



Brussels, 6 March 2014

Sectoral Social Dialogue Committee on Professional Football

Minutes of the Working Group Meeting "Career Funds"

19 September 2013

1. Adoption of the agenda and of the minutes of last meeting

The meeting was chaired by Mr Zylberstein (UEFA). The agenda was adopted. The minutes of the 16 May working group meeting would be adopted after circulating the amendments received by the different parties¹.

2. Final feedback on Ernst & Young study

The parties shared their assessment of the Ernst & Young study *"Tax and career facilities for professional football players in 2013. A comparison of 30 European countries"*².

For FIFPro, the study gave a good insight of the situation, also in relation to different tax regimes. The study findings were a good basis to explore further possibilities.

EPFL and ECA deem positive the scheme as long as it does not increase the costs on clubs. EPFL reiterated that the supply of proper education to players is more important than the financial means provided by the career funds model in order to start a second career after football. FIFPro agreed that education of players was pivotal but that a large majority of players left their sporting career without successful preparation for their second career for various reasons, including the unpredictability of the end of career, the difficulty to combine education and training with the obligations of playing professional football (in particular vocational training) and the continuing unwillingness of many employers to create flexibility for second career preparation. ECA concluded from the study that besides some new crisis taxes which were a burden for the clubs, the situation in Western Europe was globally fine. Only in the Eastern Europe, there were mostly no employment contracts because of tax facilities. ECA wondered whether leagues, clubs and players in these countries were ready to change the tax regime. In addition, EPFL stressed the difficulties to convince local Governments to provide players and clubs with tax benefits in such delicate economic times. FIFPro maintained that albeit the positive situation of career funds in Western Europe, an exchange of best practice based on the development of key building blocks (as proposed in the action plan) would still prove valuable. EPFL and ECA deplored the fact that the key findings of the study did not address education. ECA was reluctant to adopt a

¹ Minutes adopted on 30 September 2013.

² http://www.fifpro.org/news/news_details/2264

"paternalistic approach" stressing the need for players themselves to act responsibly in relation to their financial well-being following the end of their football careers. In this sense, ECA stressed the important role FIFPro should be playing in educating their members to act responsibly.

FIFPro stated that their position was clear: the players want employment contracts everywhere and terminate tax evasion. The players' union remained firm that the establishment of career funds did not bring extra costs for clubs, but could even save money (example: the Netherlands) and therefore did not comprehend the employers' objections.

3. Analysis of the action plan prepared by FIFPro

As announced at the last meeting, FIFPro proposed a draft action plan on career funds (see paper submitted).

ECA contested the statement in point 3 of the background information saying that "during the working group meeting on 16 May ..., the ideas to arrive at career funds as a minimum in every EU country ... were embraced". ECA was not against disseminating good practices but found it too ambitious (and too costly in terms of time and human resources) to travel in each country to set up a fund. ECA also stressed the need to get the education side right.

Regarding the action plan, EPFL thought it was too ambitious since stakeholders do not have the necessary resources both in terms of time and manpower to implement the proposals integrated in the paper, also considering that, at the moment, the ESD parties are fully engaged and absorbed with the implementation of the Autonomous Agreement, which requires resources to be mobilized for meetings, visits, etc. across Europe. EPFL considered that it was each country's responsibility to set up such a fund. Both sides of industry at national level should see the benefit of such a fund. EPFL would not like to impose career funds but present them as a possibility. The idea to organise a workshop to disseminate best practices – as suggested by ECA – was also agreed by EPFL, the latter organisations would be ok to support it with speakers from clubs and Leagues (but not financially). At a later stage, one could also use the country visits for the implementation of the agreement to address the issue. FIFPro agreed to consider if it was feasible to raise the subject during the second round of country visits or the regional roundtables related to the implementation of the minimum requirements. It further stressed its opinion that a pro-active approach to implement career funds was necessary and required the practical steps outlined in the proposed action plan.

Both ECA and EPFL had doubts whether the actions proposed by FIFPro were still within the scope of the working group's mandate. FIFPro agreed to put this in front of the next steering committee meeting in November for decision. The parties agreed to continue discussions amongst themselves before this meeting.

4. Presentation of the Athletes World Foundation on Dual Career Pathways

The presentation of the AWF³ (see slides) was done at the initiative of EPFL who considered that it is a possible solution to provide professional football players with proper education which deserves to be explored by the parties. . Questions and answers

³ www.athletesworldfoundation.org

on the presentation were related to the funding of the foundation and the relevance for professional players.

5. Next steps

As an observation, UEFA acknowledged that career funds were an excellent idea in theory but that in terms of priorities it would perhaps be more important to work on getting the minimum requirements for standard player contracts (which do not include career funds) implemented first. In this respect, UEFA supported the EPFL suggestion that the subject of career funds be raised as an additional item during the player contract minimum requirements country visits.

A status report of the work and discussion held within the ESD Working Group on Career Funds will be presented to the Steering Group in order to enable its members to take a decision about the objectives to be pursued by such body.

6. Any other business

No points were raised.

7. Next meeting

The plenary meeting will be held on 2 December 2013 in Brussels.

8. Calendar of meetings 2014

The plenary meeting is planned for 20 November 2014 in Brussels. The three dates for the 2014 working group meetings (to be held in Brussels) shall be fixed at the 2 December 2013 plenary meeting at the latest.

Participants 19/9/2013

<p>Employers (5 ♂, 0 ♀)</p> <p><u>ECA</u> Mr Fossen (NL) Mr Frommer Mr Lambrecht</p> <p><u>EPFL</u> Mr Bertoni Mr Rossmeisl (NL)</p>	<p>Workers (6 ♂, 0 ♀)</p> <p><u>FIFPro</u> Mr Bär-Hoffmann Mr Horváth (HU) Mr Kolster Mr Øland (DK) Mr Stefanovic (SI) Mr van Megen (NL)</p>
<p>European Commission</p> <p>Ms Durst (DG EMPL)</p>	<p>UEFA</p> <p>Mr Phillips Mr Zylberstein</p>