



## **MARS – MEDIA AGAINST RACISM IN SPORT**

### **Media, Diversity & Racism in Sport**

### **NATIONAL MEDIA ENCOUNTER**

### ***Media Cross-Production for Inclusive Coverage***

**'Taking European action against racism'**  
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### **OUTPUT**

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### **MARS - Media Against Racism in Sport**

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Antisocial behaviour at sports events and particularly football matches is unfortunately nothing new. In fact, football grounds have always been public areas where various forms of physical and symbolic violence are expressed. While tackling physical violence became a major concern for ruling bodies throughout Europe by the end of the 1970s, symbolic violence continues to be the main challenge twenty years on. Indeed, combating antisocial expressions and especially racism only became a key challenge within the professional game at the turn of 1990 when efforts got underway in the United Kingdom. Gradually, European institutions such as the Council of Europe, the EU, UEFA and FARE began highlighting racism with conferences and other similar programs in a bid to first assess and then look into ways to deal with the problems.

At the beginning of 2000, an anti-racist policy from UEFA was formally launched under the title "United Against Racism" and other publications soon followed such as "Tackling Racism at Club Football" and the "Ten Point Plan". Even if the primary punishment was to penalise football clubs by, for example, imposing fines or even in some cases excluding them from participating in European competitions, it was nonetheless noted by the authors of this policy that implementing anti-racism policies and actions within member associations was obligatory.

UEFA further noted that the member associations also needed to develop their own anti-racist policies. The first priority was to take disciplinary action by penalising football players, managers and clubs who engage in racial abuse. Moreover, at a symbolic level, UEFA's documents stated that racism or any other kind of discrimination will be shown zero-tolerance and that action will be taken against those associated with racist chanting. The clubs were obliged to highlight this statement in all match programs and to be displayed permanently and prominently around the sports grounds. The operation also called for public address announcements condemning racist chanting at matches as well as actions preventing the sale of racist literature inside and around the stadia. In this perspective, as the authors suggest, stewards and police units in football grounds should be capable of recognising chants, symbols and banners and to establish operational protocols that need to be activated should instances of racism occur.

The development of anti-racist programs was only limited in a purely sports context. Following a long-term strategy plan, UEFA's documents put forward for consideration several points.

As they highlighted, one of the most successful ways to send out messages in favour of diversity was by organising anti-racist events. During these initiatives, players, coaches, the media, fans and even local ethnic minorities would work together in sports and cultural activities in order to promote social diversity and ethnic integration.

BOX

**Dr Diamantis Mastrogiannakis, Lecturer of Sports Sociology at the University of Lille 2**

Judging from what I heard from Nicos Trimikliniotis, it is abundantly obvious that there is a lack of policing on discriminating behaviour inside sports arenas. This is due to a lack of proper discussion at a political level. We see that there is a lack of initiative from the

state to force the hand of the sports authorities to act and subsequently tackle these kinds of antisocial behaviours. With regards to the sport authorities, there actions are limited to disciplinary sanctions of which, in the end, appear insufficient due to their time-consuming procedures. In effect, they don't get to the heart of the matter but instead only skim the surface. The clubs, the football body and the players themselves should implement alternative and long-term measures such as social programs in collaboration with the media to raise awareness whilst at the same time promote non-discrimination and anti-racist behaviour within sports arenas.