



The UEC Press Release
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European Professional Football Forum by UEC sets out challenges and areas for improvement of the European football ecosystem

Today in Thon Hotel in Brussels, the UEC organised European Professional Football Forum that took place in the presence of representatives of 104 clubs, 15 leagues and 42 football stakeholders. The purpose of the event was to discuss the key topics of current interests in European football in an innovative and forward-looking manner, while enabling clubs and leagues to express their views and solutions for the identified issues.

After a few welcoming words, Mr Dennis Gudasic, Executive Director of NK Lokomotiva Zagreb and Co-Founder of the UEC, described the UEC as a union intended to protect decision-making in football from purely financial interests, and to bring back the soul to the game reflective of how football fans want to see the sport develop. “We have a different view on what football should look like in 5-10 years than provided by the undemocratic structures of ECA”, he said.

The event was kicked off by the Member of the European Parliament and a Co-Chair of the Sports Group, Mr. Garcia del Blanco, who delivered the opening address. He reminded the participants of the importance of diversity and giving equal voice to professional clubs affected by the rules, as a matter of good governance principles. He deemed this the only way to restore competitive balance between clubs and make use of system of open competitions, a task that falls on the governing body obliged to create equality of opportunity between all participants. Mr. Garcia del Blanco issued a strong statement of support for the UEC objectives and their recognition as a stakeholder by UEFA and the EU Social Dialogue Committee.

In the context of the topic of Financial Fair Play, Foreign Subsidies Regulation and Multiple Club Ownership, Mr Dan Lambert, CEO of Bohemian FC, discussed the issues his club and the league of Ireland are facing. He compared the football ecosystem to the climate crisis and said that “if we do not act soon, we will have damaged European football beyond repair. We cannot measure the health of football on the financial performance of 1% of clubs who have consolidated power, we must include the voices of, and ensure the health of all clubs across Europe”. Mr. Fran Canal, General Director of CA Osasuna considered that a way to address the issue at this time is to give the voice to modest teams with fewer economic resources that deserves to be heard because all the teams form part of the European ecosystem and support the integrated European football pyramid. For such clubs to progress, “it is essential to have an equal voice and a vote.”



Mr. William Martucci, Director of Operations at the UEC presented data showing how competitive balance has decreased both within and between European leagues over the last 30 years as a consequence of the growing financial inequalities between clubs. Mr. Alex Muzio, Chairman of Royale Union Saint Gilloise, commented this data by saying that “market pool to double count the countries that have large domestic TV revenue is illogical in the extreme. Rewarding teams who have been good for a decade, or now half a decade, is also clearly not fair and favours those who qualify regularly - stifling the chances of other clubs to progress to their level,” he said.

Panel II participants were unequivocal that the way that clubs are represented in European ecosystem can be a big part of the solutions for the issues that were identified by the previous presenters. In this context, Dr. Katarina Pijetlovic, General Secretary of the UEC, pointed out that the club representative association ECA operates on the basis of purely plutocratic principles where the clubs’ voting power is related to their wealth, while at least 92% of the professional clubs in Europe are disenfranchised – she sees the UEC, an organisation that operates on the basis of complete equality of their members, as an answer and counterbalance to the influence of big clubs in the governance. Prof. Miguel Maduro agrees and suggests that perhaps the effective solution would be a creation of supervisory agency on the EU level (similar to the one created for pharma sector) to oversee the exercise of the regulatory powers by UEFA. Recognising that some clubs from the bigger markets generate more revenue to the football ecosystem, Mr. Maksims Krivunecs, the President of the Latvian Virsliga, expressed concern that this fact is used as the primary basis for determining their share in the decision-making process. He suggested that benefits from the value generated by the collective system in domestic and international competition can be used to promote solidarity, invest in infrastructure development, and support the growth of youth and women competitions.

The event was concluded by Mr. Javier Tebas, the President of LaLiga, who said “we are an industry with a lot of responsibility, and today the decision-making environment in UEFA is hijacked by ECA, so we have to have an association that has the influence to solve this problem.”

The UEC would like to express special gratitude to Catolica Global School of Law, clubs and leagues that supported the event.

The European Professional Football Forum was livestreamed and the recording can be accessed [here](#).

The agenda of the event can be found [here](#).