American Football League Europe (AFLE)
European Football Alliance (EFA)
and other past and future European or international franchise leagues

Zürich, 23 November 2026

Open Letter: Awarding of Franchise Rights in Switzerland

Dear Sir or Madam

As the national federation, we are writing to the AFLE, the EFA and all other past and future European or international franchise leagues because the awarding of franchise rights for Switzerland raises legal questions that reach beyond sport. We do so in the interest of players, clubs and the reputation of our sport.

The requirements for work permits for foreign athletes are set out in principle in the Federal Act on Foreign Nationals and Integration (FNIA) and in the directive on the FNIA (section 4.7.11.2.2). Our concern relates to players from outside the EU and EFTA, who need a Swiss work permit. Nationals of EU and EFTA states are subject to different rules. According to the directive, permits for athletes presuppose participation in national championships in Switzerland. The State Secretariat for Migration has confirmed to us in writing that permits for clubs that only take part in championships abroad are ruled out.

For a franchise in Switzerland this means that a team that plans to employ players from third countries without competing in a Swiss national championship will in general not be able to obtain the necessary permits. Employing foreign nationals without a permit can have consequences under the FNIA for the employer, that is, the franchise and those responsible for it. We do not suggest that any league or franchise intends this. We do consider it our duty to point out the risk early, before players and clubs are affected.

We therefore urge you most sincerely to refrain in future from awarding franchise rights for Switzerland. The only exception would be an award directly to a member of our federation whose team plays in our national league A or B. Only in this constellation could the legal requirements for a permit be met at all, and even then each permit remains subject to the decision of the competent authorities. Any other constellation exposes players, franchises and their officials to legal and financial risks, and the leagues to reputational damage.

We are ready to talk at any time and offer to clarify the legal situation together with our legal counsel and the competent authorities. A clean solution serves the sport in Switzerland and in Europe.

Yours faithfully
Swiss American Football

Claudio Spescha
President

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