

Perceptions and attitudes of sports actors about whistleblowing mechanisms

Local report Belgium



Training on Protected Reporting for Professional and Grassroots Sports (T-PREG)

Data Setting and Analysis on Protected Reporting System Practices: Belgium

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Meeting, Brussels, 20 February 2019



Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union



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- I. Interviews
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I. Interviews

Data collection & topic list

- Interviews were conducted with participants from the following organisations

Sr. No.	Organisation	Number of Representatives
1	Sports Vlaanderen (Flanders)	2
2	Tennis Vlaanderen (Flanders)	1
3	Royal Belgian Football Association	2
4	Belgian Federal Police	1
5	FIFPro (Europe)	1

Topic List

- A] Perceptions on match-fixing
- B] Organisational initiatives concerning match-fixing
- C] Experiences with protected reporting systems
- D] Readiness to use protected reporting system
- E] Recommendations

Key findings - A] Perceptions on match-fixing

- For six out of seven interviewees **match-fixing is a problem in general and specifically a problem in tennis and football**
- For three out of seven interviewees **federations other than tennis and football are yet to realise the problem of match-fixing**
- Two interviewees highlighted the **problem of ‘courtsiders’**
- In last 10 years (before last scandal) only **one football match in Belgian professional football was fixed** according to participants
- **15-25** known matches were fixed **in grassroots/amateur football out of 300,000**
- For all interviewees **match-fixing in professional sports is betting-related, whereas match-fixing in grassroots/amateur sport is non-betting related**
- For all interviewees **motivation behind match-fixing is solely financial**

Key findings - B] Organisational initiatives concerning preventing match-fixing

1) Belgian Federal Police (Law enforcement)

- Started hotline for reporting for football in 2010
- In 2013, the hotline for reporting was extended to other sports
- In 2015, partnership development meeting was organised along with IOC, Interpol and the national sports organisations
- Active participation in the National Platform

2) Royal Belgian Football Association

- Single point of contact for integrity issues
- Prevention programmes for every tournament from U15s to the first teams (men & women)
- Education in the form of presentations to players, technical staff and referees
- The organisation has planned to increase its educational efforts through presentations about match-fixing to every club playing in the top 2 divisions of Belgian professional football in near future

3) Tennis Vlaanderen (Flanders)

- Single point of contact for integrity issues
- Insertion of 'integrity declaration' for players who are under contract with the federation and every player that is supported by the Tennis Vlaanderen
- Prevention campaigns through emails for international & national top players, referees, international tournament directors and international officials
- Training sessions for young international players

Key findings - B] Organisational initiatives concerning preventing match-fixing (2)

4) Sports Vlaanderen (Flanders)

- Responsible for funding sports organisations based on their performances
- The organisation has developed 'Hard-Soft' approach for funding
 - Match-fixing falls under the soft category, (non mandatory)

5) FIFPro (Europe)

- Red button app for reporting
- Visits to the locker rooms before matches
- Coordinating with UEFA, FIFA and Interpol

- For four participants, their counterparts are not doing enough
- For three others, their counterparts are doing a good job, but more could be done
- One participant mentioned that cooperation with law enforcement agencies is slowed down by delays

Key findings - C] Experiences with protected reporting systems

- According to all interviewees respective participants from all sports organisations and the law enforcement stated that their organisations have reporting systems in place

Who should manage the reporting system in Belgium?

Number of Participants	Suggested managing authority
4	Law enforcement
1	Law enforcement and sports organisation
1	Managing board of the National Platform
1	Law enforcement as well as open/ visible reporting

Advantages & disadvantages of reporting systems

Advantages	Disadvantages
Security	Misuse
Confidentiality	False information
Reach of the system	Information given with a view to blackmail someone
Awareness of people	Information could be traced easily in sports
	Information could be covered up
	Lack of action taken on the information provided

Key findings - D] Readiness to use protected reporting systems

- What are the factors that would motivate and discourage from reporting using a reporting system?

Motivational Factors	Discouraging Factors
Personal integrity	Family problems
To keep the sport pure	Personal problems
Assurance that the information will be delivered to and heard by the appropriate authority	Fear of being thrown out of the team
Appropriate action will be taken	Fear of fans turning out against
Exposure of having a protected reporting system	Fear of not getting the next contract
The reporting system is protected	Threat of organised crime
It is official	Threat to family from organised crime
	Pressure of team mates
	Psychological pressure
	Threat of information being leaked
	Bad examples set by alike events of corruption at the governing bodies

Key findings - E] Recommendations

- It would be helpful to form an integrity agency on the model of WADA (starting with Europe)
- An EU-wide reporting system would be helpful
- Education regarding how to report match-fixing shall reach players/athletes' dressing rooms
- Live betting should be prohibited for youth competitions as well as competitions with low prizes
- Webpage to report should also mention consequences for not reporting
- Sporting sanctions on athletes should be imposed on case by case basis
- Problem of “courtsiders” should be defined and dealt with by law

II. Survey

Questionnaire

- Contents
 - Incidence of match-fixing (attitudes)
 - Disclosure of match-fixing (attitudes)
 - Reporting of match-fixing (attitudes)
 - Personal experiences with match-fixing
- Websurvey distributed to all Dutch-speaking referees belonging to the Royal Belgian Football Association (RBFA) via their intranet
- Response: 595 valid responses

Sample

- Gender
 - 97.6% male referees
 - 2.3% female referees
- Age
 - Mean: 39.08 years ($SD = 16.58$)
 - Range: 15-77 years
- Level
 - Professional level: 3.7%
 - Grassroots level: 96.3%

Results – Incidence of match-fixing

Fixing of professional matches

- Current incidence
 - <5%: 33.4%
 - 5% - 9.99%: 23.1%
 - 10% - 24.99%: 24.6%
 - 25% - 49.99%: 12.5%
 - > 50%: 6.4%
- Trend (last 5 years)
 - Decrease: 16.1%
 - Constant: 45.7%
 - Increase: 38.2%

Fixing of grassroots level matches

- Current incidence
 - <5%: 34.4%
 - 5% - 9.99%: 21.2%
 - 10% - 24.99%: 28.5%
 - 25% - 49.99%: 11.7%
 - > 50%: 4.2%
- Trend (last 5 years)
 - Decrease: 13.9%
 - Constant: 65.9%
 - Increase: 20.2%

Rather small differences between professional and grassroots level matches

Results – Disclosure of match-fixing

- Likelihood of match-fixing being discovered
 - Low: 41.0%
 - Medium: 26.8%
 - High: 32.2%
- Likelihood of match-fixing being punished (if discovered)
 - Low: 22.3%
 - Medium: 18.0%
 - High: 59.7%

Results – Reporting of match-fixing

- Acceptability of reporting match-fixing among referees
 - Unacceptable: 28.5%
 - Neither unacceptable, nor acceptable: 17.5%
 - Acceptable: 54.1%
- Aware of protected reporting systems: 11.1%
- Preferred responsible for protected reporting system
 - Sports federations: 27.8%
 - Ministry of Sport: 22.2%
 - Independent entity of civil society: 19.1%
 - Judiciary: 18.4%
 - Police: 7.2%

Results – Personal experiences with match-fixing

- Witnessed or suspected match-fixing: 23.5%
 - Once: 7.7%
 - Twice: 5.3%
 - Three to five times: 4.6%
 - More than 5 times: 6.0%
- 12.4% reported the (last) case of match-fixing they witnessed/suspected
 - Primarily reported to sports federation or colleagues; almost never reported to police, judiciary or media
- Primary reasons for not reporting
 - Lack of confidence in sports system or application of sports sanctions
 - Lack of confidence in existing reporting systems
 - Lack of security for people reporting match-fixing incidents
 - Lack of trust in justice or application of criminal sanctions

Thank you

