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## *Guidelines on eligibility principles for 2020/21 UEFA Club Competitions – COVID 19*

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### **A. Background**

1. One of the core principles applicable to the UEFA club competitions is that *"to be eligible to participate in the competition, clubs must have qualified for the competition on sporting merit"* (cf. Article 4.01 of the Regulations of UEFA Champions League, the UEFA Europa League, the UEFA Women's Champions League, the UEFA Youth League and the UEFA Futsal Champions League).
2. Given the current unforeseen and unprecedented situation caused by COVID-19, National Associations and Leagues are facing a situation whereby the completion of their domestic competitions is at risk. Whereas the circumstances and restricting measures are different in every country, UEFA has a duty to guarantee the integrity of UEFA club competitions and as such the application of the abovementioned core principle that clubs shall qualify to the UEFA club competitions on sporting merit. However, UEFA stresses that the health of players, spectators and all those involved in football as well as the public at large must remain the primary concern at this time.
3. In this respect and in order to guarantee the application of the principle of sporting merit, the "Calendar Working Group" that has been established (which includes representatives from UEFA, the ECA and the European Leagues) is looking into finding the best option to apply for the restart of club competitions so as to allow European and domestic competitions to be properly resumed and completed in a manner that safeguards public health.
4. In fact, the ideal scenario, should the pandemic situation permit it, is to have the currently suspended domestic competitions completed enabling football clubs to qualify for UEFA club competitions on sporting merit in their original format. Should this outcome not be possible, in particular due to calendar issues (e.g. not sufficient time to play the remaining matches of the national competitions, i.e. league and cup) it would be preferable that suspended domestic competitions would restart with a different format in a manner which would still facilitate clubs to qualify on sporting merit based on completion of those competitions under the different format. The fallback option would be to have the currently suspended domestic competitions prematurely terminated but to determine eligibility for UEFA club competitions based on sporting merit to the extent that is possible in these exceptional circumstances.
5. Overall, the objective of these guidelines is to provide guidance under which UEFA will accept clubs from its National Associations where domestic competitions have been prematurely terminated, whilst ensuring that the principles of sporting merit, objectivity, transparency and non-discrimination are respected by National Associations with a view to ensuring fair access to the UEFA club competitions notwithstanding the disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.
6. Whilst these guidelines are meant to cover top tier domestic competitions giving access to the 2020/21 UEFA club competitions, every National Association and/or League should be able to determine how to deal best with the other domestic competitions (i.e. youth, amateur, etc).



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### **B. Guidelines on Eligibility Principles**

1. Admission to the UEFA club competitions is based on sporting merit. For this reason, UEFA urges National Associations and Leagues to explore all possible options in order to bring all top domestic competitions giving access to UEFA club competitions to their natural end.
2. National Associations and/or Leagues should be in a position to communicate to UEFA by 25 May 2020 the planned restart of their domestic competitions including the date of restart and the relevant competition format.
3. While using best efforts to complete the domestic competitions, National Associations and/or Leagues might have legitimate reasons to prematurely terminate their domestic competitions, in particular in the following cases:
  - a. existence of an official order prohibiting sports events so that the domestic competitions cannot be completed or are highly unlikely to be completed before a date that would make it possible to complete the current season in good time before the latest opportunity for the next season to start. In this situation, UEFA would recognise that it may no longer be practical to wait for a final position from the public authorities and that public health considerations mean that the domestic competitions are at high risk of not being played;
  - b. specific economic and financial justifications which would make continuing the season to its conclusion financially imprudent or which could put at risk the long-term financial stability of the domestic competition and/or clubs.
4. In the event that a domestic competition is to be prematurely terminated for legitimate reasons in accordance with the above conditions, UEFA would require the National Association to explain by 25 May 2020 (i.e. in line with date referred to in paragraph B.2 above) the special circumstances justifying such premature termination and to select clubs for the UEFA club competitions 2020/21 on the basis of sporting merit in the 2019/20 domestic competitions:
  - a. the procedure for selecting clubs should be based on objective, transparent and non-discriminatory principles. National Associations and Leagues should otherwise have the ability to decide the final positions in the domestic competitions, having regard to the specific circumstances of each competition;
  - b. the final determination of eligible places for the UEFA club competitions should be confirmed by the relevant competent bodies at domestic level.



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5. UEFA reserves the right to refuse or evaluate the admission to any club proposed by a National Association from a prematurely terminated domestic competition in particular where:
  - a. the domestic competitions have not been prematurely terminated on the basis of the reasons given in these UEFA guidelines or on the basis of any other legitimate public health reasons;
  - b. the clubs were selected pursuant to a procedure which was not objective, transparent and non-discriminatory so that the selected clubs could not be considered as having been qualified on sporting merit;
  - c. there is a public perception of unfairness in the qualification of the club.
  
6. The admission process and respective criteria outlined in Article 4 of the abovementioned UEFA club competitions regulations remain valid.

These guidelines are adopted by the UEFA Executive Committee pursuant to Article 83 of the 2020/21 UEFA Champions League Regulations, Article 80 of the 2020/21 UEFA Europa League Regulations, Article 71 of the 2020/2021 UEFA Women's Champions League Regulations, Article 53 of the 2020/21 UEFA Youth League Regulations and Article 62 of the 2020/21 UEFA Futsal Champions League.

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UEFA President

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