

Strategy 2023 – 2027

Swiss Football League



Swiss Football
League





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KICK-OFF

**“With our strategy,
we are sending out
an important signal.”**



“We considered, in general terms, how the SFL can become an attractive partner for everyone.”

Urs Egger

Urs Egger, Werner Baumgartner and Michele Campana discuss the development of the new SFL strategy.

Urs Egger: “Werner, what do you hope the SFL strategy will bring?”

WB: “First off, we have been operating without a proper strategy for years. For a league of our size, it’s important that we send out a signal both internally and to the outside world and set out some guidelines to lay a foundation that we can build on.”

Werner Baumgartner: “Michele, how can the SFL bring all football stakeholders together?”

MC: “It’s vital that we join forces with our stakeholders and bring them into the discussion. We are already used to communicating with everyone and sharing ideas. We must use this positive culture to reach out to the fans, media, public authorities and politicians, and share our ideas with them.”

Michele Campana: “Urs, what do you think were the most important themes that we dealt with when we put the strategy together?”

UE: “We considered, in general terms, how the SFL can become an attractive partner for everyone. Finances, sustainability, the environment, social aspects and, not least, profitability are all important factors. Then there’s the question of protecting our interests on the European stage. Here, it’s mainly a question of ensuring we remain competitive in every way.”



“It’s about creating a shared vision for everyone connected to the SFL.”

Michele Campana



Urs Egger: “Michele, can you briefly explain how we took these themes further at the intensive workshop?”

MC: “We tried to group the most important themes and include every aspect of Swiss football in our discussions: from competitions to clubs, player development, profitability and European matters. Finally, we summarised the main points and split them into three main categories: ‘Clubs’, ‘SFL’ and ‘Football’. ‘Safety & security’ and ‘Digitisation’ were then added.

Michele Campana: “Werner, how were the values, mission and vision drawn up?”

MB: “We mainly looked at issues that had not been given enough attention in the past: economic aspects, moral values and sustainability in all its various facets. We thought about what we can do for our clubs, which are our priority. Finally, we brought together all the main themes and thought about how we wanted to shape and position the SFL in the future.”

Werner Baumgartner: “Urs, in which area were you personally able to contribute the most?”

UE: “I’m a special case because I don’t represent a club. As an independent member, I focused

mainly on sustainability, largely because I believe this is a key issue for the clubs and the SFL, and it will need to carry more weight in the future if we want to accept our social responsibility as a professional organisation.”

WB: “One of our top priorities is to treat small and big clubs equally, gather the decision-makers around one table and promote dialogue. I think we’ve succeeded in giving the Challenge League clubs an important platform.”

Urs Egger: “Michele, which were the most important themes from your point of view?”

MC: “The greatest challenge was and remains to balance all the different interests. Generally,

I think we need to change some of the ways in which we think about and experience football in the future. In particular, we can learn lessons from how other countries tackle individual issues. In the end, it’s about creating a shared vision for everyone connected to the SFL.”





THROUGH BALL

“We want to find a common denominator for the interests of clubs in all parts of the country.”



Philipp Studhalter, chair of the SFL Committee, explains what new paths the SFL hopes to take with its new strategy.

The SFL will use the strategy ...

“... to find a common path with the clubs for the good of Swiss professional football.”

The great strength of our strategy ...

“... is, I believe, the diversity and, at the same time, the single-minded desire of our clubs to work together to progress as a league.”

So far, we have learned ...

“... that what we need most is to find a common denominator for the interests of clubs all over the country. It is hard for them to think strategically. We need to make better use of their existing know-how and incorporate it in the expert groups that represent all clubs.”

Our task in relation to the clubs and the SFV ...

“... is to make it clear that we understand and act on the concerns of individual clubs, always with our strategy in mind and for the good of Swiss football.”

Our core business consists of ...

“... the 11 strategic areas that we have defined together.”

The strategy was scrutinised ...

“... by the different expert groups and in all the relevant areas. We also talked to the clubs and received suggestions for improvement from our stakeholders via a Nielsen survey.”

We want ...

“... to implement the strategy in accordance with a measurable five-year plan that has already been set out. It is important for the league's areas of responsibility to be clear and understandable.”

Personally speaking, as chair of the SFL Committee, ...

“... I am delighted with how the strategy planning process has gone so far. Mainly because the clubs are actively participating and engaging in dialogue. I am convinced that we can show the public that we do much more than just organise football matches.”



90 MINUTES

Facts and figures

14

Ranking

UEFA five-year ranking (2022)

2,414,530

Spectators

Total in Super League and Challenge League (2021/22)

324.5 million

CHF

Expected licensing income of the 20 SFL clubs (2021/22)

1,252

Starting appearances

By Swiss U21 players in the Super League and Challenge League (2021/22)

270.4 million

CHF

Media event value for the Super League and Challenge League (2021/22)

*Source: Nielsen

36.3 billion

Advertising contacts

In the media for the Super League and Challenge League (2021/22)

*Source: Nielsen

40,951

Posts

About the Super League on social media (2021/22)

*Source: Nielsen

154 million

Contacts

Reach of social media posts about the Super League (2021/22)

*Source: Nielsen



From the left: Wanja Greuel, David Degen, Marco Degennaro, Richard Feuz, Philipp Studhalter, Urs Egger, Werner Baumgartner, Michele Campana, Matthias Hüppi



Our vision

The SFL inspires people with the most attractive sports competitions and the most innovative entertainment in Switzerland, as well as success on the international stage. Its positive contribution is valued by the clubs, partners and society as a whole.



Our mission

The SFL, in partnership with the clubs, lays the foundation for exciting, fair and safe professional football, and promotes its value to society.



Our values

- Excitement
- Credibility
- Innovation
- Team spirit



OUR VALUES

Drive, dedication and enthusiasm: **our excitement**



"It's all about being down-to-earth, humble and authentic. People should see that we are sincere and speak from the heart. I personally always try to lead the way and take responsibility.

It's fantastic just how dynamic our committee is. We want to change things and make Swiss football better. We're all in the same boat, pulling in the same direction. If we want to succeed, we must be brave, try new things and set fewer rules. We need to be competitive. Our aim is to produce better players and fill our stadiums. To achieve this, we need new ideas and better structures.

Excitement is something I experienced as a child. I would spend days on end looking forward to the next match at the Joggeli [St. Jakob-Park, home of FC Basel] with my dad. Nowadays, we can encourage fans to come to the stadium in their droves by providing outstanding entertainment. Football is a form of entertainment. And the competition is fierce. Football is the most enthralling sport there is, and the most popular more or less all over the world. We are very lucky."

David Degen



OUR VALUES

Sincerity, authenticity and reliability: **our credibility**



“Credibility is a conviction and an attitude that was instilled in me by my parents. It was and still remains hugely important to me, and is a central thread that has been with me throughout my life. It means being authentic and doing what you say.

As a committee too, we need to be credible. But we also need the courage and freedom to change our minds if we are sure that's the right thing to do. People must always know where they are with us. We need to act with clarity and transparency. But it's also a question of weighing up different opinions and including them in the decision-making process.

If you're authentic, you cannot and should not please everybody. You have to put up with internal and external criticism, and make difficult choices where necessary. Credibility can help you find solutions together in tricky situations, whether small or large. As the SFL Committee, we must ensure that our attitude is clear for all to see, and understood by the clubs and the whole football community.”

Matthias Hüppi



OUR VALUES

Magic formula, change and development: **our innovation**



“Innovation is all about mentality and attitude. What has become lodged in our heads and when are we prepared to change our mindset, be different and develop? At the SFL, thanks to our openness to new ideas, we have a great opportunity to highlight specific themes off the pitch. To do this, however, we need to make advances in certain areas.

Four years ago, at Young Boys we decided to recruit a chief digital officer. I think this was one of the most important commercial decisions we have ever taken. Football is steeped in tradition. Many people want it to stay as it is. However, resistance to change and blinkered attitudes are the enemies of a manager’s day-to-day existence. We are always encouraging our younger staff members to look into the latest trends and tools.

In the world of sport, technology is developing at lightning speed. Data and video analysis, for example, will become even more important in the future. Innovation plays a vital role in this. I am determined to make innovation an intrinsic part our thoughts and actions within the SFL Committee.”

Wanja Greuel



OUR VALUES

Cooperation, solidarity and a sense of community: our team spirit



“I am new to the committee. Even so, I felt welcome and part of the team from the moment I joined. Merely talking and preaching about team spirit means nothing; you have to live it, grow it and continuously develop it. We can see this in football every single day. How often do we hear that a certain team won because of its team spirit and togetherness? The strongest team on paper does not always win.

I witnessed a great example of team spirit in 2015. I was sporting director at FC Sion and we were playing serial champions FC Basel in the cup final at St. Jakobs-Park. They were strong favourites, but our team spirit at the time was exceptional and I am convinced that it is why we won. That victory had a big impact on me.

At the SFL, we work as a group in which team spirit and the definition of common objectives are paramount. I believe we are already on the right path. We talk frankly and we always find a way of showing the outside world that we are united. We always act with solidarity and take responsibility for our actions. In the end, we are role models, especially when it comes to showing team spirit.”

Marco Degennaro



CREDIT SUISSE

27

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7

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FUTU
SEKTION AMI

86

RS LAN DE



TACTICS

Our strategic line-up



The playing positions and numbers assigned to each theme are entirely random. They are only used for presentation purposes.





1

Our tactics: safety & security

Issues of safety and security at football matches are a serious threat to Swiss football. Violence in and around football stadiums discourages potential spectators from attending matches, deprives the game of financial support (e.g. sponsorship) and can jeopardise the orderly running of matches. Every incident damages football's image.

According to a survey of stakeholders carried out in March 2022, safety and security around football matches is the most urgent challenge that the SFL and clubs must address.

Our objective:

to reduce the number of security-related incidents at Super League and Challenge League matches

Our KPI:

Number and seriousness of security incidents

Our key measures:

- Raise awareness of 'good hosting' to encourage more consistent implementation by the clubs
- Take precautionary measures to deal with major security incidents inside stadiums so the SFL can react more quickly
- Conduct a feasibility study on the introduction of personalised tickets
- Develop proposals to improve safety by strengthening dialogue with all stakeholders
- Recruit more safety and security staff within the SFL



2

Our tactics: youth development

Switzerland has gained an outstanding international reputation for youth development. By prioritising their work in this area, the SFL and Swiss football clubs are laying the foundation for a successful future.

According to the aforementioned stakeholder survey, youth development work is not only seen as the most important activity for the SFL and Swiss football clubs, but is also regarded as the area that most requires more intensive work in the future.

Our objectives:

1. Ensure youth players have the chance to represent SFL clubs at first-team level
2. Increase transfer fee income from the sale of home trained players

Our KPIs:

1. Number and playing time of home-grown players in the first team
2. Transfer fee income from home trainer players

Our key measures:

- Analyse the training pyramid, identify sensible adjustments and implement corresponding measures



- Redistribute and ensure maximum use of the training label/Footeco budget for the benefit of the entire training pyramid and clubs that, through their youth development programmes, promote the Swiss approach and the integration of young Swiss players up to professional level
- Analyse and, if necessary, adjust the 'efficiency criteria' incentive scheme
- Increase the number of outfield players who are eligible to play for SFL club U21 teams even though they are over the age of 21
- Examine the possibility of U21 teams being promoted from the Promotion League to the Challenge League on sporting merit



3

Our tactics: economic success

Economic success is essential for the clubs and the SFL. Without income, the league cannot operate. Financial matters are therefore crucial for the sustainable development of Swiss club football.

Although the SFL's media rights have steadily increased in value over the last 15 years, this growth came to a halt in the last round of negotiations – partly on account of macro-economic factors linked to the COVID-19 pandemic. Clubs' overall income shows a similar pattern. On the whole, clubs in both divisions are highly dependent on transfer fee and ticketing income.

The SFL and its clubs must therefore work together to increase income and cut costs – for the good of Swiss football.



Our objectives:

1. Ensure that all clubs operate in a financially sustainable way
2. Improve the economic framework

Our KPIs:

1. Income and expenditure (profitability) of the clubs (excluding investor funds)
2. Income and expenditure (profitability) of the SFL (excluding investor funds)

Our key measures:

- Create conditions or conclude framework agreements to enable the clubs to exploit the financial potential of new digital services (fan tokens, NFTs, fantasy games, etc.)
- Draw up a plan of action through which foreign electronic media platform operators can participate in SFL tendering procedures in order to generate additional value
- Analyse and take strategic decisions regarding

- the central marketing portfolio (which rights should the SFL retain and which should be returned to the clubs) and collaboration model (which partners should market these rights)
- Represent the interests of Swiss clubs with regard to future financial payments from UEFA competitions in conjunction with the European Club Association, European Leagues and the Swiss FA
- Examine the introduction of measures to substantially reduce agents' fees



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4

Our tactics: digitisation & innovation

The world is undergoing a digital revolution. Digital platforms, the internet of things, cloud computing and artificial intelligence are just some of the technologies that are changing how we live. Digitisation and innovation can help businesses to gain competitive advantages and offer consumers new services and products. Football is not immune to these technological advances.

In Swiss club football, the SFL can still see a very mixed picture, with each individual club trying on its own to find its place in this new world. The SFL believes there is huge potential for collaboration in the future. It wants to complete the digital transformation in partnership with the clubs and to maximise the synergies between them.

Our objective:

Complete the digital transformation in partnership with the clubs

Our KPI:

Investment in digitisation and innovation at SFL and club level, i.e. expenditure as a percentage of total turnover or proportion of employees assigned to digitisation and innovation

Our key measures:

- Devise and adopt a digital strategy for the SFL
- Develop digital ecosystems, e.g. data lake, match centre, accreditation, ticketing, content management, marketing automation, OTT platform
- Create a central match analysis platform
- Regularly test new technologies and innovations on and off the pitch
- Identify, approach and acquire sponsors that



can help the SFL to drive forward the digitisation of Swiss club



5

Our tactics: attractive competitions

Attractive championships are a prerequisite for the successful development of Swiss club football. We can only keep players, coaches, fans, partners and all other stakeholders interested if we have exciting competitions.

According to the stakeholder survey, making its competitions more attractive is one of the SFL's three most urgent tasks. Excitement is needed not only in the title race, but also in the battle for UEFA competition places, the fight for promotion and the struggle to avoid relegation. The format of the Super League and Challenge League is therefore crucial.

Our objective:

Make the Super League and Challenge League more attractive

Our KPI:

Hypercube competitive balance score

Our key measures:

- Enlarge the Super League from 10 to 12 clubs from the 2023/24 season and, at the same time, introduce a new format
- Examine the introduction of solidarity payments from clubs that participate in the UEFA Champions League group stage
- Introduce calibrated offside lines (VAR) in the Super League
- Formalise dialogue and closer cooperation with referees
- Analyse the profile, size and format of the Challenge League and clarify the fundamental question of whether it should be a professional league or a feeder league



6

Our tactics: stakeholder engagement

Better collaboration with relevant stakeholders was identified in the stakeholder survey as the most important task for the future development of the SFL. The clubs, the Swiss FA (SFV), fan groups, politicians, media and sponsors in particular would like to see closer cooperation characterised by regular dialogue, transparency and mutual trust.

The SFL has taken this feedback into account by including stakeholder engagement as one of its strategic areas.

Our objectives:

1. Improve stakeholder communication and engagement
2. Enhance the SFL's image

Our KPIs:

1. Clear picture of the SFL's activities and satisfaction with collaboration (stakeholder survey)
2. Image of the SFL (stakeholder survey)

Our key measures:

- Create a stakeholder map showing and categorising all SFL stakeholders
- Define and implement targeted communication

- Devise and carry out a comprehensive image campaign
- Form a stakeholder committee representing the most important stakeholder groups
- Carry out regular stakeholder surveys on current themes and satisfaction with SFL collaboration





7

Our tactics: club services

In the stakeholder survey, over 77% of club representatives said they wanted to collaborate more with other clubs off the pitch.

Knowledge-sharing, economies of scale and joint use of services were considered particularly desirable.

The SFL has a decisive role to play in promoting collaboration between the clubs and using untapped potential. In the long term, the SFL should become a centre of expertise as well as a service provider for the clubs.

Our objectives:

1. Create synergies and economies of scale
2. Increase knowledge-sharing and collaboration between clubs

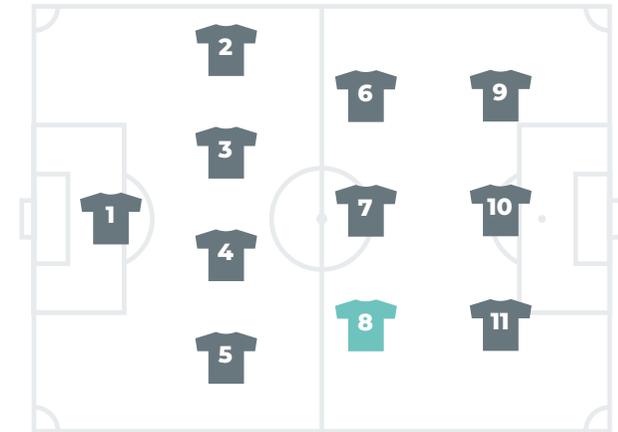
Our KPIs:

1. Cost savings and/or additional income
2. Willingness to collaborate (stakeholder survey)

Our key measures:

- Build and operate a digital platform for dialogue with and between clubs
- Professionalise knowledge management by creating a service centre for clubs and

- other stakeholders
- Centralise the procurement of tools and services in selected areas, i.e. purchased by the SFL on the clubs' behalf
- Draw up a catalogue of other measures aimed at creating synergies (cost savings or additional income)



8

Our tactics: fan engagement

Football is the most popular sport in Switzerland. It attracts more than 2 million spectators each season and has an enormous reach via various media channels. Even so, it is important to increase fan engagement even further.

Strengthening the clubs' regional roots was identified in the stakeholder survey as the SFL's most important strategic objective. At the same time, declining identification with football and new consumer habits, especially among younger target groups, were considered to be basic risks facing the SFL. The SFL has taken this feedback into account by including fan engagement as one of its strategic areas.

Our objective:

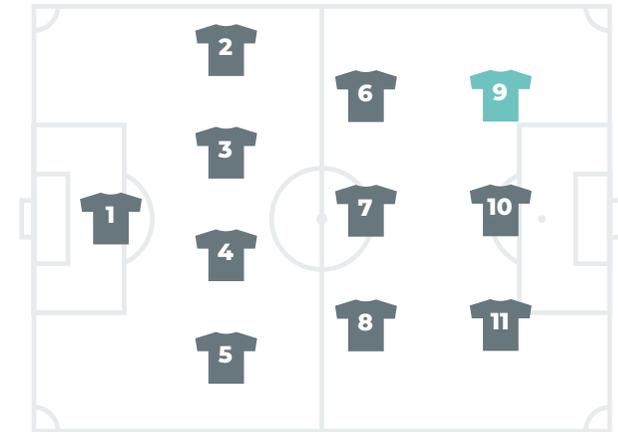
Boost the public interest in football and its regional roots

Our KPIs:

Media consumption (average viewing figures for SFL matches on free TV, reach of SFL content in print and social media) and the proportion of the population whose favourite club is Swiss

Our key measures:

- Collect case studies and recommendations related to fan engagement and prepare materials for the clubs
- Examine the role of community development officer at club level, referring to the example of other European leagues
- Conduct a study on fan engagement



9

Our tactics: stadium experience & attendance

In the last season before the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, average attendances were 11,273 in the Super League and 2,159 the Challenge League.

According to a UEFA study, the gap between the top two divisions in similar leagues is much smaller. For example, the Netherlands, Belgium and Scotland are one step ahead of Switzerland in a number of key indicators. In partnership with the clubs, this gap must be closed by offering football fans an enjoyable stadium experience.

Our objectives:

1. Improve stadium experience
2. Increase match attendances

Our KPIs:

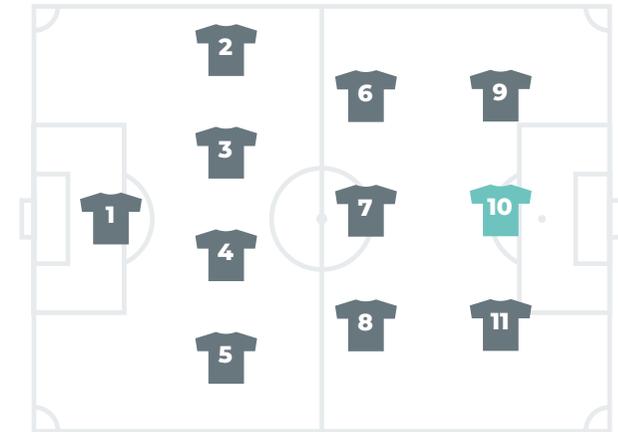
1. Assessment of stadium experience
2. Attendance figures (total and season cards sold)

Our key measures:

- Collect all available club data and information about stadium experience and ticketing strategy
- Conduct an external, independent analysis of stadium experience at all clubs, incl. benchmarking and practical recommendations for the clubs

- Organise workshops with clubs and talks by external speakers concerning stadium experience and ticketing
- Analyse kick-off times and days and their impact on attendances
- Carry out a central, consolidated evaluation of attendance figures in the fields of CRM and marketing automation in cooperation with the clubs





10

Our tactics: sporting success

The success of individual clubs at European level is extremely important for Swiss football. It benefits not just a few clubs, but the whole Swiss football ecosystem. In recent seasons, Swiss clubs have taken part in the group stage of the UEFA Champions League.

However, this positive trend is currently in decline, since the path to the group stage has become trickier for Swiss clubs to negotiate as a result of the national association's lower position in UEFA's five-season coefficient rankings. Nevertheless, the launch of the UEFA Europa Conference League in the 2021/22 season means Swiss clubs now have the chance to play in three competitions in order to improve the country's position in the UEFA rankings.

Our objective:

Three clubs in the group stages of the UEFA club competitions

Our KPI:

UEFA five-year coefficient ranking

Our key measures:

- Allow SFL clubs to postpone domestic league matches before UEFA competition play-off matches
- Adjust the match calendar to help clubs taking part in UEFA competitions (SFL clubs play home matches or, if this is not possible, away matches with a short journey time, before and after UEFA competition matches)
- Give SFL clubs taking part in UEFA competitions a bye in the first round of the Swiss Cup



11

Our tactics: sustainability (ESG)

In essence, sustainability means acting in a way that preserves resources in the environmental, social and governance fields, meeting short-term needs without harming future generations.

The theme of sustainability has been on the international football agenda for many years. For the 2022/23 season, for example, the German Football League (DFL) required clubs in its top two divisions to meet sustainability criteria as part of its licensing process.

The SFL recognises that action is needed in Swiss club football. As a modern, responsible organisation firmly committed to sustainability and ESG criteria, it supports the clubs in their sustainability efforts.



Our objective:

Support the sustainable development of Swiss professional club football in the environmental, social and governance sectors

Our KPI:

SFL sustainability index

Our key measures:

- Draw up an inventory of existing club activities, including national and international benchmarking
- Create and implement a sustainability strategy
- Examine which, if any, aspects of sustainability should be taken into account in the licensing process
- Design a sustainability index for evaluation purposes, including regular data collection in coordination with the clubs
- Provide communication support for all sustainability measures





FINAL WHISTLE

“Many SFL clubs support and fund local women’s football.”



Why is there still prejudice against women's football? Why is it not being discussed here? Richard Feuz gives his views.

“The organisation of women’s football is not currently part of the remit of the Swiss Football League (SFL), but of the Swiss Football Association (SFV).”

“The SFL and its clubs are aware of the importance and potential of women’s football.”

“Together, the SFL and the SFV have launched an in-depth analysis of the future of professional women’s football.”

“The SFL already annually licenses the clubs that take part in UEFA women’s competitions.”

“Many SFL clubs support and fund their local women’s football club, which is sometimes run as part of the same organisation.”





The strategy has been drawn up in cooperation with the Super League and Challenge League clubs, is supported by them and we will implement it all together, step by step according to schedule.



The development of this strategy was closely supported and coordinated by UEFA. UEFA Grow programme experts and others were previously involved in the development of the Swiss Football Association's strategy.