

Council of Europe co-ordinated response to match-fixing: a multi-sectoral approach

A communication event during the Parliamentary Assembly Winter Session
on the Council of Europe Convention on the
Manipulation of Sports Competitions

Monday 25 January 2016, 13:00-14:00
Palais de l'Europe, room 5
Strasbourg, France

The manipulation of sports competitions poses a challenge to the rule of law and to fair competition: it is linked to fraud, organised crime and corruption. This global problem has taken on worrying proportions since the beginning of the new millennium and shows no signs of abating. According to Interpol between 60 and 80 countries are reporting allegations of fixed football matches every year. The development of this phenomenon is linked to the increasing power of sport in the global economy as well as the uncontrolled development of sports betting (today, 80% of bets on the global sports betting market are illegal).

The Council of Europe Convention on the Manipulation of Sports Competitions (CETS 215), better known as the Magglingen Convention, provides a co-ordinated response and a multi-sectoral approach to this challenge, aims at preventing, detecting and punishing match-fixing, as well as enhancing the exchange of information and co-operation between the public authorities, sports organisations and sports betting operators.

In respect of its primary goal to promote debates on emerging and topical European issues, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) has been addressing serious issues in sport, most notably, violence, doping, corruption and more recently the growing number of scandals related to match-fixing.

Members of PACE are invited to attend this communication event organised by EPAS, where they will be updated on the match-fixing problem, which affects not only sport, but society at large, and to discuss further promotion of the Magglingen Convention among the member States of the Council of Europe.

Keynote speakers:

- Ms Gabriella Battaini-Dragoni, Deputy Secretary General of the Council of Europe
- Mr Frank J. Jenssen, Member of the Parliamentary Assembly (Norway)
- Mr Carlos Costa Neves, Member of the Parliament (Portugal) (tbc)
- Ms Claudia Bokel, Chair of the Athlete's Commission, IOC, former World and European Fencing Champion (épée)
- Ms Wendela Kuper, Chair of the EPAS Governing Board, Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport (Netherlands)
- Mr Marios Panayi, international football referee (Cyprus)

Moderator: Mr Jeremy Moakes, Head of the Multi-Media Division, Council of Europe

A Council of Europe standard to combat match-fixing

As an international organisation having a standard-setting function in many different fields, the Council of Europe provided an ideal forum to prepare an international convention which promotes a risk- and evidence-based approach and allows commonly agreed standards to be set, in order to prevent, detect and sanction the manipulation of sports competitions.

In April 2012, PACE expressed its concern at the scale of manipulations impacting sports results and so adopted a resolution calling on governments to limit the risks of match-fixing, illegal betting and other forms of corruption.

In response to this concern, the development of the Council of Europe Convention on the Manipulation of Sports Competitions was initiated by EPAS, which established a Drafting Group which started working in autumn 2012. The entire process came to fruition in 2014:

- PACE reviewed the draft convention in the spring and submitted its favourable opinion in a report to the Committee of Ministers;
- Committee of Ministers adopted the Convention before the summer break;
- the Convention was opened for signature at the 13th Council of Europe Conference of Ministers responsible for Sport in Magglingen, Switzerland, on 18 September 2014.

The Magglingen Convention calls on governments to adopt measures, including legislation, notably to:

- prevent conflicts of interest in sports betting operators and sports organisations;
- encourage the sports betting regulatory authorities to fight against fraud, if necessary by limiting the supply of sports bets or suspending the taking of bets;
- fight against illegal sports betting, allowing them to close or restrict access to the operators concerned and block financial flows between them and consumers.

Sports organisations and competition organisers are also required to adopt and implement stricter rules to combat corruption, sanctions and proportionate disciplinary and dissuasive measures in the event of offences, as well as good governance principles. The convention also provides safeguards for informants and witnesses.

To date, 22 states have signed the Magglingen Convention, two of which – Norway and Portugal – have already ratified. The convention will enter into force following the 5th ratification, subsequently triggering the setting up of the Convention Follow-up Committee. PACE will be invited to appoint a representative to this committee, contributing to the multi-sectoral and multi-disciplinary approach to the fight against match-fixing.