



# **Expert Group "Match Fixing" (XG MF)**

## **Report from the 4th meeting - 26 January 2016**

## **1. PARTICIPANTS**

Experts from 18 Member States: Austria, Belgium, Cyprus, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Sweden, and the United Kingdom. Six MS experts were absent (Bulgaria, Hungary, Italy, Romania, Slovenia and Spain).

European Commission: DG Education and Culture (DG EAC), DG Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs (DG GROW), and DG Migration and Home Affairs (HOME).

Representatives from 16 of the 24 observers were present at the meeting.

## **2. INTRODUCTION**

The Expert Group on Match Fixing (XG MF), created by the Council in May 2014,<sup>1</sup> held its fourth meeting on 26 January 2016.

The chairman, Harri Syväsalmi (FI), welcomed participants and reminded everyone that there would be in all likelihood only one meeting left to finalize the group's report. Subsequently, the overall good progress in the group's work was underlined. He also welcomed experts and observers participating first time in the meeting of XG MF.

The XG adopted the draft agenda and the report of the last meeting without comments.

## **3. UPDATES / EVENTS / STATE OF PLAY**

### **Report from the Chair**

A general update was provided on the state of play of the MS signatures and ratification of the CoE Convention. At the time of the meeting, 20 parties had signed and a further 2 had both signed and ratified. Concerning the EU signature of the Convention, no agreement had been reached at Council level due to the resistance from MT. Since the last meeting of the XG MF, some progress had been made in the setting up of National Platforms across MS.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/ALL/?uri=CELEX:42014Y0614%2803%29>

## **Information from the Commission**

**DG EAC** provided the participants with an update on the recent developments in the field of EU sport policy, including information on upcoming events (EU Sport Info Day, EU Sport Forum 2016), the European Week of Sport, the work of two High-level Groups and recent EU studies in the field of sport. The discussions on the EU signature of the CoE Convention were also highlighted.

**DG GROW** mentioned that the Cooperation Agreement on information exchange between betting regulators was already signed by 20 MS. It was underlined that the signature of the Cooperation Agreement can also have an effect on the work of the XG MF. Discussions will continue on match-fixing from the perspective of the betting regulators.

**DG HOME** outlined the pilot project now underway to identify sport betting related risks. In relation to this, a conference on match-fixing on 17-18 February is being organized jointly by DG GROW, DG HOME and DG EAC. It will bring together authorities and stakeholders aiming to develop concrete deliverables. Letter of invitations together with the draft agenda will be sent to the members of the XG MF in the coming days.

Both observers and MS expressed their interest for participating in the conference and they were highly interested in the possible outcomes of the workshops involved. DG HOME and DG GROW emphasized that the conference intends to help clarify the next steps that the EU should take, as well as provide an extra platform for enhanced cooperation between stakeholders in the field. The Chair also encouraged MS to participate in the conference.

## **Update from Council of Europe**

The Council of Europe (CoE) presented an update on the current status on the signatures of the Convention (22 signatures total and 2 ratifications by Portugal and Norway) and the requirements and preparatory measures for entry into force. The CoE mentioned some recent events where they had participated in order to promote the signature of the Convention (e.g. Play the Game Conference, CoE Parliamentary Assembly). CoE continues to seek the attention of non-CoE member states, and it also develops close cooperation with IOC, Interpol and EPAS. Furthermore, CoE highlighted on their pilot project financed by DG HOME to help the implementation of the Convention, as well as other on-going activities concerning cooperation and research.

## Other Information

The European Lotteries invited the XG to a conference on 7 December, Geneva focusing on sport betting integrity. The Professional Players Federation introduced a new publication on sports betting integrity which was circulated among members and observers.

### 3. Setting up a National Platform

To begin, the Chair provided an overview on the **FI** state of play in establishing a National Platform and which had held its first meeting the previous Friday. The Platform will operate as a national body for cooperation and coordination between the sport movement, public authorities and the betting operator in matters regarding prevention of the manipulation of sport competitions. Director Harri Syväsalmi was appointed as a chair of the Platform. The Chair also informed that the Finnish Centre for Integrity in Sports (FINCIS) was going to be established later the same week. It will be responsible for advocating for ethical principles in Finnish sport as well as carrying out anti-doping activities and preventing match-fixing and spectator violence, and other obligations following from the international conventions.

The presentation of the best practices started with **UK** which introduced its approach in a very thorough way. The Gambling Commission was identified as the country's NP and its establishment was driven by a strong political will. Given the country's remarkable sport market, sport represents a core interest in the UK Anti-corruption Plan. The National Sport Strategy published in 2015 contains explicit statement on the ratification of the CoE convention. As a result of the strong political will the Sport Betting Integrity Action Plan was also introduced. The action plan is the key element for the prevention of sport betting related crimes aiming to develop a culture of deterrence. The Sport Betting Integrity Forum is responsible for setting day to day and long-term strategy and for ensuring accountability. The NP is organized in three different platforms (Information Sharing, Intelligence Capability and Operational Coordination) which provide the framework for actions to prevent and tackle sport betting related crimes. The shared nature of the NP's competences and the close cooperation with the law enforcement agencies were identified as important aspects of the UK approach.

Following the UK presentation, it was emphasized by the Chair that depending on the national context development of the national platforms might vary between MS. Issues regarding the protection of confidential information and the role of investigatory authorities in the NP were discussed afterwards. UK underlined that specific changes in the country's legislative system were implemented which facilitate to process of investigation in some betting related cases. The responsibilities of the Gambling Commission have been expanding in this regard by gaining specific competence in the investigation process.

There followed a brief outline of the **NL** national platform. The high expectations towards the NP and its foreseen added value were mentioned first, followed by the description of its working mechanism and structure. The law enforcement body of the Platform consists of the representatives of the police and the prosecution office and it holds its meeting every two weeks. The broader subgroup of the Platform involves all relevant stakeholders which are provided with non-confidential information by the law enforcement body. Alongside information sharing, the body has the goal of fostering cooperation and building trust among involved stakeholders (e.g. sport organisations and ministries) and identifying best measures. Meetings are organized in every two months.

Finally, Norway, a non EU MS which has already ratified the CoE Convention, presented the development of its NP. The platform is being run by the Norwegian Ministry of Culture and it is hosted by the national betting regulatory authority (Norwegian Gambling Authority). Regarding its scope, it provides opportunities for information sharing between stakeholders, conducts risk assessment and creates proposals to enhance prevention in the field of betting related crimes. Although it also has the role of detecting concrete cases, it does not have investigatory powers. Therefore, its main role consists of collecting, analysing and disseminating information.

MS and observers welcomed the presentations. The need for information exchange between stakeholders and the transparent working mechanisms of national platforms was underlined. Building trust and confidence was identified as a key element of betting related cooperation. From the side of the sport movement, the need for disciplinary measures within organisations was mentioned. The lack of involvement of professional players 'associations and supporters' organisations in the development of national platforms of some countries was raised.

#### **4. Education and Awareness Raising**

The session started with a presentation from **AT** of the project Play Fair Code, where the XG MF heard about the Austrian stakeholder approach and the priorities of the platform (crime prevention through education, monitoring and the institution of the ombudsman). AT also outlined the latest Erasmus+ funded European Rookie Cup (EUROCUP) project aiming to raise awareness on MF issues among European ice hockey players. It was also announced by AT that the federal government had decided to sign the CoE convention on match-fixing.

The session continued with a presentation by EU Athletes of their project aiming to educate players on the risks of MF. Due to the high turnover rate of European players, the need of continuous education was emerged. Through the actions of EU Athletes over 15.000 professional athletes had already received training. The best ways for reaching players were explained, together with the communication campaign techniques with a special focus on social media.

In their comments, observers agreed to promote the sustainable nature of educative and awareness-raising projects. The difference between individual and team sports was also highlighted in this regard. The Commission offered its help to promote the national sport integrity days mentioned by EU Athletes.

#### **5. Deliverable – update on report**

At first, some technicalities of the report were discussed which was followed by content-related feedback from MS. UK suggested including the latest proposal of the UNODC, putting the background of the report in a slightly wider context. In light of the recent MF claims in tennis, LU argued that despite of the developments in the field some crucial issues were overlooked and neglected, therefore it suggested a more critical formulation of the 'state of play' paragraph of the report. A section on sanctions should also be added. Some MS echoed the opinion of LU and highlighted the vulnerability of tennis. In this regard the role of national risk assessment centres was mentioned and the need for a collective strategic approach was stressed by the UK.

The Chair outlined to the XG of the schedule for completion of the report which needs to be ready by the end of June 2016. The COM asked MS to

send specific comments in writing by the end of February and expressed the need to formulate the report in a more concise way.

## **6. Conclusions and next steps**

The Chair reminded members and observers that the work of XG MF primarily serves the interest of the athletes and the public at large. The wider approach involving principles of Good Governance and Fair Play was appreciated by the Chair. The need for a pragmatic, concrete and easy to adopt report was underlined. Under next steps, the outcome of the upcoming conference in February was considered to be of key importance for the work of XG MF. Depending on the outcome of the conference and other factors the group will have either one or two more meetings; this will be decided later on in February.

Closing session without observers:

## **7. Report from Member States**

Further latest developments were presented by MSs in the form of a tour de table.

**DK** – The questions concerning the scopes of the Danish NP were under discussion with the stakeholders. The establishment of the platform is foreseen in a short period of time. An awareness raising campaign with the contribution of professional athletes was mentioned.

**PL** - The establishment of the NP is foreseen for 2016. In the past years, changes have been adopted in the Polish legal system affecting also the country's sports law (2015) and the next package of modification is to be introduced already in 2016. The topic of sports integrity was involved in the new strategic national sport document called Sport Development 2020. A best practice project was showcased from 2015 which aimed to raise awareness of young football players on the risks related to MF. In the framework of the project, extensive research was conducted in sport clubs and schools.

**MT** - The Maltese NP forms part of a wider anti-corruption initiative of the government. The NP is divided into two subcommittees dealing with law enforcement on the one hand and legal aspects of MF on the other hand.

**LT** – In spring 2016, the Parliament of Lithuania will hold the second hearing to discuss the new provision on Match-Fixing in the Criminal Code. As of the 3rd of November 2015, Lithuania has its own Representative – the Focal Point for Sports Corruption in Europol. The Lithuanian Department of Physical Education and Sports is planning to conduct a survey on Match-Fixing aiming to reveal some patterns and prevalence rates in some sports, as well to ascertain the relevant approaches of athletes, sport officials and society.

**FR** - The establishment of the NP is under way. The necessary legal steps have been taken and the consultation with relevant stakeholders (including players' association) has already commenced. The necessity of building trust amongst involved parties is a priority for FR. The formulation of the national risk assessment strategy is ongoing.

**NL** - Some preventive measures were taken by sport organisations which have been supported by the government. There is an increased interest to take part in the cooperation in MF from authorities in charge of organised crime affaires.

**PT** - Betting operators have contributed to the development of the NP in a great extent. Following changes in the legislative system MF became a legal offence in the country. The National Plan for Ethics in Sport was mentioned together with a prize established for Ethics in Sport.

**DE** – Funding had been requested from the Federal Government for the establishment of the NP. The planned changes in the law system concern the introduction of two types of criminal offences (betting and non-betting related MF). The legal tools to tackle MF shall be improved.

**SE** - The country has not signed the Convention but similar legal cooperation exists. The first public hearing of a MF related bribery case was mentioned as an example of ongoing work.

**UK** - The Prime Minister will host a global antic-corruption summit in May 2016.

## **8. Any Other Business**

LU inquired about the present status of the process of EU signature of the Convention. COM explained that the Presidency was in charge to take the necessary steps to reach agreement between MS, however there were no

concrete plans yet. NL stated that they would work with the parties to try and find a solution.

## **ANNEX 1: List of participants**

### European Commission

DG EAC      LE LOSTECQUE Yves  
DG EAC      PATERSON George  
DG EAC      GARAMOLGYI Bence  
DG GROW    TERRY Agnieszka  
DG HOME    TINE Sebastiano

### MS Experts

To be completed

### OBSERVERS

ECA - European Club Association  
EL - The European Lotteries  
EOC – European Olympic Committee, EU Office  
EPAS - Council of Europe  
EPFL - European Professional Football Leagues  
ESSA - Sports Betting Integrity  
EU Athletes  
Europol  
FIFA - Fédération Internationale de Football Association  
FIFPro – World Players Union  
ICSS Europe  
IOC – International Olympic Committee  
PPF - Professional Players Federation  
Sport and Citizenship  
UEFA - Union of European Football Associations  
Norwegian Ministry of Culture