



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The Professional Footballers' Association of Ireland Announce Its Support For Justice for Players

Amsterdam, 29 January 2026: The Professional Footballers' Association of Ireland (PFA Ireland) announced today its support for the Justice for Players class action against KNVB, FIFA and several national football associations.

The total number of European football players' unions backing the Justice for Players class action has now reached eleven. This announcement follows the support from the national players' unions of The Netherlands (VVCS), Belgium (United Athletes), Austria (VdF), Slovenia (SPINS), Croatia (HUNS), Bosnia and Herzegovina (SPFBIH), North Macedonia (SFM), Serbia (SPFN) and the Czech Republic (ČAFH). It also follows the French professional footballers' union (UNFP) joining the action as a co-plaintiff in October.

On 4 August 2025, the Dutch foundation Justice for Players (JfP) announced that it is leading a class action against FIFA and several European football associations, on behalf of players who have played in European and UK clubs since 2002: <https://justiceforplayers.com/>.

The primary aim of this class action is to obtain fair financial compensation for all professional players and former players, regardless of their nationality, who have been under contract at some point in their career with a European club including the United Kingdom between 2002 and the present day. This financial compensation is owed based on the CJEU's Diarra ruling (4 October 2024) – because the FIFA rules were deemed illegal by the CJEU.

A preliminary analysis by economists at Compass Lexecon has estimated that affected professional footballers have earned on average approximately 8% less over the course of their career than they would have if the FIFA Regulations had not been unlawfully restrictive.

Furthermore, the class action aims to ensure that FIFA adopts, through genuine dialogue, the governance reforms required by EU law, which include co-decision-making power for players' unions on all matters relating to players' working and employment conditions, in collaboration with the associations representing the clubs.



Stephen McGuinness, the General Secretary of PFA Ireland, said: “We view the Justice for Players’ class action to be fully aligned with our objectives. As a union representing professional players in Ireland, it is our responsibility to support an action that is clearly in the interest of our members. Social dialogue must become central to the regulation of the labour market for professional footballers. In addition, PFA Ireland considers it essential that players who played in the EU since 2002 are compensated for damages they have suffered as a result of restrictive rules deemed illegal.

In Ireland, income for professional footballers has never been significant and in many cases has been below a living wage. The unjustified restrictions have exacerbated the already difficult environment in which contracts here are negotiated. We are determined to fight for those that have lost out since 2002 and continue to do so.”

Stuart Gilhooly, Legal Advisor to the PFA Ireland said: “Defending the rights of our members and former members is the *raison d'être* of our association. We will take a stance whenever we will feel our members interests have been compromised. We feel this is a unique opportunity to right the wrongs of the transfer system since 2002 and ultimately provide an equitable system which is fair to all parties.

We are satisfied that this class action, led by Justice for Players, and following the very strong ruling in the Diarra case, is the right vehicle for this.”

Lucia Melcherts, Chair of Justice for Players, said: “We welcome PFA Ireland’s decision to support the Justice for Players class action. As confirmed by the European Court of Justice, the salaries earned by players in Ireland, and across the EU and UK, have been suppressed for years by FIFA’s unlawful transfer rules. This legal action seeks to secure the compensation players are owed for lost earnings and to deliver lasting and meaningful reform of the system.

The endorsement of PFA Ireland reflects the growing unity and strength of the players’ movement across Europe.”



JfP is seeking substantive changes to the FIFA transfer rules so that they comply with EU law and reflect European values and principles of free movement. It follows from the Diarra-judgment of the European Court of Justice that all players were harmed as a result of the FIFA transfer rules.

An estimated 100,000 professional football players, men and women, are eligible to join the legal action. For more information, please visit www.justiceforplayers.com. JfP has instructed Netherlands-based law firm Finch Dispute Resolution, which specialises in class actions in the Netherlands to represent it in the class action. Dupont-Hissel, the law firm that is representing Mr Lassana Diarra, is also advising JfP.

This legal action is fully funded by Deminor, one of Europe's leading providers of legal finance, so that players will not have to pay to join the legal action or assume the financial



Notes to Editors

About Justice for Players

Justice for Players was founded to advocate for the interests of professional footballers across Europe. The board comprises of three members: Lucia Melcherts, Dolf Segaar and Franco Baldini. Lucia Melcherts has been the chair of Stichting Massaschade & Consument (Foundation for Mass Damages & Consumers) since 2021. She also holds the position of Coordinating Specialist Advisor at the Dutch Ministry of Justice and Security. Dolf Segaar founded his own law firm Segaar Law in July 2021, specialising in governance and litigation, with a strong focus on sports law. Franco Baldini is a former professional footballer and agent and spent over 20 years in different senior management roles at top international clubs and organizations, including AS Roma, Real Madrid, Tottenham Hotspur and the England National Team. He currently runs his own consulting firm IC20 Ltd.

www.justiceforplayers.com

About Finch

Finch Dispute Resolution is an independent Dutch litigation boutique law firm, founded in 2022. With a team of around 18 specialised litigators and 5 partners based in Utrecht, the firm handles corporate, commercial, financial, and class-action disputes—domestically and internationally. Finch is involved in several high-profile class actions against, among others, Booking.com, AbbVie, Tata Steel, Royal Dutch Philips, and ING Group.

<https://finch.nl>

About Dupont-Hissel

Jean-Louis Dupont and Martin Hissel are specialists in European law, particularly as applied to the sports sector. Together they have defended hundreds of cases, acting on behalf of all stakeholders in the professional sports sector, before the CJEU, the European Commission, the European Court of Human Rights, national competition authorities, national courts, international (including CAS) and national arbitration tribunals, and the internal judicial bodies of national and international sports associations. In particular, they have led and co-managed cases that resulted in landmark judgements of the CJEU regarding sports governance in the EU and beyond: Bosman (1995), Meca-Medina (2006), Royal Antwerp FC (2023), European Super League (2023), Lassana Diarra (2024) and RFC Seraing (2025).

www.Dupont-Hissel.com