

Mr President,  
Ministers,  
Madam Commissioner,  
Dear friends,

## **INTRODUCTION**

People who know me – and you are certainly among them – know that I never say one thing and mean another: I know good and evil when I see them and never mix them up.

European sport is tormented today by a moral evil, an evil as profound as it is intangible. So I must urge you, as ministers, to act on an indispensable challenge: the fight against match fixing.

It is therefore with total conviction that I appeal to you to support a project which has been given a great deal of thought; a project that aims to provide a measured and human solution to the dual threat of disorder and injustice; a project designed to achieve nothing less than an end to an intolerable situation.

## **MATCH FIXING**

I have described the situation as intolerable because not a week goes by now without a report somewhere about match fixing linked, I stress, to so-called “sports” betting activities. These illegal activities clearly threaten the integrity of competitions, but in particular, they undermine what all of us – I am sure – consider some of the most fundamental values of modern society.

Of course, faced with this problem, UEFA and the sports movement have not been sitting idly by, remained passive or adopted a wait-and-see policy. On the contrary, we have stepped up our efforts, initiatives, and indeed courage, in an attempt to prevent the manipulation of results for betting purposes. But you have to understand that we cannot combat this scourge on our own. Why not? The answer is as simple as it is worrying: because match fixing has become the favourite pastime of organised criminal networks. We cannot, therefore, win this battle alone!

Some of you might say – or may even already have said – that the autonomy of sport prevents the public authorities from taking action.

Well... You know how much importance I attach to the principle of the autonomy of sport. I am one of its leading supporters. But it is unacceptable to hide behind the principle of autonomy faced with a threat such as this. For match fixing represents a blatant attack on public order, which is precisely why intervention by the public authorities is justified.

Ladies and gentlemen, we have reached the point where the situation requires strategic action. So I say to you: what European sport needs is a strategy based on the criminalisation of sports fraud on the one hand, and recognition of the property rights of competition organisers on the other.

Italy, Spain, the United Kingdom, Bulgaria, Poland and Portugal, all represented here, can testify to the urgent need to criminalise sports fraud. These countries have realised that establishing sports fraud as a specific criminal offence is the only way of curbing it and of filling the gaps which the traditional offences of money laundering, fraud and corruption do not cover.

Dear friends, it is not legislation that I am asking for here. I am simply calling for the fair recognition of a right: the right of European football not to run the risk of becoming the victim, if not the slave, of online betting and organised crime.

Universal recognition of competition organisers' property rights must be the second pillar of a responsible, proportionate and sensible strategy aimed at eliminating match fixing.

France has understood this by recognising this property right in its national legislation. But the same cannot be said for most EU member states. And until this right is recognised, sport will remain at the mercy of match-fixers.

I am asking you to follow France's lead because, simply by being recognised in law, this property right will help to improve the ethics of sport. This is crucial, as it enables competition organisers and betting operators to agree on which aspects of the game can be the subject of betting. It also facilitates finding common solutions in the areas of transparency, monitoring and control mechanisms that are required.

Ladies and gentlemen, recognition of this property right is far from widespread. Rectifying this is a matter of urgency because it affects the integrity of competitions, the financing of grassroots football and the sustainable development of European sport or, to put it another way, the sustainable development of Europe itself...

## ***FINANCIAL FAIR PLAY***

We are faced today with some of the biggest questions European sport will face this decade. They are there in front of us and cannot be ignored. Good governance of European football is one of them.

Good governance essentially means assuming a father-like role in order to create long-term solutions for the future of football. It was with this in mind that we devised the financial fair play model.

Financial fair play is based on a simple, yet deeply virtuous philosophy: the notion that clubs should not spend money that they do not have. I also believe that this philosophy has acquired new impetus as a result of the economic crisis that is currently sweeping across our continent.

Some may ask: "why not continue turning a blind eye to clubs' expenditure?"... Quite simply, because the current situation is bad: last year, professional clubs accumulated losses of more than €1.2 billion.

The situation is bad, therefore, because fairness is openly flouted. In fact, it is ridiculed. When clubs go into debt in order to sign star players, when teams buy titles on credit, when players are no longer paid by their employers, it seems to me that we are in a situation of disorder and anarchy that can no longer go on.

What is more, letting the clubs' financial situation deteriorate surely raises a serious risk of more cases of match fixing, doesn't it?

So, with a clear conscience your only reward, I urge you to pledge your formal support so that financial fair play can become part of the moral order of football today... and tomorrow.

## **NATIONAL TEAMS**

The future, the immediate future of sport raises other serious questions. The survival of the national teams is one of them.

Since I was first elected as UEFA president in 2007, I have constantly reiterated that the European sports model is based on open competitions in which clubs and national teams coexist in harmony.

As a former winner of the European Football Championship and a staunch European, I have seen for myself to what extent the big national team competitions encourage a real European cultural heritage. The draw you have just witnessed has, I hope, demonstrated exactly that.

Today, however, there is a serious risk that players will no longer be released when called up to defend the colours, honour and values of their country.

This situation worries me to the extent that I believe it is now necessary to draw up rules in order to protect the future of the national teams. Spanish legislation could serve as an example here, since it expressly requires players to be released for national team duty.

Ladies and gentlemen, I am not only appealing to your sense of generosity. I am appealing to the deep political conscience of an assembly of legislators. I would not have decided to make such an appeal if I thought there was another solution.

## **CONCLUSION**

Mr President,  
Ministers,  
Madam Commissioner,

Even though sport may seem tormented, your presence here reminds me that above all it is a truly unique educational tool that teaches us how to live together in society: respect for others, unselfishness, openness to diversity and integration are all virtues which sport conveys and which help to establish an active, exemplary European citizenship, especially among the young.

For me, and for over half a billion other European citizens, sport carries the hopes of the future. It is therefore vital that we join forces to protect its values, not least respect, which will without a doubt make Europe more inclusive, more peaceful and more solidarity-based than ever.

Dear Friends,

I know I am not the first to raise the alarm in this assembly. Others have urged you to act, as I have just encouraged you to do, but – often, probably too often – from a different perspective – from the perspective of the past. Whereas I am looking to the future.

The future of European sport, as I hope to have demonstrated, will be built on concrete initiatives, respecting the key principles that characterise UEFA: excellence, sharing, openness, democracy and unity. These values are also at the heart of the European project conceived by Robert Schuman. This

only increases my attachment to them, as well as to their promotion in everyday life, right across the continent. I hope that this shared value base will give you every reason to trust us and to act together with us, in particular by providing the whole sports movement with the legal certainty it so desperately needs, not least in order to combat match fixing.

You have heard what I have got to say. I do not wish to influence you any further. I simply hope that your decisions will be the right ones.

In any case, I am convinced that the solutions that I have suggested are the solutions of the future. Because progress is not inherited; it is won.

Thank you.