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**2014 EUROPEAN BASKETBALL WEEK NETS TOP LEVEL SUPPORT**

**(Insert local headline)**

**(INSERT DATE – LOCATION)** - Special Olympics **(Insert Country Name)** is proud to announce that the giants of the European basketball community are throwing their full support behind the eleventh annual Special Olympics European Basketball Week taking place from November 29th to December 7th 2014.

Backed by FIBA Europe and Euroleague Basketball, the aim of Special Olympics European Basketball Week is to promote and expand opportunities across Europe for adults and children with intellectual disabilities to transform their lives through basketball. 2014 Basketball Week will focus on introducing half-court 3x3 competition and Unified basketball.

**(Insert information on what is happening in your Country and number of athletes taking part)**

FIBA Europe and Euroleague Basketball’s ONE TEAM programme as well as more than 25 National Basketball Federations and 60 professional clubs across Europe are supporting European Basketball Week and 18,500 athletes across 33 countries will be taking part. Euroleague Basketball is dedicating a total of 24 ONE TEAM matches solely to Special Olympics on November 27 – 28 and December 4 – 5. Special Olympics European Basketball Week is one of the highlights of the year-round event calendar and is part of Special Olympics’ on-going commitment to increase the number of registered basketball players in Europe to 60,000 with 600 additional volunteer coaches by the end of 2014.

“FIBA Europe is pleased to continue our long term partnership with Special Olympics, which is part of our mission to promote Basketball for Everyone. I particularly welcome this year’s focus on playing Unified and 3x3 Basketball,” stated Kamil Novak, Secretary General FIBA Europe.

**(You can adapt or replace with quote from National Basketball Federation/Professional Club)**

“We will be supporting Special Olympics during our Competition Rounds 7 and 8 of the Turkish Airlines Euroleague this season and it is an honour for us to dedicate our games to support Special Olympics. Special Olympics is an organization that uses the power of sport to fight against exclusion, like we do with our One Team programme,” stated Jordi Bertomeu, President & CEO Euroleague Basketball.

Unified Basketball® which brings players with intellectual disabilities (athletes) and without (Unified partners) together on the same team, will be a significant focus this year and through the support of FIBA Europe half-court 3x3 competition will be introduced. The International Day of Persons with Disabilities on December 3rd will be celebrated on court during every match throughout Europe this year.

Supported by 2,520 coaches basketball is one of the most popular sports in Special Olympics with 57,920 athletes currently registered as basketball players and 12,053 of those are Unified players.

“2014 marks the 11th year of European Basketball Week and this year our focus is on playing Unified and the introduction of Special Olympics 3 x 3 half-court basketball. By bringing together players with and without intellectual disabilities on the same team we believe more inclusive communities will be created leading to a more respectful world for everyone. I want to thank Euroleague Basketball and FIBA Europe for their support and vision and my message to the 18,500 athletes taking part this year is to have fun and enjoy,” said Mary Davis, Regional President Special Olympics Europe Eurasia.

**(You can adapt or replace with quote from your National Director**).

**Ends**

**About Special Olympics**
Special Olympics is an international organization that changes lives through the power of sport by empowering people with intellectual disabilities, promoting acceptance for all, and fostering communities of understanding and respect worldwide. Founded in 1968 by Eunice Kennedy Shriver, the Special Olympics movement has grown from a few hundred athletes to 4.3 million athletes in 170 countries worldwide, providing year-round sports training, athletic competition and related programs. Special Olympics takes place daily, changing the lives of people with intellectual disabilities all over the world. Special Olympics provides people with intellectual disabilities the opportunity to realize their potential, develop physical fitness, demonstrate courage, and experience joy and friendship. Visit Special Olympics at [www.specialolympics.org](http://www.specialolympics.org/). Engage with us on: Twitter @SpecOlympicsEU  [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/SpecialOlympics); [YouTube](http://www.youtube.com/SpecialOlympicsHQ), and [specialolympicsblog.wordpress.com](http://specialolympicsblog.wordpress.com/)