



Mapping of Corruption in Sport in the EU

*A report to the European Commission
– Executive Summary*

December 2018

EUROPEAN COMMISSION

Directorate-General for Education and Culture
Directorate C – Innovation, International Cooperation and Sport
Unit C.4 – Sport

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Mapping of Corruption in Sport in the EU

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Executive Summary

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Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2018

ISBN 978-92-76-08748-9

doi: 10.2766/785734

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Executive summary

The Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture (DG EAC) of the European Commission commissioned Ecorys in July 2018 to undertake a mapping review of sport and corruption across the EU28.

Background

Recent high profile cases of corruption in sport have shown the potential damage corruption cases can cause to sport's reputation for integrity and fair play. Corruption has been shown to manifest in varying contexts ranging from non-profit community-based activities through to activities involving high profile international events. In addition to traditional forms of corruption, particular types of corruption such as match fixing, spot fixing and doping are unique to the industry. The complex and multidimensional nature of corruption in sport has created significant challenges for sport management and policy makers in identifying where the problems lie and developing actions to safeguard the integrity of sport globally.

Aims and methodology

The key objective of this small-scale research study has been to complete a mapping review of the types of corruption that exist in different EU Member States, if/how they are dealt with at national and/or international level and what kind of legal instruments exist to deal with them and minimise potential risks. The study has sought to provide the European Commission with adequate knowledge of existing initiatives in order to identify where best to focus its efforts – and those of the Member States – in the years to come. At the scoping stage of the study a rapid literature review was completed covering the subject of sport and corruption. The review covered academic publications, official policy documents and papers. Around 70 relevant documents were identified. The mapping of reported cases and government responses also built on responses to a call for evidence which was sent out to members of the EU Expert Group on Sport and Integrity. The second element of the desk research was to undertake systematic reviews of available data and information and evidence on relevant government and organisational responses in specific Member States. Within the limits of the resources available for the study, it was possible to complete systematic desk reviews of available evidence and information on sport and corruption in 11 countries covering a range of geographies and large and small countries. Finally, a number of responses were examined in more depth through more detailed desk research and telephone interviews with contacts in Member States. This resulted in six case studies which are presented in boxes in the findings chapter.

Key findings and recommendations

The need to tackle corruption in sport is an important element of EU's policy on sport integrity. The rapid literature review undertaken for this study has shown that the more detailed empirical studies of corruption in the EU tend to focus on the prevalence of match-fixing and doping cases. This is reflected in the mapping research for this study as despite adopting a broad definition of corruption in setting the parameters of the research, the vast majority of cases identified from recent years in the sample countries were identified as either doping or match fixing cases.

The mapping research has emphasised the complex interplay of factors and contextual issues that can influence match-fixing activity. The research has also provided insights in to the diversity of match-fixing practices and its association with other types of corruption such as bribery. Specific examples of match-fixing have also revealed the importance of factors such as pay levels of athletes and the level of media exposure of specific matches.

Aside from match-fixing and doping, the mapping review has revealed very few examples of other types of corruption in sport across the EU. This does not necessarily mean that other types of corruption do not exist as such cases may be more difficult to detect through mapping exercise which is reliant on using rapid research approaches across a range of countries. The broader academic literature review indicates however that due to the lack of a transparent system of reporting in sport, the sport industry has become a fertile ground for other corruption activities such as money laundering and tax evasion.

The mapping of responses at the Member State has revealed a variety of measures that have been implemented in recent years. These include: new legislation; new policy initiatives; tighter regulations; more stringent fines; organisational restructuring; educational programmes; multi-stakeholder platforms for information sharing; and whistleblowing initiatives. Based on a limited number of case studies, the research has highlighted a number of key conclusions with regard to the effectiveness of responses and particular features of promising practices in this area:

- **There is evidence that the introduction of stricter legal penalties reduces levels of match-fixing:** Legal penalties have been shown to work in countries where there was previously a high prevalence of match fixing.
- **There is a need to focus on preventative measures as well as legal penalties:** the case studies have highlighted a range of education and awareness raising initiatives that have been shown to be successful in terms of take-up amongst sport professionals and, based on anecdotal evidence, their ability to improve understanding, influence behaviour and encourage reporting of suspicious behaviour.
- **The role of multi-stakeholder groups for preventing and tackling corruption in sport:** some case studies have highlighted the potential for involving all relevant actors in addressing specific corruption practices including law enforcement agencies, judicial bodies, government ministries, national sport agencies and federations.
- **There is an increasing emphasis on promoting 'good governance' practices in sport federations:** such codes are being introduced in order to address other types of management corruption such as bribery, money laundering and tax evasion, as well as more well-known forms of corruption such as match-fixing.

This small-scale research has addressed the topic of sport and corruption from a broad and open-ended perspective and therefore it has not been possible to address the prevalence of specific types of corruption in a systematic and detailed way. The research findings nevertheless provide evidence and insights in understanding how the EU could potentially add value to existing initiatives in this area. Recommended actions that could be taken to develop more systematic evidence on the topic and further promote effective practice in this area are as follows:

- **Supporting mechanisms for cooperation in addressing corruption:** The study has highlighted various initiatives taken forward by international sport federations. There is potentially a role for the EU to add value to these initiatives by facilitating the development of new networks and enhancing the work of existing networks focused on addressing specific types of corruption. The EU's potential role would be to facilitate cooperation between the various relevant actors who have a role in addressing corruption practices. This role could involve developing multi-stakeholder groups concerned with addressing specific types of corruption based on a detailed assessment of the role of specific actors as well as current networking arrangements. Enhanced cooperation would also allow sharing of information on good practice and help to support their implementation internationally.

- Enhancing knowledge on sport and corruption across the EU:** There are a number of potential mechanisms that the EU could use to encourage the development of better knowledge on sport and corruption across the EU. Through the development of networks with relevant federations and other relevant institutional stakeholders, and more formal recommendations, the EU could help to promote more systematic monitoring of corruption cases across the EU. Such systematic monitoring would also allow to enhance and maintain a more updated intelligence picture on the phenomenon for further use by policy-makers, for the purpose of identifying major issues and anticipating future challenges to be addressed at EU level. Building on the limited number of case studies completed for this study, it is also recommended that more systematic evidence is collected on the current state of play in the EU with regard to understanding what works well in addressing corruption in sport. In order to do this, it is paramount that the correct stakeholders are identified and reached out. This would draw on more systematic evaluation evidence including primary research with most relevant stakeholders in Member States. Generally there is a need to improve evaluation evidence on the impacts and effectiveness of government responses that aim to deal with corruption.
- Support the development of good practice sharing and dissemination:** The EU potentially has a role to play in enhancing knowledge sharing on approaches to addressing corruption, for example through networking events for international sport federations. It is also recommended that actions are developed to support dissemination of and knowledge sharing on good practice responses. This could include European level conferences held on an annual or biannual basis that allow projects Member States and international organisations to present their approaches and good practice features. Responses to addressing corruption could also be included as a regular topic in events such as the EU Sport Forum. and other relevant events organised at EU level. Building on the recommendations above, the EU could also support actions to develop capacity building of relevant authorities and sport federations in member states. The research has identified examples of practices where the promotion of common understandings and good practice may be helpful in addressing corruption (recommendations below).
- Support the development of common understanding of appropriate and proportionate penalties for corruption activities:** This research has highlighted the potential to develop a common understanding on the use and effectiveness of appropriate penalties to address corruption practices.
- Support the development of common definitions and measurement frameworks for 'good governance' and its component parts:** This research has highlighted a number of areas of promising practice in the development and implementation of 'good governance' approaches to addressing corruption. Building on the recommendations above, there is potential for the EU to play a role in supporting actions to develop common understanding on the elements required to promote good governance practice amongst sport federations. It is important for sport federations to understand the principles that constitute good governance, and how and why these principles can benefit the sport system and improve their operations, in order to be able and motivated to put these principles in practice. The promotion of codes of best practices in 'good governance', illustrated by the case study examples of Cyprus and the UK could be beneficial for the sport industry.
- The role of Member States in addressing corruption:** The case studies have highlighted the particular role that Member States can play in leading strategically on the fight against corruption and in promoting transparency and information sharing at the national level. It is recommended that Member State governments address corruption in national sport strategies and national strategies on crime fighting as well

as in related national action plans based on consultation with all the relevant stakeholders. Governments should also play a role in supporting multi-stakeholder platforms to address specific types of corruption. There is also potentially a role for Member States in collecting data and evaluation evidence on the effectiveness of policy responses, in line with the recommendation above.

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