

Over 200 football leaders and stakeholders gather in Brussels as UEC Forum calls for fairness, legality and reform for European football

The Union of European Clubs successfully gathered over 200 representatives from across Europe, including Alex Muzio, Glenn Micallef, Miguel Maduro, Giorgio Guazzugli Marini, and Javier Tebas, to advance a fairer and more democratic football governance model.

The UEC presented two major policy initiatives, the Player Development Reward and the Domestic Media Rights Protection Policy, reaffirming its commitment to balance, inclusivity, and sustainability across European football.

Brussels, 18 November 2025 — More than 200 representatives from clubs, leagues, EU institutions and football stakeholders gathered in Brussels for the **third edition of the UEC Football Forum**, under the theme “*Shaping European Football for All.*” The event marked a decisive step in the growing movement to reform European football governance, strengthen solidarity across the game, and align the sport with EU legal and democratic principles.

Opening the forum, **UEC & Royale Union Saint-Gilloise President Alex Muzio** called for a profound shift towards fairness and accountability, warning that the concentration of power in the hands of a few clubs undermines both the spirit and sustainability of European football. “*I am concerned that in the medium to long term that it will be seen as merciful that elitest clubs would not continue to grow bigger, better and smash the rest of the clubs to bits. The UEC has always believed in dialogue first, but dialogue must lead to change. Ultimately if governance in football breaches the principles of EU laws, then we and others will have no choice but to seek remedies through the European institutions.*” he said.

In his keynote address, **European Commissioner Glenn Micallef** reaffirmed the European Commission’s recognition of the UEC as a legitimate representative of clubs and endorsed its participation in UEFA decision-making structures. The Commissioner highlighted the relevance of inclusive dialogue: “*Decisions about football must be open, transparent and participatory. Small and medium sized clubs, fans, associations and players’ unions, all these have a voice, and all their voices must matter. Inclusiveness cannot just be a slogan.*” Mr. Micallef also focused on the European Union’s principles of competition, fairness and solidarity which he stated must also apply to football governance, emphasising the need for inclusive policies that protect the entire football pyramid rather than a privileged minority.

During the forum, the UEC presented **two major policy initiatives** designed to promote fairness, sustainability and growth across European football. The **Player Development Reward (PDR)**, published earlier this year, would reward clubs that invest in youth and community development, while the **Domestic Media Rights Protection Policy** aims to rebalance the distribution of television revenues to benefit domestic leagues and reduce inequality between competitions. Muzio described these proposals as essential for fairness across the European sports model, reinforcing the UEC’s commitment to ensuring that solidarity is built into the sport’s economic foundations.

The legal and regulatory dimension of football governance featured prominently throughout the discussions. Experts **Miguel Maduro**, former Advocate General at the European Court of Justice, and **Petros Mavroidis**, Professor of EU Law at Columbia Law School, warned that current governance structures risk breaching **Articles 101 and 102 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union**, which prohibit anti-competitive practices. They underlined that agreements between UEFA and the European Club Association – now renamed European Football Clubs – could entrench elite dominance and exclude most clubs from decision-making. *“The current structure of European competitions does not promote solidarity, does not promote competitive balance and this is leading to greater entrenchment and competitive imbalance, and this also undermines the conditions that the court imposes as necessary to accept for UEFA to play the role as gatekeeper and regulator of this market.”* noted **Mr Maduro**, calling for a plural system in which all clubs are represented through independent organisations such as the UEC.

A broader debate emerged around the idea of an EU-level framework for sports regulation, with academics and policymakers including **Jan Exner**, **Jan Zglinski**, and **Giorgio Guazzugli Marini** agreeing that football’s self-regulation model has reached its limits. Citing examples such as the Super League, Diarra Case and the expanded FIFA Club World Cup, speakers argued that these cases demonstrate the need for European oversight to guarantee transparency, fairness and democratic accountability. As Marini concluded on behalf of the European Commission: *“We see that challenges faced by football are becoming big challenges in other areas. It is important to call for responsibility from all stakeholders that are involved in the football ecosystem. The more we manage to have converging views and democratic principles that underlines the governance system of football in Europe, the better.”*

Beyond governance, participants also discussed how football can remain competitive while preserving its community and social values. Representatives from **Norwich City FC**, **FC St. Pauli**, **European Leagues**, and **Twenty First Group** shared insights on how local identity, solidarity and fair redistribution are key to the game’s long-term health. **Claudius Schäfer**, President of the European Leagues, stated: *“In the context of the FIFA Club World Cup 2025 two clubs received the same amount that is supposedly due to 3,000 clubs. Something is not working in the system. This is equally applicable to UEFA club competitions.”*

Oke Göttlich, President of FC St. Pauli, spoke of the importance of regulation and the role the European Institutions can play. **James Hill**, of Norwich City FC, echoed the importance of maintaining community engagement in an increasingly globalised game. Meanwhile, **Omar Chaudhuri** from Twenty First Group presented data demonstrating that competitive balance not only drives fan engagement but also enhances financial growth across leagues.

The day concluded with **Javier Tebas**, President of **LALIGA**, who praised the UEC for giving a voice to clubs and advancing concrete, fair-minded solutions for the benefit of European football as a whole. *“The greatest asset we have in our domestic competitions and leagues is competitiveness. It is what creates passion for our fans and what has made elite clubs great. The UEC is the flame that keeps the embers of football burning and is helping to keep the sport*

alive. We must defend the competitiveness of domestic leagues, an asset that is dying.” Mr. Tebas declared. His remarks encapsulated the prevailing sentiment in Brussels: that European football stands at a turning point, where compliance with EU law, respect for democratic values, and commitment to solidarity are no longer optional but essential.

The **2025 UEC Football Forum** concluded with a shared vision among clubs, leagues and policymakers, a vision of a fairer, more transparent and more sustainable European football, truly *shaped for all, not just for a few*.

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

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

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