

TOWARDS THE PREVENTION OF VIOLENT ACTS AT SPORTS EVENTS: EVENTS: PROPOSAL ON REGIONAL COOPERATION FRAMEWORK



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List of Abbreviations:

EC	European Commission
EC	European Community
EU	European Union
FATF	Financial Action Task Force
HQ	Headquarters
NFIP	National Football Information Point
NFP	National Focal Point(s)
RCC	Regional Cooperation Council
SECI Centre	Regional centre for combating trans-border crime South East European Cooperative Initiative
SEE	South-East Europe
UEFA	Union of European Football Associations

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Executive summary

Since 2000 until today seven people were killed due to the sports violence in Serbia. Over the last two years the incidents of violence at and before sports events have generated political, academic and media debate. Incidents at the Genoa stadium Luigi Ferraris jointly with the incidents during the Pride Parade have just "spiced up" the current debate. Additionally the presidents of Croatia and Serbia came with the initiatives to establish joint regional football competition, similar to the one already existing in basketball, and to co-host the 2020 European Football Championship. Yet, the sport of such international character as football is generates considerable "degree" of insecurity, particularly in this region. Incidents are constantly repeated, not only as random or organized acts of violence but also in the form of different criminal activities. This paper places an emphasis on the prevention of violence. The aim of the paper is to stir public debate about the lack of regional co-operation framework in the fight against hooliganism and violence at the sports events. In that regard, we made a brief analysis of the current situation with the focus on the mechanisms of prevention, which are already in place within EU and other European countries. Finally, we propose the model of the regional co-operation framework. The essence of our idea is to establish an additional, eighth Task Force in the current SECI Centre organisational structure, with its HQ in Bucharest. We have named it Task Force on Prevention of Violence at Sports Events. In order to achieve this goal, it is necessary to build capacity through appoint Liaison Officers that will be in charge of this matter within NFP of the SECI Centre member states. We emphasize that our idea is not to set up a new regional body for strengthening cooperation in the areas of justice and internal affairs; although there is a tendency among the Western Balkan countries to do so (we refer to the initiatives of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia and Croatia). Our goal is to build up on the already existing institutional framework of cooperation.

Key words: sport, violence, police co-operation, Western Balkans, prevention.

Recommendations:

Prevention of violence at sports events:

1. It is necessary to pass the law that would regulate the work of the private security companies and continue efforts related to the adoption of the Law on Sports and thus overcome existing dilemmas.
2. It is necessary to introduce the rulebook that would regulate the work of stewards at sports events and that would define security measures. It is important to better determine and specify measures of technical protection at and beyond sports events and consequently set (work and performance) standards for persons in charge of maintaining security and mechanisms of their co-operation with the police, as well as determine manner for selling tickets and measures against their counterfeiting and re-selling. Particular attention should be paid to the UEFA's ten point plan on combating racism in football.
3. Already existing and operational inter-sector bodies shall place or return the prevention of hooligan violence on their agendas as a top priority.
4. It is necessary to use and adjust to context in Serbia good practices and experiences from EU countries which have managed to regain control over sports events.
5. In order to improve safety it is necessary to secure funds for infrastructure development at the most visited sports facilities (FC Red Star stadium, Partizan stadium, Sports Hall Pionir).
6. Particular attention shall be paid to the problem of participation of juveniles in hooligan violence, an issue dealt with in this paper.

Regional framework for the prevention of violence at sports events: the Western Balkans

1. It is necessary to bridge the "strategic gap" related to the absence of priorities in the prevention of violence at sports events at the regional level. This shall be carried out by means of the existing regional mechanisms in justice and home affairs, primarily through RCC.

2. It is necessary to use the existing momentum of "disgust" over negative consequences of riots in Genoa in Belgrade in October 2010 for initiation of discussion on the establishment of the regional co-operation framework among bodies in charge of prevention of violence at sports events. The lesson learnt by the then EC member states from 1985 Heysel incidents should serve as an example of good practice for the Western Balkan countries.
3. The essence of our idea is to establish additional Task Force within the existing SECI organisational structure. Besides, it is necessary to build capacity within national bodies of SECI member states, that is, designate Liaison Officers at NFP.
4. We propose a three-stage approach in developing capacities within SECI member states national bodies and in the establishment of a new Task Force: a) development of a draft strategic document and action plan which would be entrusted to the sports violence prevention experts; b) presenting draft to the SECI top officials, RCC and to the executive powers of Western Balkan countries and EC and c) implementation of strategic and action plan.

Introduction: “Serbian disease” and terminology clarification

Although in the light of the October events in Serbia, dealing with this issue might seem fashionable, the problem discussed in this paper is not a new one. It has been present for years now. From 2000 until today alone, as a result of violent behaviour at sport events Serbia saw death of seven persons. However, this paper deals with the issue of sport violence in a different manner focusing on the prevention of hooliganism at the regional level (that is, in the Western Balkan countries),¹ through the improvement of information exchange. In that regard, the authors of this paper express only marginal interest to the spontaneous expression of violence, an unpleasant part of sport events folklore.

However, what differs “Serbian disease” (let us paraphrase the authors who first introduced the term “English disease” to refer to football hooliganism) from other types of hooliganism is the context in which this violence is manifested. Primarily, the issues which burden the context in Serbia are, in due order, the inheritance of the ethnic conflict and the lack of legal framework in the country. Therefore, this paper will give due consideration to each of these issues. The authors will specially underline that the process initiated in the late ‘80s that is shifting of verbal and physical violence from sport to political arena is still topical. Nevertheless, the sheer number of existing football fan groups, whose ban will be on the Serbian Constitutional Court agenda, point to the gravity of this problem. There are exactly 14 of these groups.

To begin with, it is important to make some terminology clarifications. Even though the quality of sport competitions in Serbia is decreasing, the matches are still attended by spectators who come to the stadiums to enjoy the game. Unfortunately, due to the general conditions of sports facilities in Serbia, more precisely, due to the obsolete construction designs and solutions, sometimes it is impossible to physically separate these spectators from the hooligans. The number of entries and exits at stadiums as well as number of terraces (mostly there is only one) is limited.² That is why every police intervention at football stadium may put in danger spectators that don’t participate in violent actions at all. This additionally repulses the spectators from coming to stadiums and watching matches.

¹ This paper will not go into discussion over the meaning of the term “Western Balkans”. The EU model adopted at the 2003 Thessaloniki Summit will be used in the text. Consequently, the term Western Balkans will imply the following countries: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Croatia, Macedonia and Serbia.

² On importance of environment and sports’ facilities architecture please refer to: Petković, Ž. “Crime prevention at sports stadiums through environmental design.” *Police and security* 18(3), 2009: 365-377. The text is only available in Croatian language.

In order to make distinction between football hooligans and ordinary supporters we decided to use term "hooligan violence", and "hooligan groups" for fan groups that manifest extremist behaviour including verbal and physical violence. It is arguable, though, whether the pending decision of the Constitutional Court will resolve this dilemma given that we live in the environment where decision makers, reporters, sport managers and others involved in the organisation of sport events repeatedly refer to the supporters as their team's "twelfth player". We will therefore use the collective term "hooliganism" to imply both to "hooligan behaviour" and "hooligan violence".

It is necessary to make distinction between violent behaviour of players (for instance rough kicks or tackles customary for football, fights among players during the match, and other examples of players' undisciplined behaviour) on the one hand, and violent behaviour of spectators, on the other hand. When spectators intentionally resort to violence and repeatedly engage in it then they (mostly men, rarely women) may be considered hooligans.

Finally, the facts and figures tell us that young people are the biggest victims of clashes surrounding football games. It is the football club fan groups that are threatened with the ban of their activities, while on many occasions both police and prosecution show interest into the transfers of players. That is why the examples given in this paper are related to the professional football in Western Europe and in Serbia.

The paper first discusses hooliganism as a source of insecurity, analyzing the experiences of the European countries which have tackled, with more or less success, the problem of football hooliganism. Then the paper moves to the specificities of hooliganism in Serbia and in the end it offers the proposal for the regional co-operation framework inspired by a model recently put forward by the EU.

1. Hooliganism as a source of insecurity

Is there a dominant pattern of hooliganism in Europe?

There is no precise definition of the hooligan violence and hooligan behaviour at matches. However, distinction should be drawn between spontaneous, relatively isolated incidents of spectator violence and the behaviour of socially organized or institutionalized hooligan

groups (Giulianotti 2001: 141). In environments where attacks on match officials and opposing players present a part of the “folklore”, the inter-fan group fighting and fighting between fans and the police became the predominant form of spectator disorderliness (Dunning 2004: 136). As a rule, this shift has spread throughout Europe, and it was just a matter of time when it will occur in our region.

Another characteristic of hooliganism is that the violence is occurring not only in the vicinity of football pitches but also in other contexts, for instance, in public transport and in other public places (Dunning 2000: 142). Football hooliganism involves primarily symbolic opposition and ritualized aggression which can easily be confused with ‘real’ violence (Armstrong and Rosemary 1991: 434). This distinction is not that obvious since these acts may only eventually lead to violent acts.³ Experience in fighting football hooliganism from Western Europe shows that, in some situations, violence may be triggered by aggressive policing or unfortunate match results (Spaaij 2005: 2).

Placing all violence manifestations under a common denominator is not straightforward, due to the considerable differences in practices in the Western European countries. As Spaaij and Vinas showed in their research, Mediterranean countries feature militant fan groups named “ultras”.⁴ However, their proclivities to violence may substantially vary (Spaaij and Vinas 2005: 80–81). Besides, these ultra groups have formal organisation, that is, they feature official memberships, have official premises at their disposal and even lead campaigns. Their main “concern” is not how to “humiliate and defeat” their opponent but rather how to provide expressive support to the team (De Biasi 1998: 216–218).

Moreover, hooligans envision Europe as a unique arena. They follow each other; “borrow” “songs” and choreographies which they later proudly present on stadium terraces. Behaviour of the aforementioned “ultras” and “tifos” in southern Europe, “kop” atmosphere and “casual” dressing code in northern Europe nowadays make up an amalgam of different sub-cultures. This pattern has been replicated over and over again during and at the end of ‘80s in Germany, Austria, the Netherlands and former Yugoslavia. The globalisation process allowed that two out of three top English football clubs in the last decade, that is the Manchester United and the Arsenal, have their internet presentations available in Chinese, Japanese and the Korean language. However, this unique arena doesn’t imply unique

³ Example taken from our local practice, when an obituary was published in a local daily for a football player who switched sides and joined the fierce rival represents an instance of extreme symbolic violence.

⁴ Term “ultras” stands for a type of sports fan(s) renowned for their fanatical support to a sport club. Members of ultras groups seek to discourage opposing team and are often prone to violence — verbal rather than physical. The word originates from the Latin word *ultra* (more), denoting a type of the fan club support which prevails over the “conventional” fan club support.

“practice”. The integration of different European cup competitions into the Champions League didn’t abolish distinctions among various fan groups (Spaaij 2005: 3). They remained adamant to their symbols and traditions even in situations when they are, for instance, in open conflict with club management or with other groups.⁵ To put it simply, no matter what league Niš “Radnički” plays, there will always be „Meraklija” fans ready to support it.

Western European police approaches hooliganism has become increasingly proactive and nowadays is based on intelligence-led policing. The EU member states’ police services closely co-operate through the exchange of intelligence data and participation in the bodies such as NFIP which we will be discussed later. Nevertheless, the EU enlargement and subsequent inclusion of Eastern European clubs into the elite football competitions has put the international police co-operation on a serious test. Thus, sometimes even unfairly, incidents created by fans from former Yugoslav countries, that is, from former Soviet Union countries, receive wide public coverage. Before we present the proposal for regional co-operation framework let us reflect on the experiences from the United Kingdom and Germany, since their practices may serve as a source of inspiration for fight against hooliganism in other countries.

Two examples of good practice: to what extent are they indicative for Serbia?

The first example of good practice is the experience of Great Britain which is rightly considered to be a role model of successful fight against hooliganism. In fact, upon a horrible accident at the Hillsboro stadium in 1989,⁶ all clubs were required to raise their safety standards at stadiums. Stadium terraces’ and perimeter fences were removed. Standing area was abolished and cameras installed. Police officers were replaced by stewards, who themselves were supporters of the club. Later, their rights and powers were clearly defined. Under these circumstances, a person breaking into the football pitch would be sentenced to imprisonment and, more importantly, prohibited from entering stadium(s), a punishment enforced in a consistent manner throughout the Great Britain. The law enforcement agencies

⁵ In 2005, due to the disagreements with the then new owner of the Manchester United and his hostile takeover, a group of fans decided to establish a completely new amateur club named “United of Manchester” and to use previous club emblem abandoned by the Manchester United in 1970.

⁶ “The Hillsborough disaster” is probably the darkest day in the British football history. Overcrowded stadium platforms at Sheffield Wednesday’s home ground and poor police intervention to a group of late arrival fans of Liverpool F.C. brought to a stampede resulting in the deaths of 96 people. The inquiry into the disaster is reported in the “Taylor Report” which provided drastic recommendations for improvement of security at football stadiums in the UK.

increased their co-operation through the exchange of lists of supporters with prohibited access to stadiums, knowing that “professional fans” would attempt to use the opportunity to access football matches played outside the country. It is the consistent enforcement of the “black lists” policy which contributed that 2004 European Football Championship ended with no major incidents (Scott et al. 2008: 117).

Modern technology at football stadiums allowed more effective monitoring. This made fanatical hooligans satisfy their need for violent confrontations in a different manner, that is, by meeting up with their rivals at places outside the stadium. Scheduled fights among hooligans may not be a Dutch invention, but it was in this country that these fights created a considerable problem. In the UK, for instance, the shift of hooligans’ tactics brought about the shift in police actions, that is, the police became more proactive focusing on intelligence gathering and processing. However, such intelligence-led policing showed certain limitations — police officers focused on the known hooligan groups rather than on predicting spontaneous violence.

Another example of good practice was developed in Germany. It relies on the belief that the prevention of hooliganism requires consistent promotion of education activities among kids and strengthening of their ties with football clubs. Therefore they introduced a new measure for fight against juvenile delinquency, that is, they advocated that leisure time shall be used to enjoy in the football game itself, as in every other sport after all. In Germany (as well as in the Netherlands, Belgium and the Scandinavian countries), this belief has resulted in a strategic commitment to “fan projects” (German fanprojekte).⁷ However, the manner in which these projects were implemented varied. In Germany they attempted, among others, to improve ties among fans, clubs and the police while Belgian project was mainly focusing on offering the young supporters alternative means to violent confrontations.

Finally, the Dutch aimed to re-socialize convicted hooligans (Spaaij 2005: 5). By the end of ‘80s local co-ordinators were appointed and tasked to make contacts with potential hooligans, organize activities for supporters and provide advice to youngsters. These activities were supported with the parallel efforts in community policing. The problem arising out of this approach is that “fanatic” or “career” hooligans remained outside the “network” (Spaaij 2005: 5–6). Readiness to violence remained a feature of their collective identity, which they were not willing to give up.

⁷ Take for instance the example of Bundesliga side Borussia Mönchengladbach. Several of its older fans have launched youth centre “De Kull” which organizes, for instance, away trips for fans under age of 16. For more information see: <http://www.dekull.de/>.

As we all witness, sport violence is not a phenomenon typical only for Serbia or the Western Balkan countries. One of the first research studies on sport violence conducted in the Great Britain, revealed that hooligans always comprise a minority of supporters. Their perception on the role they play at sports events is shifted, thus leading them to believe that they should take an active part in the match. Given that football is considered to be a "male game", where violence among players in the pitch comes naturally, violence among supporters shouldn't come as a surprise (Roadburg 1980: 266). Deeply emotional and stressful as it is, football match is an opportunity for supporters to "revive" feelings, that is, to express the feeling of frustration caused by poor living conditions. Unfavourable conditions in which matches take place certainly aggravate already poor situation (Hopcraft 2006 [1968]: 162).

It is arguable, though, to what extent are the above research results applicable to Serbia. Certainly, it is true that the hooligans always comprise a minority of supporters. Nevertheless, this minority is still a significant one. 12 October Genoa on the spot report confirms that a total of 1,600 Serbian fans came to support their team, while 300 of them managed to block the city traffic, throw flares, break shop windows, destroy one police vehicle and write graffiti on the walls of the landmark Ducal Palace. Finally, a total of 50 people were detained, out of which 33 were released and 17 kept in custody.

There are, then, team and individual sports which don't imply any significant physical contact among players, which considerably reduces the risk of provoking violent behaviour. These sports are still popular in Serbia. Thus, a tennis player Novak Đoković and a volleyball player Nikola Grbić are role models for kids both in Serbia and abroad. Regardless of that, supporters of tennis players Novak Đoković from Serbia and Mario Ančić from Croatia managed to get involved in a fight which took place in Australia, in that way adding a new dimension to already existing problem of sport violence.

The match itself, no matter how stressful it is, is of no particular interest for hooligans. They carry out their "agenda" regardless of the events on the pitch: they use pyrotechnics and play specially designed choreography. It is even considered to be the expression of loyalty, when the situation in the pitch goes bad, to turn back to the players and continue to chant. Both team's defeat and victory can equally serve as a justification for violent behaviour in city streets. Serbian media often mention that it is no secret that the leaders of the "Red Star" and "Partizan" fan clubs enjoy various privileges and have even turned their activities into a kind of profession.

What are features of hooliganism in Serbia?

What makes the problem of sport violence in Serbia extremely complex is the post-conflict context in which it was manifested. Namely, it was not until the end of 1980s when the supporters started to establish some formal degree of organization. This process overlapped with the shift of first chauvinistic outbursts from sports stadiums to political arena (Čolović, 30. Sept 2009). Therefore, narrative banned in public discourses now was freely voiced at stadium terraces. Besides, it is difficult to determine who is responsible when you have "fifty thousand souls and hundred thousand hands" cheering (to quote one Serbian sports commentator). The situation when one player at Maksimir stadium Zagreb got involved into the clashes between hooligans and police remained one of the strongest symbols of Yugoslav society disintegration.⁸

The public in Serbia had an opportunity to see a documentary movie "The Unit", in the production of "Vreme Film". This documentary tells a story about one of the most prominent examples of acts of violence being perpetrated voluntarily by fans. The amalgamation of fans' groups, whose meeting point was the north terrace of FC "Red Star" stadium, took place in 1989 with the support of Željko Ražnatović. First members to join the Serb Volunteer Guard, which later evolved into the Special Operations Unit (JSO), were those who in May 1990 started their fight with Croatia on the pitch of the aforementioned Zagreb stadium. After political changes took place, the practice of sport abuse continued. However, in the meantime the direct link between violence and sport got lost.

What makes hooligans in Serbia different is their readiness to commit violence. From ideological point of view, they constitute a mish-mash of different beliefs and ideologies. Although in practice and in theory they claim to be nationalists, they readily enter into "alliances" and make "friendships" with hooligan groups across borders. Despite the fact that they appear to be traditionalists, their status symbols are of material nature. Still, some of them sincerely believe that the protest they show, even if violent, remains a matter of personal choice.

Serbian hooligans consider themselves active participants in a sport event. What additionally contributes to it is that both trainers and reporters constantly refer to them, depending on the game, as either "the sixth" or "the twelfth" player. Although the club may experience "players' or result" crisis, fans will always remain on alert. Given that fan groups feature

⁸ Commenting on the Genoa events Zvonimir Boban said "there has always been and will always be a certain link between football and politics". Responding to the reporter's question he explained that riots he himself participated in May 1990 were "protests, rebellious acts against injustice and political regime. Croatia wanted to leave communism and it justified the situation" (Index.hr, 13. Oct 2010.)

formal organisation with firmly set hierarchy, their members may influence their “beloved club” management policy. If provoked, they threaten boycott. They are ready to distance themselves from the violence, but if it eventually occurs, they don’t miss the opportunity to remind the public about the “deserved” place on they hold on terraces. Yet violence was often provoked. In this manner, over the last two decades, Serbian hooligans took over traditionally most popular sports discipline — that is *association football*.

However, it would be a huge mistake if we interpret their behaviour as unreasonable or if we simply treat it as an act committed in the heat of passion. Storing stones and other items in dustbins prior to the match to use them against rival fan groups or against persons of different sexual orientation, certainly cannot be considered “unreasonable”. We have already singled out their features of discipline and hierarchy. Brutal beating to death the French football fan in September 2009 in Belgrade is indicative since the attack was organized by a group while only two of individuals orchestrated the attack itself. It is also indicative that, among all hooligans who participated in this act of violence, only these two “leaders” are still at large. Several misdemeanour and criminal proceedings have already been instituted against them.

Events in Genoa as well as subsequent shifting of responsibility among football associations, and police services from Italy and Serbia opened a new chapter in co-operation between Serbia and other countries in the EU and in region.

Box 1: Legal dilemmas related to sport violence suppression in Serbia

Although the Law on prevention of violence and indecent behaviour at sports events, adopted in 2003, was amended on several occasions, the organiser remained the entity responsible for “monitoring the performance of stewards hired for the event” (Article 3). The inexistence of the rulebook which would regulate the work of stewards, that is, the lack of law defining the work of private security agencies (EU and Serbia Internal Affairs bulletin No. 13) make such a stipulation inappropriate. Also, persons in charge of security and organisation of sports events are only rarely professionals. Draft Law on Sports, which consistent enforcement shall make club ownership structure more transparent, was forwarded to the Government at the end of 2009 and is still in procedure.

Mr. Dejan Šuput, the director of the Association for Development of Sports Law in Serbia, considers “Serbian Criminal Code and Law on prevention of violence and indecent behaviour at sports events are fully in line with the international legal standards. Majority of solutions [...] have been taken from England and integrated into our laws (Politika Daily, 22. 10. 2010).

The problem lies in the enforcement of these laws. Ms. Snežana Samardžić-Marković, the Minister of Youth and Sports, on a couple of occasions stated that Serbian Court passed a final verdict only in 2.4% of cases and in that way implicitly acknowledged the fact that over the past years the suppression of hooligan violence was not considered state's top priority.

By the end of October 2010 the National Assembly adopted the Amendments to the Criminal Procedure Code, in a situation of heavy public pressure and clear position of state leadership towards the 10th and 12th October events. These changes enable extension of detention period from eight to thirty days for criminal acts with elements of violence, for which the law envisages the sentence longer than five years of imprisonment. These criminal acts are: acts against life and body, infliction of heavy bodily injuries, attempted murder and manslaughter. The Amendments and Changes entered into force on the following day when (maybe expectedly) the Red Star — Partizan derby match ended with no major incidents. This time, the match balance totalled to "only" 34 persons held in custody (Blic daily, 23. 10. 2010). Furthermore, every match followed proportionally high number of detained juveniles.

The problem of hooligan violence is very deep and will not be tackled with a simple prohibition. Most probably, the state will resort to repression since it was not able to tackle it in a proactive manner. What we can expect though is that new, equally violent fan groups replace the old banned ones. However, if we know that almost as a rule several months elapses before the case reaches the court, and then the question remains whether replacing of fan groups would be necessary at all.

However, consistent application of stringent provisions of the Law on prevention of violence and indecent behaviour at sports events and upcoming adoption of the Law on Sports may make hooligans reconsider the idea of repeating some of their violent acts. The preventive measures include: the exchange of information, placing hooligan violence on the top of inter-sector bodies' agenda, as well as implementation of good practices and experiences from EU and other countries who managed to regain the control over sports events. Then, in order to provide for better security and safety of visitors it would be necessary to obtain funds for infrastructure rehabilitation of most frequent sports facilities (FC Red Star Stadium, Partizan stadium, Sports Hall Pionir). Finally, particular attention shall be given to the problem of increasing number of juveniles who take part in hooligan violent acts, an issue which goes beyond the scope of this paper.

2. „Fair play without violence“: proposal for the prevention of hooliganism in the Western Balkans

The current debate on the prevention of violence at sports events, generated by the incidents over the past two years and the initiatives for organizing joint “Balkan” sports tournaments, requires a dual analysis. To begin with, it is necessary to assess the current state of affairs and identify key problems. Then, it is important to initiate public debate in order to develop clear and detailed proposals for prevention of incidents and escalation of violence at sports events.

The first part of this paper briefly dealt with the main findings regarding the current situation in Europe and particularly in Serbia. In order to prompt public debate, in this chapter we deal with the proposal for regional co-operation and information exchange through existing institutional mechanism of the SECI Centre. Different and contrasting viewpoints will allow us formulate quality proposals and recommendations. Overarching goal is to strengthen the citizens’ security in the region of the Western Balkans, while the specific goal is the prevention and control over the violence at sports events, as well as bridging the strategic, legislative and operational gap. Before that, we will briefly look at the situation in some countries in the region as well at the activities of some EU countries.

The Western Balkans problem with hooliganism and the gap in understanding

All the Western Balkan countries share the common problem of sports violence, especially when it comes to the football hooliganism.⁹ These problems become particularly intense in matches of different Western Balkan national teams. The best possible scenario would imply verbal exchange of insults without any physical violence and incidents. The worst scenario

⁹ According to the survey “Media, sports and violence” carried out by the Ministry of Youth and Sports and the Serbian Sports Journalists’ Association, in Serbia one supporter dies approximately every 136 days; according to the survey both victims and suspects are approximately aged between 17 to 25. In November last year Munib Ušanović and Miodrag Kureš, high representatives of the Football Association of Bosnia and Herzegovina, were sentenced to five-year imprisonment due to the turnover tax evasion and abuse of authority. In August 2010 UEFA instigated investigation examining Bruno Marić under the suspicion of Croatian championship match-fixing. The cases of Brice Taton, incident in Genoa this year, 2009 incident in Široki Brijeg as well as attack on the Beograd–Lapovo passenger train are worth mentioning.

may include: escalation of violence, police interventions, inflicting grave body injuries and sometimes event deaths.

Due to all troubles that sports fans make, primarily to the police or to other peaceful supporters, the executive powers of respective states are obliged to regulate mechanisms (legal or institutional) for curbing violence at sports events. This has been achieved through the adoption of new laws, amendments and supplements to the Criminal Codes and through the creation of new institutional mechanisms for sports violence suppression.

From the strategic and operational point of view, the Western Balkans mechanism for prevention of violence at sports events currently lacks a regional co-operation framework. The law enforcement agencies co-operation in this region is mainly *ad hoc*; the information exchange is rather limited and is usually conducted ahead of the upcoming matches or high risk sports events. Moreover, the strategic documents of various regional bodies and initiatives, operational in the field of strengthening judicial and police co-operation, failed to recognize fight against hooliganism as a priority.

Box 2: Some examples of legislative and institutionalized framework for the suppression of violence at sports events in the Western Balkans

In 2003 the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia adopted the Law on prevention of violence and indecent behaviour at sports events. This Law was amended in December 2009. Prior to that, in May 2009 the Government established the Council for prevention of indecent behaviour at sports events, which first task was to develop an action plan.

In Croatia the Law on Prevention of Disorder in Sports was adopted in 2003. So far it has been amended two times: in 2006 and in 2009. The Department for Public Order of the Uniform Police Directorate includes the separate unit for prevention of disorders at sports events. During 2008 and 2009 Croatia implemented some activities related to the prevention of violence at sports events that were in conjunction with the fight against discrimination and racism.

In Macedonia the Law regulating this field was adopted in 2004 and during this year several amendments were made.

The fight against hooliganism is not specially mentioned in the last version of RCC strategy. However, an indirect link may be established between RCC main strategic priority in judiciary and internal affairs — fight against organized crime — with different illegal sports activities

— money laundering, match-fixing, price negotiating. FATF 2009 Report mentions several sports competitions likely to be the subject of money laundering: football, cricket, rugby, horse racing, auto and motorcycle racing, ice hockey, basketball and volleyball. Some of the abovementioned competitions, particularly football and basketball, are most popular among the Western Balkan countries. Indeed, the majority of violent incidents happen on these matches.

Regardless of the fact that prevention of violence at sports events is not singled out in either RCC strategic paper or in its draft on justice, home affairs and security cooperation, the role of RCC remains significant. This results from the fact that RCC gives an important role in deepening and strengthening co-operation to SECI centre.

„Heysel Vs. Luigi Ferraris“: perfect moment for proactive measures

It were the events which led to disastrous and negative consequences that prompted the introduction of promising preventive measures for suppression of sports violence. We can make a parallel between the Brussels events on 29 May 1985 and events which took place on 13 October in Genoa. Obviously, the Heysel event consequences were greater and more tragic. The tragedy resulted in the death of 39 people and 690 injured which led to all English football clubs being placed under the five-year ban by UEFA from all European competitions. Finally, this made British Government adopt and commence with the enforcement of stringent, some would say even “draconian” laws. In addition, the British police assumed greater role in the prevention of hooliganism. What came as a result of this were football matches deserving spectators’ attention and cheering. To avoid the Heysel disaster from repeating, the EC countries intensified preventive measures in football matches (refer to Antrfile 3). We believe that the event at the Luigi Ferraris stadium (Italy), which led to negative consequences both for Serbia and for the sport itself, showed that now is a perfect timing for the development of the preventive activities at the regional level.

Box 3: Co-operation among EU member states in the fight against hooliganism

2002 EU Council Decision concerning security in connection with football matches with an international dimension recommends every member state to designate National football information point as central point for exchange of information and as body in charge of facilitating co-operation when more than one EU state participates in a tournament. The European Championship in 2004 in Portugal was the first contest where the benefit from the

established national information points was visible. Indeed, in comparison with the previous huge competitions held on the European continent, Portugal Championship saw no major incidents. The EU Decision was amended with the 2007 Council Decision which stipulates that every member state shall allow respective national information point's access to (different) data bases which stores information about different individuals. As such information is mainly in the possession of the ministries of interior, the respective countries are encouraged to initiate exchange of football match ex-post risk assessment analyses. Finally, it has been agreed that every NFIP be responsible for compiling a list of recommendations and lessons learnt to be shared via internet presentations or on request. The 2007 Decision also stipulates the deadline for the evaluation of the implementation of EU Council Decision itself, that is, it specifies the timeframe in which the assessment of member states' efficiency related to the Decision will be concluded.

In January this year Spain, over its presidency of the EU, sent to other EU members states a questionnaire containing five questions related to the work of NFIP. Questions were related to the role of the information points, access to data bases, "risk" persons, drafting analysis of critical situations, exchange of analyses and reminded the states are required to share experiences and recommendations.

Ahead of the new competition under the auspices of UEFA League (successor of the popular Cup) the NFIP became integral parts of the strategy for enhancement of security at stadiums. In 2009 the EU NFIPs met with the representatives of police services, UEFA security commissioners, the representatives of the national football associations and other professionals in Amsterdam. Ahead of the upcoming football season, UEFA voiced readiness to undertake extreme measures; including clear guidelines for referees who are empowered to suspend or cease the match in case of racist incidents (hate speech in general).

Development of regional co-operation framework in the prevention of violent acts at sports events

Our proposal is to establish a new Task Force within the existing organisational structure of SECI centre (refer to Antrfile 4). This Task Force would exclusively deal with the prevention of

violence at sports events.¹⁰ In addition, it is necessary to build capacities within national bodies of SECI member states, that is, designate Liaison Officers at National Focal Points.

Box 4: About the Regional Centre for Combating Trans-border Crime

The SECI Centre, an operational regional co-operation initiative which brings together police and customs authorities of the SEE countries, operates under the Initiative for Southeast European Co-operation. In May 1999 twelve SEE countries signed an Agreement on Cooperation in the areas of prevention and fight against trans-national organized crime. These states are: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Greece, Hungary, Macedonia, Moldova, Romania, Slovenia, Serbia, Turkey, Montenegro and Croatia. Liaison officers — one from police and one from customs service — represent their respective country in the SECI Centre. Also, each member state has established respective NFP.¹¹ The work of the SECI Centre is supported by the SECI permanent observers' countries.¹² In line with the Memorandum of Understanding INTERPOL and World Customs Organisation are permanent councillors, that is, they participate in the decision and policy making. Their holistic approach is reflected through providing recommendations, advice and directives.

The work of SECI centre is divided into four activities. The first activity includes prompt and co-ordinated information exchange on criminal networks among respective law enforcement agencies. The second activity is the co-ordination of regional co-operation and joint investigations. Besides the exchange of information among liaison officers and national focal points, the SECI Centre features seven Task Forces which enable the organisation of multilateral operations and the co-ordination of investigations. The SECI Centre publishes problem analyses and reports about specific criminal activities and organises training courses for the law enforcement agencies. In line with the regional ownership principle, new possibilities for SECI Centre financing are currently under consideration.

There are several reasons for selecting the SECI Centre. First of all, it is the only regional initiative gathering all Western Balkan countries which have already developed capacities for

¹⁰ Currently there are seven Task Forces: Task force for Human trafficking and Migrant Smuggling, Anti –drugs Trafficking Task Force, Anti Fraud and Anti Smuggling Task Force, Financial and Computer Crime Task Force, Task Force on Stolen Vehicles, Anti Terrorism Task Force and Task Force on hazardous substances transport safety.

¹¹ In Albania the role of the NFP is assumed by the independent organizational unit within the National Police and Customs. The Interpol office in Sarajevo and Belgrade assumed this role for Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia respectively. In Croatia and Macedonia NFP is within the Ministry of Interior's Office for European Integration and International Co-operation.

¹² These are: Austria, Azerbaijan, Belgium, Great Britain, Georgia, Italy, Japan, Canada, Germany, Portugal, United States, Ukraine, France, Netherlands and Spain.

the exchange of information, which is the Centre's key activity.¹³ Then, one of the SECI Centre's main priorities is to provide support in strengthening cooperation of law enforcement agencies and special organizational units through the exchange of information. This is one of the main prerequisites for the creation of a mechanism similar to NFIP. We propose the process of development of new Task Force on the prevention of violence at sports events include the following three stages:

1. *Development of the draft strategic and action plan* — Every Western Balkan state shall nominate a representative from the respective Ministry of Interior or from the special organisational unit which deals with the suppression of violence at the sports events. One of the first joint initiatives would be mapping of all actors both on national and regional level. Upon the completion of this process, the representatives would be expected to initiate negotiations with: a) SECI member states' National Focal Points and designated Liaison Officers in SECI HQ in Bucharest;¹⁴ b) representatives of five NFIP member states that are also members of SECI Centre;¹⁵ c) representatives of sports associations and civil society organisations dealing with the security issues, particularly focusing on the preventive measures in violence suppression. The main reason for these consultations is the creation of an effective and efficient approach to the prevention of violent acts at sports events within the strategic plan. It is necessary that the strategic plan includes brief overview of present status including qualitative and quantitative data about the violence at sports events. The easiest way to carry this out would be to overlay data that the respective internal affairs bodies already have (we assume such data exists).
2. *Draft Strategic and Action plan Presentation* — Upon the finalisation of the draft document it should be presented to the executive powers of the every Western Balkan state, SECI Centre and RCC. Besides, it is necessary to expand the scope of consultations towards the EU and, in particularly, towards the EC in order to fill in the "gaps" in the strategic plan as well as to obtain certain funding. Strategic plan could serve as solid bases for developing project proposals for EU funding. It should be stressed that the action plan should be specific and down to the point with realistic guidelines and achievable goals. In addition to the formulation of mission, vision, aims, and values, achievable goals are considered necessary for the effective implementation of the action plan.

¹³ Refer to the SECI Centre annual report. Please note that in addition to SECI Centre, there is another mechanism for the exchange of information that is the Police Co-operation Convention for the Southeast Europe. The obstacle to our proposal is the fact that Croatia is not a signatory to the Convention.

¹⁴ It is not excluded and perhaps is even more desirable that these persons be the initiators of new Task Force establishment.

¹⁵ They are: Bulgaria, Greece, Hungary, Romania and Slovenia.

3. *Task Force establishment and selection of National Focal Points* — Certainly, the most difficult task would be the establishment of the institutional mechanism through strategic plan implementation. However, it should be emphasized that we don't suggest the establishment of a new regional body, but rather strengthening the existing institutional framework. Moreover, the SECI Centre is currently undergoing organisational transformation and eventually it should grow into the Southeast European Law Enforcement Centre (SELEC). New goals have already been set and they are as follows: support to the prevention activities, strengthening information exchange, deepening relations and ties among national units and development of strategic analysis. The abovementioned goals are in line with the general and specific goal of our proposal.

Role of the Task Force for the Prevention of Violent Acts at Sports Events and National Focal Points in the SECI centre

The SECI Centre's Task Forces are currently engaged in the co-ordination and preparation of the joint investigations, creation of the police professional development training programmes, as well as organisation of various international conferences which allow for the exchange of experiences. The SECI Task Forces gather professionals and experts from SECI member states as well as representatives of the national bodies and SECI Liaison Officers. The SECI Task Forces in a certain way act as a platform for discussion among South-eastern European bodies involved in the fight against crime.

The Task Force for the prevention of violent acts at sports events would act under this "umbrella" scope. Its tasks would include: defining strategic directions, establishing a mechanism for the information exchange and setting priorities at the short, mid and long term. At the regional level national focal point would act as an operational body of the respective Task force. NFPs would facilitate the efficient exchange of information between "point A" and "point B", that is, they would ensure that the right information reaches the right person at the right time. The successful work of the police in the prevention of violence at sports events, especially when it comes to international competitions, implies the development of an proactive approach based on the know-how and accurate information, the key principles of problem-oriented policing.

Proactive policing implies the prevention of potential criminal activities (there is a realistic possibility that sports violence grows into a certain criminal offence), rather than dealing with the current criminal cases. Police should take more active role in the social dialogue, in our case, the dialogue about the combating violence in sport. Besides, the police shall state what

situations they cannot handle alone and in what situations they have not achieved desired results. Know-how policing implies that police management relies on the strategic analyses that facilitate decision making as regards the implementation of the more efficient prevention programmes.

The activities of the Task Force on the Prevention of Violence at Sports Events should include the following:

- Motivate and engage police personnel, especially those deployed at borders, in different activities related to the sports violence prevention. Inform them about different hooligan groups (how they look, how they behave, are they a realistic threat), trends in fight against hooliganism and changes in the legal framework. Our proposal is that the responsible person should be Liaison Officer at the respective SECI member's state national focal point.
- Strengthening co-operation with the railway and bus traffic management. The Task Force should develop guidelines for reduction of hooligan groups' impact on traffic, as well as guidelines for the exchange of information among law enforcement bodies.
- Development of common database of persons whose behaviour may pose a security risk, analysis of critical or crisis situations, as well as advice on how to manage them, exchange of analyses with other national focal points and allowing public access to the lessons learnt and recommendations.
- Promoting and building partnerships with local police and sports associations to allow the exchange of intelligence data relevant for hooligan groups' mapping and subsequent investigations.

Opening of a public debate

The main goal of this paper was to encourage discussion about the lack of the regional co-operation framework in the fight against hooliganism and violence at sports events of an international character. The incident in Genoa in October 2010 prompted the authors of this paper to further explore EU mechanisms for sports violence prevention. Given that copying one mechanism from one geographic area to another is not considered the best option, we have proposed a model which could (and indeed should) become a matter of discussion.

Certainly, the proposed solution is not a definitive one; however it presents a solid ground for further analysis and identification of field of co-operation in the area of prevention of violence at sports events in the Western Balkan countries. In addition to procedural and institutional framework, the public may be presented with the possibility of how to reconcile the Western Balkans nations through sport.

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