



AFL Europe Limited  
2020 General Assembly  
Meeting (GAM) Minutes

Zoom Meeting  
28 October 2020 6:30pm – 8:30pm (GMT)

*Minutes taken and documented by Jackson Jones.*

Item No.	Agenda Item	Presenter
1	Introductions/Welcomes/Apologies	Ryan Davey
2	Appointment of Chair and Secretary of General Assembly	Oliver Howard
3	Ratification of 2019 General Assembly Minutes	Chair
4	AFL Europe Commission Resignations & Appointments	Chair
5	AFL Report	Andrew Hughes
6	Chairman Report	Oliver Howard
7	General Manager Report	Ryan Davey
8	Western Europe Community Committee – Update	Michael Currane
9	Northern Europe Community Committee – Update	Ryan Tucker
10	Central & Eastern Europe Community Committee – Update	Dinko Irsag
11	Financial Report	Greg Hutton
12	<p>Events</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. 2021 Calendar of Events</li> <li>b. 2021 Champions League – Qualification</li> <li>c. Euro Cup – Format</li> <li>d. Euro Cup – Player Eligibility</li> <li>e. European Champions – Format</li> <li>f. 2022 Tournament Hosts</li> </ul>	Ryan Davey
13	Full Member – Minimum Standards	Ryan Davey
14	Ratification of Affiliate Members	Chair
15	General Business	Chair

*Meeting open 18:31 (GMT).*

Attendees:

**Oliver Howard (OH)** – AFL Europe Chairman  
**Dan Jackson (DJ)** – AFL Europe Commission  
**Greg Hutton (GH)** – AFL Europe Commission  
**Dinko Irsag (DI)** – AFL Europe Commission (Central/Eastern Europe) & Croatia  
**Michael Currane (MC)** – AFL Europe Commission (Western Europe) & Ireland  
**Ryan Tucker (RT)** – AFL Europe Commission (Northern Europe) & Sweden  
**Josh Philpot (JP)** – AFL Europe Commission  
**Melissa Oberhofer (MO)** – AFL Europe Commission  
**Ryan Davey (RD)** – AFL Europe  
**Jackson Jones (JJ)** – AFL Europe  
**Martin Schittegg (MS)** – Austria  
**Kristian Røndrup (KR)** - Denmark  
**Will Shillibier (WS)** – England  
**Sarah Howell (SH)** – England  
**Yann Cornaton (YC)** – France  
**Anton Salmi (AS)** – Finland  
**Stephen Phillip (SP)** – Finland  
**Alban Schieber (AS\*)** – Finland  
**Stefan Knoll (SK)** – Germany  
**Julia Kohl (JK)** – Germany  
**Brian Currane (BC)** – Ireland  
**Stephen Dillon (SD)** – Netherlands  
**Tyson Vitale (TV)** – Netherlands  
**Neil Cooke (NC)** – Netherlands  
**Bas van Schie (BVS)** – Netherlands  
**Slava Belov (SB)** – Russia  
**David Baldie (DB)** – Scotland  
**Katren Rogers (KR)** – Sweden  
**Stefan Burgener (SB\*)** – Switzerland  
**Sebastien Muller (SM)** – Norway  
**Shir Shalev (SS)** – Israel  
**Tasha Reshetnikova (TR)** – Israel  
**Phil Forbes (PF)** – Poland  
**Radek Szeniec (RS)** – Poland  
**Atanas Kirachin (AK)** – Bulgaria  
**Jon Zophoniasson (JZ)** – Bulgaria  
**Zoltan Marosy (ZM)** – Hungary  
**Katrina Stopinski (KI)** – AFL Europe Umpires  
**Pat Leavy (PL)** – Auditor  
**Andrew Hughes (AH)** – AFL

## 1. Introductions/Welcomes/Apologies

**Oliver Howard (OH):** Quorum present so we will open the meeting at 6:31PM (GMT).

Welcome everyone, it's awesome to see the numbers continuing to grow on the call. We do have a quorum present so thank you to everyone who has come along with these different circumstances today. Great to see a few new faces in the group too, which is an awesome benefit of doing it in this format. Particularly, a strong welcome to those of you who are joining one of our General Assembly Meeting's (GAM) for the first time.

This is a really important part of what we do as a community and as an organisation. We essentially have this one opportunity each year to all get together and discuss AFL Europe issues, for you to hold AFL Europe and the Commission accountable as member countries, and also so we can make informed decisions to represent your community wishes and goals in what we do.

In these circumstances, we've moved to a virtual Zoom meeting so I will let AFL Europe General Manager, Ryan Davey, take you through a bit of admin and housekeeping before we kick off. Over to you Ryan.

**Ryan Davey (RD):** Thanks Ollie. Good evening and thanks to everyone for joining on time. I want to quickly run through the first few elements of the meeting including a few of these housekeeping matters.

If we could just make sure everyone changes their display name to your full name and organisation or country you're representing. I will switch everyone over to mute after I'm finished here, so if you do need to make an address please select unmute, make your address and then select mute again. Please feel free to use the chat box as much as you feel like during the meeting. If you do need to jump in and make a comment, please write 'comment' so I can make note of those as we go along and come back to you before we move onto another topic.

There will be occasions where we need to 'move' and 'second' Agenda Items, where we will use the chat feature. If a country would like to 'move' or 'second' an Item, please comment 'move' in the chat box. There are five or six Items where we will do some voting towards the end of the meeting, these need to be a secret ballot. Please privately message those responses to me via the chat box.

Just a reminder, it's one vote per country, so that goes to the spokesperson of each country and in which only full members will have a vote for. We do have four Affiliate Members and two Developing that are on the call, please feel free to send through your responses too as I'm interested to hear your feedback.

Finally, we would love to see your faces throughout the meeting so please turn on your camera, particularly if you are addressing the group.

*Ryan running through list of attendees and countries represented.*

**RD:** Again, it's great to see so many of you on the call, thank you for attending, and I'll pass things back over to Ollie to get things formally started.

## 2. Appointment of Chair and Secretary of General Assembly

**OH:** The first Agenda Item for these GAM's under AFL Europe's Articles of Association is to nominate a Chair for the meeting. I've prepared for that role and nominate to do it, however, it is open to anyone else if they would like to put their hand up and we can take the Chairing role for the meeting to a vote.

Zoom Chat Comment (ZCC) – (18:39) **Pat Leavy (PL):** I propose Ollie.

*No comments or objections – Oliver Howard elected to act as Chairman of this meeting.*

The second Item is to appoint a Secretary of the meeting and I would like to appoint the role of Secretary and keeping minutes to Jackson Jones from AFL Europe. Again, we can take to a vote if there any objections or other nominations.

ZCC - (18:39) **Brian Currane (BC):** Second Jackson.

*No comments or objections – Jackson Jones elected as Secretary and keep minutes of the meeting.*

## 3. Ratification of 2019 General Assembly Minutes

**OH:** Next on the Agenda Items is the Ratification of the 2019 GAM Minutes. They've been prepared in advance by Ryan and have been shared in advance of this meeting by Ryan and within the last 60 days of the last GAM. Those who do have voting power, I'd appreciate if you could 'move' and 'second' the ratification of those minutes in the chat function.

*Netherlands passes and England seconds the ratification of the 2019 General Assembly Minutes.*

## 4. AFL Europe Commission Resignations & Appointments

**OH:** The next Agenda Item to move to is the Commission resignations and appointments. We use this meeting as an opportunity to announce those resignations and appointments every year and on the odd/even years, the difference between nominated and appointed Commissioners. There have been significant changes this year on a board level and there are a number of people who deserve appropriate recognition in terms of their commitment and what they've contributed to AFL Europe over a number of years.

On behalf of the AFL Europe community, I'd like to introduce and thank those who are stepping off the Commission this year. Firstly, Greg Hutton, or "Hutts", who served the

maximum three terms and steps down as of this meeting due to the six years of incredible work in support of the Commissioner and Deputy Chair of AFL Europe. He's not entirely leaving us and will continue to be a part of the AFL Europe family and pushing us forward.

You'll all know Greg from these meetings and other interactions, but he has tirelessly pushed this organisation forward, ensured financial stability and created many new revenue streams including launching the Grand Final week Corporate Lunch and spearheading geo-advertising on AFL.com.au. We only see the tip of the iceberg of the amount of passion and work that Greg commits to AFL Europe, and simply we are a better organisation for your long-term involvement Greg. On behalf of everyone Hutts, I want to say thank you very, very much and if you would like to say anything please feel free.

**Greg Hutton (GH):** No that's fine Ollie... As Ollie said my time has come up and I'll still definitely be around in the background and happy to help and contribute as much as possible. I think the organisation is in a good place and I'm always happy to help. We all do this for fun and that's the main thing.

**OH:** Thanks mate. Now it's very early in Australia so we don't have the next two on the call, but Tom Rischbieth has accepted a role as General Manager of Commercial at FFA, and so has taken his growing family to Sydney and decided it's time to step down. Tom brought AFL Europe a clear head, unbreakable morals and a strong commercial and sporting industry network. He played a major role in exploring commercialisation of TV rights opportunities. Thank you, Tom, for helping to grow the game over the past few years both before your formal involvement and also once on the Commission. And good luck in Sydney with your new endeavours.

And Dan Jackson, who has taken a full-time role with the Adelaide Crows, and so moved to Adelaide and steps off the Commission. Dan brought a wealth of AFL industry experience to the table and played a strong role on the Commission over a number of years, helping to establish stronger connections between players, clubs and Europe. His passion for the game, and unwavering push to grow women's footy, has left an enduring mark on AFL Europe and the growth of the game. Thank you.

Greg, Tom and Dan - you are all fantastic people, strong willed and of the highest integrity. On behalf of everyone at AFL Europe, thank you. You've given first, expecting nothing in return, and we will forever be grateful. And above all we have formed lifetime friendships over a passion for footy! Good luck with your next ventures.

*ZCC - (18:45) **PL:** Thank you Greg for your hard work over the past number of years. As acknowledged by Ollie, Greg has performed a huge amount of work in the background which a lot of the members around the continent would not see on a daily basis and (along with Ryan) has ensured AFL Europe has remained financially stable.*

**OH:** What this means is that we have three roles open up on the Commission. This year is one of the two-year cycles where I have the pleasure to appoint the full Commission under the Articles of Association. After extensive searches and with full support of the AFL, we are really lucky to have three people accept.

The first you will know very, very well. We've decided to appoint Ryan Davey as an Executive Commissioner. Given the significant changes and challenges going forward, I couldn't think of anyone better suited to ensure continuity and succession than Ryan. Ryan will step into an Executive Director role, continuing his day-to-day as General Manager of AFL Europe but also preparing for a clean transition at some point in the next two years.

**RD:** I won't say too much Ollie but thanks so much for the opportunity and the appointment, I'm extremely honoured to join the AFL Europe Commission after four years in my current role. It's always been more than a job for me. I've seen how hard everyone on the call and all those around Europe work to grow the game – it's an incredible achievement by everyone. I just want to make sure that I'm here long term to support that. So far in the role I certainly haven't gotten everything right, and we can never please everyone, but I've worked really hard alongside everyone on the call and many, many more for a number of years now to give AFL Europe the best chance to succeed.

I'm really excited that with this appointment, it will give me the opportunity to work alongside the AFL Europe community for a little bit longer and support my replacement to ensure that there's a seamless transition period when the time comes for me to step away from the GM role. It's really fortunate that we've had an amazing group of Commission Members in recent years, and I look forward to joining that group, playing my part and helping out wherever I can. Thanks again for the opportunity, I'm very excited.

**OH:** Thanks Ryan. The second appointment is Melissa Oberhofer. We are incredibly lucky to have Mel join us. Mel joins the Commission with over a decade experience as an AFL player manager and is now based in the UK working with the Mercedes-AMG F1 team. Mel continues to manage players including Nic Naitanui and maintains a deep passion for the multicultural growth of AFL footy in both the men's and women's game. We are incredibly lucky to have her commitment and involvement.

**Mellissa Oberhofer (MO):** Thank you so much for having me guys I'm really excited to jump on board. You can't take the Aussie out of the Australian girl over here. I'm really excited to get stuck into it and continue to build the relationships with the boys back home and try to bring them over here to see what all these amazing countries are doing with our great game. Super excited to meet you all and work with you all, and if there's anything I can do to help please don't hesitate to reach out. Multiculturalism is really a big part of what I love about the game and of what I still do with Nic Nat back home so I'm super pumped to be a part of it and thanks so much for having me.

**OH:** Thanks Mel. Finally, Josh Philpot. Josh brings a wealth of commercial expertise from his time with world-leading stadium technology advisory and investment company, PMY Group. We are also lucky to have him share his previous experience growing Rugby Union in a non-rugby Victorian market with Victoria Rugby Union and Melbourne Rebels Rugby Club. Josh comes from a different sport but brings that really deep experience of dealing with the challenges of breaking new ground in grassroots sport and developing grassroots into an elite level. Josh is a fantastic addition and I'm really pleased Josh has been able to join us.

**Josh Philpot (JO):** Thanks Ollie, and good evening everyone. As Ollie said I've had a fair bit of experience - one for fun and two, as my full-time job - growing sport in challenging environments. I think the big thing that attracted me and hopefully what I can bring is just the energy and the passion for the game. It's certainly something that I've missed in the last couple of years since moving to London from Australia, that grassroots energy and passion in your day-to-day life. I'm really excited to be a part of it and work hard to hopefully contribute to it and help everyone on the call. I certainly think there's still plenty of work to do and plenty of opportunities, and we all realise next year might be quite challenging. I'm certainly excited to get amongst it, get my hands dirty, provide some value and help support Ryan, Ollie and the rest of the board. Thank you very much and I look forward to catching up with you all in due course.

ZCC - (18:51) **Ryan Tucker (RT):** *Welcome to the team Mel, Josh and of course Ryan!*

**OH:** Thanks Josh. And behalf of everyone on the call, welcome to the team Josh, Ryan and Mel.

The final bit of this part is the re-election of Chair position. Given the significant challenges faced during the post-COVID recovery, the need for enduring strong relationships at AFL House and the benefit of stability and continuity during the vast changes at AFL Europe, I have decided to run again for Chair. This is fully endorsed by the AFL. I am confident we can come out of this COVID-shock period strong and ready for continued growth.

*No comments or objections – Oliver Howard elected as Chairman.*

**OH:** Without any objections we'll move that forward. Thanks for that guys, I am really excited to work with the new board and really pull together in the next 12-month period.

ZCC - (18:53) **PL:** *Congrats Mel, Josh, Ryan and Ollie.*

## 5. AFL Report

**OH:** Moving onto Agenda Item 5. We do have the AFL providing a report which will be something you're all looking forward to. Given the time difference, Andrew Hughes from the AFL will join a little later in the meeting.

## 6. Chairman Report

**OH:** There is no sugar coating the difficulties we have all faced in 2020 - professionally, personally, and as a sporting community. I want to start by thanking everyone in our amazing AFL Europe community - players, coaches, umpires, volunteers, sponsors, Commissioners and staff - your continued efforts and passion have shone through during this tough time. I hope you, your families, and friends remain safe and healthy.

AFL Europe has enjoyed significant year-on-year growth for the past three years right across the board; participation, umpires, coaches, financial, and elite talent on AFL and AFLW lists. We were ready and excited to launch into 2020 and continue this growth path.

COVID obviously disrupted these plans. I am very proud of the quick and strong response of the board & executive team to immediately make the tough decision to re-cut budgets and prepare the organisation to weather this storm. We are confident in the financial position of the organisation; which Greg will speak to shortly.

Unfortunately, these financial decisions have people impacts, and it pained all of us to see Lily Beck leave the AFL Europe family. This was no reflection of Lily's incredible contribution to AFL Europe over a long period and I do want to thank her again for everything she did and the lasting impact she's had on the international growth of footy.

Despite everything going on, it was fantastic to see footy played across the continent when permitted, culminating in the recent Festival of Football. I know I speak on behalf of everyone when I say that we can't wait to hear the roar as we get back to our major events; France playing Germany, England vs. Ireland, Croatia vs. Russia... Just every one of the countries being represented in tournament footy.

I would also like to congratulate the AFL on completing a season in the most trying circumstances. What an amazing achievement. And from an AFL Europe perspective it was so fantastic to see two Europeans - Zach Tuohy and Mark O'Connor - representing the Cats in the AFL Grand Final.

With adversity comes opportunity. I am incredibly pleased to see the fantastic turnout on the call today. This virtual format gives an opportunity for the next generation of footy leaders to join the General Assembly as observers and promotes clear transition and succession amongst our Members.

Now it's time to look forward as an organisation. Our commitment at AFL Europe is to continue serving you, our Members, despite COVID impacts. We are working closely with the AFL's game development team to receive continued financial support, developing deeper relationships with corporate sponsors, and we will continue re-investing in growing the game by lowering event registration and running more umpire & coaching courses.

None of this would be possible without the unwavering support from Ryan and the AFL Europe team, the AFL's game development team, our outstanding volunteers across Europe and the continued support from the AFL Europe partners and sponsors; National Australia Bank, O'Neills, anzuk Education, PSS International Removals, Palmers Relocations, The Down Under Centre, South Australia Government, Belushi's, Fine Wine Partners, Lucidica, Topdeck and St Christopher's Inns. Thank you all - your efforts and support are greatly appreciated.

Finally, as difficult as it is at times, I implore everyone to continue following all government and health advice and restrictions so that we can overcome this virus and get back to playing cross-continent footy, the game we all love, as soon as possible. Stay safe and healthy, look after and look out for your family and friends. Thank you.

## 7. General Manager Report

**RD:** Thanks Ollie. This year has been one like no other and it has certainly had its challenges. However, there has still been a lot of activity take place and a lot of success stories along the way. I will now try and provide a summary of what has occurred since we last met.

The Fitzpatrick Cup was the only international tournament to be completed in 2020. This was our largest University Tournament yet, with ten men's teams and four women's teams attending, we were thrilled to see Southern Denmark University attend this tournament making them the first team from mainland Europe to participate in the Fitz Cup – hopefully the first of many. Congratulations to University College Cork & Cambridge University for taking out the men's and women's titles respectively. Thank you to Oxford University who hosted the tournament with great success.

Unfortunately, four weeks out from Champions League, AFL Europe & AFL Netherlands made the difficult decision to postpone and eventually cancel the tournament. At the time this was a difficult decision, although fast forward four weeks and it was clear this event could never have happened. I would like to thank AFL Netherlands, led by Stephen Dillon & Sports Park United, for their support in preparing for this event and for their flexibility during a difficult period.

ANZAC Cup was also cancelled much to the disappointment of the players who had been selected to represent the Australian Spirit & French national teams. I would like to thank AFL France & the ABA for their incredible support in the lead up to this event and we look forward to returning to Villers-Bretonneux next year. I would also like to thank National Australia Bank who were set to be our major partners of the ANZAC Cup for the third consecutive year.

Euro Cup was also cancelled much to the disappointment of all countries but none more so than Scotland, who had been planning a fantastic event in Stirling. I would like to thank AFL Scotland, in particular David Baldie, who had put a lot of work into securing a great venue, accommodation options and an after-party venue for this event.

The International Cup (IC) was also a casualty of the pandemic with the AFL unsurprisingly postponing the tournament until 2021. This was the first year that the tournament was set to be played on the Sunshine Coast in Queensland. Our thoughts go out to Ireland, Great Britain (GB), Germany and France who had all committed to this tournament.

Despite the cancellation of these tournaments, the restrictions that were placed on international travel and the challenges that we all faced to deliver a contact sport, it was great to see AFL still being played in Europe this year. I know all leagues were affected in some way, although it was great to see league matches, friendly fixtures, Grand Finals and even Tournaments and Cups being played out. Congratulations to all those who managed to get matches played safely this year, it was a massive effort and an incredible achievement to get your players out onto the field and I have no doubt it will set us up nicely for 2021.

I would also like to thank all those countries who participated in the newly developed Festival of Football. When we announced this concept at the end of July, we had hoped that by the final weekend in September we would be in a slightly better place with COVID. Despite that not being the case, it was fantastic to see ten countries participate in this event and it was great to see so many people out playing matches all at the same time. Hopefully you all valued the footballs, medals, umpire shirts & 'Player of the Tournament' jumpers that you received for this event. I would like to thank National Australia Bank who came onboard as a major partner for this tournament. Whilst this event was created because COVID restricted our ability to travel, I do believe this concept has some merit and I would be interested in exploring our options to continue this in the future.

Unfortunately, our Corporate Events such as our Grand Final Lunch & Wine Club events were cancelled this year. Whilst many of these do not directly involve all of you on the call – they are an important part of what we do as many of these events lead to new sponsorship opportunities and therefore new revenue streams. Despite these events being cancelled this year, there is a clear appetite for these events, and it will be something we will look to reintroduce into the calendar in 2021.

Game Development remained a major focus in 2020 as we continued to find ways to develop leagues, clubs, coaches, players & umpires. Whilst this pandemic has had a negative impact on our ability to deliver our regular tournaments and has prevented many of you from playing regular matches, it has also provided us with an opportunity to try doing things a little differently.

This year, we introduced a new Coaching Development Series. This 12-week program saw coaches from all over Europe attend a 90-minute presentation each Sunday to hear from an Australia-based guest speaker. Our presenters, who were all experts in their chosen field, all volunteered their time and I cannot thank them, and the AFL, enough for the support they offered our coaches during this program. Being a pilot program, we were unsure how this would be received although I was thrilled to have 130 participants in this Series. We had an average of 101 coaches on the call each week and 66 coaches attend ten or more sessions. All of the coaches who participated have now been registered on the AFL's CoachAFL platform and will also receive access to the RM Coach website. I would like to thank anzuk Education, who are our Education Partner, for helping us bring this program to life. Also, I would like to thank all the coaches who committed to this program.

Similar to coaching, this year we also developed an Umpire Development Series that was designed to recruit new umpires to the game, whilst also upskilling those who were already umpiring AFL in Europe. As we know, a lack of umpires has been a major concern for all of us in recent years, although we believe that this course would help give our umpires the skills and confidence to begin officiating games immediately. I would like to thank Katrina Stopinski who created the presentations for this four-week program and was the key presenter throughout the series. And I would also like to thank former AFL Rookie & VFL Grand Final Umpire, Daniel Butcher, former VFL Grand Final Umpire, Adrian Masterman-Smith, and former EFL Senior Umpire, Daniel Wild, who were the special guest presenters throughout the Series and gave our umpires some great insights. Again, being a new program, we were unsure what the uptake would be, although we were thrilled to average

over 100 umpires in attendance each week with 103 umpires attending three sessions or more. Once again, a huge thank you to anzuk Education for their support of this program and to all the clubs and umpires who invested their time and effort into this Umpire Development Series.

Despite the challenges facing the economy this year we have once again been very fortunate to work alongside some amazing Corporate Partners. I would like to thank National Australia Bank, O'Neills, anzuk Education, PSS International Removals, Palmers Relocations, The Down Under Centre & Lucidica for their support this year. I would also like to thank and acknowledge the Office of the Agent General for South Australia for their continued support of AFL Europe. We will continue to search for additional partners to work with moving forward, as any additional revenue streams will allow us to provide a greater level of support to the AFL community in Europe.

In December last year we delivered another successful Talent Combine in Dublin, with 20 young male athletes getting a chance to showcase their attributes and put their AFL skills on display for the AFL's Talent Department and the AFL clubs in attendance. Last year was also the first time that we held a Women's Combine which ran immediately after the Men's Combine and was extremely successful.

Despite the success in recent years, COVID-19 has forced us to place our Talent Program on hold this year. I'm sure you have all seen the incredible performances of the Irishmen and Irishwomen who have made their way to Australia to play at the highest level. This year there were 17 Irishmen on AFL lists and there are 17 Irishwomen set to participate in next year's AFLW season. With those numbers, and with the impact they are all having, we do hope that we will continue to receive funding for our Talent Program in 2021 and beyond.

As most of you will know and as Ollie has already mentioned, unfortunately the impact of COVID-19 this year meant that the position of our Events & Communications Manager became redundant and therefore we were forced to say goodbye to Lily Beck. I would just like to use this opportunity to thank Lily for her incredible contributions to AFL Europe over a three-year period. In addition, one of our newly appointed interns, Dylan Mutu, opted to return to Australia when COVID struck in March meaning we were also down one more staff member. Thankfully, Jackson Jones opted to continue his internship with us and stay here with us in London.

In a very short period of time, Jackson has had an incredible impact on AFL Europe. Leading out all of our digital content, Jackson has been able to ensure that our website and social media platforms were full of good news stories in a very challenging year, and when at times not a lot of football was being played. I'd like to congratulate Jackson for what he has achieved this year and personally, I would like to thank him for the support he has provided me throughout the year. Special thanks also to Zac Standish & James Brosnan who supported Jackson with his content throughout the year.

Jackson also showed his committed to doing things differently with his coverage of AFL Europe's Festival of Football and the Race to the MCG. On that note, I would like to thank all those who participated in the Race to the MCG and congratulate the Welsh men's team and

the German women's team who completed the 16,900km from London to the MCG in nine and eleven weeks respectively, to defeat allcomers. This competition was designed to increase the awareness of AFL in Europe, whilst also increasing engagement, motivation and fitness levels of our teams in Europe during a period when very few matches and training sessions were being completed. Special thanks to our Apparel Partner, O'Neills, who were the major partner of this competition.

I would like to thank the AFL for their ongoing support of AFL Europe and special thanks to Andrew Hughes who continued to provide guidance during a very challenging time for everyone at the AFL. I would also like to thank the AFL Europe Commission led by Ollie – each of you have been an incredible support of AFL Europe and to me personally and I thank you for the ongoing guidance you have provided. Thanks to Tom who finished up his role with the Commission in February and to Dan who wraps up today – you have both been fantastic for AFL Europe and it's been great working with you. I'd also like to make a special mention to Greg who has been a great support to AFL Europe for the past six years and has supported me personally for the last four. Whilst we are speaking about the Commissioners, I would like to encourage the AFL Europe Community Presidents to make sure you continue to talk to the Commissioner from your region – I am constantly speaking with Ryan, Michael & Dinko throughout the year on 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 the AFL Europe Community Presidents and the amazing team of volunteers you all have behind you for your incredible support and efforts to grow this great game of ours. This isn't an easy task and I know you are all up against it most of the time – especially this year – however the work you do and the passion you show is inspiring! I often feel guilty that we are unable to do more to support you, although please continue to work with us and keep us informed of what you need and I promise that we will do all we can to support you as best we can. Good luck for the year ahead and thank you.

**OH:** Thanks Ryan. Dan, I've just seen that you've joined. Thank you for coming in, I know it's a very early morning in Australia but it's fantastic to see you. We've been through the changes on the Commission and we have publicly thanked you but if you do want to make a few comments or say hi to anyone please feel free to jump in now.

**Daniel Jackson (DJ):** G'day everyone. I'll keep it short because hopefully I'll be able to see everyone at one of the future AFL Europe events. It's been an absolute privilege to be a part of the organisation and I'm really excited about the news that I heard about the others coming on. I look forward to being a friend of the organisation for a long time to come. I loved going over to Sweden and Ireland and all these places and seeing all these passionate people playing the game. Best of luck to everyone and keep reaching out as you see fit wherever I can help.

**OH:** Thanks Jacko. You've left a lasting impact on the organisation, you've been a huge help and we continue to look forward to working together with you.

We will now move over to the community updates which will each be led by the Community Commissioners in Michael Currane, Ryan Tucker and Dinko Irsag. In 2017, we adopted this

structured approach with regional sub-committees to streamline feedback. I'll pass to Mike first and he can pass around the room as required.

#### 8. Western Europe Community Committee – Update

**Michael Currane (MC):** Thanks Ollie. Good evening and welcome to the new Commissioners Josh, Mel & Ryan, I'm looking forward to working with you over the coming year. Normally, I go to the numbers and figures from each of the region but this evening each country will be able to present their own. So, I'll just focus on the positives that have come from the communications to me.

First one would have to be the strong desire amongst the players across every region to continue to play the game, wherever and whenever possible. That's been fantastic to see and that's been the same across the country reports. Everyone biting to get back into the action in 2021. A few positives from the COVID-19 timeframe in Western Europe... we did get a number of games played earlier in the year. The National University League played some games as far up until the grand final. That was a fantastic competition and is getting better every year. We had the Ashley Palmer Cup played up in Scotland, some solid games played in Israel, strong university activity in Ireland in the earlier part of the year with UCC and CIT, and a lot of new teams forming on the women's front at university level which is a positive. We also had some new university activity in France. As Ryan mentioned, we had a very strong Fitz Cup again this year with so many teams represented. And even where we didn't get some games played there was a resurgence of some clubs that hadn't played in a while coming back to action, especially in Wales.

Next I'll focus on communication. We had improved communication across all areas within clubs, countries and the Western Europe region (and Europe as a whole). This year has been fantastic for everybody to reassess, review and focus on current/new policies. There are strong lines of communications between the countries, for example, if you look at AFL Ireland and AFL England organising international university matches. AFL Wales reported that they're working really well with AFL England at the moment too. We've also seen more communication with government bodies which is always a positive, again AFL England will support England and AFL Ireland men's and women's will support Ireland etc. in which this year were often in relation to COVID guidelines and return to play. Any communication is good communication with these national sporting bodies as it can help with funding down the line. We also have Israel close to achieving tax break status as well so that's all very positive.

Next I will say the Coaching and Umpiring Courses from AFL Europe have been unanimously accepted from everyone as a huge part of the year. It was really good to engage all the different countries and get coaches to up to speed and new umpires on board at a time where there wasn't much activity happening.

The Festival of Football as well was a huge success, and Race to the MCG a huge success... all of that really comes back to AFL Europe and the team coming up with the ideas, driving

them on and administrating the whole thing. But to all the countries that took part, it was absolutely fantastic to see it.

Before we head over to the country reports I just want to add it's fantastic to see the amount of talent at AFL and AFLW level, primarily from Ireland with 17 in each code. We currently have a situation here where the Irish girls are struggling to get flights over and visa exemptions to head over with pre-season to start next week, but it's looking like we'll get them all over there in December. We also, at the AFLW draft a couple of years ago, had a number of countries represented where we had girls from the UK and from Germany and Ireland. It's fantastic to see the confidence within players to put themselves forward and are now aware of these pathways. All in all, it was more a positive run from various communications across the region, but I'd like to pass it over to the countries now. Ryan did you want to call someone up to give the first presentation?

**RD:** I'll throw to Will from AFL England to begin us with the England update.

**Will Shillibier (WS):** Firstly, thank you to the Commission and to the AFL for all of your work that you do behind the scenes. As Mike said, AFL England was one of the more severely impacted countries by COVID, we only had 14 matches all year. All of them were promisingly between university sides, we awarded minor premiers only in the University League as the grand final was unable to be played. The NUL All Stars were unable to host the Irish university side too.

Being unable to celebrate the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of AFL London and the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Central and Northern England League this year was undoubtedly disappointing for everyone involved, not just the playing community but as a national governing body. It's a huge mode of pride for us to be around for as long as we have, and we hope that any delayed celebrations will still be joined by other countries and clubs, which would make it all the more better for being delayed by a year.

We are looking forward to having return to play guidelines in place thanks to conversations with Sport England and the British Government. I'd like to thank Sarah for everything you've done with that but also with London and Great Britain. Moving forward we just want to get back to playing footy, as simple as it is. We hope 2021 will be a huge year for AFL England with these belated celebrations as I've said.

With IC, we're very eager to find out as many answers about that as soon as possible. I feel like I'd use my two minutes to emphasise that now. Again, thanks for everything you guys do, and I'll pass things onto David from Scotland.

**David Baldie (DB):** Thanks guys. I don't want to focus on too many of the negatives as I know there have been a lot over the last year, unfortunately the last time we played footy in Scotland was in March, so it's been sometime and the likelihood of us playing footy again certainly won't be this year. We'll be aiming for it as early as possible in 2021. There was big disappointment for us this year such as no International Cup and the hope of some Scottish players being picked for the Great Britain squad, and as Ryan mentioned earlier the Euro Cup being postponed.

We're trying to stay as positive as possible for next year for the Euro Cup but we can talk about that later on. There are a lot of positives that have come out of this year. It's given us time to breathe and think about how we approach our policies, procedures and contingency plans and so forth. Over the next six months we'll be developing a ten-year development strategy that will be ambitious. It will look at realistic and aspirational goals. It will focus on three key areas; developing the women's game, developing diversity and developing pathways that are coming both 'in' and 'out', so we want to look at pathways for university students and developing an AusKick program. And the pathways 'out', the international squad selection for GB and of course getting more players involved. The pathways also would be international selection and getting more involved and supporting players in the CrossCoders program.

Certainly, we've got a lot of ambition next year and over the next ten years. We're going to grow the game as much as possible in Scotland. A lot of positives have come out of taking a breath and just thinking about what we can achieve together as a community. We've probably come together better than we ever have. We could potentially be losing members over the next year, but we've still got about 250 members across Scotland so we're very positive about the future and certainly very positive about next year and getting back to footy as soon as possible.

ZCC - (19:23) **Slava Belov (SB)**: *David, great plan for the strategy!*

**RD**: Thanks for the update David. We'll now throw over to Yann from France.

**Yann Cornaton (YC)**: Hi everybody. Firstly, we were very sad not to be able to send our team to the International Cup nor come to Stirling for the Euro Cup but we understand that's the way it is. As you might know that in France, we are not on the same 'playing seasons' as most European countries. We are on a winter season, 2019/20 season had to be cancelled last spring, and we started a new season over a month ago and it was the first time in French footy history we had ten main clubs involved in the Championship. But so far so much of it has had to be cancelled due to the second wave of COVID. Our president is currently speaking about going into lockdown again, so we don't know if we'll be able to pursue this season. We may have to cancel the first part and only play from next February.

From the women's point of view, the sport is growing in France with more and more females joining different clubs. We are more or less able to build two full female teams in France. In terms of new clubs, there's a new club being built in south of France in Nice, which would make it 12 clubs across France. Ten in the Championship, one under construction in Lille and one being constructed in Nice. That will be all for me.

ZCC - (19:25) **DB**: *Thanks Slav, will be great to get input from communities across Europe.*

**RD**: Thanks Yann, great update. I'm going to throw it over to Brian Currane who's going to talk to Ireland specifically.

**BC**: Cheers mate. The men's league in Ireland was seriously hampered with COVID, they were lucky to play a little bit of footy. The Premiership was due to start back in late-April

which got postponed and then when guidelines got the go ahead, they did a reschedule of the season and got about four rounds of games in up around a month ago. That then got stopped with the COVID guidelines and postponed until next year for 2021.

There was a bit of footy played earlier on this season – in Cork (south region) they played the Leaside League where they played a number of games between the Leaside Lions, UCC and CIT Universities, they went pretty well. Belfast did something similar where they created a couple of new teams to play against the Redbacks. The universities were quite good, CIT and UCC sent teams over to the Fitzpatrick Cup and UCC came out on top which was fantastic.

In general, player numbers in Ireland have risen in the men's game. This year we're at about the 160 mark. It's mainly from the universities with a lot of new guys playing. The clubs have recruited really well too. We also had a new club formed in the North Munster Roos, the first in the last six or seven years. Their numbers are going pretty well too, and they hope to be playing a bit of footy in next year's AFL Ireland competitions.

The goals for next year are to complete a 2020 season as early as we can to then continue with a 2021 season a bit later on. The Irish Uni Cup will be held at some stage through the year with the view of having two or three new teams joining. Then again in the off-season hopefully we'll have the Leaside League play a couple of games, the winter series with the Belfast Redbacks and also a North Munster winter league with a few more feeder teams put together for that. The aim is to keep the rise going with numbers and hopefully near the 200 mark.

The women's season was completely wiped out, they had a lot of work done behind the scenes and a few new teams were set up. University teams are going very strong which they also have plans for a school's program for primary and secondary level schools. They plan to be back in action in early spring next year. All in all, we got some footy played in the men's game, obviously would've liked more but hopefully next year we get back on the international stage and with AFL Europe where we have the Fitzpatrick Cup, Champions League and hopefully Euro Cup.

**RD:** Thanks Brian. Unfortunately, Wales aren't on the call at the moment, but I'll throw to Mike Currane for an update on them.

**MC:** I touched on some of the key points from James and Wales in my overview to say they didn't get any games played this year, but they had a resurgence of some teams that were formerly dormant. Looking at their SWOT analysis, they had great communication between clubs all with a strong desire to play Aussie Rules and grow the game, and they're working well with AFL England. Some of their weaknesses were that they had a small number of volunteers. They're looking at new funding opportunities specifically through universities, and also working towards growing the women's and juniors. For 2021, they hope to get a men's and women's team to the Euro Cup, sustain and grow teams within their own league, host the Fitzpatrick Cup and keep their university teams growing.

**RD:** Thanks Mike. Over to you Ryan for the Northern Europe update.

## 9. Northern Europe Community Committee – Update

**Ryan Tucker (RT):** To start, I just want to give the countries in our region a big pat on the back for handling the pandemic and showing a great deal of flexibility and creativity flexible to get this return to footy happening and to keep the clubs alive. No one really knew what was going to happen, but our region has done a fantastic job, all the way down to the club level of getting on top of this. Everybody on the call will attest to this that it's more than a game of football and getting out on the park. It's a place to meet new friends if you've come to a new country, a chance to exercise in a safe environment and a place to help each other out if you're not doing so well. Each club within AFL Europe is very important so a well done to everyone but in particular to those in our region.

At the Festival of Football we had some great participation, the online courses as well, we had a lot of our countries using these chances to even recruit players from sports that have been shut down. Reading through the reports, quite a few countries are creating that connection with the GAA local clubs to bolster numbers and work together to help each other out which is great. We even had a couple of new clubs in the last 12 months that sprouted up such as in Finland and the Netherlands.

We've had some great growth of the women's game within our region, that's off the back of the work of the volunteers on the ground and the passionate core groups that want to grow outside the game. The tournaments put together by AFL Europe are great for these women's teams as it's something to strive towards. I'll throw over now to the Netherlands to hear from them.

**Stephen Dillon (SD):** We had an interesting year that was ready to go with the Devils having a big preseason and ready to defend the Champions League, as well as the women's team getting excited – but then COVID hit. Like everyone, it put a big stall on it all. But actually, it's been a really good year for us.

Coming out of COVID and the first wave we got together and (mainly Neil and Tyson) did a lot of work to set up our league. We were able to complete our full league this year with three clubs; Amsterdam, Waterland and Delft. All clubs existed last year but Waterland were new and Delft had nearly fallen away. Coming out of COVID we became one of the only sports starting up again (in the Netherlands) and Delft had gone from 2-3 guys to 15. This is the first year since I've been involved in the Netherlands where we played tournaments with three clubs and every player from each club was from that club, meaning we didn't have to make any transfers or swaps between each other. It was a really good, complete year that was very successful.

On the women's side we had good numbers, going up and down, but both of the outbreaks hurt that and dropped that down a bit. We were averaging 7-8 females at training, and we participated in the first round of the WEWL, a great initiative organised by Lisa. It was a shame we only got the first round done before COVID. We tried to restructure some games later in the year, but they didn't get to start.

Overall, it's actually been a good year of growth. Our strengths in that sense were the flexibility of our group because all of members are centrally within AFL Netherlands so we

can use that money and set up things in that way. We've also kept very good relationships with our venues who have been flexible in helping us.

Going forward, and this is one of the things that we're really excited about, but the Devils have hit the point of about 30 members so next year's league we're going to get Amsterdam to field a second team. I think it's one of the big steps for AFL Europe league's but we're aiming to put a restriction on Aussie's on the pitch, which will be the first for us and a sign of the growth of the game.

For women's growth we're really excited about the WEWL initiative which helps us look forward to a league and helps me as a coach to continue to grow the women's team. Mainly because of the work done by Neil and Tyson, as Waterland is 90% Dutch, we were looking forward to fielding, probably for the first time, 16 Dutch players at a Euro Cup, and also our first women's team which remains our goal for next year.

**RT:** Well done mate. Denmark and Kristian.

**Kristian Røndrup (KR):** Thanks Ryan for the general catch-up on Northern Europe. To be a bit more specific on Denmark, firstly we had a great season even though it was halved due to COVID. Unfortunately, we had to cancel our grand final with four hours' notice, because of new restrictions and rising infections in Denmark. We on the board made a decision based on that we wanted to prioritise the safety of players, so we chose to cancel. It was disappointing for players who were looking forward to the game and were even ready on the day. We felt like it was the right decision and we had support from the community that it was the right decision in the end.

But otherwise it's been a great year because we had one team that wasn't in the league last year due to low numbers, come back this year and strikingly with great recruitment and growing rapidly on both the men's and women's sides. They had nine girls during the season from none last year. We had another come from a resurrection in Aarhus, which is great so we're up to six teams this year in Denmark, and then had Malmö joining from Sweden. It's allowed us to have six matches for each team despite the season being halved.

The goal for 2021 is to really continue riding this wave of recruitment, hopefully the Barracudas will be able to have two teams in the competition next year, but also just have good recruitment in general so we have good rosters at every club. We will also be looking into recruiting and developing women's footy in Denmark.

**RT:** Awesome mate, thank you very much. Seb and Norway.

**Sebastien Muller (SM):** In Norway we've had quite strict restrictions, so we didn't have a season unfortunately. We've trained as soon as we could and for as long as we could. The trainings have at least been somewhat successful with regularly up to 15-20 people coming. For us that's really big, so we've been really happy about that. What this year has shown for the Oslo Crows and AFL Norway in general is that we have a really strong core. The board of the Crows and our other team, As Battles, have come together and we're going to focus on using that core to grow the sport next year.

Our main goal in 2021 is to start the season with three or four teams, which means we'll change the format of the game and bring the game down from 9-a-side to 7-a-side. We don't have enough people to consistently have nine people in each team in our games. It (7-a-side) will make it easier to start up a team and it opens up the ground a bit more for us, especially since the grounds we play on are so small. We're spending this winter, which lasts until May for us, to figure out how we will do that; starting teams and getting interest going. We've started reaching out to other local sporting clubs to see if any of their players would be interested. We're quietly positive for next year with our big plans. Another one of those plans is to get involved with Scandinavia again. We had originally planned Finland to travel over for a day tournament but that got shut down.

If we could get back to where we were going a few years ago, attending the Swedish Cup and maybe even going to Denmark, that would be really cool to do over the next few years. Also getting more going on locally around Scandinavia.

ZCC - (19:44) **Phil Forbes (PF)**: *Changing from 9 to 7-a-side made a huge, huge difference for us this year. Fantastic idea to get more players more ball.*

**RT**: Awesome mate. We'll jump over to Kat from Sweden.

**Katren Rogers (KR)**: Thanks Ryan. We've been pretty lucky in Sweden; we've managed to play a fair bit of footy. We had a Cup earlier this year in August and then in September participated in the Festival of Football. As Kristian mentioned, the Malmö team have been playing in the Danish league. We've also managed to travel fairly long distances to play each other within Sweden, which is one of our challenges here.

But it's been a really good year, we've seen big growth in the women's game with four women's teams in Sweden which is amazing. Hopefully next year one of our goals would be to set up more of a regular fixture with those teams, maybe bring the Danish girls in too. So that's been fantastic to see. We've also had good cooperation with the GAA, we were able to run (down in the south) a casual, local league. Without the cooperation of the GAA we wouldn't have been able to have three teams playing each other regularly. Also, up north there's been a couple of international rules games played with the women's side in Stockholm, which is really positive too.

Overall, it's been crazy trying to adapt, but I've been very proud of the clubs for supporting each other. It's about not just being a place to play sport, but being a community for people from all over the. Looking at our bigger clubs, they look as strong as they ever have been. I think that's because they've really come together and helped each other also as mates this year too. Reflecting on that and looking towards next year, right now the situation is a bit unknown but certainly there's a lot of enthusiasm going into next year to build the women's game, and hopefully engage with other teams and parts of Scandinavia. Feeling quite good and positive about 2021 really.

ZCC - (19:47) **DB**: *Yeah agree with Phil, anyone who is thinking about changing things up to keep people interested (within local rules) should definitely consider it seriously. We're*

*looking at changing to touch football rules in January to provide a competitive outlet (for the short term).*

**RT:** Great, thanks Kat and moving on to Finland.

**Anton Salmi (AS):** Hi I'm Anton Salmi from Finland AFL. In short, a bit about Finland's situation is that our season usually goes from March to September. We got a little bit of training before COVID hit and then there was a long break. Fortunately, the restrictions loosened up a bit in May, so we organised a 'mixed match day'. We organised this 'mixed day' in a city that was equal length for our teams in the three cities to travel to.

It was quite successful; the idea was that we would create new teams to mix everyone up, and then after the first game would do it again to try and make it more even. We went on to play several games with a lot of new people, who we also saw in our grand final/round robin cup which was on the same day as the Festival of Football.

The positives have been that for the first time in ages, we had women taking part in training. In Turku we had one, and five in Helsinki. Three turned up for our 'mixed day' and then two at our Festival of Football. We did 7-a-side at the festival because we have about 50 active players in our country, footy is not that big so we had to adjust. Earlier years we have had the possibility of playing with nine, but this year with the creation of a new team called the Uusimaa Kangaroos (Helsinki based), which we hope to turn into a proper club, we decided on 7-a-side and played the format with four teams. That was really exciting to have four teams.

We also had the GAA with Helsinki (Harps), who have been a big help for the Helsinki Heatseekers. They've played International Rules together, trained together and then even a few of the GAA players played for the Uusimaa Roos at the Festival of Football. We are hoping that is something that develops.

In Vaasa, we visited one school with 17-19 year old's participating in their gymnasium. Unfortunately, afterwards we didn't get any into our teams. It was our second year visiting schools, we planned for five visits but could only make one due to COVID. We are hoping the situation for that will be a bit better next year. I'd like to add we're very interested into looking, if it's possible, into playing a game with our international teams or mixed teams against Norway and Sweden at least, hopefully also Russia because they're close by and why not Denmark. We'd love to look into that and discuss that further. That's the situation in Finland.

**RT:** Thanks Anton, last one of Northern Europe is Slava from Russia.

ZCC - (19:53) **Shir Shalev (SS):** *Have any of you guys managed to play games or adaptations of games with only ten players? (5-a-side). We're trying to see what adaptations we can do in order to have games with (very) few players.*

**SB:** First of all, it was a bit disappointing at the start of the season, we had relatively huge momentum for our community after playing in Sweden at the Euro Cup and a tournament in

Tallin, the Baltic Cup with Sweden, Finland and Poland. We were really looking forward to driving it this season. We had a bit of passionate discussion about running a tournament or matches before the official shut down, but the government introduced their regulations and we had to shut down.

Overall, our season went quite well. We managed to have St. Petersburg AFL play the full eight rounds with 9-a-side in full four quarter matches. We also played in the Festival of Football and most importantly were joined by Moscow in that. We also have t-shirts, a mobile app to keep stats at the tournaments, for example we kicked 171 goals in the SPAFL and 51 in the Festival of Football. We keep building out relationships with the venue and the university where we're playing at.

We hope next year we can probably do something like varsity games, but it's hard because we still have problems with official recognition of the sport. As for the next season, we're looking forward to getting back to the Euro Cup, but we'll have to keep monitoring the travel restrictions. We're in connection with Norway and the Oslo Crows and we really hope to run a Baltic Cup next year. Last year proved it was a good format and Tallin is a good destination.

The downside is that we have an ageing group of players. It's something we need to think about, as well as the lack of umpires. We basically have two people that are umpiring and three that 'could' umpire. A possible threat as well is that we are the only active community in St. Petersburg, and if some restrictions or bans happen, it could shut down the whole country. But we're positive, we're looking forward to the next season and for more games in a safe environment. Thanks for the support from the community, it's really important and we do see it. We try to support anyone and everyone that is trying to start up.

ZCC - (19:54) **PF:** *Shir, we do that at training. Five-a-side but we use a football field and play lengthways. Like the boundary lines are our goals.*

ZCC - (19:54) **DB:** *A few clubs run intra-matches with five on the field, they shorten the pitch (and quarters) 2/1/2 positions. Works fairly well.*

ZCC - (19:55) **Zoltan Marosy (ZM):** *David, how does the midfield work?*

ZCC - (19:56) **DB:** *Because the field is shorter, one half-forward and one half-back play deeper in the mid... On the edge of the square.*

ZCC - (19:56) **ZM:** *Fair enough, we just do 1-3-1 intra-clubs. A lot of space for the forwards to work with.*

ZCC - (19:57) **Alban Scheiber (AS\*):** *Five-a-side on half-pitch works fine from winter training experience, 1-3-1. Only thing is we decided to limit the kick on goal (in our case we said you needed to cross the midfield line to kick).*

ZCC - (19:58) **DB:** *Some of the clubs play that the ruck can pick the ball out of the bounce as well (only when it's 5-a-side).*

**RD:** Thanks everyone from Northern Europe. I'm going to throw across to Dinko for Central and Eastern Europe. These updates are absolutely amazing, there's so much positive information coming out and it's great to see.

#### 10. Central & Eastern Europe Community Committee – Update

**Dinko Irsag (DI):** Hi everybody, good to see and hear from everyone. In the Central European League, we had to cancel due to travel restrictions. We're hoping AFL Switzerland are willing to host us next year. As far as it goes for Croatia, the boys played a total of four rounds but didn't decide on an overall winner. The girls played three rounds. The good thing is that because we had so much free time, we were able to build an 18-a-side pitch in Zagreb. Next year hopefully we can play six rounds of 9-a-side and three rounds of 18-a-side. We're hoping to have two complete leagues with enough players for everything. I'll pass to Martin from Austria to start things off.

**Martin Schittegg (MS):** We had just two matches this year, but besides that things were running ok. The Styrian DownUnderDogs are not the only team in Austria anymore and were joined by Vienna who have been growing very fast. They have a good coach and a good captain who aren't the same people! So that's running quite well. In Graz, it's about the same number as last year, things are still running quite well, but we changed our training pitch so we have a bigger field which gives us the possibility or opportunity to play 16 or 18-a-side matches next year, we just need the numbers. Anyway, we're looking forward to next year and maybe could be joined by another new team forming. Hopefully that can work out, thanks.

**DI:** Thanks Martin, over to Stefan from Germany.

**Stefan Knoll (SK):** In the beginning of the year, Janine Benecke, the Rhineland Lions Vice President and German Eagles player, passed away. She was 21 years old, I will say thanks to the other countries and Ryan for your support, the participation became very hard for us in Germany.

The footy year was the same as the other countries, we had to postpone the season and then cancelled it in July. All teams had friendly games and intraclub tournaments. The Festival of Football was a highlight in Berlin for the men's and Leipzig for the women's. The positive is also with three new clubs; Leipzig Quokkas in the east, Kiel Koalas in the north, and Heidelberg Knights in the south-west. We hope we can start the season next year with ten men's and six women's teams. For the German Eagles, we hope we can get training again next year. We had a message from the government that we have to cancel training in November in Hamburg. To better support AFL Germany in the future we have founded a supporter's club. Thanks to the work of the club we have already gained a great partner, UhlSport, who will support many teams and national teams with equipment/kits in the future.

**DI:** Thanks for that. Stefan from AFL Switzerland.

**Stefan Burgener (SB\*):** AFL Switzerland had plans of a five-round season with four clubs; Winterthur, Geneva, Zurich and Basel. Zurich is a new club entering the league this season. We ended up having to cancel the five round season and postponed it to then have three rounds with just three teams. Unfortunately, Basel didn't quite have enough players but a few of their players joined other clubs to play in the shortened season. Participation was slightly less than last year but that was also due to changing dates and people having to be more flexible already having other plans.

Overall, numbers (membership) are about the same around the 100 mark for men and women; 85 men and 15 women. So, we had three rounds and a grand final which was a week before the Festival of Football. We made a decision not to join as it was a week after the grand final and we felt we were satisfied with our season. It was good to see everyone had a good time though. We trained a few umpires who were local guys which had all been quite internal. Two umpires would officiate the same games with one experienced and the other new.

Next year we want to continue to grow women's footy and organise a women's match. We hope to get more women's national players too. In the men's, we want to increase our locals, as a weakness that we have at the moment is that we're very reliant on Aussie players. Geneva, who were premiers this year, were only made up of Aussies. Winterthur are 95% swiss, and the other clubs are a bit of a mixture. The good thing with the Swiss players is that we're quite young at around an average of 25 years of age, but the Aussies are over 30 so we need to address that.

**DI:** Thanks for that. Phil from Poland you're up next.

**PF:** The year 2020 for us was like it was for most people. Twelve months ago, we were made up of about 15-20 blokes in Warsaw, the capital. Then, this year in late September, we played the Festival of Football and we had about 45-50 players in the town of Wrocław. So the last 12 months we've gone from one national team to four local teams and the foundations of a fifth team.

The first town that grew was Wrocław, which is probably the fourth or fifth biggest city in Poland. And the other Nysa, which is a small town of about 4,000 people, they have an AFL team. Poznań, which is the fifth or sixth biggest city in Poland also has a foundation for an AFL team.

Over the last year we've been nurturing our relationships with teams like Dresden, who we played with here in Warsaw, as well as Prague, who unfortunately were not allowed to make the journey at the time. Also, sustaining relationships with the Austrian teams as well. Summary of our games like Slava said, we played in the Baltic Cup in Tallin late last year. March this year we played in Berlin for the Bushfire Fundraiser. We played a friendly here in Warsaw in early September and then late September was the international Festival of Football. Coronavirus only really took two months out of our season in the sense that we couldn't train in April or May. By June we were back to non-contact training and then July full contact.

I'll go through our SWOT analysis and touch on things other teams have not mentioned. One of our strengths is that we have a really high retention of players. We found that if people come to training two or three times, they're more than likely hooked. One of our weaknesses is that it's really hard to find 'sporty' people here. An opportunity that I spoke to Jason in Switzerland about earlier this year was a rugby club. We've got a really good relationship with the Polish Rugby Association. Early next year we will be playing at the 'Festival of the Oval Ball' in Warsaw. It's a day to promote sports in Poland that aren't soccer really. We'll be a part of that thanks to our relationship with the association.

Threats are the coronavirus of course, fear of injury is a big problem with some of our players, but the biggest threat or challenges we're facing would have to be travel. Poland geographically is a little bit smaller than New South Wales in Australia and the distance between Warsaw and Wrocław (being the next team we've got) is the same as the distance between Melbourne and Adelaide. For us to build a league here, which is our aim for next year, means playing games against those teams - which is expensive and time consuming. Until we can build a league and have ultimately six teams in Poland, we will continue to work closely with Berlin, Dresden, Austria, Prague... our neighbouring countries and hopefully also Russia and Scandinavian countries, to keep giving our players competitive matches. That's pretty much us!

ZCC - (20:10) **ZM:** *Good initiative.*

**DI:** Cheers thanks for that. Next, Atanas from Bulgaria.

**Atanas Kirachin (AK):** We started 2020 with one team in Sofia and by the time the virus came to the country, we had to cancel two games with teams from abroad. We had two friendly games with a Croatian team and a Danish team in 2019 and we were hoping to do more of the same. We had to get our hands dirty and it has turned out to be a great success. We started a new club in Varna, and we played our first-ever game between two Bulgarian sides. I should say thanks to Jon who is also in the call, for his work in Varna and I'm looking forward to getting these things going into next year.

We need to find ways to start a third club as soon as possible because we don't have any umpires. Jon and I umpired at the Festival of Football and weren't able to play much of it. A third team would really help that. We had one participant in the AFL Europe Umpire Course, and I think four in the Coaching Course.

In 2021, we are looking forward to having at least two, but we are hopeful for four games between Sofia and Varna. It's pretty important to get people involved and the Varna team were able to bring ten new people to the sport, with one even earning best on ground in the Festival of Footy game. We have good possibilities for next year. One thing that we really miss, in point from Phil's talk just before me, is that we are a bit 'out of the contest' as we don't have any neighbouring countries playing the sport. The closest is Croatia with their teams. If we had neighbouring countries participating that would be great and really help us out, but that's something out of our hands.

**DI:** Cheers, Zoltan from Hungary you're up next.

**ZM:** We started footy in Hungary late last year and have gone from just three players to ten regular players... we've come a long way. Unfortunately, Michael King who started Aussie Rules in Hungary was abroad when the virus started, and border closures didn't allow him back into the country. I stepped in to take over from him. We were planning to play in the Festival of Football with Austria as well as some friendly matches with neighbouring countries.

Unfortunately, we haven't been able to play our first match yet. This poses as a challenge to our new players as it makes it hard to keep training and staying motivated as there are no matches in the foreseeable future. Next year, we want to organise as many friendly games as possible, as well as hope to compete in our first ever Euro Cup, but for now and in the meantime, we will try and get as many native Hungarians interested in footy and keep on growing. Hopefully we will be able to play a lot of matches next year.

ZCC - (20:21) **AK:** *Would like to also mention that with AFL Bulgaria, none of the three clubs in the country are formal organisations so that's important work we have in front of us too.*

**DI:** Thanks for that. Tasha from Israel you're up next.

**Tasha Reshetnikova (TR):** We were able to start the season in early February, but Israel were one of the first countries to impose pretty strict lockdowns. We played until mid-March and then resumed mid-May and continued until September. We had about 12 really solid sessions and three game days. Since we still have only one club and all the universities and infrastructure were shut down, we couldn't realise our plans of trying to open up new clubs in universities.

We focussed on trying to at least get going our 'game day', an event where we tried to invite anyone and everyone who has ever been to a footy event in Israel. We have a club that is a core then whenever we see an Aussie or if they ever show up, we try and get them to play. In terms of our sports side, it was heart-warming to see people were trying to really play the game wherever possible.

In terms of administrative, it's a bit different. Last year we hit a wall trying to register a new sport, Australian Football in Israel. It turns out to register a new sport you need to have 120 players who compete in regular tournament events at least four times a year. Pretty much our own chance and way of developing the sport is to recruit new players and try to open new clubs which we hope to be doing next year. In other administrative news we hope to reach the tax break status, as next year in March we will become a two-year-old NGO and might be eligible. So, there's a lot of work cut out for us next year that we're looking forward to and this year with the lockdown, it has as given us a bit of time to regather and recuperate.

We've been really happy with the new Umpire and Coach Development Series. We have two guys who serve as umpires, who aren't certified but are just huge footy lovers. We hope we can get them certified and we're also looking forward to inviting and interesting as many new people as possible. Same with coaching, that's taken care of by Shir and a few other players who are passionate and put great work and effort into it.

We also want to try and organise some new partners in Australia but with the lockdown and everything we won't get our hopes too high. We hope to continue playing this year until December, if the weather will allow. It's been really hot this year so maybe it'll continue longer. That's pretty much it for Israel, thanks.

ZCC - (20:26) **SB\***: *I forgot to mention a strength in Switzerland is our reserves competition. Every round, Geneva's reserves side and a combined reserves side from Winterthur, Zurich and Basel, play a match at the end of the day. This allows new players to try out at an easier level and guarantees that everyone can always play. It also keeps every club motivated to constantly keep pushing to recruit more players.*

**OH**: I'll jump in here as Czech Republic aren't on the call, but I just want to thank everyone for those reports. I love sitting here and listening to that, I know everyone else does too. It takes a while but it's so heart-warming and great to see the passion and excitement pushing forward to next year.

We're going to go back in the Agenda now as we have been joined by Andrew Hughes from the AFL. Andrew has kindly agreed to join the call in his very early morning and give an update from an AFL perspective on the AFL's international strategy. The floor is yours Hughesy.

#### Return to Agenda Item 5. AFL Report

**Andrew Hughes (AH)**: Thanks Ollie and it's great to be here. I hope everyone is keeping safe and healthy. As Ollie said, it's great listening in to everyone and hearing how everyone is going, getting footy away in what has been a pretty challenging year.

For those that don't know I've been in this international community footy role since 2016 and I've been at the AFL for over ten years. I had the pleasure of attending this GAM back in 2017 in Bordeaux and I was impressed then by the passion that everyone has for growing the game. So firstly, just a big thank you to everyone for the work you do.

Obviously 2020 has been a year like we've never experienced before and it's been a little bit sad that we've had to do this virtually, and some of the AFL Europe events haven't been able to go ahead like they would've otherwise. Pleasingly it sounds like many of you were able to get some footy away which is great. I'm here to give a little bit of an AFL update, where I want to reflect on the higher level of numbers in terms of how we're going as a business.

We had really strong viewership and ratings in terms of TV audience this year, it was our highest level of TV audience since 2017 and up 15% on last year. A lot of that was out of Queensland, 32% up in Brisbane. There were several times we outrated NRL in Brisbane, which is the first time that that's ever really happened. That's a really strong sign of the growth of the game in a non-traditional market.

AFL Grand Final viewership was our highest viewership since 2016, which helps a bit when you have the Swans playing in the grand final which that was in 2016. The Grand Final viewership was up 30% on last year, obviously a night grand final which perhaps helped that a little bit and Victorians were still under COVID restrictions.

We've still had really strong membership numbers, we're only 6% off the all-time record that we set last year. Five clubs broke their all-time record for membership. It works out to be 1 in 26 Australians are a member of an AFL club which I think is really pleasing. We had over 1,000,000 people attending games this year, which is way down on the 7,500,000 million people in 2019 but obviously a lot of that was well out of our hands.

In community footy, we're pretty lucky in comparison to other parts in the world. Whilst we had a period of no sport at all, we were able to get back playing relatively quickly (outside of Victoria). Over 1,400 clubs and 50+ leagues playing across the country managed to get shortened seasons away that ran right up until a few weeks ago which was really pleasing.

Our participation numbers are still being collated and it was quite interesting as we were tracking about 20% higher than average prior to COVID hitting in March which put a halt on registrations. We think we might end up at about 7% down excluding all the leagues that didn't go ahead. Victoria is our largest state for participation and unfortunately couldn't get any seasons away.

It's been a tough year from a financial point of view for us as well. Crowd restrictions, less games, charter flights, high performance hubs... it all costs the business a fair bit. We're expecting to be about 30-40% down on revenue. We stood down about 70-80% of our staff in March and have gone through a significant reset and restructure process and we'll probably end up losing about 20% of our staff overall. That's consistent with sport around the world, it's been a really challenging year.

As part of that business reset process that we've been through, we reviewed our international operations and pleasingly the AFL wants to continue to invest in pursuing our international vision. For those of you that don't know, that's about progressing the game by increasing the relevance to and revenue from international markets. It sounds a bit commercially focussed but the relevance is around driving awareness, involvement and consumption of the game and the reference to revenue is the flow on from what that does. Which is in Watch AFL subscriptions, broadcast, and then a growing commercial focus which might be more business related, particularly in China that's a strong focus.

As part of this review, our key internal objectives remain the same; participation, talent and commercial consumption. One callout from this review has been that perhaps we need to be better at being more holistic across those three objectives. The easiest way to explain that is I don't think we do a good enough job of aligning our broadcasting arrangements overseas with efforts to grow the game via participation. That's an area where I think we need to get better.

From a talent perspective, we need to continue to identify more talent, particularly for the AFLW competition. We've seen a large number of Irish girls coming down, but I think there's an opportunity there.

So, Europe has been identified as a region which we want to continue to invest in which is pleasing. All three of those objectives are relevant in some way. The primary focus I think needs to remain on driving participation and supporting people to play the game. Whether that be through domestic competitions, tournaments or whatever that may look like. Again, it's really pleasing that international remains a priority for the business.

International Cup, which I'm sure some of you are interested in where that's heading. Most of you will know that we postponed the event in 2020 so we're continuing to review the likelihood of that going ahead. The ongoing travel restrictions are probably going to make it pretty difficult. We will continue liaising with the appropriate people including the AFL Europe guys, to consider the feasibility of running that event. I think at this stage, based on the indications that we've got, international travel into Australia is going to be restricted for quite some time which would make it difficult. We'll keep everyone posted on that.

In 2021 the focus as a business is really around community footy, returning to play and doing it in a safe manner in line with our health and safety guidance, and continuing to run a really exciting, accessible and elite competition for our fans. I'll leave it there but I'm happy to take any questions or alternatively provide feedback through to Ollie and Ryan and when we catch up regularly, trust that they will pass it on.

ZCC - (20:31) **WS:** *Comment: Will there be a cut-off date whereby we can know for sure the IC definitely can't take place?*

**RD:** I'll jump in just quickly. We've had a question from Will who is asking if there'll be a cut-off date whereby, we will know for sure that the International Cup will definitely be unable to take place?

ZCC - (20:31) **DB:** *Comment: Will got there first, but would it be sensible to postpone for a longer period?*

**AH:** Part of that will be in consultation with each of our international affiliates. I know that on your Agenda today you're talking about event planning for next year, but it almost gets to a point where it becomes easier to make a call earlier. We're working through that at the moment and as I said indications are that there will likely be restrictions on international travel for quite some time which if that's the case, I'd like to make a call sort of between now and Christmas.

ZCC - (20:32) **WS:** *My follow up answered. A concrete decision by Christmas is encouraging.*

**OH:** David did you want to jump in and ask your question?

**DB:** I think my question was pretty much answered. It was more of a follow up to Will's point. Basically, given the fact that a lot of players invest a lot of money in the actual

organisation of IC, we're better off just postponing for a longer period of time like 2022. I know that's a bit disappointing for a lot of people but is it just not safer given the investment that a lot of people put into it?

**AH:** The thing that I'm really wary of is that we just can't have a situation where we are two or three months out from an event and people aren't sure if they can come and if they do, do they quarantine and who knows the situation. Your question about when you would postpone it to is a really good one, and I don't think we need to make that decision until probably mid-next year. We'd then review where we're at, hopefully we have a vaccine or something where 2022 is then more of an option. We haven't ruled out running it in 2022 or do you just postpone it until 2023... but we would wait until mid-next year to consider that. First and foremost, it's about making an early call around 2021.

**WS:** If I could jump straight back in, I mentioned in our Country Report that we have players who have money on standby with our national team coordinators and they've held it under the impression that, about two or three months ago, if it's going to be in ten months' time then that money is still going to be on standby, it may even be spent. But we're running out of time to renegotiate flights, airlines who are holding onto our bookings for however long it is under the idea we will reschedule it... I mentioned in my Country Report we appreciate everything the AFL and AFL Europe does, and I know that the IC is such a small part of the AFL Europe community, but having an answer by Christmas on it going ahead is one thing, and postponing it in the middle of 2021 is another thing. Because it just pushes it further down the road. The decision before Christmas needs to be made with that in mind, because the playing group and the staff, the coaching, the physio and everyone involved are more tired than me and I don't do much running these days.

**AH:** No that's good feedback and if I'm hearing that correctly it sounds like you're better off just giving yourself more time to make sure that it would be ok. Which might mean that you target 2023...

**WS:** To put it into context we, Great Britain, have until the 1<sup>st</sup> of January to cancel or confirm flights, or we risk losing £150 per flight, with 85 flights it's almost £13,000, which is an astronomical figure for any national governing body in this call.

**AH:** I'm wary a lot of people on this call probably don't attend International Cup so let's pick it up offline and work through it. But I'm curious to understand what the outlay is and all the cancellation terms so we will continue to work with Ryan on that.

**WS:** Thank you Andrew.

**AH:** Any other questions?

**OH:** I think not and Hughesy we really appreciate you coming on and sharing all that. If there are other questions that do come up, send them through to Ryan and we will certainly make sure they get through to Andrew and get answered for you.

**AH:** A big thanks again for everyone with your work. I might stay on the line for a little bit and keep listening in but thanks again.

**OH:** For everyone on the call I am mindful that we were somewhat optimistic that we would rip through a Zoom call and finish within two hours. I'm mindful that we have just ticked over two hours, but we'll push through. As I said at the start, this is our one opportunity as a group to get together and iron things out, with a couple of important conversations still to come up. Let's go relatively quickly but also give sufficient time to people to table issues.

Next up on the Agenda, Hutts I'd like to pass to you to talk us through the audit on accounts.

ZCC - (20:42) **SK:** *Unfortunately, I missed the answer when a decision will be made to an IC 2021. Can someone please give me the answer again?*

ZCC - (20:43) **ZM:** *Around Christmas.*

ZCC - (20:43) **SK:** *Thanks!*

## 11. Financial Report

**GH:** I'm going to be running through the financial statements for the year on the 31<sup>st</sup> of December 2019. First, we'll look at the income statement. Looking at the turnover, 2019 was slightly down on 2018, within that there's a whole bunch of items so we'll pick on the major movements, some up and some down. The operational grant was about £10,000 down, that was made up of a £5,000 swing against us in the exchange rate, and we had £5,000 less of a grant compared to 2018.

On the flipside, merchandise sales were up about £5,000, sponsorship, which is a big one, was up £7,000. Touching on that for a second, and I know we're not a commercially focussed organisation but it enables us to grow the game and so we've gone from 2017 of £10,000 of sponsorship, to 2018 with £26,000 and then 2019, £33,000. That's about 30% of our total grant so that's a significant piece of revenue and a big thanks goes to Ryan over the last few years with that. This year, 2020 is going to be tough, we probably won't reach that same figure.

The other item which we were slightly down on in 2019 was related to the European Championships. We heavily subsidised that to the tune of £5,000 so that accounts for a slightly lower turnover in 2019.

In terms of the expenses, purchases were slightly up due to more footballs that we purchased, direct salaries and wages were slightly up from 2018 due to some additional game development coordinators we had around the regions. The rent subsidy was up from 2018 which is largely Ryan and Lily's package which we have paid as a rent subsidy. The direct premises cost is slightly up, this is accommodation at Australia House which hasn't gone up since we moved in there about four or five years ago. The meals are also slightly up which I guess is just getting back to a normalised level. Development and coaching is slightly

down which is not of a result of any less courses, there has been just less travel associated with those.

For costs, website costs and IT are another one that's down. The website, which has been upgraded over the last couple of years is not there in 2019, but also that number will probably down about £1,200 next year as we have brought onboard Lucidica as a partner for 2020. Uniform grants are slightly up, largely to do with the European Championships. And sundry expenses were up as well largely as a result of the Euro Cup and AGM Commission expenses.

Total surplus for the year was just over £5,000, again, we're not here to make a profit for the year. We want to keep a stable business and I think the most important number we're focussing on is cash flow and cash at bank. Just looking at the balance sheet, cash at the end of last year was just over £15,000. We like to keep £5,000 to £15,000 in the bank as a bit of a holdover for the following year. The VAT recoverable of £2,500, that had been received in 2020 so that's zero now, and the accruals was just some balls that we ordered in 2019 and paid in 2020 so that's also out of 2020.

Effectively our net assets and position at the end of 2019 is £14,995, which is made up of the opening amount of £9,598, the surplus for the year from profit/loss of £5,397 giving £14,995.

All in all, I think AFL Europe is in a good position as at the end of 2019 but also a big thanks to Pat Leavy who has done the audit for us pro bono. Which has saved us probably £1,500-£2,000, so a massive thank you to him. And just touching very briefly on 2020 that I will open up the floor to any questions.

At the start of coronavirus, we took a very heavy knife to the expenses in the P&L, to make sure that we were in the best place to weather the storm. So essentially, the cash that we are looking at having on hand as at the end of 2020 is around about £60,000. In addition to that we've got about £16,000 of balls at resale value to be sold. Depending on what happens with the AFL grant and which is still moving around a bit, and even if that was slightly reduced... I guess the key point is that we're still in a strong position going into 2021 with still some uncertainties and as a result of some early action we took this year. I think that's probably a good place to finish and happy to take any questions.

ZCC - (20:44) **SB:** *We will miss you in this role.*

**OH:** While any questions do come through, I'll second something there Greg. Thank you to you for all your work in the past six years on pulling this together and ensuring we are financially stable and growing. And Pat, I know you said you'd never do an audit again but in a time of need when budgets were very tight, stepping in and pro bono offering to do this again. This is what everyone on this call does, volunteering to work in this organisation and Pat is just one perfect example and we can't thank you enough for that.

**Pat Leavy (PL):** Thanks Ollie.

ZCC - (20:45) **DB:** *Comment: Third what Ollie said, thanks to Greg. You mentioned AFL Europe are in a strong position, but do we feel the cutbacks this year are enough to sustain for next year?*

**OH:** Yes we do. We are still reliant on support from the AFL, we're not yet in a position to know exactly where that's at. But we did take very significant and painful cuts, we spoke about Lily before and some of the other things that we were required to do but it has put us in a position where we do have full confidence that we can get through this next period. Anything additional that does come through from sponsorship from the AFL will put us in a position for further growth, which is really where we need to get back to. But we are really confident with the position that we are in and as Greg said, with £60,00 cash at bank, that will allow us to weather this storm for the next 12 months.

We do just have one more thing on the financials. We take this opportunity to appoint the auditors for next year. I propose that we use AC Partners LLP Chartered Accountants & Registered Auditors. We've used them in the past and they've successfully and competently audited our accounts. I'd like to propose that we reuse them and ask if there's anyone that will move and second that in the chat.

*Scotland passes and Croatia seconds.*

*Auditors appointed: AC Partners LLC.*

**OH:** Next I'll pass to Ryan for the discussion about Events.

## 12. Events

**RD:** Thanks Ollie. I'm trusting everyone has read the documents that were sent out. Firstly, I just want to highlight the proposal put forward is very much a proposal and all events should be considered TBC. AFL Europe will separately announce when each of these events are taking place. Teams should not book travel or accommodation until we announce each event and even then, they should aim to book with flexible terms where possible. We aren't overly confident of getting a major event away in the first quarter or even third of next year, so we have shuffled the Calendar of Events in 2021 to give our events the best hope of going ahead.

### a. 2021 Calendar of Events

**RD:** One of the situations is if Euro Cup is unable to go ahead in June, we're really interested to see if we can push the event back into a September/October time slot. What I'll do is copy each question into the chat box and if you have voting rights, also being one vote per country, please respond to me directly with your vote through the private chat function.

**RD:** Question 1 - If Euro Cup cannot be played in June would you prefer to cancel the event or postpone until later in the year and cancel Champions League?

*Vote (Please answer):*

1. *Cancel Euro Cup & Play Champions League – 2 Votes Received*
2. *Postpone Euro Cup & Cancel Champions League – 10 Votes Received*

**RD:** Question 2 - Assuming all events go ahead as planned, what is your preferred date for Champions League?

Vote (Please answer):

1. *September 4<sup>th</sup> – 6 Votes Received*
2. *October 18<sup>th</sup> – 6 Votes Received*

**RD:** I'm interested to know if there's any other comments or feedback on the Calendar of Events. It is a proposal only, but the main factors sit around the Euro Cup and Champions League timeslots for next year. You'll notice the Fitzpatrick Cup, which is historically held in February has been pushed back later in the year as well. We'll continue to keep some updates coming out around those events too.

a. 2021 Champions League – Qualification

Highlighting Champions League qualification, this was mainly an FYI for everyone. There's been some talk around this as to who will be qualifying for Champions League 2021. As mentioned in the report, any team who qualified for Champions League 2020 will automatically qualify for the 2021 event.

In the circumstance where a country did play a full season this year and had a legitimate winner that they would like to propose and put forward. We're happy to take applications for that although it's important to note that countries who have completed seasons this year won't get additional teams participating at Champions League. It'll be one or the other.

Ryan Tucker and Stephen Dillon have been doing a lot of work around what it may look like next year and moving forward as it gets bigger and bigger. But did anyone have any other questions around Champions League qualification at this point?

**DB:** Just to clarify on the point you made about it being one or the other for last year and this year. If we decide to run a league next year, if we're lucky enough to, can we decide as well that that team qualifies for Champions League?

**RD:** I'm happy to work with each country on what will work for each of you. We just need to make sure that we're open about what's going on. If it means you can add more weight around your season, and it makes it more meaningful then I'm all for that. The issue will be that we are going to need confirmation of what the team will be probably three months out, for travel and other purposes, plus our fixturing and planning of the event.

If there's any questions or comments I've missed, I'll come back to people directly. Moving onto Euro Cup format, basically the format for the last two or three years has remained the same. I'm really happy with the format and I think most are however there were some comments around some people struggling with the number of matches that were being played at last year's Euro Cup in Norrtälje, Sweden. The next question is as follows.

b. Euro Cup – Format

**RD:** Question 3 - Would you prefer to continue the same Euro Cup format as 2019 (6 matches, including a qualifying final) or reduce the format to 5 matches meaning no Quarter Finals?

Vote (Please answer):

1. 6 Games (inc. Quarter Finals) – **11 Votes Received**
2. 5 Games (no Quarter Finals) – **2 Votes Received**

**RD:** Did anyone have any further questions on that one?

**AS:** I just wanted to comment that we're one of the teams that got comfortably beaten in the Euro Cup. We were no way the youngest or fittest, but we still think six games is the better option. At the end of the day, it's about getting as much footy played as possible and as much time on the field. Even though we were one of the low teams and had a hard day, we are very strongly supporting the six games format.

**RD:** Thanks Anton.

c. Euro Cup – Player Eligibility

**RD:** This question is centred around Euro Cup player eligibility. In general, this has stayed the same over the past few years and I am certainly aware there are questions raised in the lead up to those Euro Cup's. It's also always a topic we address at every GAM too. Which leads me to this question for the group.

**RD:** Question 4 - Are you happy with the current player eligibility format for Euro Cup or would you prefer a different eligibility criteria?

Vote (Please answer):

1. Remain the same – **8 Votes Received**
2. Change criteria / Explore alternatives – **2 Votes Received**

**PF:** Hey Ryan, could I quickly voice something about the player eligibility?

**RD:** Yes mate, go for it.

**PF:** With the exemptions, the Euro Cup in Norrtälje was our (Poland's) first Euro Cup. We had two or three exemptions no questions asked. We used these strategically to the best of our ability and all of our playing group got game time, it was fantastic.

Will mentioned celebrating the British AFL League's 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary. To give you a bit of context, 30 years ago there were still Poles fleeing the communist regime in Poland for a better part of Europe. What I'm getting at is that we have people who have lived most of their lives in another country, speak three languages and English is not one of them. They have not touched an AFL ball until this year but under the current eligibility rules they cannot play for Poland.

In 2021 in Stirling, we will use our exemptions, apply for them and go through the process but in the future Poland may very well be left behind if the eligibility rules stay the way they are. Now I don't want to kick up much of a stink right here right now, because right here right now it's not a problem, but as we and other Eastern European countries continue to grow, it may become a problem for the wider AFL Europe community. That's just something I wanted to voice my opinion about and work with AFL Europe to help develop a solution to this problem because I don't know what a solution is, but I am more than happy to help in finding that solution.

**DB:** I've been in contact with Ryan about a similar subject for a couple of months. Obviously, the background of it and player eligibility issues in Eastern Europe is slightly different but I think the overarching issue is the same in terms of eligibility and in terms of what you perhaps could do which is a parent or a grandparent rule not being in place. It's something that I'm very passionate about and have drawn up some draft proposals that I'd be happy to discuss with Ryan and share with the Commission.

I think a lot of countries, although they don't necessarily have an issue with eligibility because of their large pool of players to choose from or a central core group of players to choose from, that there are countries on the fringe that have problems with a small piece and I think we do need to look at it. I believe passionately we are probably one of the few sports in the world that doesn't have a parent's rule at the very least. I think that would allow for say those players with parents that have moved to Germany or wherever they may have moved to, and then had children in those countries but still feel very passionately about their heritage. I do believe there are alternative tools available. Again, our issue is very different, but we do have issues ourselves. As the vote goes, if the majority are quite happy with it then I think Ryan and the Commission have said that they are very happy to still find an alternative and perhaps a working group as he mentioned.

ZCC - (21:02) **SB:** *Sorry I need to get off, it's midnight in St. Petersburg. Russian vote goes to Finland.*

ZCC - (21:02) **OH:** *Thanks Slav, great to see you.*

**RD:** Ryan Tucker did you want to add to that mate.

**RT:** From the Commission side and working with this, the idea of the eligibility rule is to protect the integrity on the broad side. What we have found, especially through David's proposal, is that we have not only a question about how the eligibility works but how we process them to spend more time on the ones that are always going to be kind of slipping through the cracks.

We are not always going to be able to create a blanket rule that serves all the purposes so the goal is to have something in place where we can get the majority on the way and then for these individual exemptions that we cannot have a blanket rule for, we will have to treat them specifically. If we have a good system in place to be able handle that then it'll be able to go a lot quicker and be a lot easier for the community and everyone involved. So that's a

two-part thing and we are definitely working with both of them to make it easier for the community to get over this hurdle.

**OH:** Let's get to a vote and if it's a vote that will look at changing the eligibility, we can take it offline, discuss it further with a working committee and take in to account the views that are very valid from Phil, David, Ryan and everyone else.

**AS:** I'd like to add that Finland support the same thought as Poland because we have a small player pool and a lot of international players that have lived in our country for ten years. So, this is also an issue for us to get enough players to play so I think it's an important discussion to keep up and we would like to take part in it when it goes further.

d. European Championships – Format

**RD:** I'm going to skip over the following question, which is point (e), European Championships format. There are about six to eight teams that were involved in that in 2019 and will look to be involved in 2022 so I will pick that up with them directly.

ZCC - (21:04) **ZM:** *Our team is made up of 90% expats at the moment, who had never touched a footy before, but wouldn't be eligible to play in these international tournaments.*

e. 2022 Tournament Hosts

**RD:** The last one I wanted to raise with events was around the tournament hosting duties for 2022. Currently we are looking at new event hosts at Champions League, Euro Cup and European Championships. If people are interested in hosting one of these events the relevant information was listed an email that was sent out in the lead up to the GAM. We have had an expression of interest from AFL Germany to host Champions League in 2022. That so far is the only application that we've had. If anyone has their own expressions of interest to host any of those events, even as a first point of thought, please feel free to private message me which event you are considering. Otherwise, I will resend all of the documentation out to this group again following the meeting. Any questions or comments?

**WS:** Just a very brief one from me. I think the European Championships in London was a great success and stand ready to do it again in 2022 but our primary preference would be that another country or destination would have the opportunity. I know that we did it last time, but we prefer someone else has the opportunity this time around.

**RD:** That's it from me on the events, if there are no further comments we'll move on.

13. Full Member – Minimum Standards

**RD:** The last one from me that I wanted to raise was Agenda Item 13 around Minimum Standards. There was a one-page document that was sent out but basically it explored ways we can improve the quality and experiences of AFL in Europe. It's centred around five key

actions that we would like to introduce next year and AFL Europe will do a lot of the groundwork to make things available to you.

But what we're looking at is probably ten hours from an entire club over the course of an entire year. It's not a significant amount of work, we're not trying to create more work for people that are already extremely time poor. However, we do think that over the course of a three-year period, this could be extremely beneficial to make sure that we have the best coaches, the best umpires, clubs are well educated, and we've got great communication amongst our community.

Not sure if anyone has any comments or objections to what was listed. Anton from Finland?

**AS:** As many other 'small countries' we have problems with the umpires and coaches that everything is done completely on a voluntary basis. We only have a few coaches and a few umpires and I'm afraid about the requirements in 2023 where you used the wording 'required'. That's something that yeah, we hope we will be able to do but it might be something that drives our umpires away, then we can't play the game. I think the 'required' should also be 'encouraged' in 2023. At least when thinking about our smaller footy countries.

**OH:** Perhaps we have some sort of AFL Europe exception for the requirement of developing countries. I think the structure in place there is strong and good, but I appreciate the point from Finland there.

**RD:** Absolutely. I think it's something that we can review, I mean it's a long time between now and 2023 when we're saying this is going to be a requirement. We don't know the impact that this will have because we have never done it before. Do we get more coaches and more umpires because they now have the skills and confidence to fulfill their role? We don't know.

I'm happy to remain flexible and maybe even revisit this in 12 months. Next year it's 100% people are invited to do it. This time next year I'd love to be sitting at this table and I'll have some numbers for everyone, and we can see the impact the first year of it has had and how far we are in making some higher standards in 2022 and 2023. Basically, I'd like to say that these five items we will be pushing out to everyone next year and encouraging everyone to see who gets involved. Again, I'll be happy to revisit it in a 12-month period but the idea being, we've got three years to really prepare for this. Thank you, Anton, for your point, we will be flexible, and we will always be working with you guys, not against you.

**DI:** I just want to jump in for a second. I want to comment on the whole Umpire and Coaching Courses. I took part in the Coaching Series; I wasn't able to take part in the Umpire Series but the general comments that I got back from everybody was that it was really positive.

Especially the Coach Program, it was tough to get up on Sunday mornings and participate but they were really informative. The umpires that took part in the Umpire Development Series actually learned some new things. Being a requirement or not, I'd just like to

encourage everybody, when you're all here, that they were really good, and I encourage you to all participate in this kind of thing. Putting it as a requirement may have a negative connotation to it but definitely it's something that you should take into account because it will increase your coaches' knowledge and umpire's knowledge. It will then provide those people the ability to transfer that knowledge onto new players and their development.

In the end the development of the players is important. I think it's a good idea and we should, maybe not force it but encourage everyone who has the opportunity to do it, to partake in it.

**OH:** Thanks, Dinko. While you count up the votes Ryan will move to Agenda Item 14 which is Ratification of Affiliate Members, and we've also included the Emerging Members in there.

#### 14. Ratification of Affiliate Members

**OH:** Appreciate if we can move and second in the chat as I enter them in. Firstly, Czech Republic.

*England passes and Netherlands second Czech Republic's ratification as an Affiliate Member for 2021.*

**OH:** Norway.

*Netherlands passes and Scotland second Norway's ratification as an Affiliate Member for 2021.*

**OH:** Israel.

*Switzerland passes and Ireland second Israel's ratification as an Affiliate Member for 2021.*

**OH:** Poland.

*Netherlands passes and Switzerland second Poland's ratification as an Affiliate Member for 2021.*

**OH:** The final two are our Emerging Members. Firstly, Bulgaria.

*Scotland passes and Croatia second Bulgaria's ratification as an Affiliate Member for 2021.*

**OH:** And now finally, Hungary.

*Netherlands passes and Finland second Hungary's ratification as an Affiliate Member for 2021.*

**OH:** Ryan if there are clear results in the votes, we'll announce that now, otherwise maybe we can take that offline and confirm the votes via an email afterwards.

**RD:** If there's no objections I'll follow up with an email immediately tomorrow if that's ok. I've got the chat all saved so there will be no issues there. I just want to make sure I can accurately count the votes and have them verified by another member of the Commission.

*No objection.*

## 15. General Business

**OH:** Everyone, thank you. It's a long one, and I know some are dialling in late at night, early in the morning, mid-afternoon, it's part of the beauty of this organisation. I love these meetings, digging into these chats and hearing what's going on everywhere.

I said it at the start, this is a really important part of what we do as an organisation; to keep us accountable, to make sure we're on the same page, to have a forum to really discuss and bottom out any issues. Come in with all of your passion, share your ideas and make it a better community for the year ahead.

Thank you to everyone who has contributed in every single way as you all have in your own country, regions and right across Europe, grown footy internationally. It's bloody awesome to be part of and I'm really proud to be a part of it and Chair this Commission and push this forward for the next year. We're going to come out strong and let's achieve what we really can achieve as group.

On that, we'll call the meeting to a close at 9:17PM London time.