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Sport Pro/UNI Europa: Athletes send strong message for workers' rights to EU Commission

Nyon (ots) -

Top European players unions are in Madrid today at the European Sports Forum to tell the European Commissioner responsible for Sport, Androulla Vassiliou, that European athletes must be covered by EU laws protecting workers' rights.

The unions won't accept a special application of EU law for sport and are protesting their apparent exclusion from a "bilateral" dialogue between the EU and the Olympic and Sports Movement that could allow the O.S.M. to bypass the European Social Dialogue process and has already undercut the European Social Dialogue in football.

Jose Luis Llorente, Vice-President of the Spanish federation of players unions, "Asociacion de Deportistas", welcomed the delegates to Madrid, saying, "We must stand together for the fundamental rights of athletes as citizens and employees in Europe to ensure they're protected. The law is the law."

"The European Commission cannot allow event organizers to hijack the sport agenda by granting their wish for exclusive dialogue," warned Bernadette Ségol, Regional Secretary for the recognized employee social partner in the Sport sector, UNI Europa. "The proper place to deal with important issues like minimum labor standards, anti-doping rules, intellectual property rights, sports betting, agents and health and safety is either in the European Social Dialogue or in an informal dialogue with the EU that includes unions as important stakeholders."

Yves Kummer, president of the European Elite Athletes Association, a federation of unions representing 25,000 athletes, agreed.

"We have been working hard in recent years to develop the European Social Dialogue for Sport and this is the proper place to handle many of the 'specificity of sport' issues on the table here," he said. "If the Commissioner sends a strong message to the Olympic movement regarding EU law and the importance of the European Social Dialogue, we believe that a lot can be accomplished in a relatively short time."

The sports unions will host a press conference in Madrid at 11:00 am today at the IFEMA.

More information: www.euathletes.info

Sport Pro/UNI Europa represents more than 25,000 European athletes.

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