

European Update

January 2009

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EUROPEAN NEWS

1. European Commission: Sports Unit's priorities for 2009

The main priorities for the European Commission's Sports Unit for 2009 are:

- To implement the €6m pilot funding projects
- To organise a conference on doping to take place in spring
- To organise a conference on licensing systems for clubs to take place in early summer, with the possibility an ad-hoc working group on licensing systems
- To strengthen dialogue with the IOC and international and European federations on nationality issues and dual careers
- To participate in two Sports Directors meetings
- To work on the studies outlined in the 'Action Plan Pierre du Coubert' in analysing players' agents and the financing of grassroots sport and volunteering.

2. European Commission: European Sport Forum

At the end of December the Commission published its official report on the EU Sports Forum in Biarritz. The paper records two important issues in sport that failed to make it onto the Commission's work schedule for 2009. Firstly, in addressing the specificity of sport, the Commission "underlined that sport did not exist outside or beyond EU law and that the specificity of sport could not be described in an abstract way. In the Commission's view, progress was possible only if work was carried out on a theme-per-theme basis [...] The Commission pledged to have consultations also with international (world-wide) stakeholders". The difference this represents between a pre-emptive clarification of EU law with respect to sport by the Commission and a retrospective ruling by the European Court of Justice after cases are brought to court is immense.

Secondly, "the Commission agreed that IPR [Intellectual Property Rights] aspects had not been sufficiently addressed in the White Paper on Sport and promised to look more into this matter in the future, based on existing EU legislation". Both issues are weighty and will require extensive analysis, but just because the tasks are difficult does not mean they should be ignored. The sport movement must ensure the Commission keeps its word - especially as these are areas where Europe can add value to the sport movement.

Link to the Commission's report on the European Sports Forum:

http://ec.europa.eu/sport/news/news689_en.htm

3. European Union: Czech Presidency of the EU

January saw the start of the Czech presidency of the EU which should prove to be a less confrontational six months for the world of sport than the preceding French presidency. The Czech presidency will take a less aggressive stance on sport and shift it further down the agenda, with volunteering in sport the Czechs' key issue. Away from sport, the presidency itself has started in controversial fashion with the donation of a sculpted map of Europe by Czech artist David Cerny hanging in the main EU Council building in Brussels. This satirical view of Europe may have won relatively light-hearted looks at some countries with Italy depicted as one large football pitch and Sweden in flat-pack form; but the depiction of Bulgaria as squat toilets and France merely adorned with a banner declaring the country on strike has been less appreciated. The UK occupies a vacant lot in the sculpture; a representation of Britain's Euroscepticism.

One of the Czech presidency's main aims is to get the ratification of the EU Treaty back on track. They have used the first few weeks of their incumbency to call on the member states to propose alternative plans for the future of the European institutions, including the Commission, depending on the adoption or ratification of the Treaty by June. Meanwhile, to enhance the prospects of the Treaty being ratified, the EU leaders agreed in December that Ireland would receive a raft of guarantees, in terms of legally binding protocols rather than declarations, to help ease worries of sensitive issues in the Treaty.

Link to the pictures of the Czech sculpture:

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/picturegalleries/howaboutthat/4239911/Map-of-Europe-sculpture-in-Brussels-is-revealed-to-be-a-fake.html>

4. European Parliament: Report into betting integrity

The Parliamentary report into the integrity of on-line gambling continues to progress through the European Parliament. The publication, an own-initiative report, provides direction for any future Commission action on gambling, without having a legal status. The Parliament is now considering 149 amendments to the original report, which will be voted on in Strasbourg on March 9.

The proposed changes are wide-ranging as is to be expected at this stage; many further emphasise the role of betting in sports integrity. For example, one amendment, proposed by the report author Christel Schaldemose in conjunction with influential MEPs Jacques Tourbon and Ivo Belet:, "Calls on the member states to ensure that sports competition organisers, betting operators and the appropriate regulators cooperate on measures to tackle the risks related to illegal betting behaviour and match-fixing in sport, and explore the establishment of a workable, equitable and sustainable regulatory framework for the financing of measures to protect the integrity of sports and ensure fair financial returns to the benefit of all levels of professional and amateur sport".

Link to the European Parliament report:

<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//NONSGML+COMPARL+PE-414.363+01+DOC+PDF+V0//EN&language=EN>

Link to the report amendments:

<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//NONSGML+COMPARL+PE-416.608+01+DOC+PDF+V0//EN&language=EN>

CCPR's analysis of integrity in sport through corrupt betting:

<http://www.ccpr.org.uk/news/newspages/Betting+research+exposes+risk+to+sport.htm>

5. European Directive: European Parliament adopts legislation on pesticides

The European Parliament approved regulations on placing plant protection products on the market (2006-0136-COD) as well as a directive on the sustainable use of pesticides (2006-0132-COD) on January 13. The legislation, which bans 22 pesticides mainly associated with farming, could also affect sports fields and grounds when it comes to be adopted in national law.

With respect to public health requirements, member states will have to ensure that the use of pesticides is minimised or prohibited and that appropriate risk management measures are taken around specific areas such as parks, public gardens, sports and recreation grounds, school grounds and playgrounds and in the close vicinity of healthcare facilities.

The crucial point is a tempering of some proposals which sees a minimisation, rather than a prohibition, of certain pesticides and an emphasis on the Member State to produce national action plans and appropriate measures.

Framework for the sustainable use of pesticides:

<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+TA+P6-TA-2009-0010+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN&language=EN>

Placing of plant protection products on the market:

<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+TA+P6-TA-2009-0011+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN&language=EN>

6. European Youth and Sport Forum

The 2008 European Youth and Sport Forum took place in Paris at the start of December with over 100 European young people from 32 countries taking part. The Forum, held at the headquarters of the French Olympic Committee, was funded with support from the European Commission and organised by the International Sport and Culture Association, European Non-Governmental Sports Organisation Youth and the Comité National Olympique et Sportif Français (French Olympic Committee).

The Forum focused on the recent White Paper on Sport, and responded to it with a “Pink Paper” which included a declaration and a good practice guide. These were presented to representatives from the European Union, the French government, Sportif Français and other European organisations on the final day of the Forum.

More information about the Forum, including a copy of the Pink Paper showcasing good practice examples in the field of youth sport can be found at:

<http://isca-web.org/english/youth/eysfeuropeanyouthandsportforum/eysf20080>

EUROPEAN FUNDING

7. Active Civil Society in Europe

The Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA) is offering a funding stream within the framework of the Europe for Citizens programme aimed at supporting civil society organisations. The projects should raise awareness on issues of European interest focusing on the themes “Action, Debate, Reflection or Networking.”

Eligibility currently includes “organisations active in the field of voluntary work and amateur sport” and should include organisations from at least two different participating countries. The deadline for application is 15 March 2009.

Information and documents:

http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/citizenship/action2/measure3/call2009_en.htm

Programme guide:

<http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/citizenship/action2/documents/measure3.pdf>

8. Youth in Action priorities 2009

Youth in Action is the EU Programme for young people up to the age of 30. It aims to inspire a sense of active citizenship, solidarity and tolerance among young Europeans and to involve them in shaping the Union's future. It promotes mobility within and beyond the EU borders, non-formal learning and intercultural dialogue, and encourages the inclusion of all young people, regardless of their educational, social and cultural background.

The total budget is €885 million for seven years (2007-2013), with the 2009 priorities set to rolling deadlines and including:

- Sport as a tool to promote active citizenship and social inclusion of young people
- Promoting healthy lifestyles through physical activities including sport

More information:

http://ec.europa.eu/youth/news/news1336_en.htm