



## Club Licensing System in the Association Belarus Football Federation

The decision on introduction of the club licensing system in Belarus was issued in 2002. In the same year, the BFF Executive Committee decided to apply it not only towards football clubs participating in the UEFA club competitions, but also towards those playing in the national top division.

On the one hand, such decision was conditioned on the BFF Top Management's wish to improve clubs standards at every level of their activities and, on the other hand, it was caused by the complicated financial and economical state of the clubs, as well as unawareness and aversion of the new system by the clubs.

A long-term work on adaptation and issuing of the BFF Club Licensing System Regulations, as well as significant explanatory work on club licensing purposes preceded these decisions. For example, the first meeting with heads of clubs of top, 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> divisions, where club licensing matters were discussed, took place in November 2001. Presidents of regional football associations and teams' head coaches also participated in the meeting.

The most substantial problems during the 1<sup>st</sup> club licensing cycle were connected with the infrastructure criteria: in 2004 four local stadia were not confirmed for hosting national top division matches.

During licensing cycle 2005 we confronted with difficulties in another area – the 1<sup>st</sup> division clubs proceeding to the top division turned out to be unprepared for licensing.

With a purpose to improve the situation, in 2005 the BFF interviewed the 1<sup>st</sup> division clubs on possibility of fulfillment of the club licensing requirements (criteria) by them. Based on their feedback, a new document similar to the main Regulations, but with “easier” requirements, was issued.

Thus, as of 2006 all the BFF top and 1st division clubs have been subject to the club licensing system.

Modification introduced in the financial criteria has become another key event in application of the club licensing system. Due to the fact that clubs made use of different auditing companies, it was very difficult to bring the BFF requirements to all these companies, as far as the attitude towards evaluation of clubs' financial and economical activities were totally different. As a result, quality of many auditing decisions did not meet with the BFF requirements completely.

Based on the BFF administration proposal, the Executive Committee issued a decision on implementation of a centralized two-step auditing inspection as of licensing cycle 2009.

On the one hand, such decision ensured:

1. implementation of auditing inspection according to the BFF requirements;
2. acquisition of the objective evaluation of the state of the football clubs.

On the other hand, all financial expenses connected with the implementation of the audit were shifted from the clubs. Moreover, in case of detection of any breach, the clubs still had enough time for the respective improvements prior to the main licensing procedure.

The Regulations on experts of the club licensing system has been issued, aiming at the perfection of the club estimation system. The document includes requirements towards experts, their rights and duties, as well as responsibility in case of improper fulfillment of the respective duties.

In general, the application of the club licensing system brought to:

1. an essential improvement of the stadia infrastructure and training camps of football clubs;
2. establishment of the groups of youth players (age of 6-8) in clubs;
3. organization of the system of republican youth competitions in 4 age groups;
4. improvement of the level of managerial work in clubs;
5. providing the clubs with highly qualified coaching staff.

At present, nobody doubts the advantages of the club licensing system, as far as the system is one of the crucial points of further development of football in Belarus.

Annually the BFF carries out an analysis of the system operation, based on which the latter defines the necessity and urgency of upgrading existing criteria and introducing the new ones.

In addition, with an aim of explanation of the new criteria, as well as discussion of existing problems in clubs, the BFF holds annual meetings with the heads, chief accountants and experts of the clubs concerning the process of club licensing of the top and 1<sup>st</sup> divisions clubs.

Best practice sharing between national associations is a key point in the development of the club licensing system. First of all UEFA seminars promote it.

Experience sharing and trips to other national associations are also very useful. They allow not only to study colleagues' experience, but also to know about their national peculiarities and football development in general.

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