

## 4.8 Prevention and education in match-fixing: the European experience

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The sheer number of match-fixing scandals<sup>2</sup> in the past decade has shown that football matches can be, and are, fixed anywhere in the world, even top-flight fixtures and international friendlies. A trillion-dollar global betting market,<sup>3</sup> much of it unregulated, makes fixing games a lucrative target for criminals and organised crime. In Europe a series of scandals, most notably the well-publicised story of how a German referee was co-opted by a Singaporean match-fixer in 2005<sup>4</sup> and the sensational trial in 2010,<sup>5</sup> (also in Germany) of four defendants in a case where it was alleged more than 250 matches were fixed world-wide, focused the attention of football's administrators and politicians. The very integrity of sport was at stake.

The common reaction to match-fixing scandals in the past had always been to consider them one-off events, an aberration that could be stopped simply by sorting out a few 'bad apples'. Clubs and leagues focused on singling out the players or participants involved.<sup>6</sup> With evidence of systemic corruption and international criminal networks targeting Europe, however, it was clear that a different approach would be required.

In 2011 the European Commission allocated resources<sup>7</sup> to combat match-fixing as part of its sports initiative and the Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA), world football's governing body, signed a 10-year €20 million deal<sup>8</sup> with Interpol to raise awareness of the risks. In 2012 FIFPro, the players' union, published shocking research into the causes of match-fixing in eastern Europe; the *Black Book*<sup>9</sup> showed how vulnerable players and match officials are in leagues in which clubs fail to pay wages and players are bullied. Two years later the Union of European Football Associations (UEFA), European football's governing body, FIFPro, the European Club

Association and the European Professional Football Leagues (EPFL) announced<sup>10</sup> a new code of conduct, specifying that their members take anti-match-fixing measures. By the end of 2014 the Council of Europe had adopted the ‘Convention on the Manipulation of Sports Competitions’, open to ratification by all states even beyond the Council of Europe,<sup>11</sup> which established a framework for tackling match-fixing that included education as well as better law enforcement (see Stanislas Frossard, ‘Combating the risk of corruption in sport: an intergovernmental perspective’, in this report).

### **Prevention and education**

It is important that criminal investigations into match-fixing and prosecutions of those involved are actively pursued to deter criminals from further infiltrating European football, but prevention is also key because it is here that those inside football can make a difference: if you can stop the most vulnerable targets for match-fixers – players and match officials – from participating, matches cannot be fixed. How this is to be done was the target of five education projects, three aimed at football, funded by the European Commission under its ‘European Partnerships in Sport’ programme,<sup>12</sup> which ran from January 2013 to June 2014.

One of these projects, ‘Staying on Side’, brought together Transparency International chapters and football leagues in Germany, Greece, Italy, Lithuania, Portugal and the United Kingdom (plus basketball in Lithuania). The project partners were the Association of European Professional Football Leagues (EPFL) and their German member, the German Football League (DFL). The development and outcomes of the project provided a useful lens with which to assess the overall challenges of implementing effective prevention and education programmes in a world struggling to come to grips with the issue of match-fixing, despite the fact the various sport governing bodies were in the process of making such training mandatory. Football leagues in Germany and Poland have already

amended their statutes to mandate education programmes to prevent match-fixing and UEFA has introduced an Integrity Resolution that was adopted by its 54 member associations in March 2014, stipulating the need for preventative programmes.<sup>13</sup>

## Building trust

Match-fixing in football is a sensitive subject. Clubs and football administrators do not like to talk about it because they fear the media will immediately cast doubt on the integrity of the games. This in turn can have disastrous financial cost as was shown in Italy after the Calciopoli match-fixing scandal in 2006 that saw gate receipts go down.<sup>14</sup> One important aim of the project was therefore to find ways of how the leagues can show leadership in managing the risk of match-fixing both internally and in their communication to the public.<sup>15</sup>

It was in 2010 that TI Germany started supporting the German Football League in its work to develop prevention programmes to educate players and clubs about the risks of match-fixing.<sup>16</sup> This formed the basis of the 'Staying on Side' project, and helped build the trust that allowed anti-corruption organisations to work with football leagues. It also provided the pedagogical underpinnings for the training approach. It looked at all the risk factors facing those vulnerable to match-fixing (psychological, financial and gambling issues), as well as the infrastructure needed to support them (a safe and secure whistleblower system, plus accessible education) in difficult situations, the goal being to show them how to resist match-fixing approaches.<sup>17</sup>

Everyone acknowledged the importance of communicating this message but there was reluctance among the participants from the leagues to speak out about the specific actions the clubs and leagues were taking. When there were match-fixing incidents reported in participating leagues during the life of the programme, for example, there was little mention of the prevention and education programmes already in place. Even today this information is not forthcoming when club

officials talk about match-fixing, and it is hard to find reference on the leagues' websites to what they are doing to combat match-fixing with the possible exception of leagues in Austria and Germany.<sup>18</sup>

## Scope

The project *Staying on Side* had three main components: to gather information and evidence about match-fixing, to develop and test training and education programmes and materials, and to seek a more pro-active approach to addressing the problem within the football leagues. Of the six countries where the Transparency International chapter paired with a football league, three collaborations – those in Greece, Italy and Lithuania (in addition to Germany, where the project was already established and then further developed<sup>19</sup>) – led to trials of the educational materials with players and coaches.

In Greece the project took place at a very challenging time as a high-profile corruption case was ongoing involving officials and players from the Super League – the partner of TI Greece for this project.<sup>20</sup> According to Nagia Mentzi, who supervised the project for TI Greece, it was a challenging but fruitful relationship that took significant effort on both sides and produced some impressive results: TI Greece developed educational materials and arranged workshops with more than 665 players from the Under 17 and Under 20 age groups to discuss honesty and integrity with young players and coaches in all 18 academies of the Super League clubs. It also gave a presentation at the Super League's 2014 annual conference, at which 30 athletes, coaches, referees and sports officials attended a session describing the project and the materials.

In Italy, TI educators visited clubs in Palermo and Brescia in addition to hosting media events in Milan and Rome, where the Serie B league representatives spoke about their commitment to long-term educational efforts to raise awareness of match-fixing. The sessions were attended by more

than 100 people.<sup>21</sup> TI Italy also carried out research in collaboration with Catholic University of the Sacred Heart of Milan and the AIC Italian Professional Footballers Association. The research aimed to identify the main behavioural dynamics in Italian football that contributed to the phenomenon of match-fixing. More than 430 questionnaires were completed by players, coaches, and technical and management staff. One striking result was that 42 percent said there was a medium risk they would be involved in match fixing and 10 percent of players thought there was even a high likelihood of involvement.<sup>22</sup>

In Portugal, the TI chapter was able to undertake research in collaboration with the referees' association. It surveyed 1,185 referees of amateur, professional and international competitions about the perception of the problem of match-fixing in Portugal. The respondents believed that as many as eight out of 100 referees participated in match-fixing, primarily because they suffer from economic problems. A second survey, of sports management students, found that more than a half believed there was match-fixing in Portugal; a third survey of supporters found that two-thirds believed that match-fixing in Portugal was a result of clubs seeking to get results for sporting reasons, rather than the fact of organised crime getting involved for betting reasons (the belief of 18 per cent).<sup>23</sup>

In the UK the chapter produced research on the various existing codes of conduct and education materials and subsequently developed a prevention resource manual entitled 'Safeguarding the Beautiful Game - A Guide to Preventing Match-Fixing in Football at Club level'. This guide was developed with input from a number of key stakeholders in the UK including the Football Association, the Premier League, the Scottish Professional Football League and the Professional Footballers' Association. The guide is primarily aimed at club officials and coaches with professional football club youth academies having shown the most interest to date. The number of pre-existing initiatives relating to preventing match-fixing within football in the UK made it impossible to gain buy-in for the project to engage directly with players at football clubs.<sup>24</sup>

The experience in Lithuania, where the first task was to raise awareness of the issue and explain when and how match-fixing happens, is described in a separate article (see Rugile Trumpyte, ‘The gap between sports institutions and the public will: responses to match-fixing in Lithuania’, in this report.)

## Longer-term impact

Today no one questions the need for European football to be vigilant about the threat of match-fixing or that it is the responsibility of clubs and leagues to be pro-active in preventing it by ensuring those involved in the sport are aware of the dangers and alert to approaches by match-fixers. The single most important longer-term impact of the project was the acknowledgement that football leagues need to adopt good whistleblower protection systems that are safe and secure. This is all the more important now that players and club officials are encouraged or even required to report any match-fixing approaches.<sup>25</sup> The first workshop that brought together all the participants for the ‘Staying on Side’ project focused on how the German Football League is doing this, via an independent and external ombudsman, a lawyer and a former referee. These discussions were instrumental in the Scottish Football Association deciding to set up a secure hotline for players and club staff using Crimestoppers, a well-known and respected organisation, to run its reporting hotline.<sup>26</sup> Leagues in Greece and Italy are also discussing what model to use. The EPFL and Transparency International are working to produce guidelines for safe and secure whistleblower systems.

The project also produced a reference guide to the actions and materials produced over the 18-month period.<sup>27</sup> These materials have contributed to a growing library of education resources that

clubs and leagues can adopt and use<sup>28</sup> as they mainstream education and prevention into training programmes for all players and officials.

The ‘Staying on Side’ collaborations underlined the difficulties that organisations face when they have to deal with corruption; they also showed, however, how much can be done in a short time frame. European football and other sports now have a legal framework to fight match-fixing, in the form of the Council of Europe convention cited above and a resolution from the sport’s governing body, UEFA, to enforce prevention and education programmes across the continent. There is now a volume of materials and experiences produced in the context of pilot projects such as ‘Staying on Side’ to help institutionalise and optimise the prevention programmes that will reinforce the integrity of the game.

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<sup>2</sup> *The Guardian* (UK), ‘Europol’s match-fixing bombshell leaves football authorities in the dark’, 4 February 2013, [www.theguardian.com/football/blog/2013/feb/04/europol-match-fixing-football](http://www.theguardian.com/football/blog/2013/feb/04/europol-match-fixing-football).

<sup>3</sup> European Gaming and Betting Association, *Sports Betting: Commercial and Integrity Issues* (Brussels: EGBA, 2014), [www.egba.eu/facts-and-figures/studies/6-sports-betting-report](http://www.egba.eu/facts-and-figures/studies/6-sports-betting-report).

<sup>4</sup> *The Guardian* (UK), ‘Two years in jail for match-fixing German referee’, 18 November 2005, [www.theguardian.com/football/2005/nov/18/newsstory.sport4](http://www.theguardian.com/football/2005/nov/18/newsstory.sport4).

<sup>5</sup> CNN (US), ‘Soccer match-fixing trial begins in Germany’, 6 October 2010, <http://edition.cnn.com/2010/WORLD/europe/10/06/germany.match.fixing.trial>.

<sup>6</sup> *Daily Express* (UK), ‘Cameroon FA brands seven bad apples amid match-fixing probe’, 2 July 2014, [www.express.co.uk/sport/worldcup2014/486088/Cameroon-FA-brands-seven-bad-apples-amid-match-fixing-probe](http://www.express.co.uk/sport/worldcup2014/486088/Cameroon-FA-brands-seven-bad-apples-amid-match-fixing-probe).

<sup>7</sup> See European Commission website:

[http://ec.europa.eu/sport/policy/organisation\\_of\\_sport/match\\_fixing\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/sport/policy/organisation_of_sport/match_fixing_en.htm).

<sup>8</sup> Interpol, press release, ‘FIFA makes historic contribution to INTERPOL in long-term fight against match-fixing’, 9 May 2011, [www.interpol.int/News-and-media/News/2011/PR035](http://www.interpol.int/News-and-media/News/2011/PR035).

<sup>9</sup> FIFPro, *Black Book Eastern Europe: The Problems Professional Football Players Encounter* (Hoofddorp, Netherlands: FIFPro, 2012).

<sup>10</sup> UEFA, media release, ‘European football adopts code of conduct on integrity’, 18 September 2014, [www.uefa.org/stakeholders/professional-football-strategy-council/news/newsid=2149775.html](http://www.uefa.org/stakeholders/professional-football-strategy-council/news/newsid=2149775.html).

<sup>11</sup> Council of Europe, ‘Council of Europe Convention on the Manipulation of Sports Competitions’, <http://conventions.coe.int/Treaty/EN/Treaties/Html/215.htm>.

<sup>12</sup> European Commission, ‘Preparatory actions: 2012’, [http://ec.europa.eu/sport/policy/preparatory-actions/preparatory-actions-2012\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/sport/policy/preparatory-actions/preparatory-actions-2012_en.htm).

<sup>13</sup> UEFA’s ‘European football united for the integrity of the game’, 28 March 2013, point 5 (e), says: ‘Establish and run comprehensive education programmes, especially for young players, to increase awareness of the

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risks of match-fixing and to ensure that all those involved in football are aware of, and respect, the relevant rules.'

<sup>14</sup> Corruption does not pay: An analysis of consumer response to Italy's Calciopoli scandal by Babatunde Buraimo, Giuseppe Migaliy and Rob Simmons, 4 April 2012.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>16</sup> See Sylvia Schenk, 'What the anti-corruption movement can bring to sport: the experience of Transparency International Germany,' in this report.

<sup>17</sup> See Ulrike Spitz, 'Match-fixing: the role of prevention', in this report.

<sup>18</sup> When Transparency International was founded, in 1993, no one in business or politics wanted to use the word 'corruption'. It took 10 years of hard lobbying to create the United Nations Convention against Corruption (2003).

<sup>19</sup> See Ulrike Spitz, 'Match-fixing: the role of prevention', in this report.

<sup>20</sup> *Financial Times* (UK), 'Football fixing scandal rocks Greek elite', 24 June 2011, [www.ft.com/cms/s/0/70d92868-9e8b-11e0-9469-00144feabdc0.html#axzz3QsY28of8\\_](http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/70d92868-9e8b-11e0-9469-00144feabdc0.html#axzz3QsY28of8_)

<sup>21</sup> Technical Implementation Report submitted by Transparency International to the European Commission in August 2014, p. 17.

<sup>22</sup> Sport Economy (Italy) La Lega serie B con Transparency International per combattere il match fixing [http://www.sporteconomy.it/La+Lega+serie+B+con+Transparency+International+per+combattere+il+match+fixing\\_49496\\_8\\_1.html](http://www.sporteconomy.it/La+Lega+serie+B+con+Transparency+International+per+combattere+il+match+fixing_49496_8_1.html)

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5.

<sup>24</sup> Football in the United Kingdom is administered by four bodies in England and Scotland at the higher level: the Football Association, the Premier League, the Football League and the Scottish Football Association. The Premier League is part of the European Professional Football Leagues and was the main partner in TI's 'Staying on Side' project. All these bodies have training programmes and materials for players, which left little room for Transparency International UK to contribute. The coaching manual was the agreed output after several months of talks.

<sup>25</sup> UEFA (2013), point 5 (c), (d).

<sup>26</sup> Crimestoppers and Scottish Football Association set up a hotline in January 2014: <https://crimestoppers-uk.org/in-your-area/scotland/crimestoppers-unites-with-scottish-football-to-keep-it-clean>.

<sup>27</sup> Transparency International, 'Staying on Side: How to Stop Match-Fixing' (Berlin: TI, 2014), [www.transparency.org/whatwedo/publication/staying\\_on\\_side\\_how\\_to\\_stop\\_match\\_fixing\\_](http://www.transparency.org/whatwedo/publication/staying_on_side_how_to_stop_match_fixing_)

<sup>28</sup> Many organisations have produced match-fixing guides, including FIFA and SportAccord.