

PRESS RELEASE: FIFA and News Media

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News Agencies Limit Coverage Over FIFA Copyright Claim

NMC says FIFA policy reduces news publicity of women's football event

Major news agencies are downscaling their coverage of the inaugural FIFA Women's Football Convention starting Thursday because the sports body insists it owns the copyright to video news content produced by news organisations.

Agence France Presse, Thomson Reuters, the Press Association, Associated Press, its affiliate, the sports news agency SNTV, Spanish agency EFE, Europe-wide agency 'epa' and German agency 'dpa' amongst others will not offer video coverage of the convention. FIFA, they say, has rejected repeated requests for the assignment of copyright requirement to be removed from FIFA's terms and conditions of accreditation governing venue entry by newsgatherers. News companies say they cannot ignore FIFA's continued refusal to respect their rights as content creators.

Intellectual property law states that the copyright in any creative work belongs to its creator, a position recently reinforced by the European Parliament.

FIFA already imposes strenuous controls on how news organisations' material can be published and distributed and dictates when, where, and for how long video news content created by news organisations covering its events can be used.

For publishers, FIFA rules mean removing journalist video news material from digital news sites after a specified period – for the convention and FIFA's decision-making Congress it's the end of the year; news material from Women's World Cup training sessions on the eve of matches must be deleted after 48 hours. Digital outlets, such as news publications, that are not official rights holders cannot use any in-venue content at all on match-day including press conferences or 'mixed zone' interviews.

The two-day inaugural Women's Football Convention was launched by FIFA on Women's Day this year. Attended by [top football administrators](#) and politicians, its [agenda](#) aims to address key issues around the development and empowerment of women in football.

News agencies had planned to create their own journalistic video news material but now say that they will not assign video journalists to cover the event.

In recent years news organisations have taken a dynamic role in embracing women's sport including football by investing in news coverage operations and leading debate about women's sport.

The News Media Coalition (NMC), the international industry body which works to ensure equitable news media opportunities and access to events of major public interest, said it was regrettable the convention and its partners will not receive all the widespread coverage and news exposure value it otherwise deserved.

An NMC statement says: 'There is still time for FIFA to review and make clear it will not claim copyright in news content which is rightfully in the ownership of news organisation creating it.'

"The News Media has taken the initiative to put women's sport on the news agenda alongside men's tournaments and achievements" said NMC Director Andrew Moger. "It is extremely unfortunate that FIFA has taken this stance as everyone has been keen to see what is next for the growth of women's football, and how the news media can play a role. The absence of independent news video coverage from the convention will result in far less independent information being available to the very people the convention was intended to reach".

He added: "There is no reason for FIFA to make this claim on the copyright of news organisations, which already agree that that their material will be used for editorial reporting. Each news organisation makes their own judgements about what to cover, but there is a common conviction that demanding copyright ownership is a control step too far and not one shared across football or the wider sports community, where there is recognition of the valuable input from the independent news media sector.'

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News Media Coalition (NMC)

The NMC is an international organisation which protects news content and news business freedoms from arbitrary controls. NMC Members include reputable, major publishing houses and national and news international agencies which invest in news coverage of sports and other major events throughout the world, each and every day, Its members can be found on the NMC website [here](#).

Background

News organisations are required, as a matter of course, to sign up to terms and conditions of accreditation (ATC's) to attend sporting events. These routinely demand that news content is limited in use to editorial rather than unapproved commercial purposes and stipulate how news company content may otherwise be used.

While some of the conditions e.g. those which relate to security and behavioural procedures are acceptable, the instances of ATC's stipulating more contentious 'rules' such as limiting or forbidding the use of news organisations' own content on online and social media platforms, are on the increase.

Such restrictions undermine the news media's ability to report on events in an unbiased, accurate and timely manner on the whichever platform is most appropriate for fans.

Attempts by sports organisations to claim the copyright in journalists' work are particularly injurious as retaining copyright ownership is vital to news organisations which want to utilise their rights, including via legitimate distribution of their material, without having to seek permission or a licence from a sports organisation.

Earlier this year news organisations, represented by the News Media Coalition, opposed failed attempts by sports organisations within a European copyright review to gain EU legislator support for a 'Sport neighbouring right' which sport bodies said was necessary to address the increasingly serious issue of online piracy. The News Media Coalition persistently asked sports organisations for assurances that the legislation they sought would not compromise the news media's ability to fairly report on sports events and that news organisations' intellectual property rights, such as copyright, would be respected - but received no response from the organisations concerned.

Football fans will still be able to watch FIFA's live streaming of convention activities. However the NMC believes sports fans know that footage and other official content supplied by sports organisations - in this case FIFA - is not a substitute for journalistic news material.