

Brussels, 2nd May 2005

## **Competition: Commission welcomes improved access to tickets for the 2006 World Cup**

*Following discussions with the European Commission, FIFA, the International Football Federation, has agreed to modify its arrangements for ticket payments for the next stages of ticket allocation for the 2006 World Cup in Germany. More payment methods will now be accepted in the second phase of ticket sales which begins on 2 May. Fans based in non-Eurozone countries in the European Economic Area (EEA) who do not have a MasterCard product or a German bank account can now pay for tickets by making a domestic bank transfer in their local currency. Previously, some fans outside the Eurozone were faced with the high costs of making cross-border bank transfers into Euros. The Commission intervened following a complaint made in March 2005 by the UK consumer organisation, Which?. When assessing the ticket sales arrangements, the Commission looked at whether there was reasonable access to tickets to consumers throughout the EEA.*

Competition Commissioner Neelie Kroes commented: "Following these changes, football fans will benefit from a fairer choice of payment methods for World Cup tickets. Fans from all over Europe want fair access to these tickets especially as it may be many years before the World Cup will be back in Europe".

Under the new arrangements, FIFA and the German Football Association (DFB) will open bank accounts in the 16 non-Eurozone countries within the EEA and will accept payments in the local currency. FIFA and DFB have informed fans of the new improved arrangements on their official website (<http://fifaworldcup.yahoo.com>).

Having examined ticket sales arrangements for several major sport events in the past, the Commission has taken the view that these arrangements should ensure that all consumers within the EEA have reasonable access to tickets overall. As regards exclusive arrangements with credit card companies, the Commission previously examined the ticket sales for the 2004 Athens Olympic Games. In that case, tickets ordered via the Internet directly from the organising committee could only be paid for by VISA cards. Following modifications to the arrangements, which ensured that consumers were duly informed of the existence of alternative sales channels that did not require payment by VISA, the Commission closed the case without a decision.

The new arrangements for the World Cup 2006 are therefore consistent with that approach.