

Investing in Local Training of Players

Q & A

A. Political questions

1. *Why is UEFA making these proposals?*

Over the last few years, UEFA has identified a number of problems that threaten to damage long term interests of our sport. In an increasingly globalised market-place, it is tempting to look for easy solutions, taking players from elsewhere rather than training them. Our proposals are an attempt to encourage local training of players, maintain competitive balance and ensure a better future for new talent.

2. *Is this UEFA's "revenge" for the Bosman ruling?*

Certainly not! Our proposals are not about the past, but about securing the future for young talent. Our thinking is entirely based on today's assessment of the sport's health. The Bosman ruling happened almost ten years ago, and European football has moved on. Today, our relations with the EU are very good.

3. *Don't these proposals break one of the basic rules of the EU, the freedom of movement?*

No, we don't think so. EU law applies to football, and UEFA accepts this. Our proposals have nothing to do with the nationality of players and we are not trying to impede free movement. To the contrary, we are trying to create more opportunities for more players whilst also protecting the interests of the game. We are also submitting our proposals for full and open consultation, not only with the entire football community but also with the EU institutions and national governments. We want to be sure that our proposals are fully in line with EU law.

4. *Who is the driving force behind these proposals?*

We expect these proposals to enjoy strong support throughout football. More young players will have a better chance of finding a reward for their efforts. Many clubs will be able to compete on a more equal footing. Leagues might become more competitive. And all of this should create a better game for supporters, most of whom want to see fairer competition as well as the maintenance of some link between their community and their club.

5. *Is this simply a reaction to EURO 2004, where some of the big national sides again performed badly?*

Not at all. UEFA is pleased to see some of the "smaller" nations enjoying success. We are talking about issues that affect the long term interests of football: player training and competitive balance. Of course, a side effect of failing to invest in local talent is that some of the big national sides now have a smaller pool of players to choose from. We want to encourage clubs to focus their efforts more on local training but we are certainly not trying to protect the big national sides from competition.

6. Isn't UEFA trying to hide from the modern trends in the game and turn the clock back to the pre-Bosman days?

No. Our proposals are all about the future. We're not turning the clock back – we're staying one step ahead of the game. In terms of labour mobility and integration, European football is already one of the most advanced sectors in society. UEFA welcomes the cosmopolitan nature of club football, and our proposals would do nothing to undermine such a positive development. Also, we have to remember that not all modern trends are necessarily good ones. Should sporting success be determined only by money and influence? We don't think so. Look at the USA: certainly a modern, capitalist economy. But its sports structures have strong mechanisms to maintain and preserve competitive balance. We are seeking to safeguard some core values of sport here.

7. How are the big clubs and their coaches going to react?

UEFA is consulting the clubs and the coaches, and will take account of their views before taking any decisions. A number of forums already exist, which facilitate this process: UEFA's Professional Football Committee, Club Competitions Committee, National Teams Committee and Technical Development Committee, as well as the European Club Forum.

8. What do the clubs think about your proposals?

The European Club Forum (a group of 102 clubs from all European countries, regardless of TV market size, participating in UEFA club competitions and having become members of the Forum through achievements on the field of play) has held initial discussions on this issue and the result of these initial discussions was that a majority of clubs were in favour of having a debate on this issue. The very largest clubs were not in favour of pursuing our proposals. Such a divergence of views is to be expected in any democratic body.

9. What do the European Leagues think about your proposals?

The European Leagues are examining the issue and the initial position of the majority of them was cautiously favourable towards looking into the matter further. Consultations and discussions are ongoing.

10. Shouldn't clubs be able to pick whichever players they want? Don't they need to pick the strongest team they can? How can you dictate what they do?

Clubs can pick whichever players they want. Obviously, they should pick the strongest team. But should we accept that a very rich club can buy an unlimited number of players, pay them massive salaries, and ensure that their smaller rivals never have a chance to win a competition? That is not what sport is about. There needs to be some degree of balance, some means to keep the playing field at least reasonably level. Our proposals are simply aimed at this, whilst also encouraging training and development of players. Perhaps some clubs may not agree with all our proposals. Does that mean our proposals are wrong or right?

11. What will you do if you encounter hard resistance either within football or from the EU?

If there was likely to be hard resistance from within football then these proposals would not even have made it to the table. We have designed a wide-ranging consultation process so that all stakeholders can express their views. We are not afraid of this debate, and want to encourage an honest exchange of views. No decisions have yet been taken, and we are eager to hear the opinions of everyone concerned. All we can ask is that people are constructive. All these views will help us in defining the precise measures to be taken.

12. How do these proposals relate to the international transfer system?

The proposals fit entirely with the spirit of the Principles for international transfers, as agreed by the European Commission, UEFA and FIFA in March 2001. Both aim at encouraging and rewarding the training of young players, which is the key for the future of our sport.

13. How do these proposals relate to the UEFA Club Licensing system?

They are also complementary to the Club Licensing system. The CLS also foresees precise requirements for clubs in the youth sector.

14. What does FIFPro think about your proposals?

FIFPro is the international association of national player associations, and as such represents a large number of European professional footballers. The initial talks held by UEFA and FIFPro resulted with a very positive attitude by FIFPro towards the issue.

15. What do the fans think about your proposals?

From the feedback that we have received from fans such measures would only be beneficial.

16. To what degree would any such measures help to mitigate the problems suffered in recent years by the clubs located in small TV markets?

It is likely that such measures should help for example clubs located in small TV markets, however we are still analysing the situation to try to understand just how much the clubs outside the big TV markets would benefit.

17. To what degree would any such measures help to mitigate the increasing gap between rich and poor in European football?

At this stage it is hard to estimate exactly to what degree any measures could help to stop the increasing gap that has appeared in European football between rich and poor – both between, and within, countries. However, what is clear is that these measures can only help.

18. To what degree would any such measures help to create a level playing field in professional football in Europe?

It will be impossible to create a completely level playing field in European football unless for example income tax rates and social charges are standardised across all 52 UEFA member countries and since European football income is so heavily concentrated in the domestic TV deals of the five major leagues (a result of the structure of the broadcasting sector). However, these proposals should definitely help, along with the UEFA Club Licensing system, to start to build a more level playing field in European football.

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B. Technical questions

1. How do you conclude that there is a risk that clubs will in future not invest enough in training? What is your evidence to support this? What if some European countries simply do not have the quality of young player in the first place?

We are currently undertaking a study to analyse this. But this trend – and the other trends that we have also identified – is perceived in various countries at professional and amateur level. This has been confirmed by various experts in the numerous UEFA Committees and Panels via the permanent ongoing feedback that we receive from them.

2. Do you have data that illustrates your assessment, such as statistics on the number of home-trained players in some of the leagues?

The available data indicates that in many European Leagues there are increasingly fewer opportunities for local trained players to play in for their clubs, as well as a decline in competitive balance.

3. What will be the minimum number of trained players in a team?

If this possible measure turns out to be appropriate, then it will be a question for the consultation exercise within European football, which UEFA is coordinating. At this stage, no decision or recommendation has been made.

4. Are we talking about a minimum number of players in the starting eleven, on the match sheet, or as part of the total squad?

Again, if such a possible measure turns out to be appropriate, then it will be a question for the consultation exercise within European football, which UEFA is coordinating. At this stage, no decision or recommendation has been made.

5. In practical terms, could a lot of administrative work be created by such a measure?

At this stage it is unclear, the precise amount of work would depend on the actual measures taken, but the administrative burden (if any) would obviously be a factor to consider.

6. How do you define 'training'?

This is a very difficult, technical, question to which there is no perfect answer. The question is for the consultation exercise within European football, which UEFA is coordinating. At this stage, no decision or recommendation has been made.

7. How do you define 'squad'?

A squad is the list of registered players of a club for participation in a specific competition.

8. When would the new rules come into force?

We expect the consultation within football to last six months or so, which means a final decision by UEFA's Executive Committee is unlikely before the spring of 2005. If all goes well, the UEFA Congress might ratify the changes in April 2005, which would allow new rules to come into effect in the 2005-2006 season. However, any such rules are likely to be implemented in a graduated, step-by-step approach which will allow an adaptation period.

9. Would the new rules apply to all clubs in Europe? Would national F.A.s and leagues be able to opt out of the new rules in their own competitions?

We believe that our proposals serve the interests of all stakeholders at all levels, right across Europe. We think they would only be effective if they applied throughout Europe to both domestic and international competitions. So we need to get buy in from most of our constituents to make the system work.

10. What about clubs that have training centres in other countries or that use 'feeder' clubs? Will that count as training by the club?

This issue will have to be considered within the definition of training.