**What is the background to the UEFA Nations League?**

The rejuvenation of national team football – and the UEFA Nations League – stems from the desire of UEFA and its 55 member associations to improve the quality and standing of national team football. UEFA and its associations wanted more sporting meaning in national team football, with associations, coaches, players and supporters increasingly of the opinion that friendly matches are not providing adequate competition for national teams.

Extensive consultation and discussions started as far back as the 2011 UEFA Strategy Meeting in Cyprus and continued at a series of Top Executive Programme (TEP) meetings over the following three years. The UEFA Nations League was unanimously adopted at the XXXVIII Ordinary UEFA Congress in Astana on 27 March 2014.

**What is the basic format?**

* The format of the UEFA Nations League will feature promotion and relegation and see the 55 European national teams divided into four leagues in accordance with UEFA’s national association coefficient rankings on 11 October 2017. League A will include the top-ranked sides and League D will include the lowest. Leagues A and B will consist of four groups of three teams
* League C will comprise one group of three teams and three groups of four sides
* League D will be formed by four groups of four teams
* The League Phase Draw for the UEFA Nations League took place at the SwissTech Convention Centre in Lausanne on 24 January 2018.
* In each league, four group winners are promoted (or play in the UEFA Nations League Finals, see below) and four teams are relegated for the next competition to be played in 2020
* The overall UEFA Nations League rankings will determine the composition of the draw pots for the subsequent European Qualifiers
* In addition, the UEFA Nations League will provide teams with another chance to qualify for the UEFA EURO final tournament, with four sides qualifying through play-off matches, which take place in March 2020.

**When will the UEFA Nations League take place?**

The UEFA Nations League will take place as follows:

* The UEFA Nations League group games will be held over six matchdays, during the 'double-headers' in September, October and November 2018. The UEFA Nations League Finals, for the teams that win the four groups within the top division are scheduled for June 2019.
* For the UEFA Nations League Finals, the four group winners of UEFA Nations League A will play in a knockout format (semi-finals, third-place match and final) in June 2019 to become the UEFA Nations League winners. One host country will be appointed by the UEFA Executive Committee in December 2018 from among the finalist teams. Italy, Poland and Portugal have submitted bids to host the 2019 Finals.

**How is the overall UEFA Nations League ranking calculated?**

Within each league (A, B, C and D), the overall ranking will be calculated based on position in the group, points, goal difference, goals scored, away goals scored, wins, away wins, disciplinary points, co-efficient ranking.

**What are the advantages for national associations and teams?**

National associations and coaches, in consultations with UEFA, revealed that they feel that friendly internationals are not providing adequate sporting competition. The UEFA Nations League creates more meaningful and competitive matches for teams and a dedicated calendar and structure for national team football.

Top teams can also aspire to take part in the UEFA Nations League Finals, a new top-level event.

For middle-ranking and smaller nations, the UEFA Nations League will offer an extra way to qualify for UEFA EURO final tournaments. Lower-tier countries – the bottom 16 in the rankings – are now guaranteed one of the 24 qualifying slots for UEFA EURO.

Lower-ranking teams who have struggled against sides ranked considerably higher than them will now get the chance to take part in balanced matches. Teams do not learn and progress by repeatedly losing; now some sides will start winning.

Associations and teams benefit from clarity of the fixture calendar, and there is now a clear buffer between the end of the UEFA EURO and FIFA World Cup, and vice versa, as well as stability of income.

**What are the advantages for supporters?**

Supporters more than most realise that most friendlies fail to deliver competitive and meaningful football. Now they will have the opportunity to see their teams play in more competitive matches, take part in a new competition and get a second chance to qualify for the major tournaments.

In every even year there are World Cup or UEFA EURO champions; now in every odd year there will be a UEFA Nations League winners. Football is about competition and now, just like in club football, there will be a national team champion at the close of every season.

**Will this mean more demands on players and clubs?**

No: the UEFA Nations League and European Qualifiers will adhere to the existing agreed international match calendar. UEFA is always keen to preserve the balance between club and international football. The new competition should, in fact, reduce demands on players and clubs with less travel envisaged for friendly games while national teams will be playing more consistently at their own level. With double-header match weeks, players will even go back to their clubs earlier than is currently the case.

**Is this just about generating more revenue?**

No, finances are not a driver for the new competition. However, the competition will have the same centralised media rights as have recently been introduced for all European Qualifiers, so associations will have even more stability in their income.

**Will there be no more friendly internationals?**

There will certainly be fewer friendly internationals and undoubtedly fewer meaningless friendlies. However, there will still be space in the calendar for friendly internationals – particularly warm-up matches for final tournaments. UEFA is also keen that European teams will still have the chance to play opponents from other confederations.