

Governance / National Regulations / Competitive balance

Issues In and Around Icelandic Football



By **Agustín AMORÓS MARTÍNEZ**

Lawyer, Ruiz-Huerta & Crespo Sports
Lawyers

and **Árni Freyr SVERRISSON, L.L.M**

Legal Intern, Ruiz-Huerta & Crespo Sports
Lawyers

Valencia – Spain

Iceland is a small country with a population of just under 390,000 people.¹ The Icelandic Football Association (KSÍ) was founded in 1947 and was one of UEFA's founding members.² Over the years, Icelandic football has grown and produced many talented players, both men and women, who continue to do so. Iceland has also made some great managers who have gone abroad to work professionally.

The Icelandic A national team has managed to qualify for the 2018 World Cup and is, therefore, the smallest country to ever take part in the tournament.³ In 2016, they also qualified for the EURO in France and went all the way to the quarter-finals, beating England on the way before losing to the host nation, France. This shows that there was a period of time when KSÍ was blooming.

Today, there are many issues and problems in and around the football environment in Iceland, and this article will touch upon some of them.

The Icelandic sports environment is a very small market and mostly runs on grants from sponsors and the Government. The ownership of Icelandic football teams is in the form of a "General non-profit organization", so there are no private owners, but the members of the clubs are the owners. As a result of this, there is not a lot of money in football in Iceland if we take the top three teams out of the equation: *Valur Reykjavik*, *Vikingur Reykjavik* and *Breiðablik*. *Valur* has a very financially strong support system behind them. Last season, *Breiðablik* was the first Icelandic team to make it to the group stage of the UEFA Conference League (UECL), and now *Vikingur* is playing the League phase in the same competition. As one of the results of the small market and low financial flow, there is no such thing as a sports law in Iceland, and there are many volunteers around the football field. There are very few people in general that have a sports law education in Iceland and, on the KSÍ appeals body, there are many fine lawyers, but not a single one of them has a degree in sports. There is a general

interest among many in bringing sports law to Iceland but, due to the circumstances, the general feeling is that Iceland is just too small of a market to bring that kind of specialty in. One of the things that the Icelandic Players Association mentioned is that there are way too many parents reading over their children's contracts when signing for clubs. This gives the clubs too much leverage when negotiating because parents with no experience in law or football negotiations will not know which clauses should be or should not be in the contract, how the clauses should look, and so on. This can put the player in a very difficult position if something happens during the contracted period or if the club has put in a very one-sided termination clause. If sports law were to be brought into the Icelandic sporting market and have sports lawyers with knowledge of the regulations of FIFA and other applicable laws in sports working there, it would make it at least easier for players to be guarded and seek professional assistance regarding their contracts, rights and duties.

1 Hagstofa Íslands, 'Íbúar landsins voru 383.726 í byrjun árs 2024'.

2 UEFA.com, 'Developing football in Iceland'.

3 J. THOMAS, 'Smallest and biggest nations at World Cup 2022 based on population', The Sporting News, 18 December 2022.