Document prepared by Dr. Katarina Pijetlovic
General Secretary of the UEC
A. Prof. of Sport Law and EU Competition Law at Católica Global School of Law, Lisbon
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WHOSE INTERESTS DOES ECA REALLY REPRESENT?

A short guide for European football executives, journalists, EU policymakers, and fans

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Executive Summary

The European Club Association (ECA) was born out of "elitist" and unrecognised G14, an economic pressure group formed in 1998 to represent the business interests of top 18 European clubs. "Official recognition of clubs as formal stakeholders within football governance has been achieved through threats of secession and litigation" – G14 promised to disband and re-form in a body with broader club representation, in exchange for withdrawing lawsuits against governing bodies. ECA was then established and included more clubs, but the majority of the Board members were G14. This elitist structure remains regardless of any reforms that have taken place recently.

The latest ECA General Assembly took place in Berlin on 6-7 Sept, and many clubs have been invited to attend. Most of them did not have a right to vote and most of the decisions have already been taken before the event started. Many of clubs were placed in a separate room while ECA leaders decided on important issues affecting their future. As reported recently, "one delegate from a leading European club suggested […] that the extravagance on show was to wow smaller clubs." In the light of the Union of European Clubs (the UEC), a new club representative organisation entering the scene, ECA has been trying hard to prevent the clubs from joining the UEC, organisation that offers a counterbalance to the influence of ECA in the governance of European football, treats its Member Clubs equally, operates "one-club-one vote" principle, while representing their specific interest.

By contrast, in ECA, Network Members are not allowed to vote and are not even mentioned in the ECA Statutes, while Associate Members of the ECA do not have any tangible way to influence the decisions or vote for those members with power to vote on the Board. Both of these categories of membership serve one purpose – to divert the attention from the lack of democratic structures; the fact that ECA is led by unelected Chairman who has major conflict of interest being a Chairman of the Qatari sports channel beIN Sports that buys TV rights from UEFA, while sitting on UEFA Executive Committee; and to provide ECA with legitimacy arising out of the broader membership. ECA claims to provide some services for these clubs – but the reason that ECA club services exist is to mitigate the damage caused to the clubs by ECA's own existence and influence. Clubs should never accept these scraps in exchange for equal treatment and real representation of their interest that is the only way to bring about changes, sustainability, and more balanced ecosystem. Without ability to represent their interests in the governance, they have no ability to progress in sporting and financial terms.

There is also a big difference even between the ECA Ordinary Members who have full voting rights in terms of their influence and places reserved for them on the ECA Board. Whereas clubs coming from six top national associations reserved for themselves half of the Board places, clubs coming from 49 other associations have the other half.

It should not be up to the elite clubs to decide on how much influence they want to give to others. All clubs are entitled to equal voting rights, equal Board places, and equal influence over the rules that govern them regardless of their wealth. Small and medium sized clubs (however defined) are the lifeblood of the European football, the very core of the football pyramid that feed and support it, and without which there would be no apex.

It should not be forgotten that SuperLeague was born out of the elitist tendencies fostered by big clubs in ECA – the clubs that were involved in the SuperLeague project, are now back to the ECA Board, while still being a part of the SuperLeague shareholder agreement.

For the first time since 2008, clubs have an alternative to ECA - the UEC is the organisation with the mission to give voice in European football governance to the clubs that are unrepresented or are inadequately represented in the existing structures. The UEC brings the collective power through unity, offers "one-club-one-vote" equality for all its members and presents a game changer in the European football governance. As the organisation

develops and its membership grows, the UEC will seek a formal recognition as a stakeholder in the European football system and as a Social Dialogue Partner in the EU institutions.

1. History of ECA

G14 was an Economic Interest Group formed in 1998 as an informal pressure group to represent the business interests of 18 top European clubs. The G14 was not recognised by FIFA or UEFA as a stakeholder and has been criticised by UEFA as "elitist".[1] In 2006, G14 was a part of lawsuits against the governing bodies that resulted in a compromise: G14 had to formally disband as a group and withdraw the lawsuits, and in return UEFA and FIFA will integrate them into their governance structure and create compensation pool for the release of players for international representative matches of national teams. **European Club Forum** that was a club representative body with 100 clubs, was then merged with G14 to create **ECA**[2], and given places at various FIFA and UEFA committees.

However, ECA Board structures were designed so that G14 clubs could always obtain majority and pass the decisions that favour the big clubs. G14 role has therefore never ended *de facto*; it has just been re-institutionalised in ECA and legitimised by the much broader membership. "Official recognition of clubs as formal stakeholders within football governance has been achieved through threats of secession and litigation."[3] In this new ECA clothing, G14 was able to extract benefits from the European football ecosystem for its top members, while creating bigger competitive gap, making rich clubs richer and poor clubs poorer.

Some examples:

- *Most of the funds from the compensation pool demanded by top clubs end up in the accounts of clubs from Big Five. Under this scheme, clubs from Big Five received nearly €100 million of a total amount of €130 million intended for clubs from 31 national associations (for EURO 2020). Clubs from 24 national associations did not have any players to release for EURO 2020 and could not benefit from the scheme.*[4]

- *In pre-ECA period, when competitive balance was more than just a slogan, football clubs like Steaua Bucharest, Red Star Belgrade, and Porto could still win the top European competition. Today, this success would be extremely unlikely for anyone outside the top clubs from Big Five leagues.*

- *"The financial success of the UEFA Champions League and the greater divides in revenues distributed have reinforced the negative impact of international club tournaments on the competitive balance in domestic championships. Regular and successful participation in European Cups helps dominant teams to consolidate their supremacy. Besides prize money, international exposure allows teams to increase commercial revenues and attract talents. This also contributes to the establishment of a vicious circle of sporting and financial dominance by a few number of clubs concentrating success not only in their country, but also at UEFA Champions League level. […]Following the increase of total revenues available, the gaps in absolute values between the top and the 5th earner clubs went up by five times from the period 1994/95-1996/97 to the last completed UEFA competition cycle (2015-2018): from €15.8 million to €78.6 million. During the same period, the gap increase between the top and 10th earner was 6.7 times and that between the top and 15th earner was 7.0 times."*[5]

2. ECA's conflict of interest and membership-governance structures

Prominent journalists, academics, and fan organisations all agree: ECA "predominantly acts as the agent of the elite clubs".[6]

2.1 Conflict of interest

First, it is led by Nasser Al-Khelaifi, an unelected Chairman of ECA, and President of PSG, one of the richest European clubs. He is a Member of the Board of Directors of Qatar Investment Authority, the Chairman of which is His Excellency Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim Al Thani, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the State of Qatar.[7] In what appears as obvious conflict of interest, Al-Khelaifi is also a Chairman of the Qatari sports channel beIN Sports that buys TV rights from UEFA, while sitting on UEFA Executive Committee.[8] This enables him to exercise the level of control over European football that can be had only by those in unduly privileged and conflicted position. For example, it is well-known that beIN ignores the debt of ca. €100 million to LaLiga as a retaliation for them publicly speaking and taking actions in defence of the economic sustainability of European football.

2.2 Membership and governance structures

Secondly, as explained below, the structures of the ECA Board and ECA membership are heavily weighted in favour of the elite clubs. Even a casual observer can easily recognise that ECA is not a democracy, and that it is not operating according to the standards of good governance. Regardless of their unconvincing PR efforts to paint the contrary public image of the organisation,[9] ECA is a fine example of plutocracy (rule by the wealthy). This is not a matter of opinion, but a matter of fact. Everything else that is created in and around ECA is just a noise and smokescreen intended to distract from these crucial elements that form the core of ECA's *modus operandi*.

Lack of transparency is often a part of this core. For example, 27 March 2023 was hailed by ECA as "historic day" as it entered into Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with FIFA to last until 31 December 2030. According to FIFA news item,[10] ECA confirmed their support for the new FIFA Club World Cup from 2025, featuring 12 European elite clubs, and an increase of 42% in compensation for those clubs who release players for the men's World Cup 2026 and 2030 tournaments.[11] The MoU was never made public, and nobody really knows what exactly was agreed in it. This secretive nature of the MoU that affects public interests of European football and affords more opportunities for elite begs many questions. However, it is obvious that the decision to enter into MoU with FIFA will make elite clubs even richer, while creating a further detriment for the competitive and financial balance in European football, sustainability of domestic leagues and small and medium-sized clubs.

ECA structure stands in stark contrast to the UEC that is based on equal treatment of its members – in the UEC every member can stand for Board election with full voting rights, every member can vote for the Board representatives, and every member has one vote regardless of its wealth (one-clubs-one-vote principle). There are no categories of membership and there are no divisions between clubs in terms of rights and obligations. These principles are not just phrases used to create false impression on social media, General Assemblies, and in PR, but they are firmly embedded in the UEC Statutes and operations.[12]

2.3 Ordinary Members

There are over 1500 professional football clubs in Europe, 732 playing in top divisions. Most of these clubs don't have access to ECA membership and only 137 of them have a right to vote in ECA. These 137 clubs are called Ordinary Members. They are split into four subdivisions. Subdivision 1 represents the clubs from Top 6 European Associations and holds 12 out of 24 places on the Board. 49 other National Associations have 12 remaining places on the Board: Subdivision 2 (National Associations 7-15) has 6 places at the Board; Subdivision 3 (National Associations 16-28) has 4 places at the Board, and; Subdivision 4 (National Associations 29-55) have 2 places at the Board. Thus, the decision-making power is directly related to wealth of the club, rendering the votes of most Ordinary Members ineffectual. It is also worth emphasizing that the important questions such as format of competitions, access, calendar, and redistribution of finances have already been decided prior to the General Assembly, and not necessarily through the proper procedures.

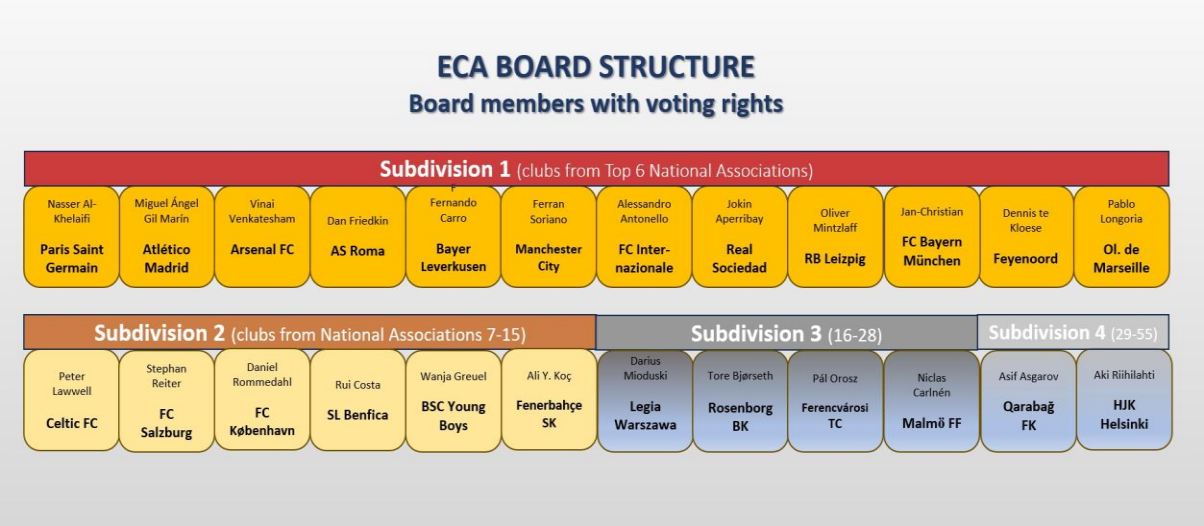


Illustration 1 (see also ANNEX II below)

When asked why is it that elite clubs get financial awards for their historic success in redistribution of profits from UEFA's club competitions, ECA's CEO admitted that it is because these "clubs are driving the value of the competition more than other clubs" and they are more valuable for the broadcasters. It is wrong for elite clubs to assume that this money belongs to them to dispose as they wish because they are "creating this value through the participation of their teams". This argument ignores the fact that these clubs depend on the national associations and leagues they are affiliated with and that without small and medium sized clubs supporting and feeding into the pyramid structure, there would be no top of the pyramid. This affiliation obliges them to adhere to certain rules, one of which is that a portion of revenue should be redistributed to other areas of the football pyramid. This is not an item on a "small club wish list" – it's an obligation and a core principle of the European Model of Sport. It's embedded in the statutes of UEFA, in the EU sports policy, and has constitutional basis in Article 165 TFEU. Clubs who are honest about preserving these principles should not be speaking about solidarity as a charity or hand-out.

Same can be applied to the governance structures. Those that are wealthy are given power in the ECA governance to make sure that they can create rules that keep their sporting, financial and market superiority unchallenged. It is safe to assume that no small and medium sized club (which constitute a massive majority of clubs) would ever vote for redistribution of UCC profits based on historic success and size of the market, for privileged access to competition for clubs from big leagues, or for format in which

they must play qualifying and preliminary rounds while other clubs go straight to the group stages. A small group of ECA elite has decided on and lobbied for the introduction of these rules that are far from being representative of what majority of clubs want and what European football needs.

SuperLeague was not an accident, but a product of these ECA's plutocratic structures and the market superiority for privileged few that it created. Now these clubs are back in the driving seats in ECA, while still being a part of the SuperLeague shareholders agreement (only one club quit the agreement, as reported). Do you trust them to do what is best for European football, for the future of small and medium-sized clubs and their fans and communities?

ECA reforms did not bring about any major change but have created more complex rules that provide a more elaborate smokescreen for the fact that elite clubs are still in the driving seat, while smaller and medium sized clubs still have no influence over the main issues that affect them. Again, it is not up to the elite to decide on how much influence they want to give to the others. It is the right of all clubs – they are all entitled to equal voting rights, equal Board places and equal influence regardless of their wealth.

2.4 Network Members

When the UEC was announced last year, ECA quickly started signing up potential UEC members to the ECA system. This was done by creating Network Membership intended to hoard the clubs without giving them any real benefits. According to ECA, Network Members did not have a status of members, but were called "a critical group of clubs that ECA wishes to engage with and offer benefits to".[13] Network members have no right to vote, no right to participate in any of the committees, they are not even mentioned in the ECA Statutes, and at the ECA General Assembly in Berlin, these Network clubs were taken to a separate room while the other clubs made decisions for them in the next room. The benefits that ECA Network clubs have from their ECA affiliation are access to some of the ECA's services including expert advisory, education & knowledge, research & insights. The statement on ECA website somewhat condescendingly reads: "*The current 200 network clubs are the clubs invested in the prosperity of the European football ecosystem. They have a voice and engagement within ECA via activities and services*."[14] Voice via ECA services? In addition to promoting this mystery concept, none of these ECA activities and research services will mention the harmful effect of ECA on the market and sporting prospects of these clubs. They will not mention the reason that ECA club services exist is to mitigate the damage caused to the clubs by ECA's own existence and influence. The results of this damage are obvious:

> *"The analysis of the evolution of the prize money paid by UEFA to clubs participating in European Cups indicates a clear trend towards greater gaps between incomes collected by the top earner teams and the remaining ones. UEFA club competitions mainly benefit a few teams from the major European leagues. Over the 25-season period studied, nine clubs gathered almost one third of total revenues, 18 earned 50%, 31 earned two-thirds and 49 earned 80%."*[15]

Offering scraps to the Network and Associate clubs and signing them up as members is not really meant to help these clubs – it is meant to help ECA by buying legitimacy for their elitist clubs to continue pursuing their agenda and maintaining control. The truth is that voices of Network (and Associate Members) of ECA are not heard, and they have no influence in making decisions that directly and profoundly affect their clubs. There has never been a time in the history of football where the elite were the "good guys" fighting for equality for small/medium sized clubs or giving them decisive influence in the governance. And they should have such decisive influence – there are over 1000 of non-elite clubs, and only a handful of elite clubs.

2.5 Associated Members

Much like with Network members, Associated Members exchange the equal treatment, voting rights, right to run for the voting places on Board, etc. for the membership in ECA in which they have no influence. After the ECA reforms, Associated Members got a right to vote for seven members in ECA Board – these seven members do not have a right to vote but have observer status. They can also run for subdivision representatives along with Ordinary Members – but subdivision representatives do not have right to vote on the Board. So, when ECA creates social media posts during their GA to boast about how it improved governance and how Associated Members now can be on the Board, this is the part that they don't tell: it doesn't really matter whether Associated Members are on Board or not because they are not given any tangible rights. ECA's Board Member said that whereas previously ECA "*was built around the interests of the big clubs*" the recent reforms in 2023 make "*it a very representative body*."[16] But being a representative body does not mean hoarding members and only claiming to represent their interests – even the very rules in ECA Statutes do not allow for such claim to be credibly made.

Both Associated and Network clubs deserve to be treated equally and have the same rights as every other club. But regarding the key questions, such as format of competitions, access to competitions, redistribution criteria (including solidarity), these clubs have no say. Losing ECA membership for these clubs would in practice mean losing nothing, and they are aware of this – the UEC Members refused to leave the UEC[17] even though it meant (legally very questionable) expulsion from ECA Ordinary and Associated Membership, respectively.

3. The reality behind the glamour of ECA's General Assembly

As one journalist wrote, "[ECA's] General Assemblies are lavish affairs, hosted in amazing venues in some of Europe's great cities".[18] It is worth noting here that ECA is funded by UEFA and this season ECA budgeted €25.3 million[19], ca. €10 million increase from last season, and ca. €16 million increase from the season before that.[20] The same article goes on to say that "[i]n Budapest, one delegate from a leading European club suggested […]that the extravagance on show was to wow smaller clubs,"[21] who are willing to exchange their clubs' future for selfies with famous football figures, a night or two of luxury hotels and rubbing shoulders with the "big boys". At the latest GA in Berlin, ECA brought in a famous Hollywood actress, Natalie Portman, and during her panel discussion she was asked by the host whether there was anything that ECA could do for her women's club that is based in California. This left many at the GA speechless. At the ECA's Special General Assembly in 2019 in Malta the ancient cannons were fired over the bay to create atmosphere for ECA's lavish dinner party – all paid for by the UEFA funds given to ECA. Who in European football is better off for those cannons and Hollywood stars who happen to have shares in the U.S. team that didn't exist before last year?

At their General Assembly in Berlin, ECA invested a major effort to give clubs a false feeling that they are a part of something, a part of "ECA Family". On a more careful observation, the Family made sure that during the GA, clubs were marked with badges denoting their subdivision. The security people at each of the rooms for divisional meetings made sure to allow the entry only for the clubs on the "allowed" list. Behind the glamour and attempts to impress and charm smaller clubs are some of the facts that ECA doesn't want clubs to know about their GAs: "[Clubs] were unhappy that what they consider 'the real business' is conducted by the ECA's board before the General Assembly begins". For example, seven members of the Board were already directly elected before the GA by the elite clubs. Everything important seems to have been decided before the show begun, and not necessarily through the proper channels and regulatory procedures.

At the GA in Berlin, ECA gave credit to itself for the accomplishment of another organisation. For a long time, European Leagues has been lobbying to increase the solidarity payment to non-participating clubs from 4% to 10%. The UEC firmly stood and worked alongside the EL proposal. These efforts resulted in compromise increase to 7%. Without mentioning European Leagues or other stakeholders in a single word, ECA has taken full credit for the solidarity increase, for which they did not lobby and to which they did not contribute.

Being able to say one thing and do precisely the opposite is a privileged display of power by those who believe that the order established by them is protected indefinitely. Prior to their General Assembly in Berlin, ECA posted on their Twitter that they were "*on a mission to support European football clubs, bringing them together and leading the way to build a successful, democratic, and inclusive football for all*". After the General Assembly, they posted: "*Great to see ECA's broad and diverse pan-European representation being recognised*". The ECA Board consists of 24 men, 12 of them from Top 6 National Associations. There is not a single woman out of 24 members with voting rights. One of the Board members is a convicted criminal. Occupiers of the 13 other places on Board have no voting rights. ECA decisions on all the important aspects of the football market do not involve a vast majority of their own Members. How can all that be the basis of "open, inclusive, and democratic organisation" ECA claims to be? Quite to the contrary, it is a faithful copy of the proclamation from Orwell's book: "*all animals are equal, but some animals are more equal than others*".

4. ECA as a single representative body for all clubs? No, thanks.

Fact is that a sole representative body cannot effectively protect all its members in the industry in which big clubs and other clubs often have completely opposite interests and would want to see different rules governing the main issues, such as redistribution of revenues, solidarity levels, calendar, and access to competitions. Many other industries have been honest about this fact and acknowledged it by having two representative bodies – one for elite market participants and one for the others. In this sense, ECA's insistence on maintaining discriminatory and elitist membership and governance structure could be seen as nothing more but the desire to extend control over every club in Europe, and the crucial rules that affect their sporting and financial prospects. The fact that top clubs have different interests and views from the rest has also been acknowledged by the current ECA in-house lawyer back in 2006, before ECA was formally set up.

Nevertheless, due to the excellent progress made by the UEC, ECA spent the last few months actively contacting clubs that were previously of little interest to it, seeking to sign them up for ECA Network or Associated status, and undermine the UEC development. In their letter to the clubs this July, ECA implied that being a part of the UEC was a breach of football regulations, and that clubs would suffer sanctions by the governing body if they joined the organisation. These assertions are not just incorrect, but also illegal, and the UEC has promptly informed the UEFA of the ECA threats.

Article 12 of the Charter of the Fundamental Rights of the EU guarantees the right to "*freedom of association at all levels, in particular in political, trade union and civic matters, which implies the right of everyone to form and to join trade unions for the protection of his or her interests*." Under the EU competition law, cartel-like arrangements between clubs or using the collective dominant position to force the regulatory rules that entrench and increase the market supremacy of already dominant elite group of clubs, is illegal.

ECA also required its members to disclose their affiliation to the UEC to be able to kick disloyal clubs out – once again, requests for such disclosure and the purpose for which they are made, are legally

questionable. In essence, ECA's actions tell a lot about the lack of confidence they feel with the arrival of the new union, which is disappointing as the UEC has always had a non-confrontational stance and an uncontroversial mission to represent the unrepresented and inadequately represented clubs in Europe, while engaging in cooperation and dialogue with all the football stakeholders, ECA included. The UEC does not aim to replace ECA, but merely wishes to enable it to become more honest about whom they really represent and focus on their elite members without having to put up the elaborate show to mask their core mission. The structures of European football governance are flexible enough and apt to accommodate two organisations existing in parallel and representing clubs with different interests. What would be wrong with that?

As the UEC develops administrative capacities and as the membership of the organisation grows, it will seek a formal recognition as a stakeholder in European football governance, as well as a status of a Social Dialogue Partner in the EU institutions in order to provide a proper representation of interests to a vast majority of clubs in Europe.

5. Union of European Clubs (the UEC) – a game changer

Across Europe, small and medium-size clubs play a crucial role in the football ecosystem and are a positive, connecting focal point for local communities. They are presented with opportunities and challenges of a different nature to those financially stronger clubs face. Without representation and support there is a danger that some clubs will die out, and the good they do for the communities they serve will be lost. In European football, it is important that clubs of all sizes are offered an influential voice and provided fair representation so their very specific needs and concerns can be addressed – they need to be a decisive part of the dialogue about the sustainability of the whole football ecosystem. These clubs are the foundation of the football pyramid, the base of our sport that nourishes the grassroots, excels at player development, and provides the springboard for stars to reach the pinnacle of the game.

The UEC has been launched on 24th April this year[22] and provides an alternative representative body for the non-elite clubs, while keeping in regular touch with football stakeholders, such as UEFA, European Leagues, and Football Supporters Europe. The opening address at the launch was delivered by Mr Schinas, the Vice-President of the EU Commission and Mr Frankowski, Member of the EU Parliament, both of whom voiced their public support for the organisation. The mission of the UEC is to give voice in European football governance to the clubs that are not represented or are inadequately represented in the existing structures. Even though the UEC membership drive started only in May, the organisation currently counts 121 members, and it will soon have more fully voting members than ECA. All UEC members are equal – they have equal right to vote, equal right to run for the Board, and their feedback and active participation is welcomed and taken seriously by the organisation. Substituting this kind of fundamental equality that pursues public interest objectives with ECA-style club services is inadequate.

The UEC Interim Executive Board guiding the organisation until the first General Assembly consists of six clubs: NK Lokomotiva Zagreb (Croatia), CA Osasuna (Spain), FK RFS (Latvia), Bohemian FC (Ireland), Royale Union Saint-Gilloise (Belgium) and Maccabi Netanya (Israel).

On 11 October, the UEC will organise "The UEC European Professional Football Forum" in Brussels to discuss the innovative solutions, new ideas, and fresh debates by some of the leading names in the industry and beyond. For example, revenue distribution within UEFA club competitions could be made more balanced by increasing the equal share for all participating clubs and focusing on awarding sporting performance, while removing the financial awards for the clubs based the size of their market and their historic coefficient, which only consolidates the dominance of already very successful clubs from big

markets and is therefore anti-competitive under the EU competition law. The solidarity model between European clubs could also be enhanced to include revenue generated by domestic leagues in addition to UEFA club competitions revenue. A common European solidarity fund where leagues and their clubs contribute a small percentage of their income would further help reduce financial inequalities and restore competitive balance. In exchange, all leagues and all clubs should gain real influence in decision-making process. UEFA's Financial Sustainability Regulations could also help in that matter with the introduction of a squad salary cap and strict sporting sanctions. A combination of these and a range of similar tools can be used to create the fairest possible model where clubs would be rewarded for good performance without distorting competition. These are just some of the topics that will be open to debate on 11 October at “The UEC European Professional Football Forum”.

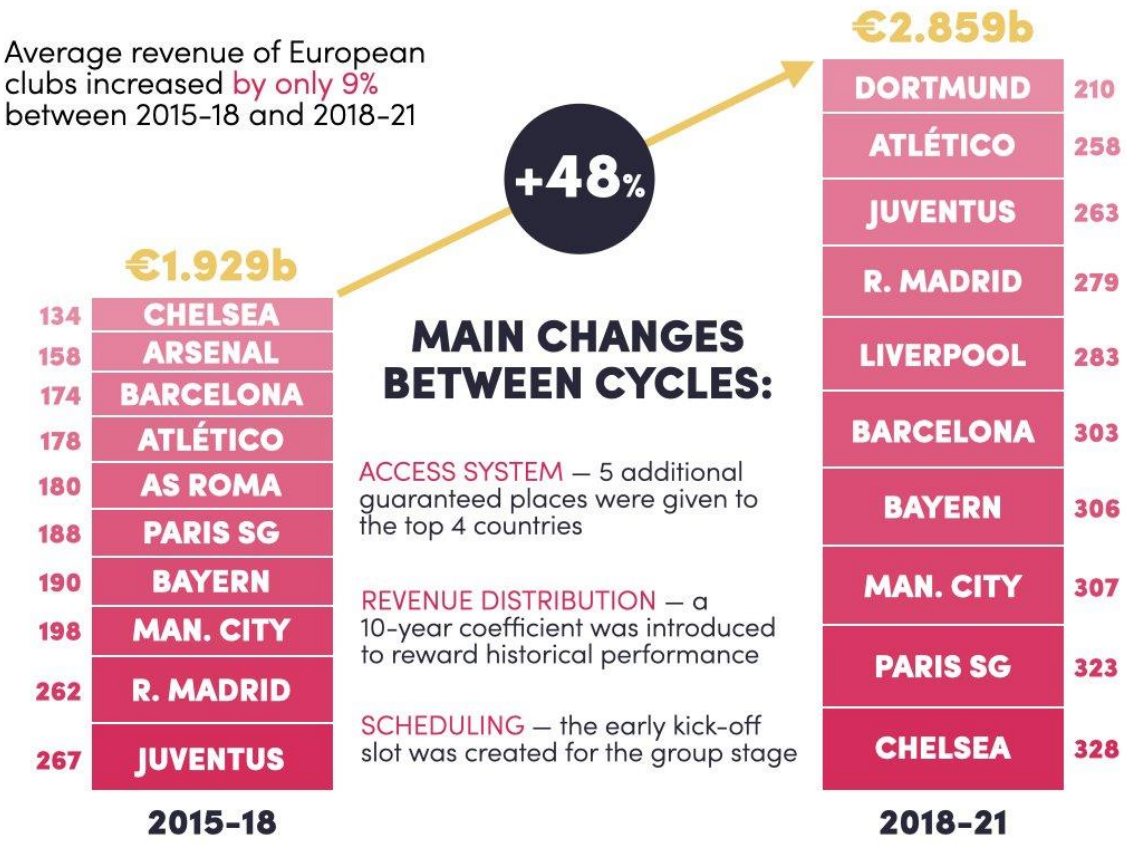
Individually, clubs have no power and no influence over the rules that govern them. Together, they have enormous collective power to create an equitable and sustainable ecosystem that lies in unity offered by the UEC. This is the single biggest threat to the system established by the elite. Operating “one-club-one-vote” principle and having a potential representational scope of over 1000 clubs, the UEC is on its way to become a massive stakeholder and a true game changer. Clubs have nothing to lose by joining the UEC – the organisation does not even charge membership fees. Yet, there is a lot to gain, and clubs are well-advised to make intelligent and independent choices that can benefit their clubs, fans, and communities. If not now, then when? If not the UEC, then who?

UNION OF EUROPEAN CLUBS

ANNEX I

IMPACT OF THE LAST CHANGES MADE TO THE UEFA CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

UEFA revenue distributed to the top 10 clubs over 3-year cycles



Sources: UEFA financial reports, UEFA benchmarking reports

UNION OF EUROPEAN CLUBS

ANNEX II

EUROPEAN CLUB ASSOCIATION EXECUTIVE BOARD 2023-27

Participation in UEFA Club Competitions group stage

	2023/24	2022/23	2021/22	2020/21	2019/20
PARIS SG	UCL	UCL	UCL	UCL	UCL
MANCHESTER CITY	UCL	UCL	UCL	UCL	UCL
BAYERN MUNICH	UCL	UCL	UCL	UCL	UCL
ATLÉTICO DE MADRID	UCL	UCL	UCL	UCL	UCL
INTERNAZIONALE	UCL	UCL	UCL	UCL	UCL
RB LEIPZIG	UCL	UCL	UCL	UCL	UCL
FC SALZBURG	UCL	UCL	UCL	UCL	UCL
BENFICA	UCL	UCL	UCL	UEL	UCL
CELTIC FC	UCL	UCL	UEL	UEL	UEL
FC COPENHAGEN	UCL	UCL	UECL	Q	UEL
ARSENAL	UCL	UEL	UEL	UEL	UEL
REAL SOCIEDAD	UCL	UEL	UEL	UEL	
FEYENOORD	UCL	UEL	UECL	UEL	UEL
YOUNG BOYS	UCL	Q	UCL	UEL	UEL
MARSEILLE	UEL	UCL	UEL	UCL	
BAYER LEVERKUSEN	UEL	UCL	UEL	UEL	UCL
AS ROMA	UEL	UEL	UECL	UEL	UEL
QARABAG FK	UEL	UEL	UECL	UEL	UEL
FERENCVAROS	UECL	UEL	UEL	UCL	UEL
FENERBAHCE	UECL	UEL	UEL		
HJK HELSINKI	UECL	UEL	UECL		Q
LEGIA WARSZAWA	UECL		UEL	Q	Q
ROSENBORG	Q		Q	Q	UEL
MALMÖ FF		UEL	UCL	Q	UEL

• 24 clubs vote to decide on the competition format, calendar, the access system, and the revenue distribution of UEFA Club Competitions (UCCs).
• These decisions have an impact on the whole European club football ecosystem: they determine the space UCCs occupy in the calendar, how much revenue they generate, who gets to participate and how revenue is shared between participants and non-participants, between each competition and within competitions.
• A majority of 18 out of 24 is needed for decisions to be approved (that is the number of subdivision 1 and 2 clubs on the Board): how can 18 of these clubs vote for anything else than an expansion of UCCs to their advantage and to the detriment of domestic leagues and all non-participants to UCCs?

Notes and references

[1] Prof. Richard Parrish "Organisation of European professional football: A stakeholder theory analysis" in Robby Houben "*Research Handbook on the Law of Professional Football Clubs*" (2023, Edward Elgar: UK), p 37.

[2] Formally, the Founding Members of ECA were Manchester United FC (ENG), Chelsea FC (ENG), Real Madrid CF (ESP), FC Barcelona (ESP), Juventus (ITA), AC Milan (ITA), Olympique Lyonnais (FRA), FC Bayern München (GER), FC Porto (POR), AFC Ajax (NED), Rangers FC (SCO), RSC Anderlecht (BEL), Olympiacos FC (GRE), FC Kobenhavn (DEN), GNK Dinamo (CRO) and Birkirkara FC (MLT).

[3] See note 1.

[4] UEFA Financial Report 2020-2021, n 21.

[5] CIES Report on Competitive Balance in European Football (2019), p 4. International Centre for Sports Studies, University of Neuchâtel.

[6] See note 1.

[7] See https://www.qia.qa/en/About/Pages/leadership.aspx (accessed 11 Sept. 2023).

[8] Al-Khelaifi is also on the Board of French Professional Football League and Premier Padel, President of the of the Qatar Tennis, Squash and Badminton Federation, and VP of the Asian Tennis Federation for West Asia. For the issues surrounding votes for Qatar FIFA World Cup and the said role that Al-Khelaifi played in it see Play the Game Senior Analyst https://twitter.com/StanisElsborg/status/1600419922911416320

[9] See, for example, an opinion written by the ECA's CEO, attempting to steer the conversation in the direction that has nothing to do with key issues: "*European Club Association is being cast as an evil elite killing football. What nonsense*" (10 May 2023, The Guardian). https://www.theguardian.com/football/blog/2023/may/10/european-club-association-evil-elite-killing-football-nonsense-tebas-parish (accessed 11 Sept. 2023)

[10] FIFA Signs Renews Memorandum of Understanding with ECA (27 March 2023) https://www.fifa.com/about-fifa/organisation/media-releases/fifa-signs-renewed-memorandum-of-understanding-with-eca (accessed 11 Sept 2023).

[11] In terms of beneficiaries of this programme, see Section 1, bullet-point 1 above.

[12] To learn more about the UEC see https://www.ueceurope.org/.

[13] Guide to the ECA Network Season 2022-23, published by ECA in 2022.

[14] See https://www.ecaeurope.com/about-eca/membership/ (accessed 11 Sept. 2023).

[15] CIES Report on Competitive Balance in European Football (2019), p 3. International Centre for Sports Studies, University of Neuchâtel.

[16] See "*Interview: ECA's Charlie Marshall on multiclub ownership, organisational reform and European football's most important development in years*" (5 April 2023, Off the Pitch).

[17] See, for example, "Battle for future of European football intensifies with Belgian club barred from ECA" (6 Sept. 2023, The Guardian). https://www.theguardian.com/football/2023/sep/06/battle-for-future-of-european-football-intensifies-with-belgian-club-barred-from-eca (accessed 11 Sept. 2023)

[18] See note 16.

[19] According to the information announced at the ECA General Assembly in Berlin 6-7 Sept 2023.

[20] For the last two figures see an announcement at ECA General Assembly in Istanbul, September 2022, and UEFA Financial Report 2020-21, n 21, respectively.

[21] See note 16.

[22] To watch the UEC launch event see https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jDNRYsV2b9U&t=58s. For media reports on the UEC see https://twitter.com/clubs_union/status/1650904963109863455