

A NEW DEAL FOR
PROFESSIONAL FOOTBALL
IN THE EU

CLUB BRUGGE CHAIR

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Robby HOUBEN
Steve NUYTS



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Cambridge – Antwerp – Chicago

Intersentia Ltd
8 Wellington Mews | Wellington Street
Cambridge | CB1 1HW | United Kingdom
Tel.: +44 1223 736 170
Email: mail@intersentia.co.uk
www.intersentia.com | www.intersentia.co.uk

A New Deal for Professional Football in the EU
Robby Houben and Steve Nuyts
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FOOTBALL'S NEW DEAL

I love the game. And so do hundreds of millions fellow Europeans. But I have to acknowledge that it's not just a game. Football is also big business. Fans and professionals in this business share the passion for the game, will do what they can to let their club win and prosper. But because so many people depend for their livelihood on the game, so many people are affected by its impact, because they work in football, because they are recruited at a young age from all over the world, because the risk of dirty money, corruption, exploitation or manipulation is always present, enforceable rules are necessary.

I welcome the fact that Robby Houben and Steven Nuyts of the University of Antwerp's Club Brugge Chair take a fresh look at what legal and fiscal rules professional football needs to prosper and what the role of the EU should be in that context. It is a thought provoking study that merits debate. I strongly believe in the autonomy of sports organisations, which has always been the basis for the fruitful cooperation between UEFA and the European Commission. But I also believe that in their behaviour as economic actors professional football organisations should respect the rules governing economic activities, such as competition and state aid rules. The European Commission has shown it's willingness to take clubs and public authorities to court if they violate these rules.

The authors' proposal for a New Deal gives us food for thought and certainly stimulates us to look for ways to

improve the potential of professional football and to strengthen our cooperation with professional football in general and UEFA in particular.

Frans TIMMERMANS

Executive Vice-President of the European Commission

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS



Prof. dr. Robby Houben is a tenured associate professor at the University of Antwerp, Faculty of Law. He is chair holder of the Club Brugge Chair at the University of Antwerp. The Club Brugge Chair is established to promote research on the professionalisation of the football enterprise and the optimisation of the regulatory environment for football enterprises. Robby Houben authored more than hundred national and international publications, regularly speaks at national and international conferences, taught and teaches abroad, supervises several ongoing research projects and is a member of several editorial boards. He frequently acts as advisor for the European Parliament. He is a member of the academic board of the European Banking Institute (Frankfurt). Furthermore, Robby Houben is director and secretary of the Belgian Institute for Company Law. He is a member of the expert panel G&M1 Sciences of Law and Criminology of the FWO (Research Foundation Flanders). He practices as a lawyer and is a member of the Antwerp Bar.



Steve Nuyts is PhD researcher at the University of Antwerp, Faculty of Law. Within the Club Brugge Chair he is preparing a PhD on the optimisation of the internal governance of and the regulatory framework for football enterprises. Before commencing his PhD, Steve Nuyts practised as a lawyer at the Brussels Bar.