THE SOLACE SUMMIT

WORDS OVER SWORDS

UNION OF EUROPEAN FOOTBALL ASSOCIATIONS (UEFA)

The 2026 Transfer Auction &
State Ownership in European Football

◆ BACKGROUND GUIDE ◆

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Letter from the Executive Board

Greetings Delegates and Franchise Owners,

On behalf of the Executive Board, it is our absolute pleasure to welcome you to the simulation of the Union of European Football Associations (UEFA) at The Solace Summit. This committee is unlike any you may have encountered before: over two days, you will step into the shoes of club owners, sporting directors, and ultimately, policymakers shaping the future of European football.

Day One will place you directly in the room of a high-stakes Transfer Auction. You will represent a European football club and will be expected to assemble a competitive fifteen-player squad within a budget of €1 Billion, balancing star power, tactical needs, and financial prudence. We expect delegates to arrive well-versed in the current form, statistics, and market valuations of the players in the pool. Bid with intent — know why you want a player and what role they will fill in your XI.

Day Two shifts the committee from the boardroom to the debate floor. Having experienced first-hand how financial firepower shapes squad-building, you will debate the Agenda: “Assessing the Influence of State Ownership on Competitive Balance in European Football.” You will be expected to speak not merely as club owners but as custodians of the sport itself — weighing sovereign wealth, sustainability regulations, sporting integrity, and the future shape of the European game.

We urge delegates to come prepared, to bid and argue with strategy rather than sentiment, and to uphold the decorum befitting a committee of this stature. The Executive Board is always available to assist and looks forward to an engaging and enriching two days of football diplomacy.

Regards.

Introduction to the Committee

The Union of European Football Associations (UEFA) is the governing body for association football, futsal, and beach soccer across Europe. Founded in 1954 and headquartered in Nyon, Switzerland, UEFA is one of six continental confederations of world football's global governing body, FIFA, and comprises 55 member associations. UEFA organises some of the most prestigious club and international competitions in the world, including the UEFA Champions League, the UEFA Europa League, the UEFA Conference League, and the UEFA European Championship.

Beyond organising competitions, UEFA plays a central regulatory role in the European game. It sets the rules of club licensing, oversees Financial Sustainability regulations (the successor to the original Financial Fair Play framework), governs multi-club ownership structures, and safeguards the sporting integrity of its competitions. In recent years, UEFA's regulatory attention has increasingly turned toward the question of ownership itself — as state-backed investment vehicles, sovereign wealth funds, and multi-club conglomerates have reshaped who owns Europe's biggest clubs and how resources flow through the sport.

This committee will simulate UEFA in its dual capacity: first, as the framework within which club representatives compete for playing talent in a simulated transfer market; and second, as the deliberative body responsible for weighing the long-term consequences of ownership models on the health and competitiveness of European football.

Day 1: The Transfer Auction

Day One of committee will be conducted as a live Transfer Auction. Delegates will represent prominent European football clubs and will bid for players from a shared player pool to build a competitive squad. Delegates are strongly encouraged to research recent league and continental performances, current market valuations, injury records, and international recognition of the players in the pool before the auction begins

Rules of Procedure — Transfer Auction

✦ **Squad Size**: Each club shall assemble a squad of exactly 15 players.
✦ **Playing Composition**: The squad of 15 must comprise a Starting XI of 11 players and 4 substitutes.
✦ **Total Purse**: Each club is allocated a transfer budget of €1,000,000,000 (€1 Billion) for the auction.
✦ **No Retention System**: There is no pre-auction retention mechanism. Every player in the pool enters the auction on equal footing

✦ Bidding Decorum: As a general rule, no more than two clubs should be actively engaged in bidding for a single player at a time. A third club may enter the bidding, provided that decorum and order are maintained throughout.
✦ Strategy Mandate: Delegates must bid with a clear tactical rationale — know the position, role, and system-fit of every player targeted. Track squad composition, positional balance, and remaining budget continuously through the auction.
✦ Value-First Philosophy: "Value for player" is the guiding principle of this auction. Clubs are discouraged from overspending on marquee names at the cost of overall squad balance and depth.
✦ End-of-Auction Submission: At the conclusion of the auction, each club must submit a short Press Release detailing its final 15-player squad, designated Starting XI, and playing formation

Quick Reference — Key Auction Parameters

Parameter	Value
Squad Size	15 Players
Starting XI	11 Players
Substitutes	4 Players
Total Transfer Budget	€1,000,000,000
Retention System	None — Open Auction Pool
Simultaneous Bidders	Max. 2 (3rd permitted with

Day 2 Agenda

"Assessing the Influence of State Ownership on Competitive Balance in European Football"

Background to the Agenda

Over the past two decades, European football has undergone a profound transformation in how its clubs are owned and financed. What was once a landscape dominated by supporter-run associations, local businessmen, and modest private investors has, in many of the continent's top leagues, given way to a new era of sovereign wealth funds, state-linked investment vehicles, and multi-club ownership conglomerates.

High-profile acquisitions — such as Abu Dhabi United Group's takeover of Manchester City, Qatar Sports Investments' ownership of Paris Saint-Germain, and Saudi Arabia's Public Investment Fund taking a majority stake in Newcastle United — have injected unprecedented capital into individual clubs, reshaping transfer markets, wage structures, and competitive hierarchies within domestic leagues.

Proponents argue that such investment has raised the overall standard, infrastructure, and global appeal of the clubs and leagues involved, generating employment, tourism, and broadcasting revenue while allowing historically underfunded clubs to compete at the elite level. Critics, however, contend that state-linked ownership distorts competitive balance, allows clubs to operate with financial backing that ordinary commercial revenue could never replicate, and raises questions of "sportswashing" — the use of football investment to improve the international reputation of the owning state.

UEFA has attempted to respond to these dynamics through successive rounds of regulation. Financial Fair Play, introduced in 2010, required clubs to broadly balance football-related income and expenditure. Its successor, the Financial Sustainability and Club Licensing Regulations introduced in 2022, replaced the strict break-even model with squad-cost and wage-to-revenue ratio caps, alongside continued restrictions on related-party sponsorship deals — a mechanism through which state-linked owners have previously been accused of artificially inflating club revenues. UEFA has also tightened its multi-club ownership rules under Article 5 of its club competition regulations, which prohibits any individual or entity from exercising decisive influence over more than one club competing in the same UEFA competition.

Alongside state-linked single-club ownership, the rise of multi-club ownership (MCO) groups has added a further layer of complexity. Groups such as City Football Group, Red Bull, and Kroenke Sports & Entertainment now control clubs across multiple continents, raising fresh questions about conflicts of interest, coordinated transfer strategies, and the dilution of genuine sporting competition. Domestic responses have varied: Germany's Bundesliga continues to enforce its '50+1' rule, which requires members to hold a majority of voting rights in their clubs, explicitly to prevent the kind of external capital dominance seen elsewhere, while England, Spain, France, and Italy have generally permitted greater external and foreign ownership.

As football continues to globalise and attract diverse forms of investment — from Gulf sovereign wealth funds to American private equity — UEFA faces the challenge of designing a regulatory framework that protects competitive balance and sporting integrity without discouraging the investment that has modernised stadiums, academies, and broadcasting infrastructure across the continent. This committee will debate how UEFA ought to respond.

Key Issues for Debate

✦ The extent to which state and sovereign wealth ownership distorts competitive balance within domestic leagues and European competitions.
✦ The effectiveness and enforceability of Financial Sustainability Regulations, squad-cost ratios, and related-party transaction rules in curbing artificial financial advantage.
✦ Whether UEFA's Article 5 multi-club ownership restrictions are sufficient to prevent conflicts of interest between commonly owned clubs.
✦ The comparative merits of ownership models such as the Bundesliga's 50+1 rule versus more open foreign-investment regimes.
✦ The tension between attracting investment that modernises the sport and preserving a competitive, unpredictable, and sporting product.
✦ The reputational and geopolitical dimensions of state-linked ownership, including concerns around sportswashing.
✦ Potential reforms UEFA could introduce — revenue-sharing mechanisms, spending caps, ownership transparency requirements, or luxury taxes — to safeguard competitive balance going forward.

Questions a Resolution Must Answer (QARMA)

✦ Should UEFA impose stricter limits on state and sovereign-linked ownership of member clubs, and if so, what should those limits look like?
✦ How can UEFA strengthen enforcement of Financial Sustainability Regulations without disadvantaging clubs that rely on legitimate investment to compete?
✦ What reforms, if any, are needed to UEFA's multi-club ownership rules to prevent conflicts of interest in European competitions?
✦ Should domestic-level ownership models (e.g., 50+1) be encouraged or mandated more broadly across UEFA member associations, and is this within UEFA's jurisdiction?
✦ How should UEFA balance the economic benefits of external investment against the long-term sporting integrity of its competitions?

Closing Note

This committee asks delegates to engage seriously with both the sporting romance and the financial reality of modern football. Day One will test your strategic instincts as club owners; Day Two will test your ability to think beyond your own franchise's interests toward the health of the sport as a whole. Come prepared, argue with conviction, and remember — as much as any balance sheet, football remains a game of passion

“Football is not just a game — it is a mirror of who controls it.”

We look forward to an engaging and insightful two days of committee.