

Brussels, 2nd of April 2020

EU Athletes statement on COVID-19 impact on sport

The Coronavirus pandemic is a global health crisis affecting all sectors and areas of activity as well as everyday life for millions of people. These are unprecedented times and our thoughts are with those who have lost loved ones and are struggling.

EU Athletes and its members are committed to making sure that when this is over, professional and elite level sport in Europe remains a viable and sustainable business. To find adequate short and long-term solutions to various challenges facing sport sector, there is a need to prioritize dialogue and stakeholder engagement.

Today, we call for sports federations, leagues and clubs to commit to the active engagement with the athlete and player associations about sport's response to the current crisis. While addressing the situation, the respect of fundamental athletes' rights and a proper decision-making process must be assured. It is simply unacceptable for decisions affecting the livelihoods of athletes to be made without consultation and agreement.

There are five main issues identified at recent emergency Board meeting of EU Athletes:

1) Salaries

Contracts need to be respected and cannot be altered without the agreement of both parties. Many players and their associations recognise that some clubs need to reduce outgoings whilst sport is suspended. However, any deferral of wages needs to be agreed through negotiation and cannot be applied unilaterally.

2) Return to play

The health and safety of players, officials, staff and spectators is paramount in any decisions around the resumption of professional and elite level sport. These must be made based on most up to date available information and avoid exposing individuals or communities to further risks.

3) Workload and scheduling

Professional athletes need adequate rest between matches, and it is essential that when sport resumes, the competitions are scheduled in a way that respects players' health and safety and allows sufficient preparation and recovery time between them.

4) International calendar

The current crisis has obviously impacted upon the timetable for national, European and international sports competitions for this and following seasons. It is essential that the new schedules are coordinated, and that European and international player associations are actively involved in these decisions.

5) Government support

Professional athletes should be included in any national government income protection schemes, just the same as other workers. What is more, the situation of athletes who are self-employed, working under civil law contract or without a formal contract must be addressed to make sure that they can benefit from financial support in these difficult times.

EU Athletes and its member player and athlete associations are committed to working with sport and government stakeholders to help ensure that European and national sport is able to continue when the current crisis finally abates.