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DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion

Employment and Social Legislation, Social Dialogue
Social dialogue, Industrial Relations

Hoofddorp, 16 May 2013

Sectoral Social Dialogue Committee on Professional Football

Minutes of the Working Group Meeting "Career Fund"

17 December 2012

1. Opening

The meeting was opened by Mr Alex PHILIPS (UEFA). At the beginning of the meeting, participants shortly introduced themselves.

2. Appointment of the chairman

Mr Alex PHILIPS (UEFA) was appointed as Chair of the working group.

3. Review on the previous meeting

The CHAIR referred to the plenary meeting held on 19 April 2012 where it was agreed to establish three working groups of which one relates to the topic of career funds. The coordination of the three working groups will be ensured by the members of the steering group and completed by discussion at the plenary meeting. The Commission underlined the fact that the working group needs to provide further information to the steering group as regards its mandate, scope and deliverables.

4. Update of the research started in 2006 by Ernst & Young

Ms Suzanne BAKKER (FIFPro) explained why FIFPro was convinced that the research started in 2006 by Ernst & Young would need an update. EPFL agreed that, in line with the principle of subsidiarity, it is a decision of the national social partners to implement Career funds models in their respective countries and therefore EPFL only agree with the update/upgrade of the study if the sole objective is to gather information and review the situation of Career funds in different countries across Europe. However, before taking any final decision on developing such study, EPFL requires detailed information about the objective of the study, countries to be investigated and areas to be covered by the research paper. Following the discussions on the scope of such a study on career funds for professional football players within Europe it was agreed to send to Ms BAKKER by 14 January 2013 comments as regards the Ernst & Young research proposal dated 11 December 2012. In relation to the draft terms of reference, it was further agreed that representatives from ECA, EPFL and FIFPro will send their comments to the CHAIR by 14 January 2013. The funding of such a study would still need to be discussed.

5. Principles of the Dutch model

Mr Ben-Ivar KOLSTER (FIFPro) made a presentation as regards the Dutch model (See PowerPoint presentation). He explained the background of 'post-career' problems for professional football players and the objective of the Dutch system which provides a financial bridge during the transition period to a new career. Mr KOLSTER highlighted the key success factors which are the following: general obligation to participate, premium payment through the clubs, tax deferral on premium payments and bridging pension in the form of periodic payments (no lump sum). Mr KOLSTER concluded that these factors would be relevant for any successful career fund in Europe. As regards the future possibilities in Europe, he distinguished the scenario of a bottom-up approach from a top-down approach as a possible long term objective.

The EPFL, although regarded the model applied in the Netherlands as a positive step for domestic football, suggested investigating and evaluating other existing examples at national level or in other sports which might be also efficient to achieve the same objective of providing football players a second career after football. EPFL added that, in these austere times, it is difficult to imagine a government allowing a scheme similar to that set up in the Netherlands to be introduced.

The EPFL reminded that there are other initiatives already in existence for preparing players for life outside football. In this respect, there are many examples of good practice not strictly related to an economic element, but those amply implemented by Leagues and clubs for already some time, such as educational programmes for players to learn a specific skill to develop a new profession, and therefore, it would be beneficial to identify these projects and encourage their implementation in other countries

6./7. Implementation of a career fund on national level + European Career fund

The agenda items were covered by previous discussions.

8. Closure

Mr Gabor HOVATH (FIFPro) distributed a document summarising the current situation in Hungary as regards the development and implementation of a career fund.

The next meeting of this working group will be held on 21 March 2013.