



AFL Europe Limited

**2019 General Assembly
Meeting (GAM) Minutes**

Norrtälje, Sweden

30 June 2019

Minutes taken and documented by Lily Beck

Item No.	Agenda Item	Presenter
1.	Introductions/Welcomes/Apologies	Oliver Howard
2.	Appointment of Chair and Secretary of General Assembly	Oliver Howard
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14.	General Business	Chair

Meeting open 10:15am

Attendees:

Oliver Howard (OH) – AFL Europe Commission
Greg Hutton (GH) – AFL Europe Commission
Tom Rischbieth (TR) – AFL Europe Commission
Dan Jackson (DJ) – AFL Europe Commission
Ryan Davey (RD) – AFL Europe
Lily Beck (LB) – AFL Europe
Paul Briedis (PB) – Czech Republic
Phil Forbes (PF) – Poland
Bas van Schie (BVS) – Netherlands
Steve Dillon (SD) – Netherlands
Maurice Verbakel (MV) – Netherlands
Slava Belov (SB) – Russia
Thomas Depondt (TD) – France
Fabian Cordts (FC) – Germany
Martin Schittegg (MS) – Austria
Ulrike Senti (US) – Switzerland
Stefan Burgener (SB) – Switzerland
Brian Currane (BC) – Ireland
James Gibson (JG) – Wales
Katrina Stopinski (KS) – Umpires
David Baldie (DB) – Scotland
Ivan Molnar (IM) – Croatia
Dinko Irsag (DI) – Croatia & Italy Proxy
Tasha Reshetnikova (TR*) – Israel
Shir Shalev (SS) – Israel
Michael Currane (MC) – AFL Europe Commission & England Proxy
Ryan Tucker (RT) – Sweden & AFL Europe Commission & Finland/Denmark Proxy

1. Introductions/Welcomes/Apologies

Oliver Howard (OH): We have quorum, so I open the meeting at 10:15am.

Welcome everyone, and apologies for the slightly late start to today's meeting. I want to begin the meeting with a heartfelt well done to Ryan Tucker and his Swedish team for organising and hosting yesterday's Euro Cup in Norrtälje, Sweden. I think everyone could see that you were hugely committed, did a mountain of work and delivered a fantastic event. Thanks also to everyone for participating in this year's Euro Cup.

With proxies we do have a quorum present, so thank you to everyone who has made it along today. We have a few new faces in the group at this year's meeting. This meeting is an important part of what we do, we essentially have one opportunity each year to get together to discuss AFL Europe issues, hold us as a Commission accountable and so that we can make informed decisions that represent the community and your wishes.

There will be a silent vote today for the election of community commissioners and open votes which will be done by a show of hands. We have three hours allocated today but we'd love finish prior to this if possible as many people need to get planes and trains back to their homes later this afternoon.

We've been lucky to be supported by a new partner in Fine Wine Partners, who are represented here today, and they have graciously given us a couple of bottles of wine to enjoy together after the meeting today.

2. Appointment of Chair and Secretary of General Assembly

OH: The first agenda item is to nominate a Chair for today's meeting. I have prepared for this role and nominate myself. Does anyone else want to nominate for Chair of the meeting?

No objection or other nomination – Oliver Howard elected to act as chairman of this meeting.

I nominate Lily Beck to act as secretary for the meeting. Does anyone else want to nominate for the role of Secretary of the meeting?

No objections or other nomination – Lily Beck elected to act as secretary and keep minutes of the meeting.

3. Ratification of 2018 General Assembly Minutes

OH: The next item is to ratify the 2018 GAM minutes.

Scotland passes and Ireland seconds the 2018 GAM minutes.

4. AFL Europe Commission Resignations & Appointments

OH: Next we move onto agenda item 4, the Commission resignations and appointments.

After 5 years on the Commission, Josip Kravar from Croatia is stepping down. Many of you in the room will know Josip Kravar, from both his presence in the community and his position as an AFL Europe commissioner. I'd like to take this opportunity to give a massive public acknowledgement to Josip for his five years of service to AFL Europe on the commission. Josip has been absolutely integral in growing AFL in Croatia, the Eastern Europe region and more broadly across Europe. He has put in countless hours, and we all hold Josip in such high regard with huge respect for what he has been able to achieve and the legacy he leaves. He's not stopping growing the game in Croatia, but he is going to step down at an AFL Europe level for now. He's had as big an effect on the growth of the game than anyone else in Europe. You will be sorely missed Josip, but I know that you have put in place the succession plans to ensure the continued growth of footy in Croatia and throughout Europe. Thank you.

Next is the role of the Chair which we vote on here. I have endorsement from the AFL to continue in the Chair role, and nominate for the role. Does anyone object or anyone else want to nominate for the role of Chair of AFL Europe?

No objection or other nomination – Oliver Howard elected to act as Chairman.

OH: The two-year term for the three elected Commissioners has expired. We now have a vote for the election of our community commissioners and all full members will have one vote. Each nominee will have 2 minutes to make a presentation and you have a voting slip in front of you. Given Croatian Dinko Israg has nominated but is running a little late, I propose we move to country reports and we'll come back to nominations and votes.

5. Western Europe Community Committee

OH: As per recent years, we have adopted a structured approach to country reports with sub-committees being led by Mike, Ryan Tucker and Josip to streamline feedback from the wider community. Each country within their region has given them a country report.

Michael Currane (MC): I'll begin with the country report from Scotland. Scotland continue with their 9-a-side league and now have 6 teams involved, thanks to the promotion of the West Lothian Eagles to a full time team after entering previously as a development team. SARFL play 21 games, with the top four placed teams entering finals. They had their first ever women's carnival this year, with three teams playing three games and working towards a permanent women's league over the next year or two. Their strengths are a steadily growing men's league, in addition to the enthusiastic and talented female contingent. Their current biggest weakness is the lack of trained umpires and availability for games. Current opportunities include the addition of new teams means an increase in new talent coming through for Scotland. Largest threat is the sustainability around rural clubs. The support they require from AFL Europe revolves around umpire training and recruitment.

MC: Moving across to France, they've had eight teams involved in their league this year, with the top four progressing through to finals. In addition to their regular league, they also host several French Cup tournaments, regular international friendlies, and the women's team organised their inaugural Gallia Cup, a women's only tournament, earlier this year. They've conducted initiation programs at four schools so far this year. Their strengths are their stable clubs and their growing player base. Their weaknesses are that there is often a lot of travel involved for players to compete in the league given the spread of teams. Their opportunities include the potential for greater numbers of Australians to join their clubs and help out on and off the field. Their threats are that some of their key players have been involved for a long time and may move on from the sport soon. They'd like some support from AFL Europe that ties in with promotion on social media, perhaps some video material.

MC: In Ireland, the men's competition is consistent with 4 teams involved over the last few years. The Irish Warriors are actively involved in every competition. AFL Ireland Women's has grown significantly since last year, including some success with universities. We had our inaugural AFL Ireland Women's University Cup this year with six teams competing. We also worked closely with AFL England to stage an international Universities match. This was the first of its kind in the community in both men's and women's divisions, and we held this in Dublin. We're continuing to recruit and form new clubs in the women's league, which has received a boost from the University player base. Last month we held an AFLW CrossCoders camp which is now the second camp to have taken place. The last AFLW season saw 5 Irish players and we now have 13 already signed for next season. Many of these players have begun their development in Ireland and have competed at Champions League and Euro Cup. It's great motivation for their peers, both from Ireland and other teams, to see girls they've competed with at an AFL Europe level moving into the AFLW.

James Gibson (JG): Wales has been competed in the Universities league this year and has been really helpful. We were very grateful to have Ryan come across and conduct a great coaching course last weekend. Our men's teams are steady this year but we have joined with AFL South England to make a league of 5 teams. We combine with the AFL Central Northern England league occasionally as well, which brings the competition to about nine teams in total. We've seen good growth in women's this year, from about 3 to 25 players in the last couple of years. Like Scotland, our biggest problem is also umpiring. Most of our umpires are players that are just covering games in the absence of proper umpires. That's our biggest concern along with not having enough volunteers.

6. Northern Europe Community Committee

Ryan Tucker (RT): Finland not here in the meeting today, although it was great to see them back at an international yesterday. It's been 2 years of solid work to get them here and they haven't competed in an international game since IC14. Their local league is growing with a couple of enthusiastic guys. Their main problem is distance between clubs, meaning players struggle to travel, and umpiring too. The players are the ones umpiring and it's difficult to get people to cover games when they're not playing. They're slowly working and growing organically and looking to get women's up and running.

RT: Denmark unfortunately weren't here yesterday. They are travelling along reasonably well after having a team fold earlier this year, but they're working to get them back in the league next year. There's been some great international games between them and Germany in men's and women's there early this year. Fantastic to travel to play club matches regularly.

RT: Sweden are in a similar position to what has already been said. We have an aging player group in some teams and we need more passionate people in each club. The sport is still growing here and women's in particular is exploding. We have a new Stockholm women's team this year and 4 of their members played in the national team yesterday. Women's is a focus throughout the country.

Slava Belov (SB): Russia now have two clubs, St Petersburg and Moscow. Moscow are back after a two year break. Our average player age is 32 so we're hoping to gradually lower this in a few years. We've targeted Universities to attempt to get some more young players involved. Distance between clubs has been a problem for us in the past, which is a problem we had with Moscow. Due to this we decided to run an AFL St Petersburg competition and we have two teams which are decided by the captains before each match. We play almost every week. Pass that on to Helsinki, it might be helpful if they're having trouble with long distance travel. Playing interclub matches still helps players to get practice. We managed to do some great things before Euro Cup, including playing a practice match against the Finland Icebreakers in Helsinki. We are looking at going to Estonia to play the Polish team at some stage. We've been discussing putting Estonia on the map and think that conducting a match there would help, the Icebreakers will probably join too. Our biggest impact on the sport and skills in St Petersburg were that we changed our internal rules after last year's Euro Cup. In our matches players are not allowed to kick the ball directly off the ground. They started picking it up not just kicking. I recommend this to anyone struggling with skill level, as it makes a huge difference. We have also started tracking personal statistics and it has had a big impact on the involvement of players. We track marks, tackles, assists, goals. They want more points and it's a small thing but it's something they can build on and it's easy to get best players of the match and it shapes the sport. Yesterday has been the best Russian performance ever so I really want to think it was because of all the work we did.

RT: I completely agree. The Russian skill level has picked up dramatically.

Maurice Verbakel (MV): The Netherlands have three clubs now. The Amsterdam Devils are still the biggest, but last year the Delft Blues joined and now we have the Waterland Eagles too. With Devils being the biggest, the other two are struggling with numbers. The league is still small with three clubs, so we have a three round competition plus a grand final. With Champions League at start of season we build up towards that. The Devils did international practice matches and travelled to play Paris and London. We have opportunities now to grow. End of season is Euro Cup usually so now we will continue having games given that it was in June this year. Our current weaknesses are lack of volunteers. The highlight has been setting up our first ever women's team in Amsterdam. We knew we needed a woman to drive it and we had Bridgette set that up and even had the Devil's women's team compete at Champions League.

RT: It's fantastic to see Netherlands grow and it's good to see on social media, you're always very open about how everything works. Everyone should strive towards Netherlands as an idol. Norway unfortunately were unable to attend Euro Cup. They are playing matches although they are struggling with numbers.

7. Central and Eastern Europe Community Committee

Dinko Irsag (DI): Our region largely comes down to our league, the CFL. Austria initially entered with one team and now have two teams. This year they joined the Italians in the CFL to help each other out with player numbers, which helps to keep all the sides involved in the league. In Croatia, we've gone down to three clubs in order to keep all the clubs stable and healthy. Our women's competition has expanded to two clubs now which is a positive development and their numbers are good. In recruitment, we've noticed that males are harder to recruit. Girls usually bring their friends along which makes it easier in the women's side. Universities help a lot, and easier to get male students involved. Switzerland also joined the CFL this year.

Stefan Burgener (SB): In the last 9 months, Switzerland has gone from one club to a 3 team league. We have 60 men and 20 women within the league. For now, we're playing a mixed league so that the girls can still play despite lack of numbers, although we have separate leagues planned for next year. Basel and Geneva have joined Winterthur in a 5-round league plus finals. Mixed teams work well although not really optimal. We've made rule changes in regards to tackling, to not use excessive force when men tackle women. Shepherding and wrapping is fine. It's not a perfect system but definitely worth doing so that the girls can play regular games. We had the Swiss women's national team here for the first time this year and playing in the league has helped with that.

DI: The Italians are struggling to get new young players in. We're trying to help out so they joined the Swiss and Austrians this year in a game to help them top up their numbers.

Fabian Cordts (FC): Germany has been consistent recently. We currently have 7 clubs playing in a country wide 10-round competition. This year the women's league was introduced with 4 teams. They're playing a shortened home and away season, and each team has 4 games plus final. Overall our player numbers are consistent, and we have teams represented at every major European tournament. Player turnover is becoming a concern, and younger players in particular don't stick around much longer than a year or two. We're putting effort into this to fix this so that we don't end up with an aging player group. Our biggest strengths are our history and our internal league.

OH: There was an incredibly strong performance yesterday by both German teams taking home the bronze.

DI: Czech Republic couldn't participate in the CFL this year but in general are always regular. They're struggling to expand with only one club but we're trying to help them out and go and play games there. They also have an aging group and are struggling to get young players involved.

Paul Briedis (PB): Dinko summed it up well. We're currently trying to organise a game with Vienna in August. Getting pitches is a challenge and there's not many available in Prague, so we're training and playing in the park. Cost of travel is an issue as well in Prague. Our money doesn't convert well to other countries so it's difficult to visit other countries. Graz, Vienna and Dresden are issues for us. Volunteers is an issue and some people are helping again and again and it limits us. We're trying to get locals involved not just Australians.

Phil Forbes (PF): We are brand new this year, we had our first proper matches yesterday. Our strengths at the moment are our opportunity. We play the culture card in Poland, and an Aussie sport gets us attention. We had 80 supporters at an exhibition match last week. We had a few exemptions yesterday, but we want to get more Polish locals recruited in Warsaw. We want to expand the game in Poland but travel within Poland is a problem. The benefit is a lot of interest from regional centres. It's been difficult for us to develop in other cities without an Aussie based there. We need to travel to grow the game but in 12 months we're hoping to have two teams in Warsaw and one more in another city. We need to go back to Warsaw and figure out who's sticking around to help grow. Performance wise our players need more game knowledge and we need to get more experience.

OH: It sounds like a lot of people in the room have had the same issues.

PF: We're not far away from a lot of people in this room. We'd like to have a game in Warsaw as we get a lot of media attention and this would get more eyes on our sport in Poland. Another challenge is that we don't have a fixed ground. We can hire rugby pitches but they don't want to hire them to us because they're scared they'll lose players.

PB: Rugby don't want us on our pitches in Prague either.

PF: We need to show them they should work with us.

Bas van Schie (BVS): One of our teams, Waterland Eagles, are partnered with a rugby club. They worked with us because it's in their off season, so they share players in the off season.

Steve Dillon (SD): The players have dual memberships to the Eagles and the rugby club.

Shir Shalev (SS): Israel kept training after last year's Euro Cup with one team. We trained all year and in January we got a new team in Tel Aviv. Both teams have some number issues and it still isn't stable. We were a bit rushed for the Euro Cup but want to keep growing. We want to revive the Jerusalem team. We had some games with the 2 clubs which helps people stick around as only training is boring, people want to play matches.

Tasha Reshetnikova (TR*): We registered with an association which is an important step for us. We hope to register footy itself in Israel to make it a recognised sport. We share our pitch with rugby.

RT: It's great to see the engagement level from the Israeli guys. It shines through and a big effort to get here.

DI: A couple more comments. This year Croatian club played with the new team in Sofia which was a success for them and they're moving to start a league in Bulgaria. We have also just received a contact for a new club in Budapest and we will look to work with them where we can. We want to go and play them and help out. We'd like to get them both in the CFL as that's a strength for the league. Rugby and soccer also don't want us there on their pitches. We've come across an 18-a-side pitch at a university which is great.

Ryan Davey (RD): Sofia are very eager to play more games to ensure they continue to grow. They have sent out an open invitation to anyone who wants to travel to Sofia to play a game of AFL. They'll play whenever and would love to host as many teams as possible to play more matches and recruit more players.

Martin Schittegg (MS): Austria have two clubs at the moment. We have a new club in Vienna which is a developing team at the moment, we'll see how they go. In Graz we've been the same size for a couple of years. We get about 8 or 9 at training, it's hard to find new players. We've tried everything and lots of marketing but no new interest. In the last couple of years this has become a problem. We have a new field for next year, it's a cricket oval and we can train and have games there. A solution for the cricket pitch is needed to cover the corridor bit.

Tom Rischbieth (TR): Touch on the Norwood Football Club visit Dinko. They came to Croatia and played the national team.

DI: I was involved when they came over. Two years ago, one of our players, Tomislav, went to play for Norwood. He played there for their reserve side and sold them the idea that Croatia is nice to visit in the summer. They came over on a tour with their male and female sides and played our national teams. One of our sponsors provided them with a trip and accommodation and they had a great time in Croatia. That inspired everyone in Croatia as they were playing against more or less professionals. It's as close as we'll ever get to the AFL, and it was inspirational for everybody. We knew we would lose but we wanted to show what we could do, and we learned a lot from them. The skill level improved a lot, they trained with us for a week and their coach showed our players new skills from high level coaches. We've taken this on board and learned from them. Our coaches got to learn from the coaches and one of them is now the AFLW Collingwood coach. We used that momentum to start the second female club in Sesvete and we use that to inspire more players. Maybe next year or the year after we'll have an Aussie team come over again and we can use this for more recruitment.

TR: I'd encourage everyone that has contacts at Aussie clubs to get in touch and see what you can achieve. We're happy to help build relationships and provide contacts. That's how the Norwood tour happened and that's great momentum for Croatia. It's a very inspirational story and Norwood absolutely loved it. Well done AFL Croatia.

MV: To follow up on club connections, with help from AFL Europe we were able to talk to the West Coast Eagles and they donated their kit to our new club, the Waterland Eagles.

OH: A number of clubs have come to us and want to help international clubs. Get in touch with Ryan or Lily if you have a new club and we'll see what we can do in regards to players attending and kit.

OH: There seem to be some common themes in the country reports. Sounds like umpire training needs to improve and we need more numbers.

RD: I think we can all agree the level of the umpiring group was fantastic yesterday and the feedback we received from coaches and players throughout the day. It was fantastic to have this group of committed umpires – who umpired around 10 matches each.

DI: Umpiring was excellent. A comment on goal umpiring, it was a bit of a problem in finals when you have to use your own players.

Lily Beck (LB): Last year at Champions League we did trial a system of having teams allocated to goal umpire games in finals so that teams didn't have to umpire their own, but it was too difficult to follow the schedules when we couldn't plan in advance where teams would finish after the pools and where they would be playing. We found that no one showed up to the games they were allocated to because instead of listing the team name we had to list A3, D4 etc.

RD: Ideally, we need more volunteers to cover goal umpiring but it's difficult to find.

OH: Teams need to help each other out.

Dan Jackson (DJ): Every game yesterday had an audience. Just grab people from sidelines if teams don't have enough players.

OH: Another topic is the cost of events. We're working on this as hard as we can to get costs down as far as possible, although unfortunately there's not much we can do about travel costs. Listening to the country reports it appears as though we do have aging lists in most countries. I'm not saying there's an easy solution, but we need to work together to try and grow and develop so that we're not left with a hole beneath us.

FC: It's not just our sport either, all sports have aging player problems.

OH: Thanks to all for the country reports and discussion.

Return to Agenda Item 4: AFL Europe Commission Resignations & Appointments

OH: Let's move back to voting. For overview, we have 2-year terms on the Commission, three positions are appointed by the Chair and three are community elected. This year is the election of community commissioners. We've had four people nominate for three spots. I'll ask them to give an overview and let them tell how you they can grow the game. We'll then ask all full country members to vote on the form provided. We'll use 1-4 preference voting for the names on the sheet. There will be 3 appointed.

RD: Please note this is full members only, there are a few people in the room who won't have a vote.

OH: For those of you that aren't full members yet, we do have some structures in place for affiliates to move to full member status.

OH: Dinko you can go first.

Nominee 1: Dinko Irsag (DI): I'm the current president of AFL Croatia. I've been involved in this sport since 2012 and I've founded a male club and as of last year opened a new female club in Croatia. Last year my main focus was women's footy in Croatia and I was involved with the Norwood tour. I've worked closely with Josip for two years in the CFL and the expansion into Bulgaria and Hungary. I love the sport and I see what we can, and need, to do to help our neighbour nations and AFL Europe. I'm capable of this and I'm happy to support and communicate with all countries. We all find common ground and we should work together. I've worked intently with Josip in the region and I think continuing on the path we're on will help AFL Europe.

Nominee 2: Michael Currane (MC): I'm Mike Currane and I've been involved in AFL for 20 years. I started with forming AFL Ireland and the first ever attempts to get a European body up and running. I've worked with the national teams for years and more recently heavily involved in women's development. I've been on the commission for two years representing Western Europe and trying to help these countries really closely. Lately I've been working closely with England in international matches, University programs and CrossCoders. I'm passionate about the game and always willing to help out wherever I can. I'm primarily focused on women's and students at the moment.

Nominee 3: Ryan Tucker (RT): I've been on the commission for 2 years representing Northern Europe. I've been involved in footy here for eight years, and I started the Norrtalje Dockers club. I'm trying to open up communication within Northern Europe to get games happening and get new countries up and running. This year's focus has been on this tournament but now we can continue developing national teams. The most important thing is that national teams get the support they need through open communication, moral support and logistical support.

Nominee 4: Steve Dillon (SD): I've been in the Netherlands for 20 years. I was originally involved in GAA and helped set up games and structures. Ten years ago, I got involved with AFL and we've slowly built up over time. My passion is games and structures, you have to have committees, boards and rules. I think it's important that we have people going for this role. I love Champions League and I think it's important to have something for clubs. It's a very successful tournament and it's important to have pathways for clubs. This year I've been helping out the girls and I am Coach of the Devils women's team and that has renewed my passion for footy. I really want to get involved and challenge AFL Europe to think outside the box.

OH: Thank you all. We'll now pass over to the room to vote. Please vote 1-4 in order of your preference, fold and pass to Ryan.

RD: We'll also have a short break. Please hand your forms in on the way out.

Meeting breaks at 11:30am.

Meeting resumes 11:40am.

OH: I reopen the meeting at 11.40am. Thanks to the four guys who have nominated for roles on the AFL Europe Commission. You're all great candidates with different ideas. The voting was close but has clearly elected three commissioners. Congratulations to Ryan Tucker, Mike Currane and Dinko Irsag.

8. Chairman Report

OH: I'll keep this relatively short. But I do love this annual opportunity to publicly thank a number of people, so please indulge me a little.

I'd first like to take this opportunity to say that I couldn't be prouder of the whole team at AFL Europe – the past year has been our best yet. After a few difficult years focusing on restructuring the organisation and building the foundations for growth, we have started to see really strong results across the board:

- Increased participation across the board.
- Trained more European umpires and coaches than ever.
- Highest ever European talent playing elite level AFL and AFLW, with particular success in finding European women through the Cross-Coders program.
- Strong, enduring commercial partnerships giving us the financial flexibility to launch into multiple development projects in the next 12 months.
- European mens and womens team are building strongly in preparation for next years' International Cup in Melbourne.

So thank you to Ryan, Lily and all the whole team – we can't and don't say it enough, but your commitment and dedication is second to none. You all go far beyond what is expected in your roles and you should all be very proud of the legacy you're creating expanding footy internationally.

Thank you to the whole Commission – Deputy Chair Greg Hutton, Tom, Dan, Ryan, Michael and Josip – for their continued support. We have a really strong connection as a board and all moving in the same direction – they all make my role not only easier but enjoyable.

I'd like to make special mention and thank Ryan Tucker and his Swedish team on the ground for the delivery of the most fantastic Euro Cup. I'm sure you'd all agree this was a really special and memorable event.

As you would have all seen, this year has seen the continued focus of the AFL on international development of footy which is fantastic for AFL Europe. Although currently focused in China, international investment is becoming more the norm and the success of

the recent game in China, which I was lucky enough to attend, sets the foundations for us to seek a game in Europe in the coming seasons.

The AFL has continued to invest in and develop AFLW. This presents huge opportunities for European women given our strong existing female competition. The increased numbers meaning more recruitment opportunities. I strongly recommend those with elite ambitions in your communities to connect with Michael Currane and the Cross-Coders team.

Our Elite Talent Identification Program continues to uncover European talent and many Europeans are now thriving in the AFL and AFLW.

I am so pleased that we have succeeded in our goal to lower event registration – but will happily be held accountable in this meeting saying that we need to do more. We are committed to work with ultimate ambition to get this to zero.

There are always challenges, we don't shy away from this. We look forward to continuing to help all of our Member countries to overcome any hurdles. Please always feel free to contact Ryan, the AFL Europe staff or AFL Europe Commission to support your local activities.

And finally for my most important thank you – to all of you. None of what we do would be possible without the outstanding volunteers across Europe and the continued support from our AFL Europe partners and sponsors. Thank you all - your efforts and support are greatly appreciated.

9. AFL Report

OH: Unfortunately the Game Development Team at the AFL were unable to attend this year's Euro Cup and meeting, however Andrew Hughes has helpfully provided the handout report and strategy for AFL Europe.

AFL Report handed out around the room.

“Dear AFL Europe General Assembly Meeting Attendees,

Thank you all for your attendance at the AFL Europe General Assembly Meeting. We appreciate your efforts, and the efforts of all the footy volunteers across Europe. You are incredibly important in ensuring the sustainability of the game in Europe and we appreciate your commitment to Australian Football.

Please accept our apologies for not being able to attend this year. However, we look forward to liaising with Ollie and Ryan post this meeting to discuss key takeaways.

AFL Europe plays an important role in helping the AFL achieve our international vision. That is, to progress the game by increasing relevance to, and revenue from, international markets. Relevance includes driving the awareness, involvement and consumption of Australian Football overseas. The reference to revenue refers to the flow-on which that relevance provides (i.e. Watch AFL subscriptions, broadcast) but also to the commercial focus which is emerging (particularly in China).

We have refined our 6 international focus areas into 3 key objectives. Previously, we grouped our international activities into 6 focus areas – 1. Participation, 2. Talent, 3. Broadcast / Digital, 4. AFL Matches and Events, 5. Partnerships and 6. Governance.

This has now been simplified into 3 key objectives:

1. Participation
2. Talent
3. Commercial consumption

In simple terms, 'broadcast and digital' along with 'AFL matches and events' and 'partnerships' now fall under 'commercial consumption'. 'Governance' which was previously listed as a focus area is inherent with good business and our view is that it does not need to be called out explicitly.

AFL Europe has an important role to play across all three objectives. However, we feel that the primary role of AFL Europe is to support people to play, coach and umpire the game either within domestic competitions or programs or through events such as the Euro Cup. AFL Europe's relationship with each member country is a really important part of that.

We look forward to continuing to work closely with the AFL Europe board and staff. We encourage you to support Ollie and Ryan and please trust that the feedback you provide to them will continue to reach us through our regular catch ups.

Thanks again.



Andrew Hughes
International and Community Football Manager
AFL Game Development”

10. General Manager Report

RD: Another massive year for us as we all know, although I will try and provide a brief summary of what has occurred since we last met. I'll begin with our events this year.

Fitzpatrick Cup was unfortunately cancelled due to extreme weather, there was heavy snow that covered all fields. Whilst this was disappointing, we were confident we made the right call, placing player safety and well-being as the number one priority.

Champions League was another huge tournament that saw the West Clare Waves and the Amsterdam Devils take out the top prize. Thank you to AFL Netherlands who hosted the event for the 5th and final time.

ANZAC Cup, although this event is our smallest and probably doesn't impact as many people in this room, it is a great one for us to increase awareness of AFL in Europe. This match, and the history of the region, generates significant interest in Australia and it is always a great event and supports the growth of the game in Europe. We were thrilled to see two great matches placed between the Australian Spirit side and the French National team.

Euro Cup, there was such a fantastic event held yesterday and special thanks again to Ryan Tucker and the teams from Norrtälje Dockers and AFL Sweden. It certainly looked like all teams enjoyed themselves yesterday and it was great to see some really good football being played in great spirit.

European Championships is another event that perhaps doesn't impact everyone in the room, although we are now deep into the planning stage for this year's European Championship that will be held in London in October. We are continuing to liaise with teams planning to attend and the event organisers, Wimbledon Hawks and Great Britain, to ensure this event is a great experience for all. As discussed with teams attending, there is a chance that the results from European Championships will impact International Cup invitations/rankings.

On International Cup, we are still waiting to hear from the AFL who are yet to confirm the location and timing of this event. Whilst this event has traditionally been held in Melbourne in August, the AFL have gone out to tender with this event and we expect the date and location to be confirmed in the coming weeks.

I have also been thrilled to attend some league matches and tournaments ran by members of the community over the past 12 months. I have loved this experience of getting out to meet with more people and learn more about what is working well and what challenges people face. This match days/tournaments have been held to a really high standard and clubs should be proud with the way they are operating.

Corporate Events, again something that might not directly impact all those in the room, but so that you are aware of the detail, we also host a number of corporate events throughout the year that are designed to increase awareness of the AFL activity within Europe to the corporate markets and also assist with identifying additional revenue streams. This year we

held the first ever AFL Season Launch in London – an event that was held by a number of our key stakeholders in London including members of the Australian High Commission, the Australian State Governments and current/potential Sponsors. This event was a great success and will be continued moving forward. We are also in the planning stages of our AFL Grand Final Lunch that will be held at Australia House in London, whilst also exploring additional event opportunities that will feature AFL/AFLW that are travelling into Europe throughout the year.

Game Development continues to be a major focus as we continue to find ways to develop leagues, clubs, coaches, players & umpires. The CoachAFL platform continues to be a great opportunity for European coaches (and players) to develop their coaching skills. We are very fortunate that the AFL have continued to provide us with free access to this platform, allowing Coaches to receive their Foundation Level Coaching Accreditation and have access to some great resources including countless videos, articles and coaching tips. In addition to this online course, I have also been delivering Coaching Workshops which complement the online course via some practical development training. As James mentioned, we ran a course with the Welsh National Teams in Cardiff last weekend, and I found this to be a great way to target a good number of national players that will return to their home clubs to help us grow the game. If anyone is interested in receiving a coaching workshop like this, please let me know.

Similar to coaching, the AFL are being very supportive in providing us with free access to online training and development for those wanting to improve their AFL umpiring skills. As we have heard already, despite the amazing umpires we had yesterday, this is an area of concern for more leagues across Europe as we struggle to recruit and retain umpires. I would encourage everyone to look at ways that they can try and put the emphasis back on clubs to help recruit and retain umpires to ensure we start to strengthen our numbers.

We are once again distributing Footballs and Umpire shirts to all our Members to assist with the growth of the game in your region. Country Presidents were emailed about this Grant recently, so you have the information about who to acknowledge in your social media posts, although if anyone has any questions please let me know. I have all the Footballs and Shirts here today, so please make sure you come and see me before you leave that the end of the meeting. We have been fortunate to receive support from some AFL/VFL/SANFL clubs recently who have sent uniforms (jumper) out to support clubs in Europe. We will continue to strengthen these relationships wherever possible, although if you would like something in particular from a specific club, please do not hesitate to contact me at any stage and I will do my best get a positive response from the clubs.

It has been fantastic to see some new clubs and leagues being established throughout Europe. If there is any way that AFL Europe can support these new clubs and leagues, please let us know and we will do the best we can to support. We are also looking at identifying other ways that we can provide funding support to clubs across Europe – this will be something we can look to confirm later in the year once we have a clearer idea of our end of year financial position.

We continue to explore ways to expand the game in schools & universities. Whilst this is a difficult task to deliver on, we do see the importance of introducing AFL to people at a younger age to get them to fall in love with the sport and then continue playing the game. If we are able to introduce the game to a wider market (particularly in schools) we may increase our chances of developing junior clubs across Europe.

As mentioned by Ollie, we have found ourselves in a much stronger Financial Position in 2019. We have been very fortunate that we have been able to extend all existing Partners for the year ahead whilst also attracting a couple of new partners – including Fine Wine Partners who attend the event yesterday and will be joining us towards the end of the meeting. We will continue to search for additional partners to work with moving forward. It is important to note that we are not blindly try to partner with any organisation we can – we want to ensure we have great long-lasting partnerships and that we are able to service those we do secure. This year we would like to try and secure 2-3 more partners, as this is how many properties we have available. As always, we are constantly exploring possibilities for new revenue streams – any additional revenue streams will allow us to provide a greater level of support to the community, which is obviously our aim.

Angus and Liam continue to produce some great content on a weekly basis. We currently have 5 regular articles that go out on a weekly basis, all designed to increase the awareness and consumption of AFL in Europe. Additional content is created leading into our major event, all of you would have seen that leading into Euro Cup with Team Preview and Tournament Preview articles going out over the past 4 weeks. I would ask that you continue to share as much information with us as possible throughout the year. If you have key events, matches or milestones that you would like us to promote please send through as early as possible and we can plan and prepare accordingly. Likewise, if you have key players, coaches, umpires or officials that you would like us to write about, please get in contact with us.

We continue to try and find way to promote AFL Europe to a wider audience both in Europe and back in Australia. Dan Jackson has recently completed an interview for the AFL Players Association and as a result an article will be written and sent around to every AFL player (past and present). Within the article Dan touches on AFL Europe and the amazing work that is taking place across the continent. He also encourages players to reach out to us when they are travelling through Europe during their breaks and we can connect them with local clubs in the areas they are travelling. Not only will this be a great experience and promotional opportunity for our clubs, but it will give AFL/AFLW players with the opportunity to meet locals and get some great local knowledge whilst they are travelling.

We have had another great year in the Talent Department. We had 6 Irish players sign with AFL clubs throughout 2018, resulting in 14 Irish players on AFL lists for the 2019 season. This is our highest number yet and it has been great to see them playing some amazing football at the highest level. In November last year we delivered another successful Talent Combine in Dublin, with 20 young athletes getting a chance to showcase their attributes and but their newly developed AFL skills on display. Four players from that group attended the AFL Academy Training Camp in April and by all reports they impressed clubs and recruiters. Four more players will have an opportunity to spend a week in Melbourne for the AFL Grand

Final and the AFL Combine in September/October. Again, this will be a great opportunity for these players to showcase their skills to all AFL Clubs. We have already had one signing this year with the Sydney Swans taking a player from last year's combine in Dublin and we expect more signings to follow in the months ahead.

In addition, we saw some incredible performances from the five Irish players during the 2019 AFLW Season. Each of these players made a significant impact throughout the season and we have no doubt there will be more exciting results to come next season. The Cross Coders program which was co-founded by Jason Hill has made a significant impact and following a great training camp in Ireland earlier in the year, we can expect to see many more Irish players playing at the highest level in 2020.

On a governance level, we were thrilled to receive word last year that His Royal Highness, The Prince of Wales, would be extending his Patronage with AFL Europe. Great opportunity to increase awareness of AFL in Europe. We currently have more staff than ever before. Whilst still only two full time staff in Lily and myself, we also have Angus & Liam working in the office two days a week delivering out Digital Content, we also have Zac who is based in Australia doing journalism work for us, Cormac who is based in Ireland and supporting from a commercial perspective and most recently Nicola from the GWS Giants who has been supporting with some game development support. I would also like to acknowledge the support of Lisa Wilson who stepped down from her part time Game Development role with us last year to focus on her coaching. Lisa was a tremendous support to us throughout 2018. We are fortunate to find ourselves in a position of stability now which is a fantastic place to be as we look to continually grow the game of AFL throughout Europe.

In closing, I would like to thank each of our partners who have shown faith in us and continue to help us grow AFL in Europe. I would like to thank the administration team who I have just mentioned, each of these guys go above and beyond in their roles and we are lucky to have them on the team. Special thanks also to the AFL Europe Commission – each of you have been an incredible support to me and I thank you for the ongoing guidance you provide me. On that note I would like to encourage the AFL Community Presidents to make sure you continue to talk to the Commissioner from your region – Lily and myself are constantly referring to these guys throughout the year for a variety of issues, so please make sure you are constantly liaising with them to ensure they can accurately represent your country. Finally, I would like to thank each of you (AFL Europe Community Presidents) for your incredible support and efforts to grow this great game of ours. This isn't an easy task and I know you are up against it most of the time. We often feel guilty that we are unable to do more, although please continue to keep us informed of what you need from us and I promise you that we will do all we can to support you as best we can. Thank you.

11. Financial Report

OH: I would like to invite AFL Europe Deputy Chairman Greg Hutton to share the audited financials. Could not do this without Greg's unwavering support across all commercial matters over the past 5 years, a huge commitment.

Greg Hutton (GH): Everybody should have a copy of the financial statements for the year 2018 in front of them. If you can please turn to page 7, we'll get into the detail of profit and loss. If you'd like to take a look at the total sales figure, and a breakdown is provided on page six. As you can see the large source is the AFL grant, on which we also received an extra 10 thousand last year. The talent grant figure outlined is for the Talent Combine that takes place in Dublin each year. Merchandise refers to kit and football sales. As you can see, as mentioned previously sponsorship has had a significant increase this year, which we always reinvest this into community. This concept goes hand in hand the events, particularly on the corporate side. The AFL Grand Final Lunch is the only event that we try to make profit on, and every other community event is designed to break even. We put this back into community and want to keep costs low for teams wherever possible. Our purchases include balls, merchandise, and we ended up buying some more stock in 2018. Our wages are slightly up this year due to the addition of game development staff. IT and website costs have also gone up due to some very necessary improvements made there. Our development and coaching costs are also up as we roll out more courses within the community. The visa sponsorship item refers to staff visas. Football and uniform grants are for community grants so we can put things back into community. Looking at the balance sheet, assets are largely debtors and we've tried to keep cash at bank steady over the last few years and we're hoping to improve on that. Any questions on 2018?

David Baldie (DB): The extra 10k aussie dollars in grant, is that due to an exchange rate difference?

GH: 200 is the number we receive; however, exchange rates are an issue so it was just due to timings on when things were banked.

Sweden moves the 2018 Financials and Netherlands second the 2018 Financials.

OH: We are also required to appoint financial auditors for next year. I would like to propose continuation of our 2017/18 auditors, AC Partners LLP.

Croatia moves and Scotland seconds the appointment of AC Partners LLP.

GH: On 2019 we've once again received the AFL grant. The exchange rate has impacted this and we're probably about GBP5,000 down which we've had to make up ourselves, although the AFL have been pretty good about exchange rate issues. Our major increase has been through sponsorship and what Ryan has achieved there. That will jump from 25 to 32+ pending a few other deals. This is a huge improvement on previous years that provides stability and enables us to make other spending decisions. Cash situation at the end of the year will be in the low 20's I predict. We're still working on the budget for the European Championships in London for this year and looking at some grants. We'll be trying to

minimise the costs for teams wherever possible. We're not here to make money, we want to generate what we can so we can put it back in. All in all this is the strongest financial position AFL Europe's been in and the base has been set and we continue to raise the bar which is a testament to Ryan.

OH: Any questions on the financials?

FC: Looking into future, has the AFL indicated they will drop the grant as we get more sponsorship?

OH: Not at this stage, no. The AFL have been big supporters and maintained the grant over the past few years, although there's no certainty that we will receive the same grant amount year on year so it's important we don't solely exist on the AFL so we will continue to build our commercial partnerships. We're growing the strength of the game commercially, and we need to give the AFL comfort that there is a return on their investment. The AFL has plenty of funding factors to consider including development of AFLW, AusKick, international, etc and we need to continue to show our unity and growth in Europe.

12. Events Calendar – 2020 & 2021

LB: Before I move into the events calendar I'd like some feedback on the eligibility process that we undertook for yesterday's tournament. Did anyone have any feedback on yesterday and the lead in process?

TR*: I'm still confused about non-Australians not being able to play. We thought that if someone didn't have any footballing history in Australia they could play for anyone.

LB: It's not so much about being non-Australian as it is about being a particular nationality. For example, just because someone isn't Australian, doesn't mean they're necessarily Israeli. The footy history is a considered factor but it's not the only factor. It's more about being able to identify as a particular nationality and having a good reason to. It's a weighing up of the criteria such as period of residency, footballing history, contribution to the growth of the game in their country etc.

TR*: Is there a limit on the amount of exemptions each team can receive?

LB: Not currently and I don't think there should be. The point of approved exemptions is that each case should be completely justifiable and therefore if we are confident on each and every case then they all deserve to be there are much as the next person.

DI: Could we replicate the exemption system from Champions League where any exemptions given cannot bring your total team list to more than 14 players?

SB: I think it was good this year, but I still think there should be a loophole for Europeans with dual passports. We have a dual Swiss-German citizen who was raised in Germany but

has Swiss heritage and grew up right on the Swiss border. He didn't get selected for Germany and we would have liked him to play for us.

DB: Citizenship is a big factor for Scotland too as there is no such thing as Scottish citizenship, only British.

LB: We are careful to stay as consistent as possible to the AFL International Cup rules. I think it's important we stay aligned with them so that we don't have too many discrepancies between who can play at AFL Europe events and who can play at the International Cup.

OH: It is important to stay aligned however we can speak to the AFL about changing their stance on European exemptions for dual citizens considering the proximity between bordering nations. Let's take this offline and we will report back.

LB: First up on the events calendar, to close out 2019 we will have the European Championships in London this October. Moving into 2020 we will start off the year with the Fitzpatrick cup which was obviously unfortunately cancelled due to snow earlier this year but this will return to Oxford University and will be held in early February. Following on from this, after 5 wonderful years AFL Netherlands have decided to step down from hosting the Champions League event as well all know. We opened this up to hosting bids from the community and received two applications from the West London Wildcats and the Paris Cocks Football Club. As most of you would have received we invited the community to vote on their preferred location and hosts for this tournament. The majority of respondents voted for Paris so the event was offered to them and unfortunately they have since had to withdraw which was just confirmed earlier this week. Given this we have since offered this to West London and they are in the process of confirming this on their end at the moment. This will be circulated as soon as it's confirmed, and the tournament will be held in early April.

MV: Will they receive an invite as host club if they don't win their league?

LB: This was something I sought feedback for when I asked for host votes. I asked for feedback on the host invites and reigning champion invites, which has been in place for the last couple of years. The feedback I did receive indicated that people think that the host club who put in a mountain of work deserve a place and that it encourages new hosts to step up.

DB: Completely agree that they should receive an invite.

MV: I agree. As previous hosts we would have always wanted to participate.

LB: I think we're all in agreement that the hosts deserve an invitational entry. Any feedback on the reigning champions receiving an invite?

MV: I don't think they should. I think the tournament is designed for league winners and that should be how they earn their place in the tournament.

DI: I disagree. I think the point of the tournament is to play the best of the best and it's good to have more strong teams there.

FC: I don't think they should because there is such high turnover between so many teams. We have almost a 50% turnover rate each year so you're almost giving an entirely new team an invite that haven't earned it. It should be the league champions attending.

SB: The cost of travel is too high for us to go and play against Australians so we opt not to attend this event and just save for Euro Cup.

SD: There needs to be more structure around qualifying and there should be some prestige around these events.

OH: I think the consensus on this one is that hosts should receive an invite and reigning champions should not.

RD: It's worth noting that the 2020 reigning champion invites will be extended as those teams have won the 2019 tournament with that expectation in mind.

LB: In regards to Euro Cup 2020, AFL Scotland have made a bid for a June tournament which will go ahead provided that this does not conflict with the International Cup dates which are yet to be released but should be shortly. We will circulate this information to country presidents once confirmed.

Brian Currane (BC): Is Euro Cup permanently a June tournament now?

LB: Not for certain. I think everyone enjoyed it, but there are other factors to consider.

RD: We need to be flexible for the hosts and adapt to what they can accommodate.

DI: Exactly. Croatia couldn't host in June as it's far too hot for a tournament.

LB: We also always look to have two months clearance from other tournaments so that the events calendar works well for all teams.

SB: It's worth noting that June is difficult for university student players.

LB: Following Euro Cup 2020 the last tournament for the year will obviously be the IC in Australia. We'll keep you updated on dates and locations when the information becomes available to us.

DI: Do we know any more on the divisions or restrictions of IC?

OH: We're pushing to be able to have more teams attend this event. I want to have as many European teams there as possible.

DI: Specifically, are the AFL planning on having a division 1 and a division 2?

RD: The AFL have indicated they'll have two divisions of eight in the men's competition, in which case Europe would have 2 teams in division 1 and 3 teams in division 2. Whilst I understand your position of wanting to be promoted into division 1 having won division 2 in 2017 the fact that we're now looking at 2 divisions of 8 would mean that 9th and 10th would be moving back into division 2 and therefore if Croatia were to be promoted the AFL would also need to relegate 8th place (Fiji) which would mean 3 teams would be relegated. We've stressed to the AFL that our European teams want to be arriving at the tournament with the opportunity to win the entire tournament even if that means playing the best teams in the world and suffering defeats however we have been told that the other teams would prefer to have more competitive games. We're continuing to pass this feedback on and when we have a better idea of dates, location and format we'll let you know immediately.

13. Ratification of Affiliate Members

OH: The final item on the agenda is the ratification of affiliate members.

- *Poland – Russia moves, Switzerland seconds*
- *Czech Republic – Switzerland moves, Croatia seconds*
- *Norway – Sweden moves, England seconds*
- *Israel – Netherlands moves, Russia seconds*

14. General Business

OH: That brings our meeting to a close. There was some fantastic discussion and I think we've all seen some clarity and some next steps to follow from the meeting. Thanks to Ryan and the team for the meeting and for hosting us here in Norrtalje. I call the meeting closed at 1.12pm.

Meeting closed 1:12pm.