

MEDIA RELEASE

FOOTBALL PLAYER UNIONS AND LEAGUES FILE COMPLAINT TO EUROPEAN COMMISSION OVER FIFA'S IMPOSITION OF THE INTERNATIONAL MATCH CALENDAR

- 1 The complaint to the European Commission about the match calendar explains that FIFA's conflict of interest as a competition organiser and governing body, coupled with a lack of meaningful engagement with social partners, infringes European Union competition law
- 2 The complaint focuses on the men's International Match Calendar, including the FIFA Club World Cup 2025 and FIFA World Cup 2026
- 3 The oversaturated international football calendar risks player safety and wellbeing, and threatens the economic and social sustainability of important national competitions which have been enjoyed for generations by fans in Europe and around the world

FIFPRO Europe and European Leagues, representing European player unions and national leagues, together with LaLiga, have today filed a complaint to the European Commission against FIFA over its conduct concerning the imposition of the international match calendar, including decisions relating to the FIFA Club World Cup 2025.

The detailed and evidenced complaint was formally submitted to the Directorate-General for Competition of the European Commission.

The submission follows an extensive review of the case by lawyers acting for FIFPRO Europe and European Leagues, whose boards agreed to the legal action in July. It comes amid widespread concerns raised publicly by players about the impact an unsustainable football calendar has on their health, wellbeing and career longevity. FIFA's behaviour also threatens the economic and social sustainability and stability of important national competitions which have been enjoyed for generations by fans in Europe and around the world.

Executives from FIFPRO Europe, European Leagues and LaLiga presented the details of the complaint at

a news conference in Brussels today, outlining how FIFA holds conflicting roles as governing body and competition organiser, which give rise to a conflict of interest. They described the lack of due process and meaningful engagement from FIFA with players and leagues on calendar-related matters and how FIFA has used its regulatory power to promote its commercial interests at the expense of the social partners (players and leagues).

The complaint explains how FIFA's imposition of decisions on the international calendar is an abuse of dominance and violates European Union law. Recent case law of the EU courts, including European Court of Justice rulings in the 'Super League' and 'Diarra' cases, makes clear that given its conflict of interest FIFA must exercise its regulatory functions in a way that is transparent, objective, non-discriminatory and proportionate so as to neutralise this conflict of interest. In this context, the inclusion of player union and league representatives in the decision-making process on calendar-related matters is legally essential.

FIFA's rules and conduct fall well short of what is required by EU law, and harm the economic interests of national leagues, and the health and safety of players in European football. A legal challenge before the

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European Commission has become a necessary course of action to safeguard the European football sector which is a global cultural and entertainment powerhouse.

FIFPRO Europe, European Leagues and LaLiga look forward to working closely with the European Commission, as well as relevant public institutions and football stakeholders, as it carries out a preliminary investigation into the complaint.

The complainants reserve the right to submit further relevant information and evidence regarding the

adverse effects that FIFA's abusive conduct is causing for national leagues and players.

Additional information:

- See [previous release](#)
- Access [European Leagues](#) and [FIFPRO Europe Position Paper](#)
- View [media release for the 2023/2024 FIFPRO Player Workload Monitoring Report](#)

Statements by Player Unions and Leagues

It is getting to a tipping point. The feedback we have from players is that there is too much football being played and there is constant expansion. The Premier League hasn't changed shape. What has changed over the last few decades is the march of international and regional football competitions".

Richard Masters –
CEO Premier League (ENG)



Serie A, like almost all other European Leagues, in the last 20 years hasn't increased the number of games. On the contrary FIFA and UEFA, cycle after cycle, have increased constantly the size of their competitions for both clubs and national teams and we have now reached a saturation point in the calendar. The problem of the overloaded calendar is not caused by league competitions, but by FIFA, with its new format and duration of the tournaments, and by UEFA with the Nations League and the new UEFA club competitions with the increased number of dates and games. But the difference is that UEFA had a strong consultation with all the stakeholders - leagues included - and decided on a reform in the format of club competitions after a long discussion. FIFA imposed their new format and competitions without any discussion, consultation and without accepting to have any form of relationship with the other competitions organizers".

Luigi De Siervo –
CEO Lega Serie A (ITA)



Calendar congestion isn't a fresh problem in professional football. But with this constant addition of international fixtures, we've reached a saturation point and it is becoming increasingly challenging to manage domestic competitions. Over the long term it could harm our operations, our financial sustainability and ultimately the quality of our product."

Neil Doncaster –
CEO SPFL (SCO)



FIFA's statutes state that when developing fixture lists, they must consult in advance and that they must take into account the interests of the clubs and competitions. Neither of those is happening now. There's no consensus on what a player can handle. Then you see that an organization like FIFA seizes every opportunity to put more matches on the calendar."

Jan De Jong –
CEO Eredivisie (NED)



With this complaint, the Super League case and Diarra, the current football governance system is at breaking point and something's got to give. The way forward is quite simply for FIFA to pick up the phone and pull up a chair. Not only for us, but also for the players and the fans. We don't ask money. We don't question the usefulness of FIFA. We just don't want decisions taken about us without us."

Lorin Parys –
CEO Pro League (BEL)



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“FIFA refuses to listen and engage with the players, the main labour resource of our industry, who are there on the pitch, creating a powerhouse of European and global entertainment culture, and pushing their bodies to the limit. But we have listened to our players. In countless discussions and locker room visits we have received the same messages for a long period of time, that they are playing too much and do not have enough time to recover. Ahead of the worst season ever for workload, many have also decided to talk in public with the same message: enough is enough.”

David Terrier -

FIFPRO Europe President (FRA)



“Less matches at the pinnacle of professional football, means less travel, better training, better conditioning, better recovery, better mental preparedness and ultimately better performances. Reducing the playing time of top players also is likely to result in more playing time and opportunities for other players who are just outside the limelight. While we recognise FIFA has its own commercial interests, we cannot accept that players are left out of decision-making about the scheduling of the match calendar.”

Umberto Calcagno -

President AIC (ITA)



“We often hear arguments that excessive workload only affects a few players, but the reality is that even those who are not at the biggest clubs are affected. Players like Fredrik Aursnes, who plays for Benfica, recently retired from Norway's national team at age 28. Over the last three seasons, he was selected 168 times for his club and country. He knew that the calendar would never allow him to have this time for himself - it was simply impossible. If the calendar remains saturated, we can expect more players to retire from their national team - an outcome which serves no one.”

Kristoffer Vatshaug -

Executive President NISO (NOR)



“We can no longer talk about player workload, and the impact of the expanding fixture schedule as a problem that's coming - it's already here. We are now able to look at the current football calendar and see clearly that it just doesn't work. Players are making their feelings increasingly clear on this. They rightly want their voices to be heard. Legal action shouldn't be needed to ensure that happens, but when key decisions are imposed unilaterally on players and leagues, then action like this becomes inevitable.”

Maheta Molango -

PFA President of PFA (ENG)



“It is the big stars who go far in all tournaments with both club and national teams that play the most matches and have the biggest workload. But the consequences of a congested match calendar - and the implementation and expansion of different tournament formats - do not only affect the top players. There is a knock-on effect for players in smaller leagues because their competitions are impacted. You want to see a fresh version of the best players, but that's not happening. It's bad for the product, it's bad for the players, it's bad for everything. We must find a solution by having an international match calendar that is decided by involving all stakeholders.”

Michael Sahl Hansen -

Director Spillerforeningen (DEN)



“Player unions and leagues are clearly aligned in protecting national competitions and their players, who are increasingly exposed to the negative impact of a congested schedule.

By introducing new formats and expanding competitions unilaterally, FIFA is acting solely in its own interest, without considering the resulting damage to the entire football ecosystem, including the value of our national leagues, which are the cornerstone of the European sporting model.

It is essential to protect our sport and ensure that decisions are made with the consideration of all football stakeholders, not unilaterally.

Javier Tebas -

President LALIGA (ITA)



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