

European Update

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EUROPEAN NEWS

1 European Parliament: Confirmation of European budget pilot projects for sport

The European Parliament has reinstated a budget for pilot projects in sport as proposed by the European Commission. The pilot projects were originally seen as a stepping stone for the funding of sport until a stream could be developed following the ratification of the Lisbon Treaty, which would have permitted the EU to support sport through mainstream funding. Following the Irish 'no' vote, the pilot projects were withdrawn by the Council as the gap to be bridged until ratification was seen as of undeterminable length.

The European Parliament's support has also seen the pilot projects' value increased from €1.5m to €6m, a sum which should be approved on October 23, before the legislative procedure is concluded with the second reading on December 18. The funding is very small compared to other European streams and the 'mainstreaming' of sport in other fields should remain a priority, but this is a welcome step in the right direction for sport.

2 European Parliament: Integrity in online gambling

The European Parliament has launched an own-initiative non-legislative report into integrity in online gambling, which was discussed in Brussels on October 7. The first draft of the report, written by Danish socialist MEP Christel Schaldemose, is scheduled for November 5 with the deadline for amendments on December 17.

The potential scope of the paper is huge and at this early stage it is unclear which areas the report will focus on. However it is possible that the effect of online gambling on sport will be considered, including the link between betting and integrity in sport and the desire of sport to receive a fair return from betting firms using their product.

Sport will require a proactive stance in order for the sector to be positively included in the report, especially given the traditional hard lobbying by the bookmakers in Europe. While legislative action on betting in sport may appear difficult within the European Union, sport may draw inspiration from successful Australian legislation in Victoria (2007) which was designed to improve public confidence in the integrity of sport and ensures bookmakers must enter into contracts with governing bodies in order to take bets on their sports.

It is possible that the EU will be asked to submit a legislative proposal at the end of this process, especially given parallel working in gambling in the Competition Council in December and the European Council's working group on gambling which will next meet at the end of October.

Links:

CCPR's commissioned independent research into integrity in sport from betting corruption:
<http://www.ccpr.org.uk/news/newspages/Betting+research+exposes+risk+to+sport.htm>

Department for Justice, Victoria - Sports Betting

<http://www.justice.vic.gov.au/wps/wcm/connect/DOJ+Internet/Home/Gambling+and+Racing/Sports+Betting/>

3 The French Presidency of the EU

The French Presidency of the EU, which runs until the end of the year, continues to prioritise sport as one of its major considerations. Its goals for European sport include: allowing quotas of foreign players in sports; European licensing systems for clubs and improving youth opportunities, particularly through dual training for elite youngsters.

The proposals offer both opportunities and threats to sport in the UK. While CCPR welcomes the opportunity for sport to regulate itself in order to benefit sport, it is clear that proposals need to be sport-specific and that a one-size-fits-all model will not work. Furthermore, autonomy of sport should be at a national level and not dictated by European institutions or European sporting bodies.

In September, the French Presidency met in Paris and the Ministry of Sport made a presentation on the progress made on the creation of an internet portal network designed to help share sporting information through the Member States, the sports movement and the European Commission. This project began during the German Presidency in 2007..

The next steps in the French Presidency will be the EU Directors meeting in Versailles on October 30 and 31 and the EU Sports Forum in Biarritz on November 26 and 27 which will immediately be followed by the Ministers' meeting, also in Biarritz. CCPR has been invited by the Commission to join the Forum and is also working closely with DCMS as Sports Minister Gerry Sutcliffe develops the UK's international sports strategy ahead of the Ministers' meeting in Biarritz.

4 European Parliament: White Paper on a strategy for Europe and nutrition, overweight and obesity-related health issues

The European Parliament adopted a decision on a strategy for Europe and nutrition, overweight and obesity-related health issues at the end of September.

The decision is a reflection of the Commission's White Paper from earlier this year and suggests that Member States and regional and local authorities work more actively through urban planning and by developing sports facilities to develop municipalities conducive to physical activity.

Links:

European Parliament processes:

<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?type=TA&reference=P6-TA-2008-0461&language=EN&in>

European Parliament Report:

<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//NONSGML+REPORT+A6-2008-0256+0+DOC+PDF+V0//EN>

5 Global financial turbulence and sport

Concerns about the health of sport in the current financial climate have been aired in many quarters in recent weeks. Speaking at the Leaders in Football conference at Stamford Bridge in early October, UEFA general secretary David Taylor raised concerns about the debt of English football clubs given the current global situation. Meanwhile West Ham's Icelandic owners have also suffered from the economic downturn.

Formula One has also been hit by instability with the French Motorsports Federation withdrawing financing for the 2009 French Grand Prix for "economic reasons" meaning the French Grand Prix will be missing from the Formula One calendar for only the second time since the championship began in 1950. Williams F1 team chief executive Adam Parr has also expressed his concern that not only independent teams, but also manufacturers, will be forced to leave the circuit as sports budgets are hit in a financial squeeze. Williams itself may be wary with major sponsors the Royal Bank of Scotland and Icelandic-owned Hamleys both feeling the pinch.

Of more concern to grassroots sport is how the bank bail-out will be funded by governments across Europe. Worryingly Ireland's sport budget was slashed in the October budget from €311m to €204 - a fall of 34%.

6 European Commission Studies: Volunteering and sport agents

In line with proposals from the 2007 White Paper on Sport and the associated action plan (called Pierre de Coubertin), the European Commission has called for tenders for their studies on volunteering and players' agents. The studies will take place in 2009.

Links:

Volunteering: http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/about/procurement/2008/07/call_en.htm

Sport agents: http://ec.europa.eu/sport/news/news547_en.htm

7 European Commission: Cooperation with European Paralympic Committee

The European Commission announced in September that it is to support the European Paralympic Committee with financing through its "Europe for Citizens" programme. Commissioner Figel said: "The European Union is above all a community of values and fundamental rights. Right at the top of these are the principles of equal treatment for all citizens and the non-acceptance of any form of discrimination, and the individual's right to play a full part in economic and social life, including leisure activities and sport. Sport not only offers people with disabilities opportunities to develop their personal skills and talents, but it also helps with their integration in society, and increases their self-confidence and social acknowledgment."

More information:

<http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/08/1295&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en>

8 European Commission, UEFA and FARE: “Different languages, one goal”

The Commission, UEFA and FARE (Football Against Racism in Europe) have joined forces to launch a TV campaign to increase tolerance and which will highlight the use of languages to build bridges between people. The campaign will air at half-time at each of the 125 matches in the Champions League, reaching an estimated 140 million viewers per match week. UEFA retains the rights to 30 seconds of air time for social initiatives as part of its television contracts.

More information:

<http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/08/1313&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en>

9 Engaging in Europe: Opportunities for governing bodies of sport

CCPR is running a European workshop in Brussels on December 9 and 10 as an introduction to Europe and European lobbying. The event will include meeting key officials and attending presentations in the European Commission, European Parliament - including a reception with MEPs - and the chance to learn from some of European sport's most successful lobbyists such as UEFA. The price for two days for members including travel, accommodation and meals is just £230; a few places are still available.

Workshop details:

<http://www.ccpr.org.uk/ourservices/events/ccprevents/ccprworkshopsoctober07april08.htm>