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Russian Sports Minister Sees Crimea Forming Its Own UEFA-Approved League

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SKChF Sevastopol supporters in Sochi.

Crimea could set up its own league which would be legally compatible with UEFA, Sports Minister Vitaly Mutko said Friday.

"UEFA has suggested setting an independent Crimean structure, which would unite the existing football federations of Crimea and Sevastopol," the head of Russian sport told the TASS news agency.

"It is likely that a Crimean football league will be set up, which will for the time be attached to UEFA. UEFA is ready to give it the necessary help."

In July 2014, the Crimean clubs SKChF Sevastopol, Zhemchuzhina Yalta and TSK Simferopol were given the go-ahead to play in the Russian second division by the Russian Football Union.

However, the Football Federation of Ukraine protested against the move and in December, European governing body UEFA stepped in to stop the Crimean clubs competing in the

Russian championship from Jan. 1.

On Friday, the Russian Football Union took the decision to exclude Crimean clubs from the Russian leagues.

"Our goal is to develop sport in Crimea and football as well," said Mutko. "We plan to send two artificial pitches there this year and we need to know which football schools we need to help there."

The Minister added that in 2016, a new sports development program would be introduced.

"This program has a section that looks at sport in Crimea. The work of the sports ministry is not connected with UEFA in anyway. But our national football federation should listen to the demands of UEFA," Mutko concluded.

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