



2015-07-06

Dear Ladies and Gentlemen

Just in case you are not aware of CONIFA and the European Football Cup 2015, carried out in Debrecen in June 2015, I would like to start this letter by introducing ourselves briefly:

The Confederation of Independent Football Associations (CONIFA) is a sport and culture non-profit organization registered on the Isle of Man. Our main purpose is to strengthen football of representative teams outside FIFA and to establish and maintain a platform for nations, minorities, cultural regions and isolated territories to represent their own identity by fielding a national team. Further we give all our members the steady chance to raise their voice, which is usually often unheard, and tell the world about their existence.

In the same time we are not a political organization! We do not judge on the “legitimacy” of our members as a political entity and we do not separate in any way by heritage, culture or religion. We always give the people a platform to show their beauty and pride – but do strictly forbid all political campaigns or ideas to be showcased through CONIFA and its events.

The European Football Cup 2015 in Debrecen was our very first European Championship and was planned to be played with 9 teams until shortly before the tournament. The tournament was planned to be a unique showcase and to make the media globally and let the world know about the teams and their stories. This worked quite well with major newspaper all over Europe and even in the US or Japan reporting intensely about the tournament.

However, the tournament ultimately could only be played with 6 teams as the 2 other teams visa applications became ignored by the Hungarian authorities last minute without any reason given until today. Our third member didn't even applied after given information from the Hungarian embassy in Istanbul that their application wouldn't be approved. This is the main reason we feel ourselves forced to write this open letter as a form of protest about ignoring the visa applications, that denied sportsman to show themselves and their culture. By ignoring the visas for the honorable CONIFA members from Abkhazia and South Ossetia the Hungarian ambassadors in Moscow clearly gave our whole tournament a political side-note that totally stands against all our values.

From the day we decided to give the hosting rights for our first European Football Cup to Debrecen, we were promised a huge support by the Hungarian government as well as the Debrecen City Council and the embassy in Moscow. Unfortunately we have to conclude today that none of that promises of support – neither financially nor in actions – ever came true.

Financial informal promises of support did not only not realize in the end, but, even worse, the actions of the Hungarian authorities, in particular the of the before mentioned embassy, did result in the fact that we had financial losses as sponsorship agreements were annulled the day the sponsored heard of the cut-down to 6 teams.

In the same time our members from Abkhazia and South Ossetia did all suffer from enormous financial losses as their flight tickets and visa processing fees could not be refunded.

We, as CONIFA, are furthermore very confused by the decisions taken to ignore the applications. In the case of Abkhazia and South Ossetia all players that applied for a visa did hold a valid Russian passport and all formal requirements were met, according to the Hungarian embassy in Moscow. Both teams attended, with nearly the same delegation, the CONIFA World Football Cup 2014 in Östersund, Sweden. A reason why Schengen visas were denied this year, while they were granted last year, was not given until today, neither to CONIFA, nor to the two delegations. For that reason we again ask you to explain why a visa was not granted, even though all required documents have been filed and all financial guarantees have been given.

Regardless of the answers on the many open questions about the visa process we must express that we are deeply hurt by the decisions taken. We are convinced that the all Russian citizen football teams does not and should not mean any national security risk to any countries in the EU we were highly disappointed the unfair decision of the Hungarian Foreign Ministry / Hungarian Embassy. We regret a lot that despite our principals the Foreign Ministry/ Embassy judged the sports teams' visas upon political considerations. Until now we do not understand how the actions of the Hungarian government go together with the paroles the official brochures of the tourism ministry, like "Enjoy famous Hungarian hospitality!"ⁱ.

On the other hand we feel sorry that we were not be able to raise the awareness of Debrecen as a sports capital and we were not able to confirm the slogan „Debrecen [...] is firmly established on the sports map of the world.”ⁱⁱ

We were really keen to strengthen Hungary and Debrecen, make the city globally famous for hosting an event of social, sporting and humanitarian importance like only a few others. We tried all we can to show the world that Hungary in general and Debrecen in particular still stand for the values of "Fair Play" and that both entities do their very best to strengthen football at its grassroots these days.

Unfortunately, with the lack of support and the fights against CONIFA and our members, we can only pay back what we received, which is far less than we hoped for and which is far away from the potential we saw.

Last but not least we have to have to express again how disappointed we personally are that political reasons have won over humanity!



Per-Anders Blind, World President
CONIFA - Confederation for Independent Football Associations

ⁱ Brochure „12 Reasons to visit Hungary“ (www.gotohungary.com)

ⁱⁱ Debrecen brochure (www.debrecen.hu)