 Championship, which is to take place in

Hungary and Slovenia in June 2021.

This change of format will offer more participants the opportunity to qualify for the final stage of the Under-21 championship, and provide valuable experience to an increasing number of promising young players and teams. The Executive Committee also approved the

regulations of the 2019/20 UEFA Champions League, UEFA Europa League, UEFA Women's Champions League, UEFA Futsal Champions League and UEFA Youth League, as well as the 2019 UEFA Super Cup regulations.

The committee's next meeting will be held in Baku on 29 May.

2017/18 UEFA fair play competition winners

FINLAND, NORTHERN IRELAND and the Faroe Islands were the winners in the various categories of the 2017/18 UEFA fair play competition. The three national associations are donating their award winnings to amateur or professional clubs of their choice for fair play or respect-themed projects.

Finland took the award for overall fair play with 8.596 points, while Norway (8.553) and Sweden (8.508) finished second and third.

Northern Ireland won the award for the best improvement in their overall fair play score from one season to the next, having progressed from 7.976 to 8.489 points in 2017/18. FYR Macedonia and the

Czech Republic followed in second and third place respectively.

The award for spectator behaviour was won by the Faroe Islands. Finland actually finished first in this category, with 8.954 points, but as Finland were winners of the award for the best overall fair play score, the spectator award went to the Faroe Islands, who finished second in the rankings with 8.818 points, ahead of Iceland (8.722) and Sweden (8.707).

The top associations in each of the three categories were granted €50,000 each to donate to amateur or professional clubs of their choice for fair play or respect-themed projects.

The season's fair play rankings are based on the fair play results obtained at all UEFA competition matches played at both club and national team level between 1 July 2017 and 30 June 2018 and are established on the basis of the UEFA fair play report completed after each match by the UEFA match delegate, in consultation with the referees and the referee observers.

Only associations that played a minimum of 36 matches were taken into account in the final rankings. This cut-off point was obtained by dividing the total number of UEFA matches by the number of participating UEFA member associations.



UEFA-FIFA programme champions female leaders

DESIGNED to inspire female leaders from all around the world, the first session of the UEFA-FIFA Women in Football Leadership Programme took place in Nyon from 3 to 7 December.

A total of 30 participants travelled to Switzerland from as far away as New Zealand, Mexico

and North Korea, with Albania, Belarus and Liechtenstein among the European associations represented for the first time. The programme is now being run jointly by UEFA and FIFA, with 140 women having taken part in the previous separate programmes, from which many graduates moved up into senior

positions in football as a result.

The week's activities in Nyon included a panel discussion featuring UEFA's head of women's football, Nadine Kessler, and FIFA's chief women's football officer, Sarai Bareman. Lively discussions took place on the topic of football leadership, personal leadership styles and

what it means to be a female leader in a male-dominated world.

The Women in Football Leadership Programme also includes a one-year mentoring system, with participants embarking on a long-term development journey, learning from established football leaders.



UEFA

UEFA SYMPOSIUM REVIEWS ANTI-DOPING DRIVE

The inaugural UEFA anti-doping symposium, held in London on 22 and 23 November, analysed developments in the campaign to rid football and other sports of doping.

More than 150 delegates from Europe, North America and Asia joined UEFA for presentations and discussions in a comprehensive review of the current situation. Topics included the evolution of the anti-doping campaign over the past 15 years, the lessons learned, various challenges currently being faced, and issues to be addressed in the future.

UEFA – recognised as one of the world's leading team sport organisations in the fight against doping – joined forces with the Swiss University of Neuchâtel and the World Anti-Doping Code (WADC) Commentary to organise the event at the Royal Institution of Great Britain.

Speakers included not only anti-doping experts and delegates from international sports federations, but also representatives of the legal and scientific sectors, criminologists, educational experts and athletes themselves.

The symposium heard that the fight against doping had increased in complexity

It was agreed that education programmes, particularly for young athletes, were a key element of any organisation's anti-doping programme.

over the years: doping had become more sophisticated, so new rules and programmes were required to counter this development. Delegates discussed whether the current legal framework served as an effective deterrent against drug-taking in football and whether the real cheats were being caught, or only those who inadvertently committed offences.

The symposium also heard a survey of football doping cases, which showed that most cases are related to recreational

drugs or unintentional doping brought about, for example, by contamination of nutritional substances. The need was clear for greater efforts to find and punish those taking drugs intentionally to enhance their performance.

It was agreed that education programmes, particularly for young athletes, were a key element of any organisation's anti-doping programme. UEFA, the symposium heard, was at the forefront of the education movement, holding awareness sessions for players and learning programmes for players and doctors. UEFA has also introduced a reporting platform to encourage players and team staff to report their doping suspicions.

The symposium delegates were unanimous that all those involved in the campaign to banish doping from football should never rest on their laurels, nor lose sight of their overall mission and objective: protecting clean athletes and ensuring the game is fair, by catching those that want to cheat. ☑

BENCHMARKING REPORT DETAILS THE JOURNEY TO PROFITABILITY

UEFA recently published its tenth annual club licensing benchmarking report, entitled The European Club Footballing Landscape. As well as looking in detail at the 2017 financial year, this edition also analyses the key trends over the last ten years.

This benchmarking report provides the most comprehensive and transparent overview of European club finances that has ever been published. What is more, it paints a positive picture, with the data for 2017 and the detailed ten-year overview both providing grounds for optimism. Indeed, in the 2017 financial year, Europe's 700 top-division clubs generated their first-ever aggregate 'bottom-line' profit (i.e. profit after transfers, non-operating income/costs, financing, tax and divestment activities had all been taken into account). That bottom-line profit of €615m comes on the back of six consecutive years of improvements in club finances following the introduction of financial fair play.

In his foreword to the report, the UEFA president, Aleksander Čeferin, writes: "This report showcases the many successes of European football. It shows that the positive revenue, investment and profitability trends identified in last year's report are continuing."

The report highlights a cultural shift in European club finances over the last ten years, with financial regulation (led by UEFA and supported by national

associations), a stable media landscape, supporter loyalty and a focus on cost management at club level all helping to put European football on a far stronger footing.

At the same time, though, the report also provides food for thought in a number of areas, showing that European football still needs to guard against complacency. For example, it highlights the increasing polarisation of wealth in club football, details the complexity of the various squad rules that are in place across European leagues, describes the increase in cross-ownership relations in European club football, and highlights the sharp increases that have been seen in transfer prices over the last three years.

The report indicates that clubs recorded the strongest revenue growth in history in 2017, with aggregate club revenues rising by more than €1.6bn. In addition, a record 28 European leagues reported aggregate profits (calculated by aggregating the profits/losses of all clubs) in 2017 – up from just nine in 2011 prior to the introduction of financial fair play.

Other key findings in the report include the following:

- In four of the last five years, European club revenues have grown at a faster rate than club wages, with clubs recording revenue growth of 8.9% and wage growth of 6.7% in 2017.
- Thanks to that improved wage control, clubs succeeded in reporting operating profits of €1.4bn in 2017 – the highest figure ever. Europe's clubs have now generated more than €4bn in operating profits over the last five years, helping to fuel the recent increases in transfer spending.
- More people are watching European football than ever before. Europe's top divisions reported the highest crowd figures on record in 2017/18, with a total aggregate attendance figure of 105 million, marginally exceeding the level achieved in 2011/12. Meanwhile, a record 15 clubs had aggregate league match attendances of more than 1 million.
- UEFA prize money has become significantly more important as a source of club revenue, especially in less wealthy leagues. UEFA's payments to clubs have increased by 228% over the last ten years, compared with total revenue growth of 77% and broadcast revenue growth of 113%. 



Top-division clubs' aggregate revenues



ANDREA AGNELLI

'I WAS BORN A FOOTBALL FAN'

A member of the UEFA Executive Committee since 2017 as a representative of the European Club Association, Andrea Agnelli, 43, talks about his passion for football and shares his vision of Europe's number one sport.

Andrea Agnelli has a prominent profile in the world of football. The 43-year-old Italian businessman is chairman of Juventus, the renowned club from his home city of Turin that enjoys hallowed status in the annals of the beautiful game. Agnelli has served the famous Vecchia Signora, or the Old Lady as Juventus are known, in this role since 2010 – maintaining a long and illustrious family dynasty at the helm of the club.

Agnelli also plays an important role within European football as chairman of the European Club Association (ECA), the body that brings together some 230 clubs from across the continent. He is a member of the UEFA Executive Committee as an ECA representative, and is committed to working in close cooperation with UEFA for the overall well-being of the European club game.

Agnelli tells UEFA Direct about the relationship between UEFA and the ECA. He also speaks about his cherished football memories, and outlines his wishes for the game's future.

We obviously know you as a football administrator – but what are your other professional roles?

In addition to my membership of the UEFA Executive Committee, I'm chairman of Juventus, and chairman of the European Club Association. I'm also a general partner of Giovanni Agnelli B.V., a member of the board of directors of FIAT S.p.A. – now Fiat Chrysler Automobiles N.V. – and a member of the board of directors of Exor N.V..

I'm a founding shareholder and chairman of Lamse S.p.A., a financial investment company, and a member of the advisory board of BlueGem Capital Partners LLP, which is an England-based private equity fund. And since March 2017, I've been president of the

"I still often play football with some friends of mine. I'm a defender, a bit rough-hewn, not exactly a natural talent, but I have fun – and that's extremely important, because I love the game."

Fondazione del Piemonte per l'Oncologia, a hospital specialised in cancer research and treatment.

Were you a football fan from an early age?

It's fair to say that I was born a football fan! My family have been the owners of Juventus since 1923 – it's the longest lasting ownership of any sporting franchise globally. So I've basically been wearing a Juventus shirt since the day I was born.

What is your first memory of football as a youngster?

The summer of 1982, just after the World Cup. At that time, the Juventus players were training at their summer camp at Villar Perosa, the small village close to Turin where my family is from. I clearly recall being near the pitch and asking my father, Umberto, if I could meet Italy's striker Paolo Rossi, who won the Ballon d'Or that year and was instrumental in Italy winning the World Cup in Spain. What a lucky young man I was!

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

I still often play football with some friends of mine. I'm a defender, a bit rough-hewn, not exactly a natural talent, but I have fun – and that's extremely important, because I love the game. When I was a teenager, I played in some local teams, but I don't really recall having any

great ambitions as a player – or maybe I forgot them!

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

Juventus was, is and will be the only team in my heart. I've been lucky enough to see many great players wearing the black and white shirt – but, given that I always played as a defender, I'd have to say that my favourite player was Paolo Montero, the Uruguayan, who played for Juve from 1996 to 2005 and won a host of trophies.



Getty Images

Agnelli cites defender Paolo Montero, who played for Juventus for nearly a decade, as his favourite player.



How did you get into the administrative side of the game? What was your career path in this respect?

Well, I've always been fond of sports, and football in particular, and I was attracted by the sports industry from the early stages of my professional career. As a matter of fact, I've been involved professionally in three different sports – Formula 1, golf and football.

Obviously, being part of the Exor group, and one of the main shareholders and general partner of Giovanni Agnelli B.V., gave me the opportunity not only to get involved, but also to see the industry from different angles – governance, management, short versus mid-to-long-term objectives, etc. This helps me a lot in my current daily activities.

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

Two games come immediately to mind – the 1996/97 UEFA Champions League semi-final when Juventus beat Ajax 2-1 in Amsterdam, and the 1993/94 Champions League final when AC Milan scored four goals against Barcelona without reply. These were two matches in which Juventus and Milan played football in such a way that you could compare it to music played by the world's greatest orchestras.

And what about the best goal you've ever seen?

Again, two of them – one was astonishing, and one was breathtaking. Firstly, Marco van Basten's volleyed goal from an acute angle for the Netherlands in the UEFA EURO final against Russia in 1988. And, secondly – even if it was a little painful at the time, for obvious reasons – Cristiano Ronaldo's bicycle kick for Real Madrid against Juventus in last season's UEFA Champions League quarter-final.

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

I have to say that I will stop being involved in football on the very day that the buzz goes away.

Which players and teams excite you today?

That's a difficult question to answer because I like football, all kinds of football – from Sunday league games between friends to the big Champions League



Marco van Basten's goal in the EURO 1988 final remains one of Andrea Agnelli's most cherished memories.

occasions. I am not a football aesthete. And, as the Uruguayan Eduardo Galeano, who wrote so eloquently about football, once said: "Give a ball to a child, and you will understand what happiness is."



As a football fan, I would wish for more European games staged in outstanding stadiums, delivering the finest show for a global, interconnected and passionate audience."

Juventus – a love affair for life?

Yes.

UEFA and the ECA share a positive relationship – how do you view this relationship in terms of European club football's development?

The engagement with UEFA is key to developing European football. We know that future challenges can only be met through collaborative and constructive cooperation between these two organisations. We might not always agree on everything – but through hard and transparent work, we will always find the right solutions.

In your capacity as an ECA representative on the Executive Committee, are you proud of being able to contribute to UEFA's development? How do you view UEFA's continual progress as the umbrella organisation of European football?

I'm as proud as I am energised. Being at the centre of European football's decision-making process is a privilege and a great responsibility. As an Executive Committee member, I am aware of the duties that arise through this role: it gives us the opportunity to discuss and decide on key topics regarding the future of the game and the related industries. I am also pleased to be able to ensure that the ideas, opinions and proposals of the clubs arrive directly at the supreme executive body of European football.

What is the ECA's key role in the development of the game in Europe?

Among all the various actors involved in the game, the ECA is the natural counterpart of football's governing bodies: it represents the clubs, the entities that invest every year in infrastructures, players, coaching, marketing and development. We deliver the 'show' on the pitch every week, and we are the only stakeholder to bear the entrepreneurial risks in the industry.



Moreover, we always need to understand the state of 'the beautiful game' and have a strong view of its development five to ten years from now. I think this is the most challenging task for all of us.

What do you think are the main dangers that football faces today?

Violence. In every form: verbal, physical, on the pitch, off the pitch, online, offline. Clubs, UEFA and European institutions must work together every week to make sure that every single football event is played in a safe and respectful environment from every point of view.

How important do you feel that respect and fair play are in football?

Extremely important. UEFA, clubs and all the relevant stakeholders know it well. These core values are entrenched in the very idea of football and sport. Our role is to follow them in everything we do at club level, and share them with all the other stakeholders.

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

As a football fan: more European games staged in outstanding stadiums, delivering the finest show for a global, interconnected and passionate audience. As a 'grassroots' football player: to have the possibility to play football wherever you are, in nice and clean facilities, or on any world street, with anybody. On the pitch, ultimately, we're all the same, aren't we? #EqualGame. ☺



Juventus FC



BEGUILING BUCHAREST

The Romanian capital plans to charm Europe and build a EURO legacy.

Set on the banks of the Dâmbovița river, and north of the Danube, Bucharest is also home to the best of the country's cultural and architectural attractions. But when the EURO comes to town, all eyes will be on football.

"By playing its part in the biggest EURO to date, Romania hopes to carve out a lasting legacy," says Răzvan Burleanu, the president of the Romanian Football Federation (FRF). For the country's football-loving population, on the other hand, it will also be an unmissable opportunity to see some of the continent's best teams at the National Arena.

"The event will benefit all those who are passionate about football," says Burleanu. "We expect it to encourage a much higher number of children to play the game, give many Romanian supporters their first opportunity to attend a EURO, but also inspire our own players. I don't know how often they will be able to play such highly competitive matches in a final tournament on their home turf."

Operation enchantment

Bucharest's successful hosting of the UEFA Europa League final in 2012 helped to highlight the city as a flourishing European capital. With the EURO, Romania is keen to enchant Europe

once again, and plans to throw a party all supporters will be sure to enjoy.

"We aim to offer all fans a unique experience and have formed a strategic partnership with the Bucharest municipality that's running smoothly. Supporters will savour a unique atmosphere in the stadium and the fan zones," says the FRF president. "Visitors to Bucharest will discover a city once called Little Paris, in a country surrounded by Slavic peoples that is Europe's gateway to the Orient. It's a cultural melting pot you can't find anywhere else! And, of course, we guarantee the joy of Latin-style football!"

Infrastructure and inspiration

In turn, Burleanu anticipates a lasting positive impact on the capital's facilities. "I think hosting the European Championship will help us a lot. Firstly, with regard to infrastructure, as the last public investments in Romanian infrastructure were made during the 1970s and 80s. But also football development, as we expect an increase in attendance figures and the number of children playing football in Romania."

Promoting the game among the younger generation is a priority for the FRF, Burleanu says. "It's what we have been doing since 2015, through our generic 'Together we are football'





Shutterstock

Bucharest

Once known as Little Paris, down to the Arcul de Triumf based on its French namesake, the Romanian capital is once again a booming economic hub and a dynamic city. The renewed vitality has brought a surge in visitors keen to explore Bucharest's eclectic charms, with this city of contrasts offering a spectacular array of Orthodox churches and reputedly the heaviest building in the world, the vast Palace of Parliament. Football remains a local passion too, appropriately enough for the home of 1986 European champions FC Steaua Bucureşti. The National Arena is of a newer vintage, inaugurated in 2011, but is no stranger to high-profile matches, having hosted the 2012 UEFA Europa League final.



“By playing its part in the biggest EURO to date, Romania hopes to carve out a lasting legacy.”

Răzvan Burleanu
President of the Romanian Football Federation

programme. We have started 23 new competitions and we are pursuing this course.

“It will certainly be a great inspiration for young players to see their idols in the flesh in Bucharest. Most often, their idols are foreign,” he says. “So, this time we want their idols to be our national team players. We are so excited, even proud, to have a highly competitive national youth set-up. What certainly counts the most when you take part in an event of this scale is the transfer of know-how from UEFA to the national federation. It will surely make a difference as that know-how will then be applied to other final tournaments we host in Romania. That’s also why we would like to apply to host a UEFA youth or women’s football championship, for example.”

Volunteer mentality

The FRF has also been working hard to launch its volunteer programme. Volunteer commitment and enthusiasm are highly valued by the federation, and Burleanu hopes the event will set the tone for future volunteering in Romania.

“It will involve a new concept for Romania that we plan on developing very soon, namely volunteering,” he says. “For a country marked by the trauma of communism, when ‘volunteerism’ was imposed by the communist party as so-called patriotic labour, it is a great challenge to attract 2,000 volunteers. But we are targeting young people, whose mentality is different.”

HAMPDEN WILL ROAR

Expect passion, pride and celebration as Glasgow prepares for EURO 2020.

Beaming with pride as the official UEFA EURO 2020 host city logo was launched back in October 2016, coaching legend Sir Alex Ferguson was the special guest to celebrate the start of an adventure that will see Glasgow's iconic Hampden Park stage three group matches and a round of 16 encounter during June 2020.

Fast forward to 2019, and plans are well under way to ensure Scotland's reputed passion for football is reflected in a festival everyone can enjoy. Ian Maxwell, the Scottish Football Association's chief executive, shared some of his plans for a EURO neither Glasgow, nor Europe, will ever forget.

"I think every Glaswegian will be very proud," says Maxwell, who is also from the city. "I think we watch more football than any other country in Europe, and it's great that we will be able to bring the Glasgow public top-level football."

National passion

As a former professional footballer, Maxwell has first-hand experience of the importance of the sport within the national identity. "Scotland and the Scottish people are well known for being hugely passionate about football," he says, "and Glasgow is a well-known football city. It's great that we've been able to bring the EURO to Hampden Park."

Football is a fundamental part of Scottish culture and the country's most popular sport, enjoying sustained growth in many areas, including women's and grassroots, as investment to promote participation continues to be a priority for the Scottish FA.

Tartan Army

On the pitch, things are looking positive for head coach Alex McLeish's men, as they finished top of UEFA Nations League Group C1 and can look ahead to their EURO play-off in March 2020, if required. Qualifying is everyone's dream, according to Maxwell, to ensure Scottish fans, affectionately known as the Tartan Army, can cheer on their team, as well as celebrating Glasgow as a host city.

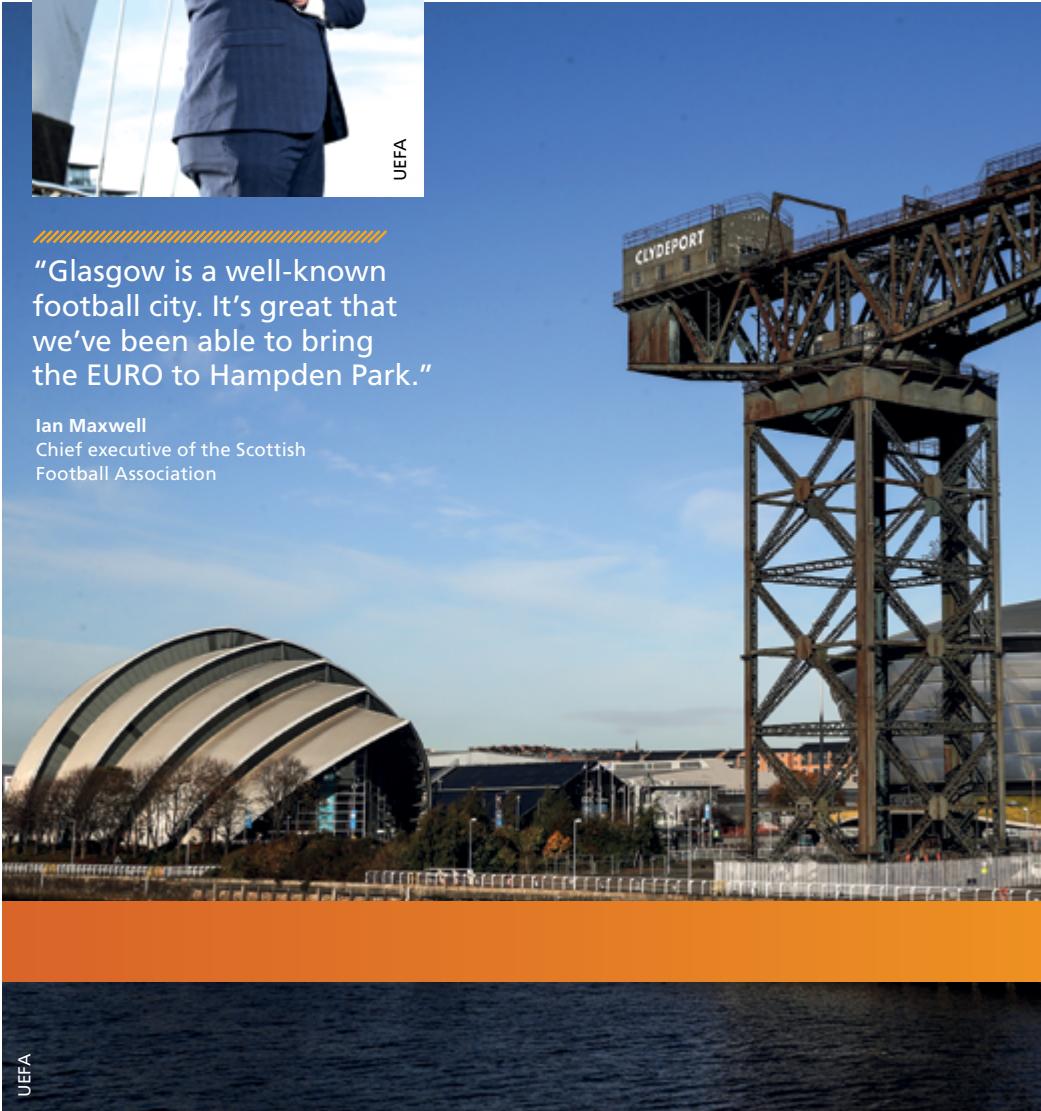


UEFA

"The Tartan Army are well received all over the world, and I think Glasgow will definitely be as hospitable at hosting," says Maxwell. "EURO '96 was our last appearance at the European Championships. So, there's essentially a generation that has missed out on watching Scotland perform at major finals. That's something we're desperate to put right and we will make sure we're performing at Hampden in EURO 2020."

"Glasgow is a well-known football city. It's great that we've been able to bring the EURO to Hampden Park."

Ian Maxwell
Chief executive of the Scottish Football Association



UEFA



"Our mission is to inspire a nation to love football, and this gives us the opportunity to do that. We will obviously see top-quality players on the pitch, and it's up to us as an association to use that engagement to drive participation and involvement in football throughout the country."

Hampden Park staged the UEFA Champions League final in 2002, when Real Madrid lifted the most coveted trophy in European club football, after defeating Bayer Leverkusen 2-1. That thrilling final continues to live long in the memories of Maxwell and Scottish football supporters, having already showcased what Glasgow has to offer.

Ultimate Sport City

"It was an incredible game first and foremost," Maxwell recalls. "It was a great game. Everybody remembers the Zidane goal. It was great for the city. There was obviously a huge amount of interest in the stadium. The world came to Glasgow to watch that match, and it's something that we're very proud of."

Scotland's reputation as a friendly, passionate and fun-loving country comes naturally, but the commitment to staging major sporting events takes collaboration and vision. The Scottish FA, along with its partners in Glasgow and throughout Scotland, are focused on helping to host a unique EURO, a jewel in its event crown, as Glasgow aims to build on its status as

one of the world's top-five Ultimate Sports Cities of 2018.

"Scotland has a real history of being able to put on high-quality, high-profile events, and the association has been a key player," says Maxwell. "We've hosted Champions League finals and other games. I think it's an incredibly brave decision by UEFA to take the EURO around Europe as they're doing. I think it's a very fitting way to celebrate the competition's 60th anniversary, open it up to as many supporters as we can, take top-class elite level football to as many supporters across the continent as we can. It's a great initiative."

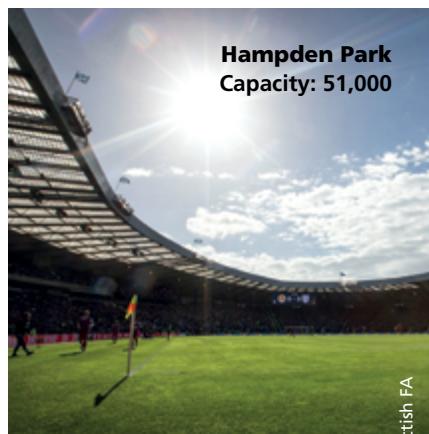
Driving engagement

In addition to the carnival atmosphere a football festival such as the EURO brings, the Scottish FA is also seizing the opportunity to reach out to all corners of the community, including people living with dementia and at risk of social isolation.

"For the events themselves, obviously there will be fan zones," adds Maxwell. "We have a pioneering Football Memories programme which brings people with dementia and similar illnesses together to discuss the good experiences football has given them, allowing them to connect on a social level. We're also looking at how we can connect with young people, schools, clubs and families to make sure everyone can be part of it and use that engagement to increase awareness of the benefits of football and drive participation.

"I think everyone can expect a very warm welcome to Glasgow and to Scotland," he concludes. "I don't think there is any doubt about that. Everybody will get very well looked after, especially because they are coming to be involved in football. I'm sure it will be a great spectacle."

Hampden Park
Capacity: 51,000



MATCHES

- 15 June:** Group D match
- 19 June:** Group D match
- 23 June:** Group D match
- 30 June:** Round of 16

KOSOVO: EMERGING FROM THE SHADOWS

Leaving behind a difficult past during which it had to develop outside football's governing bodies, Kosovo has experienced a true revolution since being admitted as a UEFA member association in 2016.





Thanks to a period of rapid growth and a wealth of talented young players, Kosovo can look forward to a very bright future, with recent success in the UEFA Nations League allowing it to dream of qualifying for EURO 2020.

A new page in the Balkan country's history was written on the coast of Finland in September 2016. At the Hansa stadium in Turku, the Kosovan national team was preparing to play its first-ever competitive match, a qualifier for the 2018 World Cup.

The country's president, Hashim Thaçi, had made the journey and was enjoying

the company of Kosovan football legend Fadil Vokri.

For the president of the Football Federation of Kosovo (FFK), it was a crazy day. With just a few hours until kick-off, Kosovo still did not have a full team to put out.

"We were waiting for FIFA's permission to field a number of players who had previously represented other countries," explains Eroll Salihu, a former FK Prishtina stalwart and now the FFK's general secretary. "We didn't even have 11 players the day before the match."

One by one, the players received the all-clear. With five hours to go, FIFA gave the green light for six more players and →



Having previously played home matches in Albania, the Kosovan national team now plays at the 13,000-capacity Fadil-Vokri stadium in Prishtina, which was renovated in 2017. A new 30,000-seater stadium will soon be built near the capital.



coach Albert Bunjaki finally had a full squad to choose from. And so the magic began.

After 60 minutes, with Finland in the lead, Valon Berisha rifled home his country's first-ever competitive goal from the penalty spot. The former Norwegian international had put Kosovo on the world football map.

The battle for accession

Football has been part of the national culture in this small Balkan nation for over 100 years. But war, the break-up of Yugoslavia and then the country's unresolved status forced Kosovan football to develop in the shadows until independence finally arrived in February 2008.

The FFK applied for membership of UEFA and FIFA in spring that year, but had to wait before being admitted to the international football family. Not all countries recognised Kosovo's independent status and its application was rejected on the grounds that it contravened FIFA's statutes.

"Fadil Vokri battled away for years," recalls current FFK vice-president Predrag Jović. "He argued that our country loved football, that our supporters were exemplary and that there was no reason to prevent thousands of Kosovans living out their passion for football."

In 2014, FIFA gave Kosovo permission to play international friendly matches, albeit without a flag or national anthem, but still refused to admit the FFK as a member association.

Then, at the Ordinary UEFA Congress in Budapest on 3 May 2016, the clouds parted as the majority of member

association delegates voted in favour of the FFK's accession to UEFA. The FFK became a member of FIFA in Mexico City ten days later.

"From that moment on, everything changed very quickly and very positively," says Eroll Salihu. "We were able to organise our own league, play in international competitions, sell TV rights and access funding from UEFA and FIFA."

Urgent need for pitches

This financial assistance enabled the FFK to tackle one of its main challenges: the development of sports infrastructure.

"It's one of the shortcomings in our country," says Saniye Krasniqi, head of grassroots football and assistant coach of the women's national team. "For a long time, some clubs have only had one pitch for all their teams, from the juniors to the Superliga."

There is an urgent need for more pitches in a country where demand for football is growing day by day.

"More and more players are joining our youth teams every year. We had 150

players in 2014, but now we have more than 300," says Arton Hajdari, training centre director and U19 coach at KF Feronikeli, a historic club based in Drenas, some 20km west of Prishtina. "We had to build more pitches so we could accommodate everyone."

The FFK got the message and since 2016 has been working to improve the situation in all seven regions of the country.

"Things have changed very quickly. We built six artificial pitches in 2018, while six more will be installed in the near future, with even more in the pipeline," says Jović.

The facilities for the national teams will also be improved, since the ministry for sport has also approved the construction of a new 30,000-capacity national stadium approximately 20km from Prishtina, which is due to open in the next two or three years.

"Kosovo currently play in the Fadil-Vokri stadium, which can hold 13,000 spectators, but the demand for tickets is very high. This new stadium will accommodate more fans and bring in more ticket revenue," says the FFK vice-president.

Coaching the coaches

The ultimate aim of this improvement programme is to provide sufficient pitches and facilities to enable players to reach their full potential.

Another piece in the jigsaw is the training of competent staff. This is the responsibility of the FFK's technical director, Michael Nees, who came to Kosovo as part of the international sports development programme run by the German ministry of foreign affairs.

"We want to create a sustainable

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 "We want to create a sustainable training structure, in other words to develop technical teams to look after Kosovo's young players in the near future."

Michael Nees
FFK technical director



training structure, in other words to develop technical teams to look after Kosovo's young players in the near future," explains the coach, who has also worked in the Seychelles and Rwanda.

"We were lagging behind in many areas. We didn't have a development programme for fitness coaches and we still don't have any analysts," says Nees, "whereas all the big teams have two or three. But we are getting there step by step and we are now training technical teams, because coaches are the key."

The German strategist has drawn up a timetable that will see the FFK, with the help of UEFA instructors, train coaches at C, then B, then A licence level, with the ambitious target of increasing the number of coaches from just over 120 to 500 by 2021.

Sanije Krasniqi works very closely with her technical director. Before taking charge of the FFK's football academies, she worked as a teacher and refereed in all categories of youth football. She is well aware of the potential of Kosovo's up-and-coming players.

"We have lots of talented young players," she says, "but it's mainly up to the coaches to help them go far in the game. If we do our work properly, the future will be very bright." The former referee was the first woman to officiate at a men's Superliga match in Kosovo.

"In Kosovo, 60% of the population is under 30. We are a young country, but it's difficult without professional staff. Young players are in good hands up to the age of 14, but once they reach adolescence they need skilled coaches to help them get to the top level."

Patience is required: the seeds planted by the FFK are already bearing fruit at youth level, where Kosovan teams are faring very well on the international stage.

"In terms of progress in the last two years, we are among the best teams in the world," says a delighted Michael Nees. "The Under-21s, playing in their first-ever EURO qualifying campaign, have resisted Germany, the current world champions (0-0 in Prishtina last September). The Under-17s qualified easily for the elite round coming up in March, and the Under-19s have also been excellent."

Girls answer the call

Football is not just for boys, of course. Kosovan girls love their football just as much, and the development of the

women's game has been one of the FFK's priorities since it became a UEFA member in 2016.

Before any teams could be set up, however, it was crucial to make it easier for them to join clubs.

"Some girls live in villages and it's very difficult for them to play because they don't know who to talk to or how to find a club," says Valbona Gashi, FFK women's football director, who has been running a huge recruitment programme for girls aged 9–12.

This UEFA-backed initiative is a source of great pride for the FFK. "We invited schools from all over the country to take part in regional tournaments," explains Gashi. "Every school entered at least one team and the winners qualified for →



Kosovo launched their UEFA Nations League campaign with a 0-0 draw in Azerbaijan on 7 September 2018.



The development of women's football is a priority for the FFK, which has launched a huge recruitment programme.

SPECIAL FEATURE



Eroll Sahilu and Agim Ademi, FFK general secretary and president respectively, signed the UEFA Grassroots Charter on Kosovo's behalf in Dublin on 1 December 2018, here with Aleksander Ceferin and Theodore Theodoridis.

the finals in the capital. Coaches from Kosovan clubs attended the matches and the national Under-16 and Under-19 team coaches were also there to see the talented youngsters in action."

One thousand girls from 99 schools all over the country took part, including some who played on a proper pitch for the very first time.

"I was very emotional," says Valbona Gashi, "because I saw girls crying when they lost a match. They were so determined to win. Some of them absolutely love playing football and dream of playing for clubs, or even representing Kosovo one day."

At senior level, the women's national team played their first competitive international match last year, a 2019 World Cup qualifier. A difficult campaign opened with a rather special fixture against Albania.

"It was both very tough and very emotional," says Sanije Krasniqi. "We grew up with the same flag, we share the same history. Many of the Albanian players came from Kosovo. And now we wanted to beat them!"

Like the men's team, most members of the women's national team play abroad. It is natural that they should want to be near their families, who were scattered all over Europe before or during the war.



"We have very close links with our diaspora, even though we don't have any scouts or paid talent-spotters," says Krasniqi. "We are usually in regular contact with fellow Kosovans who are involved in football abroad. And it's even easier with the internet."

Nations League success

With the likes of Valon Berisha, Benjamin Kololli, Milot Rashica and Enis Alushi, the spine of the Kosovan national team is made up of players who were born or grew up abroad. The team's recent success owes much to these players' experience of top-level football in Europe.

Since their inaugural World Cup qualifying campaign saw them finish with one point in a difficult group, Kosovo's record has been impressive, initially in friendly matches and then in the Nations League, where they won their group. The fact that they were able to play home matches at the Fadil-Vokrri stadium in Prishtina was crucial.

"Previously, we played our matches in Shkodër in Albania, which was difficult for our supporters to get to. Playing in Prishtina after the stadium was renovated in 2017 was a real boost for the players



Edon Zhegrovë runs past Clayton Failla during Kosovo's Nations League win over Malta on 11 October 2018.

“The Nations League was a huge step forward for us. Thanks to our results, we will have two chances to qualify for EURO 2020, which is our next objective.”

Predrag Jović
FFK vice-president

and supporters," explains Diturie Hoxha, FFK communications director. "All the tickets for the match against the Faroe Islands sold out within a few hours. There were so many people outside the stadium ticket office, it looked as if there was some kind of demonstration going on."

Undefeated at the Fadil-Vokrri stadium, Bernard Challandes' men are now on a ten-match unbeaten run.

"The Nations League was a huge step forward for us. Thanks to our results, we will have two chances to qualify for EURO 2020, which is our next objective," says an excited Predrag Jović. "I think we will finish second behind England in our qualifying group, but even if we don't get through that way, we will have another opportunity to qualify through the play-offs."

There are no limits to Kosovan football's ambitions. The FFK is taking the game forward step by step, supported by the game's governing bodies and driven by the passion of those contributing to the rise of football in Kosovo, whether at federation, national team or club level.

"I've been here for 18 years now and I won't be leaving until we win the Champions League," laughs Isak Smajli, general secretary of KF Feronikeli. He and his friend Elmi will never forget the past, but they see football as a means of recovering from it and moving forward. "The area around Drenas had been decimated. The bombing had destroyed 80% of the town. Everything had to be rebuilt brick by brick: the houses, the football pitches ... Elmi was there every day to rebuild the club and it's thanks to people like him that KF Feronikeli is alive today. It's something we're very proud of and it promises a brighter future for our town."

In Drenas, as in the rest of Kosovo, football is more than just a sport. ⚽



REFEREES TRAIN FOR VAR ROLL-OUT IN LISBON

The introduction of video assistant referees (VAR) in UEFA competitions was a key element on the programme when 122 European referees came to Lisbon between 28 and 31 January for the annual introductory and advanced winter courses.

The top European men's match officials on the advanced course took part in special VAR training sessions in view of the system's launch in the UEFA Champions League knockout phase from the round of 16 first legs on 12 and 13 February.

The video assistant referee reviews decisions made by the referee in certain key match situations with the use of video footage and a headset for communication.

VAR is now incorporated into the Laws of the Game. UEFA's Executive Committee decided to introduce VAR in UEFA competitions last September, subsequently deciding in December that the system would be deployed in this season's UEFA Champions League knockout stage.

In addition, VAR is to be used at May's UEFA Europa League final in Baku, the UEFA Nations League finals in Portugal in June and the European Under-21 Championship finals in Italy in the same month. It will then be deployed at the 2019 UEFA Super Cup, and UEFA plans to subsequently extend the use of the system to both EURO 2020 and the 2020/21 UEFA Europa League from the group stage onwards. Because VAR is being used, there will be no additional assistant referees.

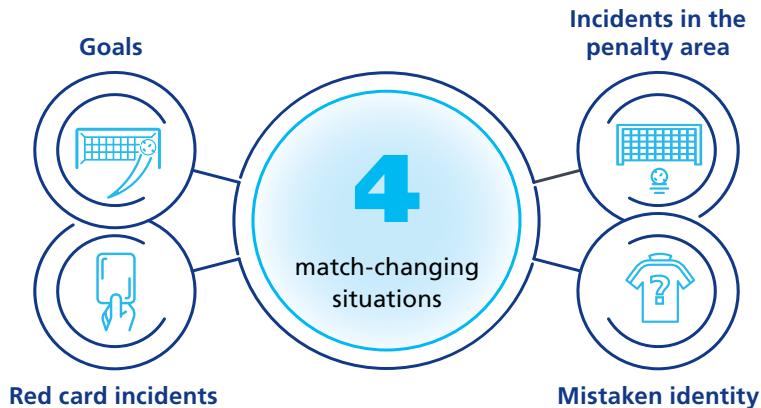
In Lisbon, the referees participated in specific training sessions and simulation sessions involving recorded footage of actual matches, practising reviews in particular. Study sessions on recent UEFA match incidents, using video clips, also included discussions on potential VAR situations. "This is a big challenge for referees, but I know your qualities, and I am confident that you are ready for the challenge," UEFA's chief refereeing officer, Roberto Rosetti, told the referees.

Europe's top referees welcome the VAR system. "Anything that helps us get the decisions correct has to be a positive thing," said England's Anthony Taylor.



Sportsfile

When VAR can be used



"We're very happy with VAR – this is a very important project," added Dutch referee Björn Kuipers. "This gives the players, teams and spectators more trust in referees," was the view of Turkish official Cüneyt Çakır.

The introductory course in Lisbon saw Europe's new referees briefed on their duties as a UEFA referee, and they undertook a fitness test to check their physical condition. All of UEFA's match

officials were urged to show consistency and uniformity in decision-making, to protect players from reckless challenges potentially causing serious injury, and to protect the image of the game by, for example, acting firmly against cases of dissent or mobbing.

"We don't need nice or popular referees," Rosetti emphasised. "We need strong, professional personalities who show courage in taking decisions."



Sportsfile

Roberto Rosetti on VAR

UEFA's chief refereeing officer has led the project for the introduction of VAR in UEFA competitions. Here's his take on how it will be implemented.

VAR has been introduced for the knockout phase of the UEFA Champions League. Can you explain the main reason for this?

We are convinced that it will be beneficial as it will provide valuable help to match officials and reduce the number of incorrect decisions.

How have the referees reacted to these developments?

Very positively. We have held various courses over the last few months for our top referees and they welcome any steps to ensure that, ultimately, the correct decision is made.

How have you prepared for this?

We have held successful technological trials and, as mentioned, we trained the referees over the last few months. We then tested VAR at selected matches and finalised preparations for all operational aspects. Now we are ready to use VAR in the UEFA Champions League.

So, when exactly and how does the VAR team intervene and communicate with the referee?

A VAR team – a video assistant referee, an assistant video referee, and two video operators – will be located at each stadium and will support the decision-making process of the referee. The protocol on when and how to use VAR has been defined by the International Football Association Board, which also defines the Laws of the Game. Our guidelines for how to apply this

protocol at UEFA matches are very clear. The video assistant referee will only intervene when they have evidence of a clear and obvious mistake in four match-changing situations: goals and offences leading up to a goal; penalty decisions and offences leading up to a penalty; direct red card incidents; and mistaken identity. This includes goals scored after a foul during the attacking phase, or from an offside position.

The latest 3D technology will help the video assistant referee to determine whether an offside position has occurred.

The video assistant referee will also intervene when there is evidence of serious foul play, which must be sanctioned with a direct red card in line with the Laws of the Game.

When does the VAR intervene during penalty area incidents?

Again, the video assistant referee intervenes only if there is clear evidence: obvious foul play in the penalty area to claim a penalty or clear evidence there was no infringement to rule out a penalty award. For example, in the case of a handball, the video assistant referee must intervene when there is clear evidence of a deliberate act of a player making contact with the ball with the hand or arm. The VAR team takes movement, distance, and position of the arm or hand into consideration to judge if the contact was punishable, and the referee should carry out an on-field review.

In which situations will the video assistant referee not intervene?

The VAR will not intervene when there is no clear evidence to justify a review.

How will VAR interventions be communicated to the fans?

During the on-field review process, TV viewers will be told what is happening by commentators and on-screen graphics and there will also be graphics on stadium screens for fans to understand what decision has been taken.

How long do the reviews take?

VAR is not perfect, but it will help referees to take correct decisions. The main aim is to take the right decisions. So, accuracy is more important than speed. Nevertheless, time matters and we want to make reviews as efficient as possible. ☺

We are convinced that it will be beneficial as it will provide valuable help to match officials and reduce the number of incorrect decisions.

THE IMPORTANCE OF SOCIAL RETURN ON INVESTMENT

Football has numerous benefits on and off the pitch. It helps keep people fit and teaches a person important life skills; it is also a form of entertainment loved by millions throughout the world. How beneficial, then, can football be for an individual, a community or even a country? This is something the UEFA GROW SROI (social return on investment) model is attempting to answer.

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

UEFA GROW has adapted the SROI model to include grassroots football, with a view to assessing the impact that the sport has on any particular country. The focus is on four key fields – economic, social, health and high performance (in football) – to ascertain the impact that mass participation in football has had in these areas. Finally, a monetary value is placed on the proven benefits in the first three of these fields.

There are currently seven UEFA member associations involved in the UEFA GROW

SROI programme. Collectively, they have 10.6m registered players, which has led to a combined €6.35bn monetary contribution to society.

€1.42bn benefit in Scotland

The Scottish Football Association has been one of the pioneers of the SROI model, aiming to prove that investment in mass participation has a significant impact in economic value, social and health benefits. The UEFA GROW scheme is reaping rewards, with Scottish society benefiting to the tune of around €1.42bn, just by playing football.

The direct economic impact amounts to more than €227m, over €340m in social benefits and a preventative health spend of almost €794m from the grassroots game.

"We have known for decades about the positive impact of our national sport

on the population: it can inspire a nation, unite families and entire communities, and make society a better place," says the Scottish FA's chief executive, Ian Maxwell.

"The findings in the UEFA GROW report underline the extent to which football is a force for good in supporting the Scottish government's health and well-being agenda, and also the dramatic impact the game has on the national economy."

The Scottish model also includes non-registered players, as the Scottish FA has a variety of data on the number of people taking part in recreational five-a-side games. However, in keeping with an academic perspective, the UEFA GROW SROI model bases its results on registered players – those who train at least twice a week and play 25–30 games a year.



10.6m REGISTERED PLAYERS = €6.35bn



Economy
€1.5bn

direct contribution
to the economy



Social
€2.1bn

economic impact
of social benefits



Health
€2.7bn

savings in
healthcare





Staggering results

Applying the SROI model to football at a national level has not been tried before and is relatively new to sport in general. Quantifying the benefits and then applying a monetary value to them requires data, research and algorithms.

More than 100 peer-reviewed research papers were consulted by academics to ensure the findings would be consistent for all UEFA member associations. Algorithms were also developed that would automatically take account of national variations throughout Europe, such as GDP, population, cost of healthcare and VAT.

“UEFA brought together academics from ten European universities along with two agencies that are industry experts in this field,” says the president of the Swedish Football Association, Karl-Erik Nilsson, who is also UEFA’s first vice-president and chairman of UEFA’s HatTrick Committee. “Thanks to the work done in the Grassroots Charter and in women’s football development, most national associations have solid data on participation and coaching.”

The first step was to test the model in two countries. UEFA chose Sweden and Romania as they differ significantly in terms of participation, facilities, data and the football workforce (volunteerism/paid coaches). It was critical for UEFA to develop a model that could be applied to all its members. Football data was verified, and national agencies/bodies confirmed additional data on factors such as employment, health and facility development.

“The results were significant from the outset,” says the president of the Romanian Football Federation, Răzvan Burleanu. “Despite taking a very conservative approach, in the economic, social and health aspects of the model, the monetary value of mass participation in football was staggering.”

Sweden and Romania have also been reaping the benefits of encouraging more people to play football, and these are highlighted in the SROI model’s findings. Sweden has witnessed a monetary contribution to society of €1.9bn, with its health service saving €1bn. Meanwhile, Romania has observed a €272m positive

rate of investment, with a significant boost to its economy, as well as major savings by its health service.

Numerous benefits

There are many benefits of this analysis. For the first time, football administrators can talk to governments about the proven benefits of the sport. They can present scientific evidence recognised by the academic world, the World Health Organization and the Council of Europe’s Enlarged Participation Agreement on Sport (EPAS). The proven broader benefits enable football to speak with new ministries, such as health, education, justice and regional development.

This also allows football’s commercial partners to highlight the benefits they bring to society by supporting the grassroots game. At the request of the Swedish and Romanian FAs, the model can now filter down to regional levels, which has enabled local regions to talk to local government about the impact of their work on the community and economy. ☈

EUNATE ARRAIZA – SPAIN

'PERSEVERANCE PAYS OFF'

Eunate Arraiza is a wonderful example of how to take a life obstacle in your stride. The Athletic Club and Spanish women's national team player has learned to live with serious hearing impairment to make her way in football and fulfil a host of dreams.

When Eunate was small, she was found to have a profound hearing disability. She suffers from complete hearing loss in her left ear and now wears a cochlear implant – a surgically implanted hearing device. Yet this has proved to be no barrier to success. Eunate, raised in a rural family with an agricultural business in north-eastern Spain, grew to adore football – and is carving out an impressive reputation.

The 27-year-old left-sided midfielder or defender has won a domestic title with Athletic Club and broken into the national team. Her target is a place in the Spanish squad at this year's Women's World Cup. "I am thankful that I can be an inspiration to people," Eunate reflects. "If you enjoy something, you should put your all into it – and with hard work, sacrifice and effort, sooner or later, you always reap the rewards that you're seeking."



SCAN HERE
to see the video





ANDREAS JAKOBSEN AND OLIVER SVANGREN – DENMARK

TWO HEARTS BEAT AS ONE

Andreas Jakobsen and Oliver Svangren are both diehard fans of Danish club Randers FC – and they have been given the opportunity to work for the club as part of an internship.

Andreas (17) and Oliver (16), who live with autism and Down syndrome respectively, are involved at Randers FC as part of its mini-trainee inclusion programme. Andreas assists with organising events in the club's corporate suites – while Oliver helps the kitchen staff to prepare and serve the player and staff lunches. And both are committed players in their school team.

"I love football," says Oliver. "Football's a very, very important part of my life," adds Andreas.

Both welcome the game's spirit of togetherness. Oliver sums it up in one perfect word: "Unity". And Andreas agrees: "It's a sport that can bring people together," he says.

Andreas feels that his experiences have boosted his confidence, while Oliver is particularly keen to improve his skills as a goalkeeper. The two youngsters are relishing this special time, and they are the perfect embodiment of the values promoted by UEFA's #EqualGame campaign.

THE TECHNICIAN



GFF

VLADIMÍR WEISS

'MY RELATIONSHIP WITH MY PLAYERS IS KEY'

"I've always prioritised my relationship with the players, and tactics come second," says Vladimír Weiss when asked about the foundations of his managerial philosophy. For Weiss, now coach of Georgia, it is an approach that has reaped rewards at club and national-team levels, notably with FC Petržalka in the UEFA Champions League and the Slovakian national team at the World Cup.

In a wide-ranging interview, Weiss reflects on a coaching career that has included spells in Russia and Kazakhstan, reveals his most difficult decision, and discusses his ambitions for a Georgia team he guided to the top of their UEFA Nations League group.

Why did you decide to become a football manager, and how did you achieve it?

You could say that I became a coach overnight. My football career was drawing to an end, and I was 33 years old. Straight away, I was appointed as a player-coach. At the time, I was at Artmedia (ed. note: the club is now known as FC Petržalka). In 1997/98, I became the player-manager of that club. There were certain requirements, but, at the time, there were no UEFA coaching courses like you have today. We used to work alongside somebody more senior in those days, so I worked as an assistant to the head coach. In the space of a year, I passed my exams, and became the head coach when I was quite young. My coaching career started straight away. It was a

Being a footballer, you just assume that it's all about football. You assume that you know everything. But that's not the case. Education is key."

small club, but we had some real success, even though conditions were rather modest. The club grew stronger every year and won the Slovak Super Liga twice, as well as qualifying for the 2005/06 Champions League.

How has your coach education helped you as a manager during your career?

Being a footballer, you just assume that it's all about football. You assume that you know everything. But that's not the case. Education is key. I gained experience, studied for two years and I took exams. So I learned a lot. I learned that a good manager should be able to convey his ideas about how a team should play and what he wants from the players, but also explain what is needed, such as tactical requirements. Everything depends on this ability.

Which manager has inspired you the most, and why? Do you consider anyone your role model?

There are a lot of good managers, but I think it's not only about those managers who win titles at big clubs. There are a lot of other managers who are doing a great job without anyone noticing them.

Of course, I respect José Mourinho, Josep Guardiola and all the other big-name managers, but I think one of the true footballing geniuses in terms of tactics and strategy would have to be Marcelo Bielsa. We played against

him in 2012 when I was managing Slovan Bratislava in the Europa League and, after our game against Athletic Bilbao, I stayed on in Bilbao for a couple of days to observe his methods and training sessions. Incidentally, we lost 2-1 against them both at home and away in the group stages.

He's a great coach, so tactically aware, and I learned a lot from him – especially the way he prepares for a match. He keeps an incredible portfolio on all his opponents, down to every player. He assembles a fantastic team of assistant coaches. He works on creating his own training programme, which is unbelievable. His tactics are spectacular; I think they could be the best in the world. And he continues to prove this at Leeds United. I wish them luck, and hope they get promoted to the Premier League. ➔



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How would you describe your management style?

I think the best endorsement a manager can get comes from his team, or from his chairman and board of directors. In modern football, we're used to measuring a club's performance in two ways – it's either success or failure. A coach is assessed based on how he is doing and his results.

In this respect, I think you could say I've achieved something during my career as a manager. But I'm never satisfied, and I want more – I want to grow and work more. I want to get to the next level and give everything 100%. So, let's see what can be achieved with Georgia.

What does success depend on in your job?

The most important thing for me as a manager, or the most important part of my philosophy, is my relationship with the players. If the relationship is bad, you'll never be able to achieve anything. My approach is to create a friendly environment of mutual respect within the team. Having bad blood between a manager and his players isn't an option, as it would make it impossible to succeed as a team, so I've always prioritised my relationship with the players. It's the most important thing. Tactics come second. If you don't communicate with the team in a positive way, then you'll never achieve success.

You have mentioned your work with Petržalka and Slovan. Could you expand a bit more on what you managed to achieve while in charge of these clubs?

Of course. I don't really like looking back, as life goes on and we should think about the future, about tomorrow, about our next training session or next match. But moments like that will stay as memories that can be relived again through books and videos.

Artmedia/Petržalka had an amazing journey. We qualified for the Champions League after beating Kairat Almaty, who I actually went on to manage. We then beat Partizan Belgrade on penalties and Glasgow Celtic, which was an unbelievable match, as we managed to win the first leg 5-0 at home before losing the away game 4-0. It was amazing.

We ended up in the same group as Inter Milan, Porto and Glasgow Rangers.



We picked up six points in that group, and were very close to winning the last match against Porto at home and qualifying for the knock-out stage.

So, it was a great success story, bearing in mind we were just a small Slovak team.

I arrived at Slovan in 2011. I was managing the Slovakia national team at the time, and Slovan's owner asked me to help out after they'd sacked their coach, because the team hadn't qualified for the Champions League.

So, I stepped in three days before the match with AS Roma in the Europa League play-off round. We went through against Roma. We won 1-0 at home and drew 1-1 away against a team who had the great Francesco Totti in their side.

The group we ended up in was a tough one with Paris Saint-Germain, Salzburg and Athletic Bilbao. But the memories are still nice. Not every manager can tell you about their experience of being at the World Cup and in the Champions League.

"I made a tactical decision not to include my son, and we won 3-2 – but my wife wouldn't speak to me after that!"

I don't want to boast about it, but this is what I've achieved and I'm proud of it.

Your first experience working abroad was with FC Saturn Ramenskoye. What memories do you have from that season?

I worked with Saturn for about a year in 2006/07. Back then, we'd created a young and ambitious team, but I lacked experience working abroad – it was the first foreign club I'd managed. I was 42, which is young for a coach, and I wasn't experienced enough.

So, I left after about 18 months or, to be more precise, I was removed from my position following too many draws. We'd drawn 16 matches, which turned out to be a record in Russia. I only have fond memories of that period. It was a great club.

What can you say about your experience in Kazakhstan with Kairat?

When I started working with Kairat, they were 10th in the Kazakh League. They nearly got relegated. The club's owner got in touch with me and showed me what he'd planned for the future, and I shared his vision.

There was no training ground, nothing really, when we arrived. Since then, the chairman has built one of the best training bases in Europe. This was the start of Kairat's renaissance, when the club started claiming back its status as a champion and taking pride in its history again, as it was the only Kazakh club that played in national competitions during Soviet times.

I accepted the offer. The working environment was great, and we started building a team. It was very hard in the beginning, in the 2013 season, when we didn't do well in the league, but the next season we ended up taking third place and won the Cup, which was great, then in our third season we came second and won the cup again.

Jaba Kankava celebrates Georgia's opening goal against Latvia on the fourth day of Nations League fixtures.



My contract was for three years, and I worked there until it came to an end. We realised, both myself and Kairat Boranbayev, the club's chairman, that we needed new challenges, so we decided not to extend my contract. I took some time off – a couple of months – before moving to Georgia.

What's been the most difficult decision in your career as a manager? Can you think of anything specific?

I would say that one of the most difficult decisions I've had to make as a manager was not to include my son in the starting line-up for our third group game at the World Cup in South Africa, when we played against Italy.

It was a make-or-break game. I made a tactical decision not to include my son, and we won 3-2. It was a historic victory. My wife wouldn't speak to me after that, so I'll have to carry that with me for the rest of my life! We then played against the Netherlands in the last 16 and lost 2-1. It's a bit funny, but it'll still be a burden I'll have to carry around with me.

What are the requirements for the coaches on your staff, and what do you expect from them?

In modern football, one person can't do everything: work has to be divided up, and you have to respect your colleagues.

The assistant coaches are not here just to help carry the equipment to training. Every coach has a particular job. The head coach has to establish his footballing

philosophy and set the basis for training, and then each assistant can do their job.

My first-team coach is in charge of different aspects of training. Then, of course, the fitness coach takes care of the warm-ups, and the video analyst draws conclusions from training and also prepares training sessions, and so on.

Everyone has their own job. I have a great coaching staff that I've been working with for around 10 years. Everyone does their job, and you could say that we can all work together with our eyes closed, because we have known each other for so many years.

How do you use sports science?

My football is pretty straightforward, as I said before, but someone has created a science out of football, and we have to get used to that. You have to work with computers, you have to understand aspects of physical preparation, etc. Nowadays it's a science, it's not just a head coach who is involved when preparing the team – there's also a doctor, a fitness coach, video analysts and others. The head coach puts across his football philosophy, discipline, tactics, the formation and how the team will be set up. Everything has to work together, in harmony. I will be 55 this year, so I was brought up with an older football philosophy.

As a national team head coach, how do you manage to get the best out of your players in the very short periods of time you spend with them? →



Getty Images

You have to work with what you have, which is two to three days of preparation time. And the most important things are your relationship with the players, your tactical work and their mentality. As the coach, I have to get the team up and running, and I emphasise that they are playing for the national team, representing their country. They have to feel that responsibility – but not in a way that would pressure them. They need to feel relaxed and enjoy playing football in front of our amazing fans – it's unbelievable how the nation is getting behind the team at the moment, and I try to make the footballers enjoy playing for their country.

But, of course, you have to be well prepared tactically for each opponent. There are your ideas, your passion, and you have to put that across to the players and connect with them. That's when you can achieve good results.

That's precisely what you did with Slovakia at the 2010 World Cup in South Africa, reaching the second round ahead of holders Italy.

Of course, after the World Cup in South Africa, the nation was happy. It's possible to achieve it again. I believe in the Slovakia national team. Many of the footballers who played in South Africa are still playing, like Martin Škrtel and Marek Hamšík.

Your work with Georgia didn't start out as well as you would have hoped – you didn't manage to win a World Cup qualifying game, drawing five times, but in the Nations League you won five games out of six. How important was this second tournament for your team?



Getty Images

We performed well in the Nations League, but it wasn't easy for me before that. When you manage a national team, it's not only an honour but, first and foremost, you have a responsibility to the Georgian people.

It's not easy to establish the connections that we've been talking about. I believe we have a good relationship with the players, the football federation and the fans now.

Everything depends on results, and your job depends on results and the team's performance. We managed to turn things around, but it wasn't easy for us. We were on a bad run at first.

We drew with Kazakhstan in my first game in charge, then we lost to Slovakia and Romania, then we won away in Spain [in a June 2016 friendly]. That's when something changed in our mindset and in the players' minds – it was like: 'Wow, we can do something with this squad.'

I believed in that, and we've been gradually working our way to where we

want to be. Our previous qualification tournament [for the 2018 World Cup] wasn't easy, with five draws and five losses. We were just missing something to get a win.

Does this mean the quality was there, yet the results weren't?

You have to carry on – sometimes coaches don't get results, but I could see some hope. Now we've done well in the Nations League, and we're really hopeful for the future. We're not just thinking about next season and waiting for March 2020 [when Georgia play Belarus in the Nations League Group D play-off match].

We have a new qualification group for EURO 2020, a very tough one where we have to play two teams, Denmark and Switzerland, who are ranked in the top 10 according to the current FIFA rankings, and we've got Republic of Ireland and Gibraltar too.

It's a hard group, but we'll try to get as many points as possible and fight to qualify. That's our goal. We can't think otherwise.

We can't prepare for that one game in March 2020. We'll compete with Switzerland, we'll go to Ireland and see how we match up against the other teams in this group. Of course, we'll prepare for each match, but the players' form will be vital.



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Georgia celebrate with their fans after their 2-1 victory against Kazakhstan in Tbilisi on 19 November. Unbeaten in the Nations League, Georgia move up to League C.

“Bad blood between a manager and his players isn’t an option, as it makes it impossible to succeed.”

My biggest issue as coach of Georgia is players getting enough playing time for their clubs and maintaining consistency. If key players are injured or not playing for their clubs, that’s a huge problem.

Has there been a time, as coach of the national team, when you’ve been able to pick your best starting XI, or something close to it?

There was one game when we were able to field a strong team, and that was away to Wales in the 2018 World Cup qualifiers. We drew 1-1, but Jaba Kankava couldn’t play. He’s an incredible footballer, and an incredible guy that I respect a lot.

He’s incredibly important to me and my team, and is in my top five in terms of the most professional players I’ve ever worked with. He does everything I ask of him, and puts in not 100%, but 150%.

He has great physical attributes, he grafts and does the dirty work well. Even when I changed his position and moved him higher up the pitch, he scored two goals – he was very dangerous in attack and played unbelievably in the Nations League.

You could say I’ve not had the chance to put out my strongest team, the one I have in my head, for one single game since becoming coach. But not having your strongest team at your disposal is not only my problem – many coaches face the same problem. It’s not an excuse either, as there are injuries and suspensions in football.

But Georgia has, and always will, produce big talents, no matter if I stay here or not. If you look back, there’s been Kakha Kaladze, Shota Arveladze, Levan Kobiashvili, Georgi Kinkladze and lots of other footballers. Apologies to anyone I’ve forgotten, but there’ve been a lot who went on to play for some big clubs, and there always will be.

The most important thing, and I’ve asked agents to pay great attention to this, is where Georgian players are going to play. At the moment, Giorgi Chakvetadze is an example of this – he’s a good example of a Georgian football player.

He is a product of Dinamo Tbilisi’s academy; they are nurturing some real

talents there. They have great facilities for young players, a good training ground and a good stadium. They have everything necessary for young lads to become great players.

Chekvetadze chose a good club, and you could say that he’s already become a key player for KAA Gent. He’s a rising star of European football. He could become a real star – he’s on the right track, and it all depends on him. He has a good family behind him, and I’ve spoken to his parents a couple of times. If all Georgian footballers chose such a path, then I’d be thrilled, because the national team would benefit from that.

What do you think you can achieve with this team?

Everyone dreams of going to EURO 2020. Of course, we’re only halfway towards that goal now, or only a third of the way there really. But, we have a chance to go to the EURO through the Nations League play-offs. We’ll try to reach this goal through the qualifiers first, and will take it game by game.

The first game is against Switzerland, then Ireland away. We’ll fight for the points that will allow us to have a chance of finishing in the top two. All coaches and players have to be realistic and prepare for what it’s really going to be like.

It won’t be an easy group. There aren’t teams on a similar level to us like in the Nations League – they’re a level higher. But I’m sure we can prove ourselves, and pick up some similar results to the ones we had in Spain and Austria, against Ireland at home, as well as Wales away [the last three matches were all draws].

As a group, we can win against teams ranked higher than us and compete with the best teams in the world with our fans at home, where we have an amazing atmosphere. That makes it hard for any opponent. I always say during my press conferences that nobody thinks a trip to Georgia will be easy. We’ve earned respect, which is nice, and now we have to prove ourselves on the pitch and show we can compete with these big teams. ☺



Getty Images

A family affair

“I was born in 1964. My father was playing at the Olympic Games, and he didn’t see me when I was born, because he had to be at the team’s training camp and wasn’t allowed to leave. The first time he saw me was when I was one month old.

“He was a good defender, very talented. He won a silver medal at the Olympics in Tokyo in 1964. He spent most of his career playing for Inter Bratislava. My son has played for the national team too, and took part in the World Cup in South Africa in 2010. He also played at EURO 2016, and he still plays for Slovakia. I also played international football; I played for Czechoslovakia at the 1990 World Cup in Italy. After Czechoslovakia was split, I continued to play for Slovakia. I don’t think there are many families out there that can say they’ve had a grandfather, father and son who are all called Vladimír and played for their nation’s football team in a World Cup, European Championships and an Olympic Games. We managed to achieve that, and we can be quite proud of it.”

100 YEARS OF THE PZPN

In December 1919, the Polish daily newspaper Ilustrowany Kurier Codzienny (IKC) reported: "Just before Christmas, namely on the 20th and 21st of this month, a meeting of all Polish sports associations was held in Warsaw, during which the Polish Football Association was established."

That laconic notice is one of the few reports describing the creation of the Polish Football Association (PZPN), which celebrates its 100th anniversary this year.

The meeting at which the PZPN was established was held in Warsaw, in a now-demolished building located at either 1 or 3 Obozna Street. Not everyone was satisfied with the venue for that meeting, with the IKC report describing a number of issues: "The meeting did not get off to a great start, since the designated building was taken and the Warsaw hosts were extremely unpunctual; this was not appreciated at all by the delegates from Lesser Poland and Poznań, who were accustomed not only to being punctual, but also to respecting decisions taken at meetings."

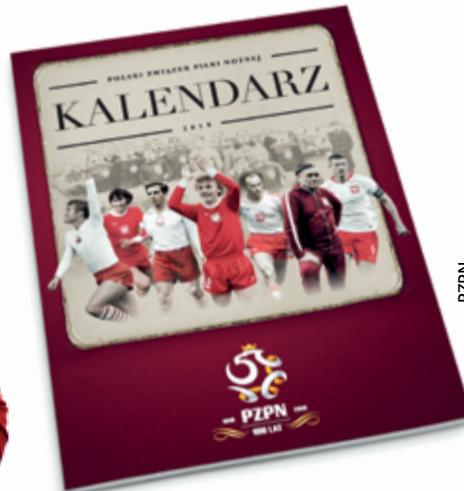
Despite these issues and a number of other minor obstacles, 31 delegates from various clubs and districts managed to achieve consensus and establish the PZPN. The author of the PZPN's first articles of association was Stanisław Polakiewicz – the vice-president of the Polish Olympic committee and later the president of the Polish ice hockey federation.

It should be remembered that significant efforts had already been made to establish organised structures and football associations in Poland. However, owing to the partition of the country, it had not been possible to complete that work.

Although the founding meeting was held in Warsaw, an overwhelming majority of delegates voted to base the new association in the southern city of Kraków. Consequently, the PZPN's second general meeting took place in Kraków, at what



Team captain Robert Lewandowski sports a replica of the first jersey worn by the Poland team for a match against Hungary in 1921.



PZPN

was then 4 Radziwiłłowska Street. The first president of the PZPN was Edward Wiktor Cetnarowski, a doctor and an official at a renowned Cracovia sports club. At that second meeting, five regional associations were also established, the 'capitals' of which were Warsaw, Kraków, Lviv (now part of Ukraine, of course), Poznań and Łódź. Moreover, the rules of the Polish championship were also established.

In 1921, the Polish national team played their first official match, losing 1-0 to Hungary; in 1923, the PZPN was officially granted membership of FIFA; just a year later, Poland's footballers competed at the 1924 Olympic Games in Paris. That tournament was an unsuccessful one for Poland, but the PZPN had much to smile about at home, with 510 clubs, 17,000 players and 200 referees being registered with the Polish Football Association by the end of that year. Indeed, in just three years, the number of footballers in Poland had increased more than sevenfold. But that is a completely different story. ⚽

INTERNATIONAL WORKSHOP FOR SPORTS LAW AND ARBITRATION

ANDI VERÇANI

 In January, the Football Association of Albania (FSHF) held an international workshop entitled 'Sports law and arbitration: a practical perspective on selected legal issues', a bold initiative by its legal division to help the professionals of the sports law and arbitration sectors in what is a new field in Albania.

In his welcoming speech at the start of the event, the FSHF president, Armand Duka, thanked organisers Blerina Xheraj and Aldi Topçiu, the representatives of the clubs, UEFA, and the arbitrators from the Court of Arbitration for Sport in Lausanne.

"I am thrilled to be part of this event," said Duka, "seeing the importance of sports justice not only for football but for all sports in Albania. We feel that Albania's intellectual, judicial and capacity level regarding maximum sports justice is incomplete. So, this international workshop is a forum to exchange ideas. No one came to teach, but to share their personal experiences so that everyone can learn. This won't be the only workshop or

event; other activities will follow."

The workshop was attended by the lawyers of the member clubs, the FSHF judicial team and legal experts from other associations in the region.

The discussions focused on the latest developments in sports law and legal practices according to the most successful European models, through the experience and practice of renowned experts.



FESTIVITIES GALORE

XAVI BONET

 This is a special year for the Andorran Football Federation (FAF). Founded in 1994, it has now reached its 25th anniversary. The association has prepared special events to celebrate this important milestone, one each month of the year.

So, a series of different initiatives are being unveiled from January all the way through to December, relating to all the various sectors that the FAF has worked in over all these years, from the sport itself through to social responsibility. These events will extend from solidarity



to esports, with football as the common feature of them all.

Besides this major jubilee, this year is also the 20th anniversary of the Francesc Vila memorial youth tournament. And that too will be a good reason for celebration at the FAF.

Finally, the draw decided that this year the Andorran national team would play a qualifying match for EURO 2020 against the current world champions, France. As that match will be held in Andorra on 11 June, the FAF is preparing yet more special events to celebrate.

MORE THAN JUST SPORT

CARMEN REDL

 The strategy of the Austrian Football Association (ÖFB) for the next five years has been placed under the motto 'More than sport'.

The ÖFB's aim is to anchor the country's largest sports federation even deeper into Austrian society, with more than 300,000 active players and 130,000 organised matches each year. "Regardless of the success of our national team, the ÖFB should be recognised for its services to youth and society, for all the things it does to promote integration, health and social policies week by week," said Leo Windtner, the ÖFB president.

The strategy was developed in a rigorous process as part of UEFA's GROW programme to promote the growth of football in its member associations.

With support from UEFA, the ÖFB developed a plan based on three cornerstones: 'Developing Austrian

football', 'Inspiring national teams' and 'Working with our partners'.

The strategy was unveiled to ÖFB staff, partners and media representatives, explaining how the ÖFB would like to ensure that the national teams can develop

their full potential and that grassroots football can be reinforced and developed. Special attention will be paid to girls' and women's football.

The brochure can be downloaded from oefb.at.



UEFA EUROPA LEAGUE MUSEUM

TORA AKHMEDOVA

 A pop-up UEFA Europa League museum was set up in Baku from 22 December to 7 January to set the scene for the competition final due to be held in the Azerbaijani capital on 29 May.

The opening ceremony was attended by Rovnag Abdullayev, the president of

the Association of Football Federations of Azerbaijan (AFFA), Azad Rahimov, the minister of youth and sport, Chingiz Huseynzade, the vice-president of the national Olympic committee, and members of AFFA's executive committee and coaches committee.

Exhibits reflected the history of the

Europa League, including signed kits from the teams and players that took part in the finals from 2008 to 2018, official Europa League balls and signed balls from the Europa League finals. Screens installed inside the museum played unforgettable moments from the competition's history, such as goals netted in the finals and various other interesting game snapshots.

The event featured a series of autograph days, on which visitors were able to meet famous players – legendary Argentine striker Hernán Crespo and members of the Azerbaijani national team, Mahir Madatov, Tamkin Khalilzade and Mirabdulla Abbasov – ask for autographs and take photos with them.

Anyone whose heart beats for football was able to enjoy the museum as access was free to all.



15TH UNDER-17 DEVELOPMENT CUP TAKES PLACE IN MINSK

ALEKSANDR ALEINIK



In January, the Football Federation of Belarus (ABFF) and the Minsk city executive committee played



host to the 15th annual Development Cup youth tournament in cooperation with the Development Bank of the Republic of Belarus.

Many of Europe's top players have used this international Under-17 event as a springboard, lighting up the tournament before going on to be capped for their respective senior national teams. Indeed, several of Belarus's current senior squad earned their spurs at this tournament, including Stanislav Dragun (the second highest scorer in the UEFA Nations League), Denis Polyakov, Sergei Politevich and Pavel Savitski.

The tournament has been contested by teams from a whole range of different countries over the years, including representatives of 20 UEFA member associations and teams from Asian countries such as Japan and China.

At this year's tournament, half of the 12 teams – Belarus, Belgium, Iceland,

Israel, Slovakia and Ukraine – had qualified for the elite round of the 2018/19 European Under-17 Championship, with Bulgaria, Finland, Georgia, Lithuania, Moldova and Tajikistan providing the other six participants.

Mikhail Markhel's Belarus side won the tournament (the country's third title, following previous triumphs in 2006 and 2007), beating Israel in the final thanks to a wonder goal by Makar Litskevich, while Slovakia overcame Georgia in the third-place play-off.

The organisation of the tournament continues to improve year on year. The Development Cup has its own dedicated branding, all matches are broadcast live on the ABFF's official YouTube channel (while the hosts' games are also shown on TV), photographs are provided for all games, and there is extensive coverage on social media.

HOUSE OF FOOTBALL INAUGURATED

FEDJA KRVAVAC



After a remarkable season, marked by the successes of its senior and Under-17 teams, the Bosnia and Herzegovina Football Federation (NFSBiH) has now completed its own 'house of football' in Sarajevo.

The UEFA president, Aleksander Čeferin, and the president of the NFSBiH, Elvedin Begić, headed the ribbon-cutting ceremony on 22 November.

"Bosnia and Herzegovina will be richer for this new sports facility," said the UEFA president. "This is a great step in the development of football in this country. We were all pleased to see the Bosnia and Herzegovina national team promoted to League A of the Nations League, despite getting off to a difficult start."

"NFSBiH has also met with success in the youth categories and is among the leaders when it comes to the number of tournaments organised for younger generations. The fruit of its work can be seen in the results of its Under-17 teams at the group stage of the European Championships three times in a row," he said.

"We have made significant progress over the last few years," added Elvedin Begić, "that has been rewarded by our promotion in the Nations League. And now we have a new business centre for our work. The support we receive from UEFA and FIFA means a lot to us and we'll do our utmost to meet their expectations and trust."

"This facility will benefit us and future generations, bearing witness to a time of

good, transparent management, a time of reform and change, a time of success, courage and vision," he said.

In other news, the former executive director of the NFSBiH administration department, Adnan Džemidžić, has been appointed general secretary for a four-year term of office. He has replaced Jasmin Baković, who held the position for eight years.

"Taking on this new responsibility is a great satisfaction for me and a reward for all I've done so far," said Adnan Džemidžić. "What is most important to me is the the success of the association and all its members. With a good spirit of cooperation, we'll achieve excellent results with the senior team and all other national teams and clubs."

GEARING UP FOR AN EXCITING 2019

NIKA BAHTIJAREVIĆ

 As with all good things, the Croatian Football Federation's (HNS) spectacular 2018 had to come to an end. And the best year in Croatian football history ended with a prizewinning bang.

Luka Modrić capped the year off by adding the Ballon d'Or to his awe-inspiring list of awards. The national team (the Vatreni) was named Croatia's best sports team by sports daily Sportske Novosti. The Croatian Olympic committee, meanwhile, awarded the national squad the titles of best men's team and best promoter of Croatia. The country's best sportman at both events? Luka Modrić, of course.

With 2019 now under way, the Vatreni and the HNS are looking ahead to EURO 2020, after the qualifying draw in Dublin revealed that Croatia will be meeting Wales, Slovakia, Hungary and Azerbaijan in Group E.

Meanwhile, their younger counterparts in the Croatian Under-21 team found out



Luka Modrić, Davor Šuker (HNS president), Zlatko Dalić (head coach of the Croatian national team)

that they will face England, France and Romania in Group C at the 2019 European Under-21 Championship, when they will have the chance to secure Croatia's first appearance in the final round of the Olympic football tournament.

The winter break after the draws provided the HNS with the opportunity to

refocus on youth activities such as its annual winter camp, as well as education activities such as the HNS medical symposium and the security conference – all of which will ensure that Croatia's football family is ready for the Vatreni's return to action in March.

A HIGHLY SUCCESSFUL PARTNERSHIP

MICHAL BLAŽEJ

 On 14 and 15 December, nearly 60 delegates from 38 countries gathered at the headquarters of the Football Association of the Czech Republic (FAČR) for the 14th Special Olympics European Football Conference, providing each other with mutual support and inspiration in the field of learning disability football.

Special Olympics – a global movement focused on helping athletes with various levels of learning disability – and the FAČR have been working closely together since 2014, and many notable successes have been chalked up in that period (such as increases in membership numbers, new training programmes for coaches and significant improvements in terms of equipment). That work has not



gone unnoticed at European level, with Special Olympics Czech Republic receiving a UEFA Foundation for Children award in 2018.

In addition to various presentations and practical demonstrations, the conference in December also involved the

presentation of special awards to three football associations in recognition of their work with Special Olympics. One of those associations was the FAČR, providing further proof of the extent and depth of the cooperation between the two organisations.

DENMARK

www.dbu.dk

BOTH PROGRESS AND CHALLENGES IN QATAR

ADAM GRØNHOLM



Representatives of Nordic football associations and trade unions visited Qatar in January and found preparations for the 2022 World Cup in full swing. After meeting World Cup organisers, professional organisations and local migrant workers, they concluded that several positive changes had taken place in recent years, but a number of challenges still remained.

Indeed, much has happened in Qatar since a similar delegation visited the country in November 2016. Notably, progress has been made in relation to the working conditions of migrants employed in the construction of stadiums and other

buildings. For example, a temporary minimum wage has been introduced, 256 state supervisors have been recruited, and a new mechanism has been established for reporting breaches of the rules.

DBU president Jesper Møller Christensen and his Nordic colleagues used their recent visit to keep up the pressure on the Qatari authorities and maintain dialogue in this regard.



ENGLAND

www.thefa.com

21 DAYS OF POSITIVITY

MARIA DE LEON



Research by The FA has shown that 90% of younger players perform better with positive encouragement and that insight has shaped The FA's Respect campaign's new mantra, 'We only do positive'.

The campaign aims to improve touchline and on-pitch behaviour in youth football across the country by raising

awareness of the importance of respect among a new generation of parents, coaches, volunteers and players.

In November, Gareth Southgate called upon parents and coaches to support the campaign, with the release of the 'We only do positive' handbook.

Distributed to grassroots youth coaches across the country to reinforce the

importance of the campaign, the handbook focuses on Gareth Southgate's five positive principles of coaching:

- Create the right environment
- Lead by positive example
- Understand your players
- Build a positive team around you
- Instil an 'anything is possible' attitude

On 21 January, players from the England men's, women's and disability football teams lined up together to support the next wave of the campaign, '21 days of positivity'. Parents and coaches involved in youth football are asked to commit to a positive approach and share their positive stories on social media with #WeOnlyDoPositive.

During these 21 days, a symbol for the period of time it takes to enact a behavioural change and form a habit, The FA is sharing messages of positivity on its social media channels, with England stars thanking those that have had the biggest influence on them.

To find out more about The FA's respect campaign please visit: thefa.com/get-involved/coach/respect



FRESH FACES FOR WOMEN'S TEAMS

TERJI NIELSEN

 John Petersen has been appointed head coach of the Faroese women's national team on a two-year contract, replacing Þórir Clementsen, who will now take charge of the women's Under-19 team.

The 46-year-old former striker is no stranger to the players, having been their assistant coach for the last three years. "I am really pleased and honoured to be given this opportunity to build on all the good work done by my predecessor," Petersen said.

The Faroe Islands recently took part in the qualifying competition for the 2019 Women's World Cup in France. They made it to the main group stage, but were then placed in a very strong group, where they faced the likes of Germany. "Even if some of the results were not very good, there is no doubt that our players learnt a lot and improved their game massively as a result of taking part in the group stages," Petersen said.

Petersen is himself a former Faroese international, scoring six goals in his 57 appearances for his country.

His first games in charge of the women's national team will come in early April when the Faroe Islands play two friendlies away against Lithuania.



John Petersen

FSF

CHAKVETADZE PLAYER OF THE YEAR 2018

OTAR GIORGADZE



The 19-year-old midfielder Giorgi Chakvetadze, who plays for Belgian team KAA Gent, as well as the Georgian national team, has been named Georgia's player of the year for 2018. He won the main prize at the Georgian Football Federation awards ceremony for the first time, having triumphed in the young player of the year category a year earlier.

Chakvetadze made his debut for the senior national side in March 2018 in a friendly match against Lithuania, scoring



one of the goals in a 4-0 victory for Georgia. In six group matches of the

inaugural UEFA Nations League, Chakvetadze scored four goals, helping his team to the top spot in the group. His long-range strike against Kazakhstan in Astana was the historic first goal scored in the new UEFA competition. Chakvetadze's overall record currently stands at five goals in seven appearances for the national side. Prior to debuting with the seniors, he represented Georgia at all youth levels.

Georgia's player of the year is chosen by local club coaches, club captains, former players and media representatives.

AMATEUR FOOTBALL CONGRESS IN KASSEL

THOMAS HACKBARTH

 The German Football Association (DFB) recently held its third amateur football congress, looking at the current and future challenges facing amateur clubs. As part of that event, which took place in Kassel from 22 to 24 February, DFB representatives worked directly with delegates from regional and state associations and representatives of individual districts and clubs across Germany to establish recommendations aimed at stabilising and strengthening grassroots football.

The congress devoted significant amounts of time and attention to the views of amateur clubs and the interests of their players. There was also considerable discussion regarding the question of what should be done over the next few years, with the support of associations, to ensure that amateur club football was in the best possible position to take advantage of Germany's hosting of EURO 2024.

The congress covered five key topics:

- Amateur football in 2024
- External conditions for clubs
- Association development
- Training opportunities
- Digitisation

Those five topics were presented and discussed in various different formats with the aid of external experts and specialists from individual clubs and associations. Delegates then took part in workshops, during which concrete lists of clearly prioritised actions were drawn up for each topic.

All delegates met on an equal footing, regardless of the type of organisation they were representing, with participants discussing matters in various different constellations. There were 84 delegates from amateur clubs, 42 representing districts and another 84 from state associations, with the remaining delegates from regional associations and the DFB.

This was a tried and tested format, having been successfully employed at the DFB's second amateur football congress in 2012 – an event that had resulted in the establishment of the DFB's amateur football master plan. Following that congress, an amateur football steering group led by DFB vice-president Peter Frymuth had drawn up the plan, resulting in the introduction of, among other things, club dialogue and a nationwide fair play concept (including a fair play league), as well as a significant expansion of club services such as short courses, the DFB-Mobil initiative and online competition management tools. Similarly, the successful reorientation of the fussball.de website as the DFB's main platform for amateur football was also a direct consequence of the master plan, as were the 'Our Amateurs. True Pros.' amateur football campaign and the DFB's junior coach project.

FOOTBALL FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

EITAN DOTAN

 The Israel Football Association (IFA) shares UEFA's vision that football should be for everyone and, with this in mind, it decided to set up a new project in partnership with Special Olympics Israel.

The goal of this 'unified football' project is to help the country's learning disabled people feel equal and enable them to play alongside non-disabled players. Thanks to this project, both groups of players will learn to accept the other with all their differences.

This year the Israel Football Association started the project with three clubs, Hapoel Beer-Sheva in the south of the country, Maccabi Tel-Aviv in the centre and Maccabi Haifa in the north. A group of Under-16 players was selected in each club.



The clubs will hold unified training sessions with the disabled players, along with experiential and formal activities to create a sense of community.

In late May, an end-of-season tournament will be held at the Ramat Gan Stadium for the three clubs' mixed teams. At the same time, there will be a festive event in the

vicinity of the stadium for the players' families and the general public.

By next year, the IFA intends to have three teams in each region and within two years it hopes to achieve five teams in each region. Further down the line, it would like to launch a special league or cup tournament for people with disabilities.

"The players' reactions are amazing," says Ziv Solomon, the director of the youth department, who is in charge of the project. "They are excited and admit that they would never have met these people with special needs in their day-to-day lives. The players also say that they will now try to be more tolerant and show leadership and will try to help those weaker and different from them."

FREED BY FOOTBALL: A NEW SCHEME FOR MARGINALISED YOUNGSTERS

DIEGO ANTENOZIO

 The president of the Italian Football Association (FIGC) and the presiding judge from Reggio Calabria's juvenile and family court have signed an agreement that commits both institutions to the Freed by Football programme, a pilot scheme that seeks to use the game as a vehicle for educating and integrating marginalised young people.

Freed by Football is aimed at youngsters on probation, unaccompanied foreign minors, children from a disadvantaged background and families involved in organised crime, with participants selected by the court from among the young people affected by its rulings. The scheme is designed to help rehabilitate these young people and build their social skills by having them learn to play football. Under the terms of the six-month agreement, the

court will also award scholarships and set up a team of qualified volunteers – including legal experts, psychologists, teachers and students – to support the youngsters in all aspects of their involvement with the programme. The FIGC will be responsible for planning and delivering the sporting activities, through its youth and schools division, and providing all the necessary coaching equipment and materials.

The FIGC president, Gabriele Gravina, said: "This is a crucial partnership in terms of what it means going forward: by finding new ways to bring people to the sport, it allows us to make the most of the educational and social benefits that football can offer at local level. Social inclusion is one of our core values, and that means giving something back to the community and playing an active role



in bringing people together."

The court's chief judge, Roberto Di Bella, added: "This is a tough area to grow up in, which is why the court uses different educational and cultural development strategies to help Calabrian children to resist the lure of the local mafia. In this sense, this partnership with the FIGC will be hugely important, particularly if it helps certain categories of young people to reintegrate into society."

BALTIC ASSOCIATIONS TEAM UP FOR STRATEGIC GROWTH

TOMS ĀRMANIS

 The presidents of the three Baltic football associations met in Riga in January to discuss their joint initiatives.

Last August, the associations agreed to set up a strategic development panel, comprising Kaspars Gorkss, the president of the Latvian Football Federation, Tomas Danilevičius, the president of the Lithuanian Football Federation, and Aivar Pohlak, the president of the Estonian Football Association. The aim was to discuss topics relevant to the region and find joint solutions to shared issues.

This was the first panel meeting held in Latvia. After a broad debate on the UEFA Congress to be held in Rome, the presidents discussed the region's shared vision of the programmes, solutions and

innovations put forward by candidates for seats on the UEFA Executive Committee.

As in previous panel meetings, a great deal of attention was paid to combating match-fixing. The panel members shared their experiences and approaches to applying the financial fair play principles and discussed mechanisms to promote more efficient monitoring of them in the Baltic region.

The meeting also discussed the fostering of women's football in the region, with particular attention to the new season of the Baltic women's football league and the development of the competition, together with the overall role and importance of women's football in the three countries.

"There is a lot of solidarity in Baltic

football, because our countries often face similar challenges, local specificities and a related understanding of football development," says Kaspars Gorkss. "Meetings such as these will only strengthen the spirit of football growth in our countries, providing the opportunity to learn from each other and opening the door to projects and initiatives that will bring tangible added value to all Baltic football."

"By discussing all the issues facing us, we can move forward as a joint force that is willing to cooperate and defend the interests of football in our region."

The next panel meeting on 9 May will also be held in Latvia, when one of the main points of discussion will be the development prospects of the Baltic Cup.

LIECHTENSTEIN

www.lfv.li

DEDICATED NATIONAL COACH APPOINTED

ANTON BANZER

The Liechtenstein Football Association (LFV) has taken a strategic decision for its future. Since the start of 2019, the roles of national team coach and technical director have been held by two different people. Rene Pauritsch, who had occupied both positions since 2012, stepped down as national coach after the 2018 UEFA Nations League and will now work full-time as the association's technical director.

He has been succeeded by Helgi Kolvidsson as national team coach. The 47-year-old Icelander started his



LFV Helgi Kolvidsson

coaching career with German team SC Pfullendorf, before going on to spend just over three years at SC Austria Lustenau. After stints at SC Wiener Neustadt and SV Ried, Helgi Kolvidsson became assistant coach for the Icelandic national team under head coach Heimir Hallgrímsson. While he was there, Iceland managed to qualify for the first time for the final round of the World Cup.

Liechtenstein will play their first national match under the former centre-back and 30-capped former Iceland player against Greece in Vaduz on 23 March.

MALTA

www.mfa.com.mt

MALTESE PREMIER LEAGUE UNDER THE MICROSCOPE

KEVIN AZZOPARDI

 The Malta Football Association (MFA) is in the process of conducting a comprehensive review of its flagship football competition, the Maltese Premier League, with support from UEFA. At the last meeting of the MFA council, Angelo Chetcuti, the general secretary of the MFA, explained that the main objective of the study was to provide a snapshot of the country's top division and evaluate its impact on Malta's national teams.

The study, being carried out in cooperation with the UEFA intelligence centre as part of the UEFA GROW Insights pillar, involves three key elements:

- an assessment of the impact that the gradual rise in the number of foreign players over the years has had on Maltese clubs and the country's national teams;
- a comparative analysis of the various youth transfer and registration regulations that are in place across UEFA's 55 member associations;
- a pathway analysis comparing Malta's success at getting youth and Under-21

players into the senior national squad with that of comparable associations elsewhere in Europe.

Meanwhile, at club level, Valletta FC recently completed a clean sweep of



domestic honours in 2018 after beating Balzan FC 2-1 to win the Maltese Super Cup having already won the double last season. Valletta, led by Serbian coach Danilo Dončić, took an early lead in that one-off game, which took place on 13 December at the National Stadium, when Balzan defender Michael Johnson deflected the ball into his own net as he tried to clear a Miguel Alba cross.

Balzan, who were taking part on the back of their second-place finish in the league last season, overcame that initial setback to level the scores nine minutes from half-time through Brazilian forward Alex da Paixão Alves. The game remained finely balanced in the second half, but it was Valletta who ultimately prevailed, scoring the winner with 14 minutes remaining, courtesy of Italian forward Mario Fontanella.

At the end of the match, Norman Darmann Demajo, president of the MFA, and Deo Scerri, chairman of sponsors Bank of Valletta, presented the Super Cup trophy to Jonathan Caruana, the Valletta captain.

17TH ORDINARY CONGRESS

PRESS OFFICE

 On 25 January, the Football Association of Moldova (FMF) held its 17th ordinary congress at the FMF futsal arena in Ciorescu. The annual congress is the FMF's supreme governing body, with delegates from FMF members discussing and voting on various issues relating to Moldovan football.

The meeting began with a minute's silence in memory of everyone in Moldovan football who had passed away since the last FMF congress on 7 March 2018.

The congress was attended by Bjorn Vassallo, director for Europe at FIFA, Igor Šarov, state secretary at the

Moldovan ministry of education, culture and research, Nicolae Piatac, vice-president of the Moldovan Olympic Committee, Ivan Scripnici, mayor of Ciorescu, and Constantin Tampiza, a former president of the FMF.

Addressing the congress, the FMF's president, Pavel Cebanu, spoke of various achievements and developments that



gave him confidence for the future.

A report on 2018 by the FMF's president and various FMF committees (including its executive committee) was discussed and approved by delegates, as were various financial matters (including the consolidated annual accounts for 2018) and a number of other issues on the agenda.

In addition, the FMF's Order of Honour was presented to Valeriu Plopă, Alexandru Veriovkin, Nicolae Fachira, Nicolai Moseac, Serghei Cebotari, Anatolii Dudun, Serghei Sapunji and Mihail Andronic in recognition of the major contribution that each had made to the development of Moldovan football.

A PACKED SCHEDULE FOR 2019

NIGEL TILSON

 Northern Ireland's disabled footballers have a busy schedule ahead of them in the coming months.

In April, the Irish Football Association (IFA) will send its learning disability team to Wales for the 2019 Under-19 Learning Disability Home Nations Championship, where they will face England, Scotland and the Welsh.

In May, Northern Ireland's powerchair football team will take part in their first ever international tournament, when they compete in the EPFA Nations Cup – the sport's European championships – in Finland.

And in June, the country's cerebral palsy (CP) football squad are set to participate in a seven-a-side development tournament organised by the International Federation of CP Football in Barcelona, where they will be up against the likes of Brazil, Germany, Denmark and Scotland.

Meanwhile, at domestic level, the 2018/19 IFA Disability League is set to continue. The Disability League represents a core element of the IFA's disability



IFA

football work, with 23 teams competing across four divisions.

Other initiatives on the disability football front this year include continuing to develop a participation programme for visually impaired players, and staging the annual Community Cup, which will feature 72 teams from across the UK and Ireland.

There will also be numerous competitions for schools catering for pupils with special educational needs, along with efforts to improve the matchday experience for disabled fans attending international games at Northern Ireland's national stadium, Windsor Park.

NORWAY

www.fotball.no

BROADCASTING AGREEMENT FOR EFOOTBALL MATCHES

MATS THEIE BRETVIK

 The Football Association of Norway (NFF) and Norwegian broadcaster TV 2 have signed a deal that grants the channel media rights in relation to international efootball matches and the Norwegian efootball championship.

"We are very pleased with this agreement, and we are delighted that TV 2 want to help us with the development of efootball," said Mats Theie Bretvik, esport manager at the NFF.

The agreement covers four to six international efriendlies, in addition to the domestic championship. The Norwegian efootball team have not been in existence for very long, but have already played a few matches. They played France in Paris in December (winning 3-2), and they also took part

in a Nordic championship hosted by the Football Association of Finland at the beginning of February.

"TV 2 have already shown that they are taking this seriously, and their knowledge of football is also important to us. The link between efootball and real-life football is

very strong, and we believe that this arrangement will strengthen that link."

Next up is an international efriendly against Sweden at Ullevaal Stadion on 25 March – the day before the two countries meet in a EURO 2020 qualifier.



REPUBLIC OF IRELAND

www.fai.ie

LGBTI+ TRAINING FOR FAI STAFF

GARETH MAHER

 The Football Association of Ireland (FAI) recently organised LGBTI+ awareness training for FAI staff at its national sports campus.

It was delivered by 'BeLonG To', a national organisation that provides a range of services for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex young people in Ireland between the ages of 14 and 23, and helps to create an environment where they feel safe, equal and valued.

The awareness training at the FAI was provided as part of an LGBTI+ capacity-building initiative run by Ireland's department of children and youth affairs. FAI CEO John Delaney and chairperson of the women's committee and FAI board member Niamh O'Donoghue were on hand to personally welcome BeLonG To to the national association.

The session was also attended by Aidan Walsh, Danny Ogilvy and Hicham Lamchaali, three players from the Dublin Devils, an inclusive gay football club based in the Irish capital. The players talked about their experiences playing for the team and explained how much it had helped them in their lives.

"We're delighted to welcome BeLonG To and the members of the Dublin Devils to the FAI today," said John Delaney.

"It's extremely important to emphasise that football is for everybody – regardless of gender, race, religion or sexual orientation. To hear from the Dublin Devils players how football has helped them in their lives shows the hugely positive impact that our game has in every community across Ireland.

"It is hugely important for the board and staff to hear about these

experiences, helping us to make football more inclusive than ever before. We're delighted to welcome the LGBTI+ family to the football family."

"Today is a historic day for BeLonG To," said Moninne Griffith, the executive director of the organisation.

"It is a chance for us to raise awareness of our organisation and the services we provide for the young LGBTI+ community in Ireland. Today's session teaches skills to use if you witness homophobic or transphobic bullying in the football community, so you know how to deal with those situations.

"The FAI is one of the biggest sporting bodies in the country, and we're delighted that they've welcomed us here today."

FOSTERING TOMORROW'S TALENT

PAUL ZAHARIA



 Developing football among the youngest players is one of the main strategic objectives of the Romanian Football Federation (FRF), and is therefore one of its main pillars of activity.

Obviously, this can be achieved not only by improving the national youth teams, but also by improving the work of the various youth development structures all over the country and then

raising the standard of domestic competitions for children and teens.

Significant investment in these structures provides the ideal opportunity to discover and foster young talent, but that alone is not enough. Young players need a suitable competition system so that they can continue striving for higher levels and, ultimately, the national youth teams.

Taking these factors into account,

the FRF has launched a complex project to rank the structures, which include academies, youth clubs and the clubs' own youth centres, according to their quality standards.

Conducted in cooperation with NMC Bright, a Dutch consultancy with more than 15 years' experience in assessing and classifying European football academies, the ranking will be based on transparent criteria for seven categories: strategy and football philosophy; number of teams and players; technical staff; support staff; training sessions and matches; infrastructure and facilities; and team results.

In a statement, the FRF president, Răzvan Burleanu, summarised its significance: "The results our national teams obtained in 2018 once again confirm the huge potential of Romanian football, with its many talented players. We really need a clearer picture of Romanian youth football as that is the starting point of the development process for everybody. This is the only way to offer our youngsters the best facilities so they can improve and achieve glory."

NEW UNDER-21 HEAD COACH

EKATERINA GRISHENKOVA

 Late last year, the Football Union of Russia executive committee appointed Mikhail Galaktionov head coach of the Russian Under-21 team.

Under Galaktionov's leadership, the Russian Under-17 team won bronze medals at the 2015 European Under-17 Championship in Bulgaria and reached the final stage of the 2015 U-17 World Cup in Chile. He was also head coach of Russian premier league club FC Akhmat Grozny and recently led the Russian Under-20 team.

"Coaching the second national team is both a great honour and great responsibility," said Galaktionov.

"We have set ourselves some very interesting and serious goals. First of all, we need to create an efficient side that will be recognisable, with its own style of play and a good team spirit. We need to do our best and achieve good results."

Mikhail Galaktionov and his team have another major aim: qualify for the final stage of the 2021 European Under-21 Championship, to be held in Hungary and Slovenia. In the qualifying competition, the Russians will play in Group 5 against Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia and Poland, opening with a home match against Serbia on 6 September.



"We will be up against strong teams in an interesting group," he said. "We expect the matches to be tough and we'll need to carefully analyse our opponents and thoroughly prepare for each game. But most importantly, we need to be in prime condition."

KIT DONATIONS HELP TO FORGE AN UNLIKELY BOND

CRAIG WRIGHT

 Scotland and Rwanda may not be the most obvious partners, but the common language of football is helping to forge a strong relationship between the two countries.

Football-mad children across the east African nation are benefiting from the use of surplus Scottish kit, with the passion for the game as strong in Kigali as it is in Glasgow.

"I'd been over to Rwanda the previous year with a group of coaches from Tranent Community Club, who had been working with some local youth academies in Kigali," said Scottish Football Association chaplain Mark Fleming.

"We'd visited a group of kids who were living on a rubbish tip, which meant that they were susceptible to all sorts of abuse and so on. If they were found loitering they'd be thrown in prison. The kids were just living off their wits.

"The organisation I work for – Comfort International – started a sponsorship programme for the kids, which ended up being so successful that they cleared the

rubbish tip. These kids don't have a great deal in terms of clothing, so we gave them spare Scotland jerseys. These became their school uniform, and they wear it with such pride."

Fleming is understandably proud of the relationship that the two nations have forged through such work, and he is hopeful that the medium of football can

continue to inspire the next generation.

"The Rwandan FA are really keen to have an ongoing relationship with both us and the Scottish FA. They're really enthusiastic about continuing these links. It's massively raised the profile of Scotland among Rwandan people, too.

"It's created such a love for Scotland, and that makes me so proud."



Scottish FA

STARS OF THE FUTURE

MIRKO VRBICA

 The Football Association of Serbia (FSS) recently organised another of its regular winter camps, bringing together 120 of the most talented boys in order to hone the skills of future stars of the Serbian national team. That latest camp, which took place in Stara Pazova from 10 to 21 January, was a great success, with the team of instructors, led by coordinator Borislav Cvetković, following a new work programme under the watchful eye of project manager Dalibor Zorko.

The work programme formed part of a new project aimed at producing talented footballers and healthy, rounded individuals.

In addition to targeted training, the programme also involved educational sessions and obligatory elements of the school curriculum, including mandatory reading. In line with the approach adopted in the most successful European countries, instructors stressed the importance of education – both during a player's career and after their retirement.

The star guest at the camp was Serbian international Antonio Rukavina, who was spending his off-season working at the FSS's sports centre. The boys were thrilled to meet him and hear his valuable words of advice.



FSS sports director Darko Kovačević and youth team coordinator Goran Vasilijević kept a close eye on the implementation of the new programme, which is part of a long-term strategy aimed at establishing a true Serbian football school. On the basis of what they saw in Stara Pazova, Serbian football has a bright future ahead of it.

SLOVAK FOOTBALL MOURNS JOZEF ADAMEC

PETER ŠURIN

 There is one more genius in football heaven. Jozef Adamec, one of the greatest players of all time and a unique coach, died on 24 December 2018 – a suitably special day for the passing of a very special individual.

Born in Vrbová on 26 February 1942, Jozef Adamec was a talismanic figure in the golden era of FC Spartak Trnava, playing a key role in the club's five Czechoslovak league titles of the late 1960s and early 1970s and helping them to the semi-finals of the European Champion Clubs' Cup in 1968/69. He was a turbulent player on the pitch, but loved football and hated injustice. He often found himself in the midst of conflict – not only verbal, but also physical – but he was always a proud defender of the truth and a staunch advocate of the right to express an opinion.

Generations of fans respected him – including those of opposing clubs, who suffered as a result of his scoring so many goals against them. He won the Czechoslovak league title on seven occasions in total: two with Dukla Praha, plus his five with Spartak Trnava. The football world will also remember him as someone who scored a hat-trick against Brazil, a feat he achieved on 23 June 1968 at Štadión Tehelné Pole in Bratislava.

He made a total of 396 top-flight appearances, scoring 170 goals, and was capped 44 times for Czechoslovakia, scoring 14 goals for the national team; he was the league's top scorer on four separate occasions and was part of the Czechoslovak team that were runners-up at the 1962 World Cup; he is a member of the Slovak Hall of Fame and came second in a player of the century poll. He also



SFZ

coached a large number of Slovak, Czech and Austrian clubs, as well as taking charge of the Slovak national team from 1998 to 2001.

"If he had played today, he would have been a Barcelona player," said pundit and former player Martin Poljovka.

He was, quite simply, a living legend – a divine talent and an unforgettable player.

SPAIN'S UNSTOPPABLE WOMEN

COMMUNICATIONS DEPARTMENT

 Unstoppable. That is the only way to describe women's football in Spain at the moment. In 2018, Spanish teams won the U17 Women's World Cup, were runners-up

in the U20 Women's World Cup and won the European Women's Under-19 Championship.

The picture is not all that different at senior level, either, with the women's

national team qualifying undefeated for the 2019 Women's World Cup in France with eight wins out of eight.

It is surely no coincidence that Spain's spectacular sporting success has coincided with broader social change in the country in the area of gender roles. Record numbers of fans have been attending women's national team's matches, the number of registered female players has doubled in the last few years, and more and more women have been appointed to executive positions at the Royal Spanish Football Federation (RFEF).

This recent period of sporting success began with the arrival of RFEF president Luis Rubiales, who has boosted and promoted women's football. That institutional support has, in turn, fuelled success on the pitch as women's football has gained in terms of visibility and resources.

The RFEF's commitment to the women's game is clear: there will be no going back; women's football is here to stay.



SWEDEN

www.svenskfotboll.se

HUMAN RIGHTS DELEGATION TO QATAR

JAKOB KAKEMBO ANDERSSON

 A delegation consisting of the Nordic countries' football associations and trade unions visited Qatar to raise issues of human rights and working conditions. The group held meetings with the International Labour Organization (ILO), human rights organisations and Qatari authorities, and also met with migrant workers in Qatar. This was a follow-up to an initial visit in 2016. "There has been progress in Qatar," says Jörgen Eriksson, the Swedish Football Association's vice president, "but there are still significant shortcomings that need to be addressed."

In other news, Sweden's national men's team coach Janne Andersson received the leader of the year award at the annual Swedish sports gala in January. Andersson led the Swedish team to the



Jörgen Eriksson, Johan Lindholm, chairman Byggnads (Swedish construction workers trade union), Håkan Sjöstrand, Swedish FA general secretary.

quarter-finals in last year's World Cup. The Swedish sports academy's motivation for the award was that "under

Andersson's leadership, Sweden has become a team machine that has surprised time after time."

SWITZERLAND

www.football.ch

'WE ALSO WANT TO BEAT THE BEST'

PIERRE BENOIT



In September of last year, after Martina Voss-Tecklenburg, the then coach of the Swiss women's national team, announced her resignation, the Swiss



Nils Nielsen

Football Association published a statement that took some people by surprise.

While we realise we shouldn't count our chickens, as the saying goes, on closer examination it was clear that the Swiss FA had landed a very big fish, in the shape of Nils Nielsen, a Danish footballer who had been forced to end his playing career due to injury.

Nielsen brings his experience from Danish club elite youth football and various national youth teams. So, it made sense for the Danish Football Association to look to him six years ago when an opening came up as head coach of the women's national team. Nielsen accepted and took them through to the final of Women's EURO 2017.

Since last December, Nielsen has been the highly motivated coach of the Swiss women's team, and he is setting his sights high.

"We have many young female players with enormous potential," he says.

"So, we must aim to be so good in some areas that we are even able to beat the very best teams."

Nielsen has also noticed that the Swiss women's team has not only made great strides over the last few years but has also had considerable success.

"Switzerland has already achieved so much thanks to its many extremely good players. We would like to do wonderful things with the ball, dominating possession and scoring some beautiful goals, so that the Swiss fans will be eager to buy tickets whenever we're playing at home."

Nielsen already has ideas about the future of women's football as a whole. "We need to make sure that players ending their active career want to take on other roles in Swiss football," he says, "so that their know-how isn't lost. If we manage to do that, we will help to make women's football even more popular in Switzerland."

UNDER-16s SHINE IN 20TH AEGEAN CUP

EGE ERSÖZ

 This year, the Turkish Football Federation (TFF) welcomed the national Under-16 teams of Albania, Azerbaijan, England, FYR Macedonia, Moldova, Russia, Spain and Turkey for the 20th Aegean Cup, its international youth football tournament.

The event was hosted at Turkey's second-division club Altınordu FK's training facilities in Torbali and at the Tire stadium. The club are renowned for their contribution to developing youth football.

Turkey won the tournament for a record ninth time, having defeated Spain 2-0 in the final.

Ömer Faruk Beyaz scored both of Turkey's goals in the final and was named man of the match. England's Liam Delap was the tournament's top scorer, with five goals. The fair play award also went to England.

Launched in 1999 and originally named after the Turkish super league's former top scorer Bora Öztürk, the competition was renamed the Aegean Cup in 2002. It is one of the most



TFF

important TFF events to develop youth football by giving younger players a chance to compete in a friendly tournament at an international level.

France, one of the most frequent

participants, have lifted the Aegean Cup six times, five of which in a row. Greece are in third place, having won the cup twice. Russia, the USA and Ukraine have won the Aegean Cup only once.

WELSH CFM COURSE COMES TO AN END

MELISSA PALMER

 On 12 December, a graduation ceremony took place at the Celtic Manor Resort to mark the end of the Welsh edition of the UEFA Certificate in Football Management (CFM). Course participants from the Football Association of Wales (FAW), the FAW Trust and a number of other European football associations were joined by CFM course leaders and lecturers, Professor Jean-Loup Chappelet and the Welsh national team's manager, Ryan Giggs, to celebrate their achievements.

Over the years, many employees of the FAW and the FAW Trust have successfully completed this prestigious UEFA course. However, this was the first time that Wales



had hosted the course – a clear sign of the desire to actively invest in the personal development of FAW and FAW Trust staff.

As many national association employees will know, the CFM is run in cooperation with the University of Lausanne in Switzerland. The programme of study

adopts a blended-learning approach, which combines online modules with three face-to-face seminars led by academic and professional experts, with each component focusing on a different aspect of football association management.

The Welsh course, which lasted more than nine months, enabled FAW and FAW Trust employees to learn about best practices using case studies from across Europe, as well as giving them the opportunity to strengthen relationships with other members of Europe's football family. Graduates felt that it had been an invaluable experience and encouraged all national association staff to take part in such courses if they had the opportunity.

PIERRE DELAUNAY PASSES AWAY

UEFA and European football mourned the loss on 24 January of a highly influential figure in the body's early years, when Pierre Delaunay, UEFA's second general secretary, passed away at the age of 99.

The Frenchman served UEFA as general secretary from 1956 to 1959, succeeding his father Henri Delaunay, who had taken up the post following UEFA's founding in June 1954. Pierre Delaunay assumed the position on an interim basis when his father died in November 1955, and was officially appointed as UEFA general secretary at the 1956 general assembly in Lisbon.

Pierre Delaunay had also succeeded his father as general secretary of the French Football Federation (FFF), and divided his working time between the French national association and UEFA, serving the European body under its first president, Denmark's Ebbe Schwartz. He combined the two roles from the same office in Paris, as UEFA had yet to acquire its own headquarters. "My father showed me the way in the world of football. So I was well prepared for taking on this role," Pierre Delaunay said.

A European vision

Pierre Delaunay fiercely championed his father's long-standing dream of creating a European competition for national teams – a vision that would become reality with the launching in June 1958 of the European Nations' Cup, later to become the European Championship. During his time as general secretary, UEFA moved forward boldly and earned credibility and respect as the umbrella body of European football.

UEFA moved from Paris to the Swiss federal capital Berne in 1960, and Pierre Delaunay decided to stay in France with the FFF – Switzerland's Hans Bangerter succeeding him as UEFA general secretary. He continued to attend meetings of the UEFA Executive Committee as a member until 1962, and remained a member of the European Championship organising committee until 1969. Leaving the FFF that same year, he eventually opened an antiques shop in Versailles.

Pierre Delaunay remained close to UEFA through his membership of the 'Amicale



Presse sports

des anciens' circle of former committee members. "Pierre Delaunay's belief in unity and the power of football endures today in the organisation he served," said UEFA's current general secretary, Theodore Theodoridis, in paying tribute.

"He was a key driver in the establishment of what we now know as

the UEFA European Championship, which had been the vision of his father. It is fitting that the EURO celebrates its 60th anniversary next year with the biggest celebration of European unity that has ever been staged. It will be a wonderful tribute to all that he stood for." ☈

MARCH BIRTHDAYS

1 FRIDAY Peter Frymuth (Germany) Benny Jacobsen (Denmark) Luis Medina Cantalejo (Spain) Christian Musenga (Italy)	2 SATURDAY Aleksandr Gvardi (Russia) Jenni Kennedy (England) Damir Vrbanović (Croatia) 60th	3 SUNDAY Zbigniew Boniek (Poland) Alexandru Deaconu (Romania) Andy Gould (Scotland) Carolin Greiner Mai (Germany) Hans Lorenz (Germany)	4 MONDAY Patrick McGrath (Republic of Ireland)	5 TUESDAY Zoran Bahtijarević (Croatia) Crawford Wilson (Northern Ireland)	6 WEDNESDAY Dan Ashworth (England) Boris Durlen (Croatia) Ichko Lozev (Bulgaria) Hervé Piccirillo (France)	7 THURSDAY Tomás Gea (Andorra) Dušan Maravić (Serbia) 80th
10 SUNDAY Diana Andersen (Denmark) 50th Jasmin Baković (Bosnia and Herzegovina) Mateo Beusan (Croatia) Ilkka Koho (Finland)	11 MONDAY Vito Di Gioia (Italy) Lucien Kayser (Luxembourg) Olga Zhukovska (Ukraine)	12 TUESDAY Jean-François Crucke (Belgium) 70th Miroslav Vitković (Croatia)	13 WEDNESDAY Thomas Partl (Austria)	14 THURSDAY Neil Jardine (Northern Ireland) 50th Lucia Knappkova (Slovakia) Nikola Prentić (Montenegro)	15 FRIDAY Götz Dimanski (Germany) 60th Ari Lahti (Finland) Robert Malek (Poland) Michael Ross (Northern Ireland)	16 SATURDAY Carlos Velasco Carballo (Spain)
19 TUESDAY Mark Bos (Netherlands) Claude Kremer (Luxembourg) Ronald Zimmermann (Germany)	20 WEDNESDAY Sándor Csányi (Hungary) Eddie Foley (Republic of Ireland)	21 THURSDAY Jim Boyce (Northern Ireland)	22 FRIDAY Helmut Fleischer (Germany) Pascal Garibian (France) Chris Georgiadi (Cyprus) Michail Kassabov (Bulgaria) Ginés Meléndez (Spain) Andrew Niven (Scotland) Hugo Quaderer (LIE) Gabriele Tomassi (Italy) Luca Zorzi (Switzerland)	23 SATURDAY Dejan Dimovski (MKD) Gianni Infantino (ITA/SUI) Franz Krösslhuber (AUT) 70th Andrea Lastrucci (ITA) Miroslaw Malinowski (POL) Hilda McDermott (IRL) Mahmu Özgener (TUR) Fernando Ruiz Hierro (ESP) Outi Saarinen (FIN)	24 SUNDAY	25 MONDAY Michael Kirchner (Germany) 50th
28 THURSDAY Pål Bjerketvedt (Norway) Pavel Cebanu (Moldova) Lamprini Dimitriou (Greece) 30th	29 FRIDAY Bernadette Constant (FRA) Bernardino González Vázquez (Spain) Sanna Pirhonen (Finland) Edgar Obertüfer (SUI) Christina Sass (Germany) Ignacio Sitges Serra (Spain) Alan Snoddy (Northern Ireland)	30 SATURDAY William Wilson (Scotland)	31 SUNDAY Richard Havrilla (Slovakia) Marina Mamaeva (Russia) Matteo Simone Trefoloni (Italy)			

APRIL BIRTHDAYS

1 MONDAY Christina Wolff (Germany) 30th	2 TUESDAY Kevin Azzopardi (Malta) Elisabeth Derkx (Netherlands) Márton Dinnýés (Hungary) Dejan Filipović (Serbia) Michael Sjöö (Sweden)	3 WEDNESDAY Dennis Cruise (Republic of Ireland) Kaj Østergaard (Denmark) Yoav Strauss (Israel) Martin Sturkenboom (Netherlands) Emil Ubias (Czech Republic)	4 THURSDAY Marco Casagrande (Finland) Christian Kofoed (Denmark) Alex Miescher (Switzerland) Eamon Naughton (Republic of Ireland)	5 FRIDAY Momir Djurdjevac (Montenegro) Jan Ekstrand (Sweden) Petteri Kari (Finland) Aleksandra Pejkovska (FYR Macedonia) 40th Alexey Sorokin (Russia)	6 SATURDAY Snježana Fočić (Croatia) Vencel Tóth (Hungary)	7 SUNDAY Vadims Lasenko (Latvia)
10 WEDNESDAY Eduard Kindle (Liechtenstein) Gordon Pate (Scotland) Zoran Petrović (Serbia) Panagiotis Tsarouchas (Greece)	11 THURSDAY Pierre Dumarché (France) Umberto Gandin (Italy) Viktoria Marozava (Belarus) Kristiaan Van Der Haegen (Belgium)	12 FRIDAY António José Fernandes Cardoso (Portugal) Rodger Gifford (Wales) Valeriu Ionita (Romania) Neil Morrow (Northern Ireland)	13 SATURDAY Marcin Borski (Poland) Edvinas Eimontas (Lithuania) Paolo Piani (Italy) Giovanni Spitaleri (Italy) Johan Verbst (Belgium)	14 SUNDAY Octavian Goga (Romania)	15 MONDAY Georgios Bikas (Greece) Erol Ersoy (Turkey) Anders Hubinette (Sweden) Antonius van Eekelen (Netherlands)	16 TUESDAY Manuel Enrique Mejuto González (Spain)
19 FRIDAY Elena Charina (Russia) 40th Norman Darmanin Demajo (Malta) Virgar Hvidbro (Faroe Islands) Johan Timmermans (Belgium)	20 SATURDAY Michael Argyrou (Cyprus) Nenad Santrač (Serbia) 50th Jean-Luc Veuthey (Switzerland)	21 SUNDAY Alexandru Burlac (Moldova) Marc Lenefants (Belgium) 70th Vitor Pereira (Portugal) Martínus van den Bekermo (Netherlands) Tomislav Vlahović (Croatia)	22 MONDAY Claudine Brochet (Belgium) Jan Damgaard (Denmark) Morgan Norman (Sweden) Rod Petrie (Scotland) Volodymyr Petrov (Ukraine) David Pugh (England) İlker Yücesir (Turkey)	23 TUESDAY Mehmet S. Binet (Turkey) Prune Rocipon (France) Roland Tis (Belgium)	24 WEDNESDAY Nebojša Ivković (Serbia) Sándor Piller (Hungary)	25 THURSDAY Nikolaos Bartzis (Greece) Salustia Chato Cipres (Andorra) 50th Thomas Einwaller (Austria) Dany Ryser (Switzerland) Valentin Velikov (Bulgaria) Philippe Verbiest (Belgium)
28 SUNDAY Yuriy Zapotskiy (Ukraine)	29 MONDAY Gudmundur Ingi Jónsson (Iceland) 70th	30 TUESDAY				

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

8 FRIDAY	9 SATURDAY
Kris Bellon (Belgium) 50th Josep Lluís Vilaseca Guasch (Spain)	Vladimir Aleshin (Russia) Herbert Fandel (Germany) Otar Giorgadze (Georgia) Henk Kesler (Netherlands) 70th Alexis Ponnet (Belgium) 80th Lennard van Ruiven (Netherlands)
17 SUNDAY	18 MONDAY
Simeon Tsolakidis (Greece)	Paul Elliott (England) Marcello Nicchi (Italy) Marina Tashchyan (Armenia)
26 TUESDAY	27 WEDNESDAY
Gitte Holm (Denmark) Peter Schöttel (Austria)	José Antonio Casajus (Spain) Armen Minasyan (Armenia) John Peacock (England)

MARCH

Meetings

11 March, Nyon
Women's Football Committee

13 March, Munich
UEFA Regions' Cup: final draw

15 March, Nyon
UEFA Champions League/UEFA Europa League: quarter-final and semi-final draws

Competitions

5/6 and 12/13 March
UEFA Champions League: round of 16 (return legs)

7 March
UEFA Europa League: round of 16 (first legs)

12/13 March
UEFA Youth League: round of 16

14 March
UEFA Europa League: round of 16 (return legs)

20/21 March
UEFA Women's Champions League: quarter-finals (first legs)

20–26 March
2019–21 European Under-21 Championship: qualifying matches

21–23 March
EURO 2020 qualifiers: matchday 1

24–26 March
EURO 2020 qualifiers: matchday 2

26–31 March
European Futsal Under-19 Championship: main round

27/28 March
UEFA Women's Champions League: quarter-finals (return legs)

APRIL

Meetings

2 April, Nyon
HatTrick Committee

2/3 April, London
#EqualGame Conference

4 April, Nyon
Stadium and Security Committee

4 April, Dublin
European Under-17 Championship: final draw

5 April, Bulgaria
European Women's Under-17 Championship: final draw

12 April, Nyon
Club Licensing Committee

Competitions

2/3 April
UEFA Youth League: quarter-finals

9/10 April
UEFA Champions League: quarter-finals (first legs)

11 April
UEFA Europa League: quarter-finals (first legs)

16/17 April
UEFA Champions League: quarter-finals (return legs)

18 April
UEFA Europa League: quarter-finals (return legs)

20/21 April
UEFA Women's Champions League: semi-finals (first legs)

26–28 April, Kazakhstan
UEFA Futsal Champions League: final round

26–29 April, Nyon
UEFA Youth League: final

27/28 April
UEFA Women's Champions League: semi-finals (return legs)

30 April–1 May
UEFA Champions League: semi-finals (first legs)

8 MONDAY	9 TUESDAY
Clemens Burgstaller (Austria) Jim Fleeting (Scotland) Peter Hegyi (Hungary) Yevgeniy Stolitenko (Ukraine)	Márton Esterházy (Hungary) Ladislav Svoboda (Czech Republic)
17 WEDNESDAY	18 THURSDAY
Charles Schaack (Luxembourg) Frances Smith (Republic of Ireland)	Alexander Remin (Belarus) Oguz Sarvan (Turkey)

26 FRIDAY	27 SATURDAY
Lucílio Batista (Portugal) Laurent Georges (France) Yariv Teper (Israel)	Jan Carlsen (Denmark) Frank Fontvielle (France) Marina Sbardella (Italy) Edgar Steinborn (Germany)

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