

UEFA to investigate football clubs' debt

UEFA has set up a working party to investigate ways of controlling football clubs' debts, general secretary, David Taylor has said.

The announcement comes a day after Lord Triesman, chairman of the Football Association, said that English clubs had amassed debts of around three billion pounds (\$5.2 billion), that transparency in the game "lies in an unmarked grave" and that even the biggest clubs were not immune from collapse.

Also speaking at the Leaders in Football conference at Chelsea's Stamford Bridge ground Taylor said: "I was very pleased to see the statements from Lord Triesman and we also believe that the European Union shares many of our ideals about the self-regulation of sport in a free market" and added that a working party would meet for the first time next week to begin investigating the issue.

"This is an attempt to find greater financial stability, especially at a time when banks are failing. Governments might bail out banks but they are not going to bail out a football club," he said. "The current system needs to be looked at, it needs more transparency. We need to look at which areas we regulate to ensure the long-term stability of the clubs. It is not something that will happen overnight, we are still at the stage of investigating and developing solutions, but we are concerned about the longer term."

Taylor told Reuters that UEFA was a long way from coming up with any concrete proposals, but was likely to favour an extension or revision of its current licensing system whereby clubs have to satisfy various off-field criteria before being allowed to take part in Europe's club competitions.

He also echoed Triesman in dismissing the current "fit and proper persons" test for ownership as of little use in establishing the financial credentials of people looking to take over clubs. "We showed with club licensing that these things can spread through UEFA leadership, starting with our own competitions," said Taylor.

Separately, Uefa president Michel Platini also criticised the influx of foreign owners in the Premier League over the last few years. "You have to have identity, that is where football's popularity lies," he said. "Can we do something against it? I will try to do something, I am not sure it will be possible to do that but I have to see European law, English law, French, German, Russian, Ukrainian, many."

UEFA to investigate football clubs' debt. **Sportbusiness International**. Disponível em: <www.sportbusiness.com>. Acesso em: 17 out. 2008.