

DECLARATION OF THE SPORT MINISTERS OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

The meeting of European Union sport ministers held in Biarritz (France) on 27 and 28 November:

1. Calls attention to the fact that the Nice declaration of December 2000 advocates the preservation of the specific characteristics of sport;
2. Notes with satisfaction the progress that has been made since July 2007 on implementation of the White Paper on Sport and the Pierre de Coubertin Action Plan adopted by the European Commission in promoting the societal values of sport, evaluating the economic impact of physical activity and sports and contributing to good governance and consultation;
3. Welcomes the setting up by the European Commission of a constructive dialogue together with the European sports movement, by organizing the first European sport forum in Biarritz on November 26th and 27th, 2008.
4. Notes with interest the shared positions within the European and international Olympic and sports movement on the specificity and autonomy of sport;
5. Reiterates their attachment to the principles of subsidiarity, autonomy and self-regulation of sport;
6. Agrees, following the conclusion of their work, to support to the following points:

A protective “dual training” programme for young men and women athletes

7. The ministers consider that a dual curriculum of education and sports is vital for the training of young sport professionals and high-level athletes to enable them to prepare for a future life after their sports career has ended.
8. To encourage the development of the relevant facilities and structures to ensure that athletes can have access to a dual curriculum, the ministers encourage national federations and confederations, in association with the public authorities and sport/club representatives, to define the quality criteria these structures should meet to provide a dual training to men and women athletes.

Recognition of the benefits of training structures

9. The ministers recognise the vital importance of quality training policies for sport competitions and the important human resources that must be invested in these training structures if they are to be in a position to accompany the athletes they have trained to the highest level of competition.
10. The ministers consider that the participation of a minimum number of players issued from training structures approved by national federations or authorities on the teams of clubs engaged in European competitions is one of the approaches that could reinforce the training of young players in these clubs.
11. The ministers express their interest in and want to encourage further discussion on the initiatives of international federations to encourage the teams of professional clubs in each country to develop the presence of athletes capable of qualifying for national teams, in compliance with EU law, to strengthen the regional and national roots of professional clubs.

A stronger consultation framework

12. To foster exchanges between the European Union and the international and European Olympic and sports movement, the ministers ask the relevant European institutions, in relation with the Council of Europe, to strengthen current dialogue mechanisms by setting up a consultative framework as of 2009 associating notably the International Olympic Committee and representatives of the sports movement at the most relevant levels.

On the specific characteristics of sport

13. Taking into consideration the specific characteristics of sport and noting the concerns and difficulties encountered by international, European and national sport organisations in governing their sport, the European ministers call on the Commission to provide clearer legal guidelines on the application of EU law to sport organisations concerning the highest priority problems that they are facing.

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