

The CAP meeting in Madrid was followed by more than 300 professional football clubs, 34 league organisations and 140 representatives from the media. It was attended by all major football stakeholders such as FIFA, UEFA, ECA, FIFPro and fans organisations. These numbers and the attention generated say it all. Following an intense and demanding season navigated by leagues and clubs under strict Covid-19 protocols and before a brief summer break, it was the perfect moment to reflect with the football community and its clubs across Europe upon the latest developments and the upcoming challenges we will all have on top of our joint agenda.

The recent decisions and the ongoing discussions of the future of the European Club Competitions as from 2024 and especially the reactions and consequences of the rise and fall of the Super League in just 48 hours, will have an impact on the whole football ecosystem. In this context, it was emphasized by many participants from clubs, leagues, fans and player representatives that changes in the fields of governance and decision-making are necessary to protect and further develop European football in a post-Covid and post-Super League era.

Earn it on the pitch

During the CAP meeting, we had the privilege to hear from a rich variety of professionals who passionately articulated the essence of exciting professional football competitions and one of the core values which defeated the Super League: having sporting merit and sporting ability as the deciding factor in winning or losing. This leads to competitions filled with matches where unpredictable outcomes are possible and where the excitement and passion for the fans lie in the possibility their side could triumph.

Domestic Competitions: the foundation of professional club football

In Europe alone there are more than 1500 professional football clubs. Approximately 700 clubs play in first divisions and just 96 of them will play in UEFA Club Competitions (UCC) as from the next season. Therefore, as stressed during the CAP meeting, it is imperative to protect the domestic competitions (leagues and cups) and the domestic calendars. This is the exclusive field where fans and local communities embrace their passion for football and, at the same time, the field where the vast majority of professional clubs play and develop sportingly and economically every single weekend. Domestic competitions are the motor of our industry and our ecosystem. We have a joint responsibility to protect and enhance domestic competitions and their competitive balance.

Safeguarding Competitive Balance with improved Revenue Distribution

During the meeting, leagues and clubs' representatives called for the safeguarding of competitive balance of domestic leagues through a fairer and more democratic distribution of financial resources at UCC level, especially for those clubs that do not participate in European competitions. This was not just a request and/or a demand reiterated during the various contributions at the CAP meeting. It is becoming a growing necessity to protect the ecosystem and ensure the sporting and economic sustainability of all European professional clubs and not just a lucky few. The recent improvement of the financial distribution model for the 2021-24 UCC cycle - especially regarding the amount of revenues distributed to non-participating clubs - represents for sure a first positive step. Nevertheless, if we do not work further in the direction of more equal and fairer distribution models, a new Super League threat will become inevitable.

Reforms towards Better Governance

Clubs, leagues, players and fans' representatives were actively involved in the debate. They all agreed that professional football needs and deserves a better governance model to face the social, sporting and financial challenges posed to the professional football ecosystem during these difficult times.

The *Convention on the future of European Football* that UEFA will kick-off soon was discussed and welcomed with a positive spirit at the CAP. The expectations are that the outcome will result in stakeholders being more involved in the decision-making structure and process by reaching agreements on issues of common concern which impact professional football, its competitions and clubs across Europe.