

SPORTFORUM BOEDAPEST

Tuesday 22 February

***15H: DEVELOPING THE EUROPEAN
DIMENSION IN SPORT***

Ivo Belet, MEP

Ladies & gentlemen,

Good afternoon,

Warm thanks to the Hungarian Presidency for inviting us.

Let me stress, first of all, that the European Parliament fully endorses the EC's Communication. It is an important step in the development of the European dimension in sport.

It contains excellent, concrete measures on crucial aspects, such as:

- the enhancement of health through sport. The proposal for a Council recommendation in this respect of course is an initiative which we support warm-heartedly;
- the fight against intolerance;
- European guidelines on the dual career;
- the promotion of local training of players.

Chairman, President, Mme Commissioner:

Of course we consider it as a Parliament as our task, to keep high ambitions and to look already even further.

We are aware of the fact that this document is an important new step in the gradual process of developing that European dimension. Revolutionary steps are not the right means to reach that goal. But we nevertheless

will try to go beyond and try to put the bar even a little big higher.

Let me stick to 2 particular issues:

(1) Transfers and players agents.

(2) the fight against doping.

(1)Doping: perhaps the biggest threat for all sports, professional and amateur sports. We have to use all legal instruments that are at our disposal now within the Treaty. A common European approach would enormously enhance the efficiency of this fight (and let's not forget the fight against overtraining of young athletes, of minors).

I congratulate the Belgian presidency for the steps they have undertaken. We count on the Hungarian and the Polish presidency to take further steps on this route.

(2) Financial fairplay, transfers, players' agents and solidarity: all issues linked to financing in sports and linked to each other.

Sport governing bodies like UEFA have already undertaken important steps in this regard, by starting up a financial fair-play mechanism. We expect this to have an intense influence on the way professional clubs are being run.

With regard the transfers of players: we need absolute transparency. We need a very strict ruling and enforcement of those ruling for transfers of minors. Zero-

tolerance should be our driving principle with regard to trafficking of young players. And not to forget, also with respect to match-fixing.

We need strict rules for agents; on this field, we must not exclude a specific proposal for a legislative initiative.

And above all, we need *solidarity*.

That was one of the main lines of our parliamentary report: competitive balance is crucial. More solidarity, especially concerning the redistribution of financial income, is of quintessential importance for the future of professional sports.

The Parliament has started up its report on this Communication. My Spanish colleague and former sportsminister *Santiago Fisas* will be the rapporteur. I can confirm and you will notice very soon that the rapporteur is realistic, but also an ambitious man who shares the main objectives of this document, but at the same time will use every instrument available under the Lisbon-Treaty to maximally reach those goals.

Dear friends:

A sports programme without *a budget* is of course a source of intense **disappointment**. We therefore call upon the ministers present here and on all the Council representatives to take into account the enormous potential of European initiatives in sport for the European citizens, as an instrument of social inclusion, as an health-enhancing instrument (investing in sport means having to spend less for social security costs in the

future), and last but not least as an instrument to promote European identity.

Therefore we need to develop budgetary means for sportspolicy in the Union's next multi-annual budget. The responsible ministers have the duty and the mission to fight for a reasonable budget and to win that fight.

Summarising: the EP will without any doubt support all those who want to strengthen the integrity, social inclusion and solidarity in sport. We have the utmost respect for the autonomy of the responsible sport governing bodies. Self-regulatory measures are the most efficient way to reach that goal. But we are available to assist in order to help in the fight against doping and against child trafficking. But only on the basis of a dialogue with the stakeholders. I'm confident that, as such, we can and will reach our common goal, developing a European dimension at the service of the sport organisations and above all for the benefit of all the fans, European sport amateurs and professionals.