

WRITTEN QUESTION E-2172/08
by Luciana Sbarbati (ALDE)
to the Commission

Subject: Protecting football academies

One of the problems currently facing football within the Community is the lack of proper legal protection for academies – the youth set-ups within football clubs in which young 'non-professional' footballers are trained. Under the rules recently introduced by UEFA and FIFA in line with the White Paper on Sport of July 2007, football clubs are required to invest in the training of young players within their academies. Despite the existence of this wholly proper requirement, there is a lack of properly targeted, uniform rules within the EU providing effective protection for the clubs with which the young players are registered. The financial and other efforts made by clubs in training young players often come to nothing because the players are then bought by another club, and are able to do so precisely because of the lack of proper legal protection within the EU Member States. The arrangements put in place by FIFA – the Regulations on the Status and Transfer of Players provide simply for the payment of compensation to the club that trained the young player – fail to solve the problem.

Would the Commission not agree that:

1. a standard apprenticeship contract applicable in all 27 Member States should be introduced for young players between the ages of 16 and 19;
2. a clear definition of the terms 'professional' and 'non-professional' which, particularly in the football world, currently give rise to confusion and arbitrary interpretation, is required?