



No 36/2023

TO UEFA MEMBER ASSOCIATIONS

For the attention of
the President and the General Secretary

Your reference	Your correspondence of	Our reference	Date
		F/CC/THT/ANS	7 July 2023

UEFA club competitions cycle 2024–27 (“Post 2024”)

Dear Sir or Madam,

Following the approval of the UEFA Executive Committee on 10 May 2022 and on 28 June 2023, as well as the approval of the men’s international match calendar for 2025–2030 by the FIFA Council on 14 March 2023, please find hereunder and attached further detailed information on the men’s UEFA club competitions for the cycle 2024–27.

On 19 April 2021, the UEFA Executive Committee approved the principles of access, format and calendar for the new UEFA club competitions from the 2024–25 season onwards.

Following an intensive consultation process with all stakeholders, which led to some amendments and fine-tuning, at its meeting on 10 May 2022 the UEFA Executive Committee finalised and approved the new structure of the UEFA Champions League (UCL), the UEFA Europa League (UEL) and the UEFA Europa Conference League (UECL), with regards to access, format and calendar.

Furthermore, the UEFA Executive Committee approved at its meeting on 28 June 2023 the new format, access and calendar of the UEFA Youth League (UYL) from the 2024–25 season onwards.

For 2024–27, the key changes are the following:

- Reformatting the UCL, UEL and UECL group stages to a ‘league phase concept’;
- Increasing the number of clubs taking part in the UCL, UEL and UECL centralised phases;
- Changing the number of league phase matchdays (current group stage) for the UCL and UEL;
- Creating an intermediate knockout round play-off in the UCL between the league phase and the round of 16;
- Opening the access in the UYL in the domestic champions path to all national associations and adapting the format of the UYL Champions League path in accordance with the format changes in the UCL.

Finally, the UEFA Executive Committee decided to rename the UEFA Europa Conference League into **UEFA Conference League**, in a move that will strengthen the personality and identity of this new but already important competition. The change of name will be implemented **as of the start of the 2024/25 season**.

You will find below a more detailed explanation of the new framework. Furthermore, attached to this circular letter you will find an illustrated overview to further explain the changes.

1. UEFA Champions League, UEFA Europa League, and UEFA Europa Conference League

Access:

The access list and the feeding principles in the qualifying rounds for UCL, UEL and UECL does not change. However, four clubs will be added to the current 32 clubs in each of the group stages (league phases in the new format) of the three competitions based on the outline below (full details of the new access list for all three competitions are enclosed). The new structure for UEFA club competitions will ensure that a minimum of **37 UEFA national associations** are represented in the league phases of the three competitions combined. There will be a minimum of 15 domestic champions in the UCL league phase and a further 22 in the UEL or UECL league phase.

Since all changes made to the access list will enter into force in the 2024/25 season, the outcome of the 2023/24 domestic season (or 2023 for summer leagues) will be taken into account. The ranking of the associations in the 2024/25 access list are determined on the basis of the five-season association coefficients established at the end of the 2022/23 season, i.e. the cumulative total of the associations' season coefficients from 2018/19 to 2022/23 inclusive.

UEFA Champions League

Based on the UCL access list for the 2021-24 cycle, four additional spots will be allocated as follows for a league phase composition with 36 clubs (see full details in the enclosure):

- One additional spot for direct qualification to the league phase will be allocated to the **association in the fifth position** of the access list in accordance with the UEFA associations' club coefficient ranking. This association will also keep its spot in the qualifying phase (third qualifying round of the league path) of the competition.
- One additional spot in the league phase will be awarded to a domestic champion by extending from **four to five the number of clubs qualifying via the champions path qualifying rounds**. The champions path will be adapted as detailed in the access list, including, notably, the removal of the preliminary round (see enclosure).
- One additional league phase spot each will be reserved for the **two associations whose affiliated clubs have the best collective performance in the previous season** in the UEFA club competitions (in accordance with the associations' club coefficient for the season). This spot ("European Performance Spot") will be allocated to the club best ranked in their domestic league behind the clubs that have qualified directly for the UCL league phase positions. The additional spot will not reduce the number of clubs in UEL and UECL, so these two associations will be entitled to one team more each in their overall UEFA club competitions quota.

UEFA Europa League

More associations and clubs will be involved in the qualification path. The four additional spots will result in the following league phase composition, with 36 clubs (see full details in the enclosure):

- The UECL titleholder
- Twelve clubs (**one more** than in the 2021–24 cycle) **qualifying directly** via their domestic competitions:
 - o two from each association ranked 1 to 5 in the UEFA associations club coefficient ranking;
 - o one from each association ranked 6 and 7 in the UEFA associations club coefficient ranking.
- Five clubs (**one more** than in the 2021–24 cycle) entering from the **UCL play-offs of the champions path**.
- Six clubs (same as in the 2021–24 cycle) entering either from the UCL play-offs or UCL third qualifying round of the league path.
- Twelve clubs (**two more** than in the 2021–24 cycle) from the **UEL qualification phase**, which will include two additional rounds (first qualifying round and second qualifying round of the main path) and 24 more clubs from 18 additional associations.
 - o The clubs losing in UCL champions path second qualifying round will enter Q3 of the UEL champions path, the clubs losing in UCL champions path third qualifying round will enter the UEL play-offs;
 - o The clubs losing in UCL league path second qualifying round will enter Q3 of the UEL main path.

UEFA Europa Conference League

The four additional spots will result in the following league phase composition, with 36 clubs (see full details in the enclosure):

- Twelve clubs (**two more** than in the 2021–24 cycle) entering from the **UEL play-offs**.
- Five clubs (same as in the 2021–24 cycle) from the UECL champions path, reserved for clubs eliminated in the UCL champions path Q1 (16 clubs entering in Q2 of the UECL champions path) and clubs eliminated in the UEL champions path Q3 (six clubs entering in PO of the UECL champions path).
- Nineteen clubs (**two more** than in the 2021–24 cycle) from the **UECL main path qualifying rounds**, which still consist of four rounds and include clubs from all 55 associations.
 - o The clubs losing in UEL main path first qualifying round will enter in Q2 of the UECL main path, the clubs losing in UEL main path second qualifying round will enter in Q3 of the UECL main path and the clubs losing in UEL main path third qualifying round will enter in the UECL main path play-offs.

Titleholder rebalancing

The rebalancing of the UCL, UEL and UECL titleholders (if the titleholders qualify for the respective league phases via their domestic competitions) will be as follows:

- If the UCL titleholder qualifies for the UCL league phase via the domestic league, the **club with the best individual club coefficient of all clubs that have qualified for the UCL champions path** (champions of associations 11 to 55) will enter the UCL league phase directly instead of the original round they qualified for.
- If the UEL titleholder qualifies for the UCL league phase via the domestic league, the **club with the best individual club coefficient of all clubs that have qualified for the UCL champions path** (champions of associations 11 to 55) **and the UCL league path** (clubs of associations 5 to 15) will enter the UCL league phase directly instead of the original round they qualified for (**provided they are the next best club in their domestic championship not already qualified for the UCL league phase**).
- If the UECL titleholder qualifies for the UEL league phase via the domestic competitions, the **club with the best individual club coefficient of all clubs that have qualified for the qualification phase of the UEL** will enter the UEL league phase directly (**provided they are the next best club in their domestic championship not already qualified for the UEL league phase**).

Format:

From the 2024/25 season, the group phase will be replaced by a **league phase with 36 clubs**. Clubs will no longer play three opponents twice – home and away – but will instead face fixtures against **eight different clubs in UCL and UEL**, and **six different clubs in UECL**. Half of each club's matches will be played at home and half of them away.

The new format is expected to provide greater sporting fairness for all clubs, a more dynamic ranking, wider diversity of opponents and a greater level of sporting interest until the last matchday.

The principles of the new league phase will be as follows (see more details in the enclosure):

- Clubs are no longer drawn in groups.
- All clubs start the competition together in one league and play against a selected number of opponents equal to the number of matchdays. All results are counted in one ranking: 3 points for a win, 1 point for a draw, 0 point for a loss.
- Each club plays an equal number of matches at home and away.

The opponents, and which matches will be played home and which away, will be assigned by a draw, based on a system of pots, to ensure all participants have the most balanced level of opposition.

UEFA Champions League and UEFA Europa League

- Each club will play eight opponents.
- The 36 clubs will be seeded into four pots of nine clubs based on their individual club coefficient established at the beginning of the season (five-season coefficient, including the previous season). The first pot in UCL includes the UCL titleholder and the top eight clubs in the club coefficient ranking, in UEL the first pot includes the top nine ranked clubs. Pots 2, 3 and 4 include all other clubs according to their ranking order.
- Each club will be drawn against two opponents from each of the four pots, playing one match at home and one match away against them.

UEFA Europa Conference League

- Each club will play six opponents.
 - The 36 clubs will be seeded into six pots of six clubs based on their individual club coefficient established at the beginning of the season. The first pot comprises the top six clubs in the club coefficient ranking and pots 2 to 6 all other clubs according to their ranking order.
 - Each club will be drawn against one opponent from each of the six pots.
 - The six pots will be paired (pots 1 & 2, pots 3 & 4 and pots 5 & 6). Each club will play one opponent at home and the other opponent away of each of the two paired pots.
- In principle, clubs from the same association will not be drawn against each other in the league phase. Exceptionally, a maximum of one match per club against another club from the same association may be allowed for associations with four or more clubs in the league phase, if this is the only way to avoid a deadlock in the draw.
- At the end of the league phase, in each of the competitions the clubs ranked 1 to 8 will qualify directly for the round of 16. Clubs ranked 9 to 16 will face clubs ranked 17 to 24 in a knockout round play-off, to qualify for the round of 16. Clubs ranked 25 and lower will be eliminated from all UEFA club competitions (i.e. no feeding to another competition). To strengthen the synergy between league and knock-out phases and to provide more sporting incentives to the league phase, the **pairings of the knock-out phase will be partly determined by the league phase ranking**. The following seeding system will apply:
- For the knockout round play-offs, clubs that finish 9th to 16th in the league phase will be seeded and those that finish 17th to 24th will be unseeded. The seeded clubs will in principle play the second leg at home.
 - For the round of 16, clubs that finish 1st to 8th in the league phase will be seeded and will play against the winners of the knockout round play-offs, who will be unseeded. The seeded clubs will in principle play the second leg at home.
 - A table will be formed that will guide the pairings of the knock-out phase from the knock-out round play-offs up to the semi-finals. Clubs ranked 1 to 8 will be coupled based on their position in the league phase and split in two opposite parts of the table by draw, for example, clubs ranked 1 and 2, clubs ranked 3 and 4 and so on. An example of a seeding table of the knockout phase system for illustration purposes is shown in the enclosure.

- From the knockout round play-off, there will be no more country protection, so clubs may face other clubs from the same country.
- The knockout phase will be completed with two-legged quarter-finals and semi-finals, with the final then played in a single leg at a neutral venue.

Calendar and kick-off times:

The three competitions will consist of the following rounds and matchdays:

- UEFA Champions League
 - o League phase: 8 matchdays (4 home and 4 away)
 - o Knockout round play-offs: 2 matchdays (home and away)
 - o Round of 16: 2 matchdays (home and away)
 - o Quarter-finals: 2 matchdays (home and away)
 - o Semi-finals: 2 matchdays (home and away)
 - o Final: 1 matchday
- UEFA Europa League
 - o League phase: 8 matchdays (4 home and 4 away)
 - o Knockout round play-offs: 2 matchdays (home and away)
 - o Round of 16: 2 matchdays (home and away)
 - o Quarter-finals: 2 matchdays (home and away)
 - o Semi-finals: 2 matchdays (home and away)
 - o Final: 1 matchday
- UEFA Europa Conference League
 - o League phase: 6 matchdays (3 home and 3 away)
 - o Knockout round play-offs: 2 matchdays (home and away)
 - o Round of 16: 2 matchdays (home and away)
 - o Quarter-finals: 2 matchdays (home and away)
 - o Semi-finals: 2 matchdays (home and away)
 - o Final: 1 matchday
- The qualifying rounds dates will follow the calendar pattern of the cycle 2021-24 as of Q1 (no more UCL preliminary round).
- The eight league phase matchdays of the UCL and the UEL and the six league phase matchdays of the UECL will be played over **ten European match-weeks**. The **UCL and UEL** matches will be played **between September and January**, while the **UECL** matches will be played **between September and December**. Each of the three UEFA club competitions will have **one exclusive matchweek** with the other two competitions not being scheduled in this week.
- In standard weeks, UCL matches will be played on Tuesdays and Wednesdays and UEL and UECL matches on Thursdays. In the UCL exclusive week, UCL matches will be played on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday. In the UEL exclusive week, UEL matches will be played on Wednesday and Thursday. In the UECL exclusive week, UECL matches will be played on Thursday.
- The finals will be held on Saturday for UCL and on Wednesday for UEL and UECL.

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- There will be two kick-off time slots on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday: 18:45 CET and 21:00 CET. An additional slot at 16:30 CET may be used for UEL and UECL matches in time-zones CET+2 and higher. For the last match day of each of the league phase, all matches will be played simultaneously. As of the quarter-finals in UCL and as of the semi-finals in UEL and UECL, in principle all matches are played at 21:00 CET.
 - The calendar for the 2024/25 season is enclosed.

2. UEFA Youth League

Access:

As the competition structure is initially split in two parts, access to the UEFA Champions League (UCL) path will be granted to all clubs participating in the UCL. Access to the Domestic Champions (DCH) path has been **extended to** domestic youth champions from **all UEFA national associations** (having at least a national youth championship between the ages of U17-U19).

The clubs will enter the DCH path either in the first or second round according to the ranking of their association in the UEFA men's club competitions access list. The final access list will be defined at the beginning of every season once the final number of participants and the titleholder are known.

The relevant domestic youth championship (i.e. U17, U18 or U19) giving access to the UEFA Youth League is defined by the national association and validated by UEFA. This age category needs to be confirmed for the entire 2024-27 cycle and therefore needs to be the same for the 2024/25, 2025/26 and 2026/27 season.

If a club qualifies for both the UCL path and the DCH path, it automatically participates in the UCL path and the vacancy in the DCH path is filled by the runner-up of the same association. No further replacement is possible if the runner-up is also qualified for the UCL path or not available. In this case the access list will be rebalanced accordingly.

The UYL titleholder has a guaranteed spot in the DCH path (Round 2) if it does not qualify for the competition, either as a club participating in the UCL path or in the DCH path. If the UYL titleholder is already qualified to the competition the access list will be rebalanced accordingly.

Since all changes made to the access list will enter into force in the 2024/25 season, the outcome of the 2023/24 domestic season (or 2023 for summer leagues) will be taken into account.

Format:

In phase one the competition is split into the UCL path and the DCH path, while in phase two the two paths are combined together into the knock-out stages.

Phase One:

UCL path

- Adopting the same format as in the UCL, the group stage will be replaced by a single league phase of 36. The UCL path will replicate the UCL league phase but limited to matchdays 1 to 6 (three matches at home and three away).
- At the end of the league phase, the clubs ranked 1 to 22 in the UYL league phase ranking qualify for the round of 32. The clubs ranked 23 and lower are eliminated from the competition.

DCH path

- The DCH path will consist of three rounds played under the cup (knock-out) system with two-legged ties (home and away matches). Each rounds' pairings are determined by means of an open draw.
- The access to the three rounds will be defined once the final number of entries and the titleholder are known. For example, with 54 domestic champions, the rounds would be set-up as follows:
 - o Round 1 features 30 clubs of which 15 qualify to round 2:
 - the domestic champions of the associations ranked from 25 onwards.
 - o Round 2 features 40 clubs of which 20 qualify to round 3:
 - the UYL titleholder,
 - the domestic champions of the associations ranked 1 to 24,
 - the 15 winning clubs from round 1.
 - o Round 3 features 20 clubs of which 10 qualify to the Round of 32 in phase two:
 - the 20 winning clubs from round 2.

Phase Two:

The knockout stage will consist of a round of 32, a round of 16, quarter-finals, semi-finals and a final. All knockout stage matches will be played as single-leg matches.

Round of 32

- The clubs ranked 1 to 6 in the UCL path league ranking will play against the clubs ranked 17 to 22 in the UCL path league ranking. The clubs ranked 1 to 6 in the UCL path will be seeded and play at home.
- The clubs ranked 7 to 16 in the UCL path league ranking will play against the 10 clubs qualifying from the DCH-path. The 10 clubs from the DCH-path will be seeded and play at home.
- The pairings will be determined by means of a draw and clubs from the same association cannot be drawn against each other.

Round of 16 and quarter-finals

- For the round of 16 and the quarter-finals, the pairings will be determined by means of an open draw. The draw will also determine which teams will play at home.

Semi-finals and final

- The semi-finals and final will take place during a 'final four' event at a neutral venue. The pairings will be determined by means of an open draw.

Calendar:

Phase one will be played between September and December (in principle over six UCL matchweeks).

Phase two will be played between February and April.

In principle, UCL path matches will be played on Tuesdays or Wednesdays (and Thursday in the UCL exclusive match week), on the same day as the respective clubs' UEFA Champions League teams. DCH path matches will, in principle, be played on Wednesdays.

A draft calendar for the 2024/25 season is enclosed.

In any case, the final and definitive version of all details regarding the new club competitions including the new format, the access and the calendar will be outlined in the respective competition regulations for the respective season of the cycle 2024-27 (i.e. seasons 2024/25, 2025/26, 2026/27 respectively), which prevails, in case of any discrepancies.

For more detailed information and a visual representation of the above information, please refer to the enclosure. Should you have any questions regarding these changes or require any clarification, please feel free to contact the Club Competitions or Competitions Strategic Development unit.

Yours faithfully,

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Theodore Theodoridis
General Secretary

Enclosures

- Overview of changes for 2024–27 cycle of UEFA Champions League, UEFA Europa League and UEFA Europa Conference League (enclosure 1)
- Overview of changes for 2024–27 cycle of UEFA Youth League (enclosure 2)

cc (with enclosures)

- UEFA Executive Committee
- UEFA Club Competitions Committee
- European members of the FIFA Council
- FIFA, Zurich
- European Club Association
- European Leagues