

# **International Federation of Association Football**

*Committee Background Guide*

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# Table of Contents

<b>Statement of Diversity and Inclusion</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Topic A: European Super League</b>	<b>4</b>
Introduction	
Context	
Advantages and Disadvantages	
Current Issues	
Works Cited	
<b>Topic B: Video Assistant Referees</b>	<b>10</b>
Introduction	
Context	
Works Cited	

## **Statement of Diversity and Inclusion**

Whilst NYUMUNC is committed to maintaining as educational and historically accurate an experience as possible, we recognize that any debate around historical events will incorporate sensitive issues. Delegates are expected to discuss these issues maturely and appropriately. NYUMUNC is committed to promoting a culture of diversity and inclusion in line with NYU's values; in the spirit of this commitment, NYUMUNC will not tolerate any bigoted symbols, statements, or attitudes.

# **Topic A: European Super League**

## **Introduction**

The European Super League brings together the best clubs of the top five leagues competing and coming together to play each other regularly, more than the UEFA Champions League allows. The idea was for the top European football clubs to break away from UEFA and start their own competition in 2021. Not only will it bring the best across the continent face-to-face, but it will also generate revenue for each club in gargantuan amounts, making them financially stable for years to come. This has especially become a hot topic since the start of the Coronavirus pandemic, which has deeply damaged the economic situation of a lot of clubs around the continent.

However, the announcement was met with widespread criticism from fans, players, football associations, and even politicians. Critics argued that the ESL threatened the integrity of domestic leagues, undermined UEFA competitions, and further widened the gap between elite clubs and the rest of the footballing community.

## **Context**

During the testing times of the pandemic COVID-19 played a major impact on the creation of a European Super League. COVID-19 most certainly acts as a catalyst for the creation of the European Super League.

In addition, however, it is because clubs, especially the non-English clubs, want to generate more revenue as much as the Premier League clubs. In addition to this, due to the dominance of certain

teams in the top 5 leagues of Europe such as; Manchester City and Liverpool in the Premier League. Barcelona, Real Madrid and Atletico Madrid in La Liga, Juventus and AC Milan in Serie-A, Bayern Munich and Borussia Dortmund in Bundesliga and PSG and Lyon in Ligue-1. Because of this other teams want a better platform to compete and not always be hammered by the better teams.

Other than this, big clubs such as AC Milan and Inter Milan want to return back to where they belong, amongst the top.

Introducing a competition with the best clubs in Europe would eliminate the predictability of the Champions League group stage. Unfortunately, the biggest clubs in Europe do not see the forest for all the trees. They believe playing each other in the European Super League will increase revenue amongst themselves. The problem with the biggest clubs playing multiple times a season is that fans will become jaded to the matches. Moreover, one of the reasons the top clubs in Italy, Spain and Germany support the idea of a Super League is because they cannot compete financially with the Premier League. English clubs already make more from the Premier League than from European football. At the moment, a Champions League campaign can be 13 matches from Group Stage to final. For a true league format, even of just a dozen clubs, you would need to play a lot more matches. So either you need to persuade the domestic leagues to get smaller, or the bigger clubs leave them behind.

The European Super League aimed to revolutionize the footballing landscape by providing a platform for the continent's elite clubs to compete against each other on a regular basis. Proponents argued that such a competition would not only elevate the standard of play but also create a more sustainable financial model for participating clubs. By breaking away from the

traditional structure of domestic leagues and UEFA competitions, the ESL sought to maximize revenue streams, including broadcasting rights, sponsorship deals, and merchandise sales. Additionally, the ESL presented an opportunity for clubs to exert greater control over their own destiny, reducing reliance on governing bodies like UEFA and domestic football associations.

However, this pursuit of financial gain and autonomy came at a cost, as it threatened to undermine the principles of sporting meritocracy and fair competition that are integral to the integrity of football. The ESL's emphasis on exclusivity and financial elitism alienated fans and stakeholders alike, highlighting the widening disconnect between the interests of club owners and the broader footballing community. Ultimately, the swift and decisive backlash against the ESL underscored the enduring power of football's grassroots culture and collective spirit, reaffirming the importance of inclusivity, tradition, and solidarity in shaping the future of the sport. However, The closed nature of the ESL, with its exclusive membership and lack of promotion and relegation, was seen as antithetical to the principles of meritocracy and fair play that underpin football.

The establishment of the European Super League would also most certainly mean annihilation of the Champions League. The European Super League could experience legal issues if it were to attempt to end the Champions League. However, with the biggest clubs in Europe moving to the proposed super league, it is likely the Champions League would fall by the wayside.

The Champions League's only alternative would be to find a way to co-exist and potentially run alongside the new competition. There is no clear idea about what would happen to the domestic competitions such as the Premier League, Bundesliga, La Liga, Serie A, Ligue 1 and Eredivisie, and Primera Liga among others.

## Advantages and Disadvantages

### **Advantages:**

- Protects the massive revenues of top clubs and UEFA.
- Decreases the number of games.
- Provides an even playing field for top player awards. Messi and Ronaldo are undoubtedly benefitting from the lack of parity (or defense) in La Liga. Forcing the best players to play against each other. A week in and a week out would remove any league bias for awards.
- It will also provide fans with the most entertaining football as it will give us top quality matches amongst the best and will provide clubs a platform to come face to face and play each other regularly.

### **Disadvantages/Concerns:**

- Due to location and said location's economy, there would not be financial parity between clubs. Even amongst the big clubs there are financial differences. Man Utd could outspend Juventus, Real outspend PSG etc. These would lead to the creation of super clubs that would rule this league similar to the way that current big clubs rule theirs.
- This basically precludes a team that is not originally considered a big club from becoming a big club. If Southampton gains a rich investor and strengthens their brand significantly, in the current format they could become a big club in the EPL and Europe. In your proposed system they would be just left to dominate England every year without any possibility for reward.
- Who do you classify as a top team?

- Do you use revenue, recent success, all time success, location? It would be quite complex figuring out who to include.
- Less competitive because permanent members
- Less appeal than traditional domestic leagues

## Current Issues

### **The Possibility that a European Super League would eliminate other Tournaments**

The biggest proponents of a European Super League seem to be the continent's richest clubs who would benefit most financially from the competition. It would be a money machine for big clubs to simply take cash out whenever desired.

For clubs outside of the European Super League, the competition would be a major slap in the face. It would create a gap between rich and poor like never before. Of course, it all depends on just what kind of European Super League would be created. This is something that is debated. Although the Der Spiegel report indicated the competition would take over for the Champions League, a European Super League that takes teams from their domestic top flight competitions would be even more detrimental to the game.

A European Super League in which the same clubs continually contest the tournament would make all other football competitions pointless. It wouldn't be long until leagues and clubs folded due to the lack of money available. It is up to the big clubs to ensure the smaller ones remain in existence.



## **What would the potential departure of elite clubs do to the competitiveness and financial stability of domestic leagues across Europe**

The potential departure of elite clubs to form a European Super League poses a significant threat to the competitiveness and financial stability of domestic leagues across Europe. Consider, for example, the Premier League in England, which boasts some of the wealthiest and most popular football clubs globally. According to Deloitte's Football Money League report for the 2020/21 season, the Premier League generated over €5 billion in revenue, with the top six clubs alone contributing significantly to this total.

### **Broadcasting Rights**

One of the primary revenue streams for domestic leagues is broadcasting rights deals. These deals are often negotiated based on the attractiveness of the league, including the presence of elite clubs and the level of competition they provide. For instance, the Premier League's domestic broadcasting rights for the 2022-2025 cycle were sold for approximately £5 billion (\$6.7 billion), highlighting the immense value attributed to the league's content.

However, the departure of top clubs to a European Super League could diminish the appeal of domestic leagues to broadcasters, leading to a decline in the value of broadcasting rights. This, in turn, would have a direct impact on league revenue and the financial sustainability of clubs across the board.

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# **Topic B: Virtual Assistant Referees**

## **Introduction**

The video assistant referee (VAR) is an assistant referee in association football who reviews decisions made by the head referee with the use of video footage and headset for communication specifically in order to minimize human errors causing substantial influence on match results.

Following extensive trialing in a number of major competitions, VAR was first written into the Laws of the game by the International Football Association Board (IFAB) in 2018. Operating under the philosophy of "minimal interference, maximum benefit", the VAR system seeks to provide a way for "clear and obvious errors" and "serious missed incidents" to be corrected.

The Video Assistant Referee (VAR) was approved in March 2016 by the International Football Association Board (IFAB) and was used in the FIFA World Cup Russia 2018. It was introduced at the Quarterfinals stage of the AFC Asian Cup UAE 2019. It is now being used in all mainstream leagues across the world including La Liga, Premier League, Bundesliga, Serie A and Ligue 1 among others.

## **Context**

### **Rationale**

National FAs and competitions are only permitted to take part in experiments (or use VARs) with the permission of IFAB. Permission is only granted where IFAB protocols will be used in full and IFAB's referee-VAR education and technical requirements have been fulfilled: 'One protocol – used by all'.

The overall goals of VAR are as follows:

1. To rectify clear and obvious mistakes or serious missed incidents in certain key match-changing situations (as stated in the section – Reviewable decisions).
2. Minimum interference: Maximum benefit
3. Enhance not detract from the game

### **Reviewable Decisions**

Match officials make hundreds of decisions in every match, including decisions that an offense has not occurred. It would be impossible, without completely changing football, to review every decision. Therefore, the use of VAR is limited to four areas of match-changing decisions/incidents:

The role of the VARs is to assist the referee in determining whether there was an infringement that should have prevented the goal from being awarded. Potential infringements include, but are not limited to:

1. Goal or No Goal
  - a. offense by the attacking team in the build-up to or scoring of the goal (handball, foul, etc.);
  - b. offside: position and offense;
  - c. ball out of play prior to the goal;
  - d. goal/no goal decisions.
2. Ensure that no clearly wrong decisions are taken in conjunction with awarding or not awarding a penalty kick, including where:
  - a. penalty kick incorrectly awarded;

- b. penalty kick offense not penalised;
  - c. location of offense (inside or outside the penalty area);
  - d. offense by the attacking team in the build-up to the penalty incident; ball out of play prior to the incident;
  - e. offense by goalkeeper and/or kicker at the taking of a penalty kick;
  - f. encroachment by an attacker or defender who becomes directly involved in play if the penalty kick rebounds from the goalpost, crossbar or goalkeeper.
3. Direct Red Card Incident Reviews are limited to clear and obvious errors in crucial offenses which result in a red card to a player (not second yellow cards/cautions).
- a. denying an Obvious Goal-scoring Opportunity (DOGSO), especially position of offense and positions of other players;
  - b. serious foul play (or reckless challenge);
  - c. violent conduct, biting or spitting at another person;
  - d. using offensive, insulting or abusive gestures.
4. Mistaken Identity: if the referee penalizes an offense and then gives the wrong player from the offending (penalized) team a yellow or red card, the identity of the offender can be reviewed; the actual offense itself cannot be reviewed unless it relates to a goal, penalty incident or direct red card.

In all these situations, the VAR is only used after the referee has made a decision (including allowing play to continue), or if a serious incident is ‘missed’ ie: not seen by the match officials.

## **Principles of VAR**

1. Video technology will only be used to correct clear and obvious errors and serious missed incidents in predefined match changing decisions (goal/no goal, penalty/no penalty, direct red card, and if the referee cautions or sends off the wrong player).
2. The final decision will always be taken by the referee, either based on information from the VAR or after the referee has undertaken an on-field review.
3. VARs are match officials and any information they provide to the referee will be treated by the referee in the same way as information received from an assistant referee, an additional assistant referee or the fourth official.
4. The referee must always take a decision, regardless of the existence of VARs, i.e. the referee is not permitted to give “no decision” and refer the situation to the VARs. On rare occasions, when it is unclear whether a penalized offense is a caution or a sending-off or who should receive the sanction, the referee may consult the VARs.
5. The original decision taken by the referee will not be changed unless the video review clearly shows that the decision was a clear and obvious error.
6. Players, coaches or other team officials are not permitted to ask for reviews.
7. There is no time limit for the review process as accuracy is more important than speed.
8. The players and team officials must not surround the referee or attempt to influence whether a decision is reviewed, the review process itself or the final decision.
9. As the VAR will automatically check every situation/decision, there is no need for coaches or players to request a review.
10. The referee can make an on-field review. This review will take place in the referee review area (RRA). Only the referee is allowed to enter this area.

- a. Any player who enters the RRA will be shown a yellow card
  - b. Any team official who enters the RRA will be dismissed from the technical area
11. The referee must remain “visible” during the review process in order to ensure transparency.
12. If play continues after an incident which is then reviewed, any disciplinary action taken/required during that period is not canceled, even if the original decision is changed (except for a caution/sending-off for stopping a promising attack or DOGSO).
13. If play has stopped and been restarted, the referee may not undertake a review except for a case of mistaken identity or for a potential sending-off offenses relating to violent conduct, spitting, biting or extremely offensive, insulting and/or abusive gesture(s).
14. The period of play before and after an incident that can be reviewed is determined by the Laws of the Game and VAR protocol.
15. The VAR protocol shall be in line with the principles and philosophy of the Laws of the Game.

### **When a Review is Initiated**

The VAR is operated from the Video Operations Room (VOR). The replay operator has access to all broadcast feeds to maintain the integrity of the process. A broadcaster cannot show footage which was not available to the VAR.

The VAR will check every decision. If a ‘check’ indicates that an incident should be reviewed, the referee will be informed immediately. In addition, if the referee suspects that a serious incident may have occurred, or something serious has been missed, a review can be requested. Only the referee can initiate a review. Other match officials (especially the VAR) may

recommend a review but only the referee will decide whether or not to have a review and the outcome of that review. The referee may decide that the match officials have clearly seen the incident and therefore no review is needed.

If the referee wants a review when play has not stopped, play should be stopped as soon as it is in a 'neutral' zone/situation ie: when neither team has a good attacking possibility.

### **How Does A Referee Call For A Review**

The referee will make the sign of the outline of a TV screen. A decision cannot be changed unless a review signal has taken place.

When a referee determines that a decision on the field needs to be reviewed, they will make a specific hand signal to indicate their intention. This signal involves the referee forming the outline of a TV screen with their hands, mimicking the shape of a rectangular television screen. This gesture serves as a clear indication to players, coaches, and spectators that a review is being initiated and that the on-field decision may potentially be overturned based on the outcome of the review.

It's important to note that once the referee makes this review signal, the decision cannot be changed unless the review process has been officially initiated. This ensures that the integrity of the review system is maintained and that decisions are not subject to alteration without proper assessment and consideration. The review signal acts as a trigger for the VAR team to begin their assessment of the incident and provide necessary guidance to the on-field referee.



## **Where Does A Referee See The Review**

The referee can make a decision on the information from the VAR or more likely review the footage at a pitch side monitor. This is known as an On-Field Review (OFR) and the viewing area is known as the Referee Review Area (RRA). Once the referee has reviewed the footage and made a decision, that decision is final).

OFRs will usually be for decisions that require the referee's interpretation and not for factual decisions e.g. position of an offense or player (offside), point of contact (handball/foul).

Normally the RRA is by the fourth official's area and players and team officials must not enter this area during a review or seek to influence the referee.

The footage can be watched at normal or slow-motion speed if required and a decision should be made as efficiently and quickly as possible remembering accuracy not speed is vital.

## **What Must the Referee Decide?**

If the decision to be made is within the four designated scenarios of match changing incidents – if not it cannot be reviewed.

The decision can only be changed if there is a clear and obvious error highlighted by the viewed footage.

## **What Happens If The Technology Malfunctions Or There Is A Mistake By VAR?**

The match continues as normal without VAR. A match is not invalidated because of:

- malfunction(s) of the VAR technology;
- wrong decision(s) involving the VAR (as the VAR is a match official);
- decision(s) not to review an incident;
- review(s) of a non-reviewable situation/decision.

## **Practicalities of VAR**

1. Use of VARs during a match involves the following practical arrangements:
2. The VAR watches the match in the video operation room (VOR) assisted by an assistant VAR (AVAR) and replay operator (RO).
3. Depending on the number of camera angles (and other considerations) there may be more than one AVAR or RO. VAR relies on various technical components, including multiple camera angles, high-definition video feeds, and software systems for video analysis and communication. Stadiums must be equipped with the necessary infrastructure to support VAR implementation, including video review rooms and monitors for on-field referees.
4. Only authorized persons are allowed to enter the VOR or communicate with the VAR/AVAR/RO during the match. Both match officials and players/coaches require thorough training and education on the use of VAR to ensure its consistent and fair application. Match officials undergo specific VAR training programs to familiarize themselves with the technology and its protocols, while players and coaches must understand the limitations and procedures of VAR to avoid unnecessary protests or disruptions during matches.

5. The VAR has independent access to, and replay control of, TV broadcast footage.
6. The VAR is connected to the communication system being used by the match officials and can hear everything they say; the VAR can only speak to the referee by pushing a button (to avoid the referee being distracted by conversations in the VOR).
7. If the VAR is busy with a 'check' or a 'review', the AVAR may speak to the referee especially if the game needs to be stopped or to ensure play does not restart.
8. If the referee decides to view the replay footage, the VAR will select the best angle/replay speed; the referee can request other/additional angles/speeds.

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