



LMUN 2026

A Background Guide for the:

European Club Association



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**ECA 2025| The Unify Super League: Fighting for the Soul
of the Beautiful Game**

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Letter From the Chairs

Hello delegates, and welcome to the 30th edition of the Lincoln Model United Nations conference. We are your chairs for the European Club Association (ECA) committee, Ariel Araya and Jorge Guardia. Both of us are thrilled to commence this campaign with all of you, and we're especially excited to listen to your avant-garde debate. This committee focuses on an acutely controversial topic, and we expect your arguments to match its strife while also advocating for consensus. As sports devotees, we mutually knew that the Unify League was the topic that we desired to do and we sincerely desire for all delegates to be as passionate as us. Now, here is a terse introduction to both of us.

Ariel (aarayat@lincoln.ed.cr): Hello delegates, my name is Ariel, and I am a senior at Lincoln. I've been part of the MUN program since 6th grade and have chaired committees numerous times. It's safe to say that the footballing world is my main interest, and I aim to dedicate my life to working in "the beautiful game" industry. As for this conference, I am specifically provoked by this subject area as this topic not only affects the elite clubs but also imprints on the fans, such as myself. Moreover, I call for all delegates to urge for harmony whilst also not being afraid to spark a squabble with their fellow committee members. Please feel free to inquire about anything at all to either me or to my more than qualified co-chair.

Jorge (jguardia@lincoln.ed.cr): am Jorge Guardia, a senior student at Lincoln School, and it is my honor to welcome you to the European Club Association committee at LMUN. The European Club Association (ECA) consists of 224 professional football clubs from Europe and has a significant influence on decision-making regarding governing, financial regulation, and the future of the game. As a delegate in this committee, your group will explore the growing challenges and responsibilities for clubs in an increasingly commercialized and global football environment. Please be sure to prepare well for each session and participate in an active debate. Most importantly, please communicate respectfully and constructively with one another throughout our committee sessions. I look forward to a successful and engaging committee experience.



Topic Introduction

“The Unify League” is amongst the most contentious ideas in modern football, a project that has sparked discussion from boardrooms to the fans' homes across Europe. Formerly titled “The New European Super League”, this venture was spearheaded by Real Madrid's President Florentino Perez in 2021. However, it was met with an immense amount of backlash by football fans who stated it would compromise the spirit of the game. The original plan looked to bring together an assortment of elite European clubs who aimed to establish a closed competition. This arrangement would guarantee these distinguished and high-profile clubs would have a constant presence and high revenue matchups. Moreover, “The New European Super League” promised these involved clubs financial stability whilst also providing fans with blockbuster games every week. Nonetheless, numerous critics arose claiming this plan represented acquisitiveness and that it would betray the established values and beliefs that make football the "beautiful game”.

In the rear of backlash from players, crowds, football clubs, and governing bodies such as UEFA and FIFA, “The New European Super League” proposal collapsed days after its disclosure. Be that as it may, the project never exactly died as Real Madrid and a handful of patrons continued to safeguard the values of the idea. This party argues that the "beautiful game” needs to be amended to ensure competitiveness and sustainability. Due to this perseverance, a rebrand gave rise to the modern proposal denominated as “The Unify League”. Unlike its precursor, “The Unify League" maintains inclusivity and balanced pugnacity, which promises an open structure that, in theory, concedes more clubs to participate, whilst still advocating for the magnetism of top category matches.

“The Unify League” embodies more than just a competition structure or project. It represents the ongoing strife and juxtaposition over football's future by clubs and fans alike. This plan is a dispute between innovation and tradition, between heritage and permutation culture, between the voices of supporters and the faculty of silk-stockings. “The Unify League” makes us ask tenacious questions on whether football should take bold steps toward innovation or if deviation from convention is a dangerous gamble that could compromise rooted values in the sport.



Key Terminology

- **UEFA:** The Union of European Football Associations (UEFA) is the governing body of football in Europe. It was founded in 1954 and is one of FIFA's six continental confederations. UEFA coordinates numerous illustrious competitions such as the UEFA Champions League, Europa League, Conference League, Youth League, and the esteemed European Championship. Moreover, this association also focuses on overseeing the application of financial fair play and club licensing.
- **Domestic League:** Domestic Leagues in football refer to competitions where licensed clubs within the same nation compete in a league format. This occurs naturally over the course of the regular season. Multiple countries have more than one professional division where teams would be promoted and relegated through performance. Some domestic leagues include the Bundesliga in Germany, the Turkish Super Lig in Turkey, and the Scottish Premiership in Scotland.
- **Elite Clubs:** In football, the term elite clubs, though subjective, customarily refers to professional teams that are recognized for their routine success in international and domestic competitions. More often than not, these clubs are recognized for their significant financial prosperity and the ability to pursue the world's best and most influential players. These clubs have fan bases that are noticeable and can be seen around the globe, not only at a domestic level. Some examples of elite clubs include Bayern Munich, Manchester City, and Inter Milan.
- **Marquee Matchups:** Marquee Matchups or blockbuster games involve football games that draw significant media or monetary consideration. These matches, by definition, involve Elite Clubs or regional derbies that can carry a compelling amount of weight. This level of gravity typically implies there is a trophy, qualification, or elimination on the line.
- **Underdogs:** Underdogs or darkhorses refer to teams that play in professional competitions and are not routinely considered Elite Clubs. These teams are known for being responsible for unpredictable results by eliminating powerful teams or by reaching a high standing in the tourney. Underdogs do not have either the historical achievements, financial influence, squad quality, or squad depth to be thought of as Elite Clubs. Some



teams that are ordinarily known as Underdogs include RB Leipzig, AS Monaco, and FK Bodø/Glimt.

- **Financial Fair Play Rules (FFP):** Financial Fair Play Rules (FFP) is a group of regulations established by UEFA in order to prevent clubs from spending more money than they earn. Not only does this promote financial stability, but it also prevents wealthy owners from making heavy, unfair injections into their teams. FFP forces teams in European competitions to operate within their generated revenue. If a club breaks or breaches FFP rules, it is subject to a fine, transfer bans, and exclusion from UEFA competitions. Some notable clubs that have infringed FFP are AS Roma, Galatasaray, and AC Milan.
- **European Spot Qualification System:** The European spot qualification system refers to the way in which clubs can access or gain the grace for European competitions like the UEFA Champions League, Europa League, and Conference League. All members of UEFA have the ability to enter European tournaments through success in their domestic competitions. However, some leagues have more European spots available in comparison to alternative leagues. Moreover, some domestic competitions have direct entry into UEFA competitions, whilst other leagues only have entries to the qualification stages of the competition.
- **Television and Streaming Rights:** This refers to the rights that UEFA gives to certain companies to stream or televise their competitions. Not only is this a key form of income for UEFA, but also the main way in which fans and viewers spectate these tournaments. However, many fans end up watching illegal streams of matches due to the unavailability of services in their area or context.
- **Cross Continental Opportunities:** Cross continental opportunities refer to the recent trend in world football of subverting the location or teams in a competition to include continental diversity. An example of this type of competition is the FIFA Club World Cup played in the United States of America. Many members within European clubs have actively advocated for UEFA matches to be played in non-European territory or to include highly competitive teams in these competitions, like teams from Saudi Arabia or Argentina. The discourse around these opportunities is controversial and complex, as it



could provide new viewership and income to these competitions but would also betray the core culture and tradition of European tournaments.

Committee Background

ECA: The European Club Association (ECA) was founded in 2008 to provide European Clubs with a powerful voice regarding decision-making within European and international football. Members of the ECA are spread across the 55 national associations in UEFA. Moreover, this club association is built on the support of more than 300 clubs.

Bloc Positions

Pro “Unify League” Bloc: This bloc is in favor of the creation of the “Unify League” and is part of clubs that are the main backers and supporters of this concept. The main interest of this bloc is to establish the “Unify League” and convince most, if not all, clubs and organizations to join the league and reject UEFA’s stance on this competition. Furthermore, the bloc wants to establish this tournament as the new most popular and prosperous competition in sporting culture, completely taking over the place of the UEFA competitions. It is important to note that the main clubs in this bloc are Real Madrid and Barcelona. Delegates that align with this bloc should be persuasive and compelling in order to bring more clubs to support the “Unify League”.

Anti “Unify League” Bloc: This bloc is against the creation of the “Unify League” and is strongly against any attempts to support this initiative. The main interest of this bloc is to stay committed to the current UEFA competitions as they view the “Unify League” as treason to football culture. Most European clubs fall within this bloc and have reaffirmed publicly their loyalty to UEFA and the “open competition” system the organization offers, whilst also rejecting breakaway league proposals. Moreover, the clubs within this bloc that have shown the most opposition towards the “Unify League” are Bayern Munich, Borussia Dortmund, and Paris Saint-Germain. Delegates that align with this bloc should aggressively reject changing the current structure of European football.



Passive Opposition Bloc: This bloc refers to clubs that have preferred risk management strategies in order not to be fully vocal on the “Unify League”. It's important to note that the clubs in this bloc are still opposed to the concept of this league. However, their main interest is to keep good relations and look for consensus between the other two polar opposite blocs. Members of this bloc should advocate for ideas on which both blocs can agree on a single proposal and should act as passive forces in the debate. Furthermore, some clubs with significant influence in this bloc include Ajax, Internazionale Milano, and AC Milan.

History of the “Unify League” Proposal

The “Unify League” is not a sudden or original idea. It is the latest attempt in a long struggle over who controls European club football. In many ways, it is simply the next version of the European Super League, reshaped after the spectacular collapse of the 2021 plan. Since then, its supporters have softened their language, redesigned the competition, and turned to the courts instead of press conferences. At the heart of it all is a familiar tension: powerful clubs want more financial security and freedom, while European football remains built around centralized oversight and open competition.

For years, some of Europe’s biggest clubs have been unhappy with the way UEFA runs its competitions. They felt that the Champions League did not reward them fairly, despite the audiences, sponsors, and global attention they brought to the tournament. These frustrations grew even stronger during the COVID-19 pandemic. Empty stadiums and lost matchday income exposed how vulnerable club finances really were, especially for teams carrying heavy wage bills and large debts. In that environment, the idea of creating something new began to feel less radical and more necessary to some executives.

That thinking burst into public view in April 2021 with the announcement of the European Super League. Twelve clubs from England, Spain, and Italy revealed plans for a new, partly closed competition that promised guaranteed places and steady income. The reaction was immediate and fierce. Fans protested outside stadiums, players and managers spoke out, and domestic leagues and governments pushed back hard. Within three days, the project fell apart. The English clubs withdrew first, followed by Atlético Madrid, Inter Milan, and AC Milan. It was one of the most chaotic and emotional moments football had seen in decades.



Even so, the idea did not completely die. In the years that followed, the remaining backers, mainly Real Madrid and Barcelona, with Juventus involved for a time, changed direction. Instead of trying to launch a league, they focused on the rules that govern European football. Under a new company, A22 Sports Management, they argued that UEFA had too much power and could shut down rival competitions without fair or transparent processes. What had once been a football debate became a legal one.

That legal fight reached a turning point in December 2023, when the European Court of Justice ruled that UEFA's system for approving new competitions was flawed under EU competition law. The court did not approve the Super League or order UEFA to accept it. But it did say that UEFA could not automatically block alternatives without clear and objective rules. Supporters of the project saw this as a small but important opening.

Out of that opening came the "Unify League." Unveiled in late 2023 and expanded in 2024, it was designed to look and sound very different from the Super League. The proposal talked about promotion and relegation, multiple divisions, and qualification based on results. It promised solidarity payments and even free-to-air broadcasting. The message was clear: this was no longer about protecting a handful of elite clubs, but about bringing European football together.

In practice, though, little changed. Very few clubs showed any interest. Real Madrid remained the driving force, while Barcelona's support was less consistent, and Juventus eventually walked away. Most of the football world simply ignored the proposal. Leagues, federations, and players' unions restated their opposition, while clubs chose not to engage at all. Instead, they continued playing in UEFA competitions and treated the Unify League as a risk not worth taking.

Current Situation

Right now, the "Unify League" is more talk than action. It's a concept, a set of ideas on paper and in courtrooms. Even though it's presented as a fairer, more open version of the old European Super League, it hasn't found the support it needs to become real.

The group behind it, A22 Sports Management, says the goal is to fix some of the problems in European football. They want a league where more clubs can compete, with promotion and relegation, and where performance matters more than fame or reputation.



Compared to the old Super League, it sounds friendlier and more inclusive. The message is about “uniting” football rather than giving a small group of elite clubs special privileges.

But in reality, almost nobody else is buying it. UEFA hasn’t approved it. Domestic leagues, national federations, and players’ unions are sticking with the system they know. Without that backing, the league can’t be scheduled, sanctioned, or run properly. Football’s calendar, revenue streams, and competitions are still all built around UEFA tournaments.

The legal side is more active than the sporting side. In 2023, a European court said UEFA’s system for blocking rival competitions wasn’t completely transparent under EU law. That gave A22 a chance to push their case, and they’ve asked UEFA to formally recognize the Unify League while filing claims for damages. But courts haven’t forced UEFA to let the league happen, so it’s all still in the legal gray area.

The biggest hurdle is clubs. Real Madrid is the only one fully backing it right now. Barcelona sometimes supports it, but inconsistently. Juventus, which used to be on board, pulled out in 2023. Most other clubs haven’t said a word; they just keep playing in UEFA competitions. Their silence isn’t indecision; it’s a calculated choice. Joining a league that isn’t sanctioned by UEFA would be risky, both financially and politically.

Money is another issue. No major broadcasters or sponsors have signed up. A22 has talked about a direct-to-fan streaming service, but without top clubs or big audiences, it’s still just an idea.

In short, the Unify League is alive in concept and conversation, but not in reality. Its main effect is keeping pressure on UEFA and reminding everyone that some of the biggest clubs aren’t completely happy with the current system. For now, though, UEFA competitions continue as normal, and the Unify League remains stuck somewhere between an ambitious vision and a playable league.

Possible Solutions

Unlike most committees, in this one, the chairs have decided that only two possible solutions will be accepted within resolutions as the main result of this situation. These are that the current structure of European football is kept as is, or the other solution is that a new competition will be the new mainstay, and clubs eliminate UEFA competitions. These two polar opposite solutions are the ones available as they are realistic and force delegates to take decisive



action during the debate. Nonetheless, consensus can still be reached if all blocks act in harmony. However, the chairs expect all members of the debate to align with their club's stance and protect their interests and values above everything else. As a result, settlement will not take the form of hybrid models, but rather through coalition building within each of the two frameworks. Utilizing persuasive argumentation and engaging in strategic negotiations will be key in this committee in order for one's resolution to become the preferred outcome.



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