

Press Release

22 March 2010

Professional sportsmen in Europe join forces

Professional sportsmen and sportswomen from across Europe, supported by the international trade union movement, are joining forces to address a serious challenge to players' fundamental rights.

This threat is outlined in a 'Common Position' paper endorsed by the IOC on behalf of the Olympic and Sports Movement that was published this January. In this paper a request is made for the European Commission to grant a specific application of E.U. law to sport that could deny sportsmen and women access to the courts and set a dangerous precedent for all working people across Europe.

The professional players are of the opinion that professional sport as a whole falls under the scope of European law. The recent verdict in the Olivier Bernard Case is proof of the fact that E.U. law provides sufficient instruments in order to arrive at a balanced and fair judgment.

The proposed establishment of a Permanent Bilateral Consultation Forum between the E.U. institutions and the Olympic and Sports Movement also raises real concerns. This is an attempt to exclude sportsmen by separating discussions on the 'specificity of sport' from the process where they belong: the European Social Dialogue (the dialogue between employers and employees in sports).

To address this challenge, FIFPro Division Europe and SPORT PRO - UNI europa, integrating members of the European Elite Athletes Association, fully supported by the ETUC, affirm their intention to work together to develop a joint action plan leading up to the European Sports Forum in Madrid (on 19 and 20 April) and beyond. The parties intend to develop common positions and discuss the formation of a legal fund.

Notes for Editors:

1. Please go to www.euathletes.info for more information or call General Secretary Walter Palmer at 0049 951 2413679.

2. European Elite Athletes Association:

The European Elite Athletes Association is a federation of independent athletes associations from all over Europe with member associations from 15 European countries representing over 25,000 professional athletes. Among the sports represented are basketball, cricket, Gaelic sports, handball, ice hockey, rugby and volleyball. EU athletes has member associations in for example Denmark, England, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Israel, Italy, The Netherlands, Scotland, Spain and Sweden.

3. UNI europa:

UNI europa is a European trade union federation. It unites trade unions organising in services and skills sectors in 50 different countries. With over 320 affiliated trade union organisations, UNI europa represents 7 million workers. Sport-PRO/UNI europa is the European trade union platform for professional sportspeople.

4. FIFPro Division Europe

FIFPro Division Europe is one of the four divisions of FIFPro, the worldwide representative of professional football players. FIFPro is the official spokesperson for more than 50 thousand footballers. FIFPro Division Europe has got 24 member associations in the following countries: Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Denmark, England, Finland, France, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Israel, Italy, The Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Russia, Scotland, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden and Switzerland.

5. European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC)

The European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) was set up in 1973 to promote the interests of working people at European level and to represent them in the EU institutions. At present, the ETUC has in membership 82 National Trade Union Confederations from 36 European countries, as well as 12 European industry federations, making a total of 60 million members, plus observer organisations in Macedonia, Serbia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina.