

EOC EU Office

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Sport

1. EOC EU Office opens in Brussels

The successful work of the EU-Office of German Sport in Brussels will continue in future at the new EOC EU Office under the management of the European Olympic Committee (EOC). In the presence of EOC President Patrick Hickey, IOC President Jacques Rogge, DOSB President Thomas Bach, EU Commissioner Jan Figel and many other representatives of Olympic sport, the new EOC EU Office was officially opened in the European Quarter of Brussels on Friday, 20 February 2009.

The EOC reinforced its commitment to European policy work last year after the European Union's development of various activities in the field of sports policy, such as its adoption of the White Paper on Sport and the inclusion of an article on sport in the Treaty of Lisbon.

Patrick Hickey, Dr. Jacques Rogge, Dr. Thomas Bach

In his opening speech, EOC President Hickey referred to the German organisation's pioneering role in cooperation with the EU and underlined that the relationship between sport and the EU would take on added significance if the article on sport were to be included in the Treaty of Lisbon. Said Hickey: "We would therefore like to enter into a constructive dialogue with the EU institutions right now and are convinced that the EOC EU Office is the ideal partner through which to do so."

After handing over a symbolic relay stick to EOC President Hickey, DOSB President Bach said: "We at the DOSB will continue to make our contribution to representing the interests of sport in Europe in the future. Sport needs to appear in force in Brussels. We would like to take up the structured dialogue announced by the European Commission so that in future, sports-related questions are answered with sport's direct involvement and preserving its autonomy. In this, the EOC EU Office has the DOSB's full support."

In his contribution IOC President Rogge underlined the importance of an open dialogue with the European Commission and namely with Commissioner Figel. In this regard he assessed the opening of the EOC EU Office as an important step for the structured dialogue between the Olympic movement and the European Institutions.

The EOC EU Office is headed by Folker Hellmund, who has managed the EU-Office of German Sport on behalf of the German Olympic Sports Confederation (DOSB) since October 2007. Alongside the DOSB, the CNOSF, BSO and DFB are also represented with staff at the Office. The EOC EU Office is also supported by the IOC and by umbrella sports organisations and National Olympic Committees of the Netherlands, Luxembourg, Denmark, Finland, Sweden, Norway and the United Kingdom as well as by the European Athletic Association.

2. FIFA: Report presented in Brussels on the 6+5 rule

FIFA presented a report it had commissioned from the Institute for European Affairs (INEA) on the compatibility of the 6+5 rule with European Community law at a press conference held in Brussels on 26 February 2009. The researchers concluded that in principle, the rule limiting the deployment of players who are ineligible to play for the respective national team in club teams does not conflict with the European right to freedom of employment.

In May 2008, the FIFA Congress in Sydney passed a resolution on the so-called "6+5" rule, which says that each football club must field at least 6 players who are eligible to play for the national team of the country of the club concerned. The public is overwhelmingly in favour of the rule, which serves to ensure the competitive balance of sport, the promotion of junior players and the protection of the national identity of football and the national team. European legal opinion, however, saw a threat to the individual's right to freedom of employment within the EU. In its statement, the committee of sports experts underlined the social function of sport recognised under European law and its right to arrange its affairs independently as well as its regulatory autonomy compared to purely economic orientations. In the view of the experts, the central task of the 6+5 rule was therefore to create and guarantee competition in sport. "Sport must remain sport" was the expert opinion's underlying view.

The report's main aim is to set in motion a political process focusing on a discussion of the autonomy of football and of sport in general and on preserving their cultural diversity. These have suffered greatly in recent years in the wake of the Bosman judgement of 1995, and football in particular has become much commercialised. The experts will hold talks with the EU Commission in the weeks ahead with Commissioner Figel and Commissioner Spidla as well as with representatives of the Legal Service.

Legal questions:

3. Breach of Treaty proceedings: Commission investigates tax inequality of sportsmen and sportswomen in Finland

On 19 February, 2009, the European Commission initiated the second stage of breach of treaty proceedings against Finland. In the Commission's view, Finnish tax legislation discriminates against non-Finnish sportsmen and women, thus contravening EU rules.

A non-Finnish sportsman or sportswoman earning income in Finland is required to pay 15 per cent tax. In contrast, while the income of Finnish sportsmen and women is also subject to taxation, they can benefit from tax breaks and write-offs.

Thus, in the Commission's view, the Finnish tax rules contravene the freedom to provide services under the Treaty on European Union. If the Finnish government does not communicate a satisfactory response to the Commission within two months, the Commission may take the matter to the European Court of Justice (ECJ).

Other matters:

4. The project EU:SPORT:FUTURE – Citizens present their views

The project EU:SPORT:FUTURE of the European Non-Governmental Sports Organisation (ENGSO) began in February with the aim of collecting citizens' opinions over the next ten months on how the future EU competence in sport should be shaped. In cooperation with experts, European citizens have an opportunity to take part in discussions and to make recommendations for the EU's future policy in the fields of sport and health, volunteering, social inclusion and education.

First, the project is organising an online questionnaire in seven languages on the above subjects, which is to be completed by March. The results of the questionnaire

will form the basis of five subsequent workshops and discussions in France, Austria and Hungary.

At a final conference, the recommendations and proposals will be submitted to the European Commission, which is supporting the project EU:SPORT:FUTURE through the "Citizens for Europe Programme".

The project will be managed by the European Non-Governmental Sports Organisation (ENSGO) in cooperation with the following seven sports organisations from all over Europe:

- Bulgarian Ski Federation (BSF)
- Central Council of Physical Recreation (CCPR)
- Estonian Olympic Committee (EOK)
- French Olympic Committee (CNOSF)
- Austrian Federal Sports Organisation (BSO)
- Slovenian Olympic Committee – Association of Sports Federations (OCS-ASF)
- Hungarian Secretary of State for Sport

The questionnaire and other information on the project EU:SPORT:FUTURE may be accessed at the following website: www.eusportfuture.eu

5. Success: European Year of Voluntary Work to be held already in 2011

The European Commission announced in February 2009 that it will take the necessary steps to hold the European Year of Voluntary Work already in 2011. In November 2008, Commission officials were favouring 2013 for holding such a year (see Monthly Report November 2008) at a meeting with representatives of relevant non-governmental organisations, including sports organisations.

The European Commission is now drawing up a legal text on the basis of which the thematic year is to be implemented in 2011. According to Risto Raivio, Director of the European Citizens' Panel, the Commission aims to achieve the following objectives in the year 2011:

- to raise an awareness of the special significance of voluntary work
- to create an environment that promotes voluntary work
- to recognize the work of volunteers

- to create extended possibilities for the cooperation of voluntary organisations and to enhance quality

Sport, where more volunteers work than in other civil society organisation, will be a central element of the programme in 2011.

6. Call for the submission of proposals offers new funding opportunities for public health

The European Commission has published its Working Programme for 2009 concerning the implementation of the second Community action programme for public health.

The publication of the Working Programme followed publication of a call for the submission of proposals for projects, operating cost grants, conferences and joint measures by the Executive Agency for Health and Consumers.

This call represents new funding opportunities for European organisations operating in the field of public health. The complete budget for implementing the working plan in 2009 is € 48.2 million.

Financial contributions will include joint financing by the Community and one or more Member States where appropriate or by the Community and competent authorities of other participating Member States.

All project proposals should address important European public health problems and conform to the Commission's priorities expressed in the Working Programme.

Successful proposals should concentrate on aspects of public health that are not achieved at national level. They should ensure significant effects throughout Europe.

The deadline for the submission of proposals is 20 May 2009.

An information day on the EU health programme will take place in Luxembourg on 18 March.

You can register for the information day online at the following address:

<http://ec.europa.eu/eahc/health/infoday.html>

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