

Slovenian Club licensing System

Introduction

Football Association of Slovenia is relatively young association, although founded in 1920. Slovenia became independent country after major geopolitical changes in Europe and football association is full member of FIFA and UEFA from 1992 and 1993. Football is playing in Slovenia in 9 regional associations, referees and coaches are organised in their own organisations under umbrella of FA. Clubs of different levels are very important part of Slovenian football and represent basis for main football activities. Historical and regional reasons as well as position of football in the society are reflected the structure of our football association. The important role on the level of professional football plays also league association as organisation of top division clubs. Slovenian football family is relatively small on European map, although football is Slovenian sport no. 1 taking into account number of players, clubs, coaches, referees, presence in all regions, etc. In the recent years a significant increase in number of registered players as well as youth teams is present, major infrastructure investments as well as professionalization of grassroots level, youth academy level and top division football. Slovenia is also one of the youngest and smallest countries to ever participate in the major championships (EURO 2000 and World Cup 2002).

Implementation of club licensing within FA Slovenia

Slovenia was a pilot association within UEFA project and involved in the licensing processes already from 2000. Main task of our project team was, beside involvement in the UEFA project, mainly to strategically establish Slovenian club licensing system with regulations, organs and communication concept. It was decided at early stage of the project to introduce club licensing not only for clubs playing UEFA competitions but also on the national level. Taking into consideration existing elements of club licensing in our regulations at that time (e.g. youth teams, coaching qualifications, and infrastructure) wider national club licensing system was needed to raise standards of our club football. National club licensing system for 4 levels (UEFA, 1st division, 2nd division and 3rd division) was introduced with tailored licensing criteria and processes. Each year more than 50 clubs are licensed in regular licensing procedures.

Importance of club licensing within our association is reflected also in the organisation of our FA, where licensing department is one of divisions of our administration. Licensing administration was formed in 2003 to continue the work of our project team. We have

included in the administration available and appropriate human resources within our association, league association as well as external advisors for legal and financial matters. Our licensing administration is unchanged since 2003 which brings certain level of stability and quality for the system.

Club licensing results

Introduction of club licensing have brought long-term stability to Slovenian club football although in the early phase of the project some problems with few traditional clubs raised because of their major financial and organisational problems. FA Slovenia was helpful but strict as equal treatment of clubs is our basic approach. We always try to safeguard the continuity of competitions, to compose leagues by sporting merit and licensing decisions and to raise transparency and credibility of our football with regular communication with all football stakeholders.

In the first licensing cycle (for 2004/05 season) only 4 clubs were successfully licensed for the UEFA level. In the further seasons number of UEFA licensed clubs increased as improvements of our clubs were significant. In the last licensing cycle for the 2008/09 season all top division clubs successfully undergone the process for the UEFA level. In total more than 80 clubs were licensed in recent years and increase of positive decisions is present.

Benefits

One of the benefits of CLS is also possibility to perform benchmarking analyses and prepare benchmarking reports of Slovenian club football, taking into consideration appropriate transparency of financial reporting, credibility of our licensing system, available football specific data and information and also some positive feedback from clubs.

One of the real benefits of establishing a pan-European club licensing system is the chance to share experiences between national associations, leagues and clubs. UEFA is playing an active and important role in organising workshops and seminars and encouraging licensors within national associations to communicate with each other. The right solution to improve the understanding of football in Europe is to know and understand different football cultures, league structures and the differing potential for development.

Club licensing is dynamic system and will continue to develop to better help football stakeholders in financially unstable environment.

Conclusions

Club licensing is still very important project on international and national level. One of the main goals of licensors throughout Europe is definitely to raise standards of football in all licensing related areas. We can secure our football future only by further improvements of transparency, credibility and solidarity of all levels of European football. FA Slovenia is proud to have the possibility to contribute to these processes, which will hopefully bring better and friendlier football environment.

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