

## **The Code of Ethics for sport in the Municipality of Milan: a grassroots approach against organised crime and corruption in sports**

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### **The problem**

The city of Milan and the Lombardy region are traditional areas of industry and professional services, providing approximately 25% of Italy's GDP, and are historically characterised by a respect for the rule of law. However, the last decade has witnessed a gradual increase in organised crime,<sup>2</sup> with judicial investigations repeatedly uncovering the presence of the Mafia in building, waste cycle management, trade, major infrastructure projects and retail commerce. Greater attention was drawn in early 2014 in connection with the organisation of Expo 2015 in Milan, when serious cases of corruption surfaced.<sup>3</sup>

Nonetheless, it still surprised many in Milan that organised crime extended to the world of grassroots sport. In March 2011 the Ripamonti sports facility in via Iseo was impounded as part of the Milanese anti-Mafia operation 'Redux-Caposaldo'. The operation found that the facility was being managed by the Flachi clan, 'which exercises all the powers typical of dominus: deciding on staff, resolving disputes, managing services and raking in the profits. And the City, as the owner of the centre, was unaware that it was funding the Flachi group by supporting its economic initiatives.'<sup>4</sup> As a result of the seizure, the facility was closed by the prefetto (the central state authority) and the licence was revoked by the municipality. A further arson attack on 8 October 2011 seriously damaged the building, and was clearly committed for purposes of intimidation.<sup>5</sup>

## Actions taken

The city of Milan and the Lombardy region have undertaken various measures to tackle corruption and organised crime, including an Anti-Mafia Committee, which reports directly to the mayor of Milan, a Municipality Council Anti-Mafia Commission and a ‘Head of Corruption Prevention and Transparency’ in Lombardy.<sup>6</sup> The city of Milan also undertook its first whistleblowing procedure in October 2014.<sup>7</sup>

Specific to sport, it was in the shadow of the Ripamonti case and wider issues at the apex of Italian sport<sup>8</sup> that public opinion first became sensitised to the risks of organised crime and illegality in sport, even at the grassroots level. Against this background, the City of Milan initiated a policy to prevent and combat criminal infiltration of public sports facilities, thus integrating sport into its anti-Mafia agenda. This was led by the Commissione Consigliare Antimafia (Anti-Mafia Advice Committee) through its chairman, David Gentili, in coordination with the Assessorato allo Sport (Department of Sport) and the Commissione Consigliare Sport (Sports Advice Committee).

The chosen instrument for was a Code of Ethics in sport, to be adopted by the management licensees of the city’s municipal facilities (110 facilities managed by private sport clubs or companies as a result of public bidding procedures) and the public company Milanosport (which manages 24 municipal sports facilities).

In order to construct the Code, and develop a plan for its implementation, the city of Milan signed a memorandum of understanding with Avviso Pubblico<sup>9</sup> and Transparency International Italia<sup>10</sup> on a voluntary basis to work alongside technical experts and representatives of public administration, starting with a preliminary collection of information and views on the issue.

It became clear from the outset that what was needed was not an approach limited to countering infiltration by organised crime but an ‘overall’ approach to the contemporary issue of ethics in sport. The final proposed version of the Code set out 12 areas to reach the two key interrelated goals of combating organised crime and fostering integrity in sports practices.

#### Elements of the Code of Ethics for grassroots sport in the city of Milan<sup>11</sup>

- 1) The principle of the supremacy of the ‘rule of law’ in social dynamics and in sport.
- 2) Self-regulation in the management of sports clubs.
- 3) Protection from the misuse of sport and from the effects of illegal, criminal and Mafia interests.
- 4) Effective participation on the part of members in the activity and decisions of sports associations/clubs, promoting awareness and individual and collective responsibility.
- 5) Strengthening the interchange between the sports clubs/associations and the local community.
- 6) Principles of fairness, honesty and loyalty in competitive and non-competitive sport and in social relationships; sports associations/clubs to select their leaders on the basis of these principles.
- 7) Developing sport to respect nature and promote environmental sustainability.
- 8) Strengthening the content and perception of sport as a clean and proper environment in which there are no concealed or unverifiable interests.
- 9) Generating awareness that lawlessness and minor non-compliance within sports associations/clubs increases the risks of criminal infiltration.
- 10) Promoting full transparency in order to make reporting and selection criteria for activities accessible and verifiable.
- 11) Recognising sport as important in the proper development and expression of the personality of the child and the adult, thereby also assigning to sport an educational and cultural function

in the improvement of society and quality of life for individuals and communities.

12) Recognising that the principles promoted by sports associations/clubs also apply to all people involved in the organisation and promotion of sports activities, including the local authority and public administration.

The Code was conceived in recognition of the fact that sport plays a positive role in the growth of the individual, so the Code itself is a tool for protecting, strengthening and making more visible and explicit the ethical component of sport. A strategic choice was also taken to consider the ‘cultural and behavioural context’. The trend in recent years has been a watering down of the sporting spirit: excessive competition; the use of sport for financial ends; personal grandstanding; foul and abusive language; insufficient technical skills in sports performance; and family interference in the work of instructors. In addition, inefficient models of sports organisation in Italy have encouraged minor misdemeanours, contributing to a sharp reduction in public and private grants. The Code therefore addresses the use of language by participants, information-sharing with families, the link between training capacities and learning goals, risk management and procedures to be adopted in controversial situations.

The process for the adoption and implementation of the Code is particularly innovative, as it is both inclusive – open to all clubs in the area – and participatory, inviting inputs from the same clubs to shape the initial draft. An initial tutoring phase involving six pilot clubs will lead to a final compulsory adoption by all clubs on the basis of a shared, tried and tested text. The Code can then be used by any legal entity active in the field of sports, from joint-stock companies to non-profit grassroots associations. Unlike other codes, the Code also empowers decision-makers to evaluate situations critically with a range of options, avoiding the risk of the Code merely being adopted in form but not in

substance, with the paradoxical consequence of lowering self-responsibility. Instead, clubs are compelled to look at themselves critically and take decisions tailored to their own circumstances.

### **Preliminary lessons learned and next steps**

By the end of 2014 the Code and the implementation plan were being shared with the 110 licensees for possible improvements, with six sport clubs already in the process of formally adopting it. In 2015 a dedicated website to the Code is being launched to support networking among licensees, the public authorities and citizens. From February to May 2015 an appointed commission is to evaluate the effectiveness of the application of the Code by the pilot clubs so that additional clubs and the public administration itself can address gaps and begin to tailor policies.

Among many emerging aspects, four key lessons can be drawn. The first is the importance of having reliable data. The absence of systematic preliminary information on grassroots sport's connections to illegality, beyond the single case of the Ripamonti sport centre, proved a challenge in terms of persuading potential stakeholders to take part. To remove this obstacle, three steps have been taken: a training/information programme is currently under elaboration; two stakeholder focus group meetings will take place; and fundraising for dedicated research on a local scale is under way.

The second lesson is the importance of public–private partnerships, whereby the public institution plays a start-up and accompanying role, and civil society and private actors lead the programme. The involvement of NGOs such as Transparency International and Avviso Pubblico, and their good reputation, made it possible for the municipality to roll out the initiative in a credible and consistent way. Equally, active cooperation with local sport clubs is decisive, not least in avoiding possible future fall-outs.

A third element is the importance of training sessions to support decision-makers in clubs on implementation: most do not have the skills base to oversee ethics initiatives. Once the issues of ‘corruption’ and ‘crime infiltration’ have been understood, the lack of tools becomes immediately tangible to operators themselves. The organisation of tailored training sessions will require additional time and resources.

Finally, the development of the Code of Ethics for Sport of the Milan municipality has shown that mobilising the grassroots sports movement as a force for the promotion of ethical behaviour requires considerable effort by clubs, and it is therefore important to ensure that a ready set of services can be delivered to them, for free or with reduced fees, so that this effort/investment is feasible and of benefit. This will require resources, such as a permanent assistance desk for critical situations, a shared mechanism to cooperate with potential sponsoring companies interested in corporate social responsibility projects, and shared public opportunities to foster the importance of ethics towards managers, trainers, family and all participants in grassroots sport.

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<sup>1</sup> Paolo Bertaccini Bonoli works for Transparency International Italia and Caterina Gozzoli is the director of the Alta Scuola di Psicologia Agostino Gemelli (ASAG) at the Catholic University of Milan. This article is the result of personal experience in formulating the code of ethics and its implementation programme, providing coordination expertise and being directly involved in the process, and representing Transparency International Italia and the Catholic University of Milan.

<sup>2</sup> The consciousness-raising as a result of the presence of the Mafia in Milan has been quite shocking for a city that saw itself as immune to organised crime. See CaféBabel (UK), ‘Milan is the true capital of the ‘Ndrangheta’, 9 April 2010, [www.cafebabel.co.uk/society/article/milan-is-the-true-capital-of-the-ndrangheta.html](http://www.cafebabel.co.uk/society/article/milan-is-the-true-capital-of-the-ndrangheta.html). See also DissentMagazine.org (US), ‘The anti-Mafia movement in Milan’, 2 April 2014, [www.dissentmagazine.org/online\\_articles/the-anti-mafia-movement-in-milan](http://www.dissentmagazine.org/online_articles/the-anti-mafia-movement-in-milan). Nando dalla Chiesa, son of the Carabinieri general Carlo Alberto Dalla Chiesa, who was murdered by the Mafia in Palermo in 1981, has been one of the leaders of civil society movements against organised crime since the early 1980s, and was appointed by the mayor of Milan in 2011 as chair of the Milan Anti-Mafia Committee. See also *Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno* (Italy), ‘Suspected ‘Ndrangheta mobsters arrested in Lombardy’, 18 December 2014, [www.lagazzettadelmezzogiorno.it/english/suspected-ndrangheta-mobsters-arrested-in-lombardy-no678971](http://www.lagazzettadelmezzogiorno.it/english/suspected-ndrangheta-mobsters-arrested-in-lombardy-no678971).

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<sup>3</sup> Many corruption cases have emerged in recent months; see *Il Fatto Quotidiano* (Italy), 'Antonio Acerbo, commissario Expo indagato per corruzione su "Vie d'acqua"', 17 September 2014, [www.ilfattoquotidiano.it/2014/09/17/expo-il-commissario-delegato-acerbo-indagato-per-corruzione-e-turbativa-dasta/1123624](http://www.ilfattoquotidiano.it/2014/09/17/expo-il-commissario-delegato-acerbo-indagato-per-corruzione-e-turbativa-dasta/1123624); and ItalyChronicles.com, 'Corruption scandal hits Milan Expo 2015 preparations', 8 May 2014, <http://italychronicles.com/corruption-scandal-hits-milan-expo-2015-preparations>. The concern about illegal practices was nonetheless significantly present from the very beginning of the organisation, leading to the adoption of a specific 'Protocol of Legality': Expo2015.org (Italy), 'Protocol of Legality', [www.expo2015.org/en/transparency/legal-notes/protocol-of-legality-](http://www.expo2015.org/en/transparency/legal-notes/protocol-of-legality-); this has proved to be largely ineffective, however: ExpoLeaks.it (Italy), 'Mafia and unclear bids, "Controls on Expo 2015 are not enough" says Antimafia Committee', 8 August 2014, [www.expoleaks.it/mafia-and-unclear-bids-controls-on-expo-2015-are-not-enough-says-antimafia-committee](http://www.expoleaks.it/mafia-and-unclear-bids-controls-on-expo-2015-are-not-enough-says-antimafia-committee).

<sup>4</sup> On 13 March 2011, order by Milan public prosecutor Giuseppe Gennari. See the text of the order in the Italian Parliament Acts: [www.camera.it/\\_dati/leg16/lavori/stenografici/sed533/pdfbt13.pdf](http://www.camera.it/_dati/leg16/lavori/stenografici/sed533/pdfbt13.pdf).

<sup>5</sup> Reference links to the fact in the local newspapers: *Corriere della Sera*, 'Pisapia: avvertimento della 'ndrangheta l'incendio di via Iseo', 10 October 2011, [http://milano.corriere.it/milano/notizie/cronaca/11\\_ottobre\\_10/incendio-iseo-ndrangheta-1901773343877.shtml](http://milano.corriere.it/milano/notizie/cronaca/11_ottobre_10/incendio-iseo-ndrangheta-1901773343877.shtml); *Il Giorno*, 'Rogo al centro sportive ex feudo della malavita', 8 October 2011, [www.ilgiorno.it/milano/cronaca/2011/10/08/596841-incendio\\_centro\\_sportivo\\_feudo\\_della\\_malavita.shtml](http://www.ilgiorno.it/milano/cronaca/2011/10/08/596841-incendio_centro_sportivo_feudo_della_malavita.shtml). See also MilanoX.eu (Italy), 'Un anno fa la 'Ndrangheta bruciava il palazzetto di via Iseo', 8 October 2012, [www.milanox.eu/un-anno-fa-la-ndrangheta-bruciava-il-palazzetto-di-via-iseo](http://www.milanox.eu/un-anno-fa-la-ndrangheta-bruciava-il-palazzetto-di-via-iseo).

<sup>6</sup> The region of Lombardy introduced this position in May 2013: [www.regione.lombardia.it/cs/Satellite?c=Redazionale\\_P&childpagename=Regione%2FDetail&cid=1213619980676&packedargs=NoSlotForSitePlan%3Dtrue%26menu-to-render%3D1213582351799&pagename=RGNWrapper](http://www.regione.lombardia.it/cs/Satellite?c=Redazionale_P&childpagename=Regione%2FDetail&cid=1213619980676&packedargs=NoSlotForSitePlan%3Dtrue%26menu-to-render%3D1213582351799&pagename=RGNWrapper).

<sup>7</sup> The implementation process has been under way since the council finally gave approval on 10 October 2014: *Il Fatto Quotidiano* (Italy), 'Corruzione, Comune di Milano adotta il "whistleblowing": che Expo ha rifiutato', 11 October 2014, [www.ilfattoquotidiano.it/2014/10/11/corruzione-comune-di-milano-adotta-il-whistleblowing-che-expo-ha-rifiutato/1150186](http://www.ilfattoquotidiano.it/2014/10/11/corruzione-comune-di-milano-adotta-il-whistleblowing-che-expo-ha-rifiutato/1150186).

<sup>8</sup> This includes the 2011 match-fixing scandal in football: see Wikipedia, '2011–12 Italian Football Scandal', [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2011%E2%80%9312\\_Italian\\_football\\_scandal](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2011%E2%80%9312_Italian_football_scandal); and the 'Schwazer case' of doping before the Olympic Games in London 2012: ESPN (US), 'Alex Schwazer caught doping', 6 August 2012, [http://espn.go.com/olympics/summer/2012/trackandfield/story/\\_/id/8239963/2012-london-olympics-2008-olympic-race-walker-champion-alex-schwazer-caught-doping](http://espn.go.com/olympics/summer/2012/trackandfield/story/_/id/8239963/2012-london-olympics-2008-olympic-race-walker-champion-alex-schwazer-caught-doping). See also the recent important interview with Italian public prosecutor Guido Rispoli: *La Gazzetta dello Sport* (Italy), 'Caso Schwazer, parla il procuratore Rispoli: "Ecco le nuove armi contro il doping"', 23 September 2014, [www.gazzetta.it/Aletica/23-09-2014/caso-schwazer-parla-procuratore-rispoli-ecco-nuove-armi-contro-doping-90535055331.shtml](http://www.gazzetta.it/Aletica/23-09-2014/caso-schwazer-parla-procuratore-rispoli-ecco-nuove-armi-contro-doping-90535055331.shtml); and, on fan-based violence, see CNN (US), 'Violence mars Italian Cup final in Rome as fan remains critical in hospital', 7 May 2014, <http://edition.cnn.com/2014/05/03/sport/football-italy-napoli-violence-ultras>; and ANSA (Italy), 'Soccer: "Genny the Scumbag" arrested over Cup trouble – update', 22 September 2014, [www.ansa.it/english/news/2014/09/22/soccer-genny-the-scumbag-arrested-over-cup-trouble-update\\_8114ef27-b072-44b0-861a-cd3ef8b9ee0e.html](http://www.ansa.it/english/news/2014/09/22/soccer-genny-the-scumbag-arrested-over-cup-trouble-update_8114ef27-b072-44b0-861a-cd3ef8b9ee0e.html). The reference essay on racism in Italian football is that by Mauro Valeri, *Che razza di tifo: Dieci anni di razzismo nel calcio italiano* (Rome: Donzelli, 2010).

<sup>9</sup> Avviso Pubblico is a primary Italian association that was founded in 1996 and associates local public institutions (municipalities, provinces and regions); see [www.avvisopubblico.it/home/associazione/chisiamo/about-us](http://www.avvisopubblico.it/home/associazione/chisiamo/about-us). In 2012 the 'Charta of Pisa' for transparency and fairness in public administration was launched, now updated in the 'Charta of Avviso Pubblico'; see [www.avvisopubblico.it/home/progetti/progetti-in-corso/carta-di-avviso-pubblico](http://www.avvisopubblico.it/home/progetti/progetti-in-corso/carta-di-avviso-pubblico).

<sup>10</sup> Transparency International Italia is, in turn, collaborating with the masters programme in sport at the Catholic University of Milan in the field of psychosocial intervention through sport, within the advanced institute ASAG, directed by Caterina Gozzoli (<http://asag.unicatt.it>); see <http://asag.unicatt.it/asag-sport-e-intervento-psicosociale-ix-edizione-presentazione>.

<sup>11</sup> Summary of the key principles of the code of ethics. The full code will be made available online at [www.codiceeticosportmilano.net](http://www.codiceeticosportmilano.net).