



**Report on Compliance by Bulgaria
with the European Convention
on Spectator Violence and Misbehaviour
at Sports Events**

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**European Convention on Spectator Violence and Misbehaviour
at Sports events and in particular at Football Matches (T-RV)**

Compliance with Commitments Project

Respect by Bulgaria of the Convention

Visit: 29 September 2004

Reports by:

- Bulgaria**
- Consultative Team**

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A. National Report

Prepared by Dimitar Hristov, chief expert in National Police Service Directorate

I. Legislation in the Republic of Bulgaria

An Ordinance for the Security of Sports Sites and the Measures against Violence and Misbehaviour of Spectators before, during and after Sports Events organised at Stadiums and in Sports Halls is the only specialised instrument in force at this moment in time. It provides the engineering and the technical requirements to sports sites, as well as the organisational and other measures for prevention of violence and misbehaviour before, during and after sports events and contains the procedures for permitting the use of sports sites. A person who violates or does not fulfil an obligation under the Ordinance shall be punished under the Administrative Breaches and Penalties Act if no crime has been committed.

According to the Ordinance, stadium owners or the users of sports sites shall be obliged to appoint a person responsible for all measures connected with the security of the sports site. He/she may hire police or a private security company for securing public order during the sports event. When the police are hired, they must be paid by the owner or the user of the stadium according to a rate approved by Ministry of Interior. The payment does even not cover the expenses for sending policemen from the countryside to guard a football match in Sofia, for example. If there is a risk match, it should obligatorily be guarded. (Risk matches are those that, considering the spectators' interest, spectators travelling etc., could cause incidents and football hooliganism. They are identified during a meeting of representatives of the Bulgarian Football Union and the National Police Service for each season).

The Ordinance prohibits visitors of sports events bringing into the stadium weapons and objects which can be used as weapons, gas sprays, bottles made out of breakable or hard material, including plastic bottles of over 500 ml, big objects, signal rockets, pyrotechnical objects, flags and handles for slogans longer than 1 m and with diameter bigger than 1cm, mechanically driven devices causing noise, alcohol of any kind, and animals. There was a case when a snake was thrown onto the football pitch. The visitors are also prohibited from climbing and jumping over fences, entering into certain areas, throwing any objects onto the pitch, lighting fires, shooting signal rockets, etc.

There is also an Ordinance on Championships and Tournaments in the System of the Bulgarian Football Union issued for each season. According to its provisions, the hosting club is obliged to ensure the necessary protection of the official entrances and tunnels, of the changing rooms and of the referees and to guarantee their safety using video cameras. As a result of this measure recently we do not have cases of assaulted referees.

For the time being there is no specialised Act on combating football hooliganism. There is a draft Act on Preserving Public Order and the Measures against Disturbances committed before, during and after Sports Events. It was submitted recently to the Bulgarian Parliament.

This is the reason that, so far, the violence that has taken place before, during and after sports events has been punished as a general crime according to the Criminal Code of the Republic of Bulgaria or as an offence according to the Juvenile Delinquency Act or according to the Act for Control over Explosives, Weapons and Ammunitions Act or according to the Decree for Combating Minor Hooliganism. There are no special articles in these legal instruments about football hooliganism or about violence at stadiums and sports sites.

The current legislation does not allow the police to use video records as evidence in court. For example, persons detained for throwing pyrotechnical devices can be punished according to the Ordinance mentioned above, but there are no legal grounds to prohibit them entering the stadium for certain time periods.

II. Risks and problems that could be created by Bulgarian football hooligans

The most dangerous problem is related to the preparation and throwing of improvised pyrotechnical devices made from bronze and lead minium. In order for an explosion to be initiated, the offenders add stones and sometimes also iron pieces. A young man was killed by such a pyrotechnical device in 2000. A young lady was also seriously wounded in August this year by such a pyrotechnical device. The perpetrators were found by the police in both cases and were brought to the Prosecutor's Office.

The fans are very inventive in their attempts to carry forbidden objects into the stadium. In some cases they hide and bring into the stadium bronze and lead minium separately and then they make the pyrotechnical device on the spot. Small children are used to bringing such forbidden objects in. We have cases when days before the match, pyrotechnical devices were brought into and hidden in the stadium area. They are usually thrown at the beginning of the football match or when the team scores. The fans fire smoke devices first and after that they throw the pyrotechnical devices. Another 'cover' used by the fans are the large flags that are spread out over the fans. The fans under the flag then take out the hidden pyrotechnical devices. There are cases when football players and people working for football clubs assist the fans in bringing forbidden objects into the stadium area. Usually the preparation, bringing into the stadium and throwing of the pyrotechnical devices are not committed by the leaders of the fan groups but by certain fans who want to 'impress' the leaders. The perpetrators that commit crimes at Bulgarian stadiums by throwing pyrotechnical devices do not intend to kill. They just want to have fun, but the result can be a tragedy for the victims and their families and also for the offenders and their families.

Fans under the influence of alcohol is another reason for problems. The police do not use technical means to check whether the persons entering the stadium are under the influence of alcohol and it is possible that a drunken spectator who is able to walk normally will be allowed in. We still have very small number of cases of drugs in the stadium.

Skinheads have appeared in Bulgaria in the last 7-8 years. They can be seen among the football fans as well. Usually they are not very interested in what is happening on the field. They raise flags with a Celtic cross on them and very

rarely with a swastika. There was a case when a poster appeared with “88”, that means “Heil Hitler”. If tension rises they may become aggressive.

Shouting insulting slogans is the reaction of the Bulgarian fans when they believe that the referee has taken an unfair decision or in response to the group of fans supporting the other team. Sometimes the aggression among the fans is provoked by the misbehaviour of football players and trainers. Their negative reaction against the referees (including some cases, when the referees were beaten) initiates disorder among the fans and sometimes the fans try to enter the football field. If big groups of fans supporting different clubs meet each other before or after the match outside the stadium, it is very likely that there will be disorder and it is not easy to control the situation.

Breaking the seats is another problem created by the football fans. To break the seats of the enemy's stadium was a fashion, an honour, two years ago and it still exists as a problem.

We have two main football clubs playing at international level – CSKA Sofia and ‘Levsky’ Sofia - and they have the most famous fan clubs. The CSKA supporters have more ‘skinheads’ among them. It is more likely that they will raise a flag with a swastika. The authority of the leaders is much more centralised. The fans supporting ‘Levsky’ are more fond of throwing improvised pyrotechnical devices, made of bronze and lead minium. Usually young people from the so-called ‘Levsky West’ fan club do this. The intolerance between the supporters of these clubs is notorious. This is the reason that during matches in international competitions the police place the two groups of fans in different sectors of the stadium. We have a similar situation with the supporters of ‘Lokomotiv’ Plovdiv and ‘Botev’ Plovdiv. These are the four football clubs in Bulgaria whose supporters may cause problems.

There is not only negativism but also sympathy between the supporters of different teams. There are cases when fans supporting one team visit a match of a friend's fan club in order to support them.

III. Combating football hooliganism

The combat against football hooliganism is led by the public order police and by the operational police services. They work according to a territorial principle that means in the respective police station or Regional Police Directorate there is an investigator, responsible for football hooliganism, but also for dealing with people who violated the law during all sports events in the area of their responsibility. There is one investigator in the National Police Service Directorate, appointed to deal with these problems and he co-ordinates those activities for the entire country. When defining the spectators we use the categories of the European Convention on Spectator Violence and Misbehaviour at Sports Events and in particular at Football Matches. Since 8 September 2003 a police officer who is supposed to accompany the fans when they travel to another town for a football match is attached to each fan club. These police officers act as liaison to their colleagues in the police station hosting the football match.

When there is a football match, the police have to perform the following activities:

1. Before the sports event: Before the football match we have a meeting with the person responsible for the security of the stadium and with representative(s) of the fan clubs. The police remind the hosting club of the responsibilities regarding the order and security during the match. The number of tickets that should be available to the visiting fans is agreed upon. The zone of the stadium for the visiting supporters is discussed, as are the buffer zones. The police specify the route of moving and entering the stadium for each group of fans. We do everything necessary to avoid the meeting of the two different fan groups in the vicinity of the stadium.

The police get in contact with known football hooligans and make police warnings to them, according to the Ministry of Interior Act.

The police follow the necessary co-ordination measures in order to receive information about the travelling supporters of the guest team. Depending on the number of fans we send a certain number of police officers to guard them and to guard the other people from them. The police officers may travel in the buses with the fans or may use police vehicles. If the fans are travelling by train, a police unit called the Transport Police provides the security on the trains. Depending on the risk assessment, the police may begin guarding the stadium 3 to 6 hours before the match. Exceptionally, this could happen 25 hours before the sports event.

A high-ranking experienced police officer from regional level may be appointed as chief of the police working on the security of the sports event. When necessary, police officers from other police structures may be appointed to participate in securing the stadium and its vicinity. The number of guarding police officers could be even 1000 for a stadium with 25 000 seats, if it is known in advance that the opposing groups of fans are dangerous and tension is expected. This number includes the police officers guarding not only the stadium but also the route of the fans and the vicinity of the stadium. Sometimes we use mounted police and special police dogs. Shortly before the police take on the guarding of the stadium and the vicinity, they are briefed and the police officers begin fulfilling their tasks. They check for pyrotechnical and other dangerous objects which may be concealed in the area of the stadium. Before the beginning of the game police officers take their place between the football field and the stands in order to prevent spectators from entering the pitch. We have police officers searching the spectators at the gates, police officers at the stairs and gangways of the spectator sectors so that they are kept free in case of evacuation. We also have some police officers behind the last row with spectators. There is also a reserve police unit. The uniformed police officers at the stadium not only guard but also assist us in identifying football hooligans.

2. During the sports event: When the spectators enter the stadium, each person should be searched by the police for forbidden objects. If someone refuses, it is his or her right but he/she will be not allowed to enter the stadium. The supporters of the visiting team are directed to a special sector for standing spectators (but when we have international matches they are placed at the usual sectors with seats). From both sides there are buffer zones of free sectors, so that there is no direct contact between the two groups of fans. Since some stadiums have no mounted video cameras, we use police video cameras. The number of police officers appointed to a match depends on the

expected number of spectators and whether it is a risk match. During the match we send police officers in plain clothes into the fans. Their task is to identify the fans that violate the public peace and order or commit crimes. In order not to create disorder at the stadium, the police detain such fans afterwards when they are leaving the stadium. If someone's life or health is in danger, we react immediately. The two biggest and most famous football clubs hire private companies to work at the stadium, usually as ushers. Some of the football clubs have stewards appointed from the fans. The stewards are to stop the fans that violate the order at the stadium. In Bulgaria this is a relatively new form of preserving order among the groups of fans and it needs time to prove its efficiency. Some matches may be guarded inside the stadium by private companies, but according to a plan approved by the relevant territorial police unit. Special attention is paid to guarding the referee team and the rooms for the referees and for the delegate to the match. The police are allowed to enter the football field as an exception, when the game has stopped and by requirement of the delegate of the Bulgarian Football Union.

For the duration of the match a special police group is appointed to work with the detained people. The police maintain contact with the prosecutor and with the judge, who are on duty in case a crime is committed.

3. After the sports event: The police ensure free movement of the football players, trainers, referees and delegates to the service rooms of the stadium and guard them when leaving the stadium and the town. Usually the supporters of the visiting team have to wait until the other spectators leave the stadium. When leaving the stadium they are provided, if need be, with a police escort to the railway station, bus station or airport.

4. International activities: There is a similar procedure when Bulgaria has matches in international competitions. The Bulgarian police take into consideration the Council Recommendation of 22 April 1996 on guidelines for preventing and restraining disorder connected with football matches on the exchange of police intelligence on football hooligans and other European documents, regarding international police co-operation and measures to prevent and control violence and disturbances in connection with international football matches.

The European Convention for Violence and Misbehaviour of Spectators at Sports events and in particular at Football Matches was ratified by the Bulgarian Parliament and is part of Bulgarian legislation.

As already mentioned during the football match the police monitor the fans and use video cameras to try to trace the fans who are likely to create problems. After the match, while leaving the stadium we identify them, if they are not known.

In Bulgaria we do not have the practice to have police officers under cover among the fans and fan leaders. We mainly take preventive measures - this means having enough police troops guarding the event and having meetings with the leaders of the fan clubs. When preparing the plan for providing security for a match we also use information from informants and from open sources.

It should be noted that the Internet sites of the so-called “ultras” are also very interesting to read.

The high fines imposed to football clubs by the Bulgarian Football Union and by UEFA for throwing objects onto the pitch encourages good co-operation with the clubs in order to calm the tension among the spectators.

In Bulgaria there is a project ‘Work of the Police in Schools’. During the last 2 years we included a lecture regarding football hooliganism.

IV. Existing Problems

Out of all police officers dealing with football hooliganism, only one works mainly on this subject. He is from the staff of the National Police Service Directorate. The other police officers working on this issue, no matter whether they belong to the uniformed police or to the plain-clothes police have also other tasks and combating football hooliganism is not their first priority.

Often tension rises because of the representatives of the media. Titles in the newspapers such as ‘A Bloody Match is Coming’ or publishing a map with identified cross points where the fans would fight (by the way, there was no such intention) create additional tension among the supporters of the different clubs.

At this moment in time, we still do not have modern legislation on football hooliganism. The ownership of most of the stadiums is not clarified yet and the users do not wish to invest lots of money for the sports site.

V. Tackling the problems

As mentioned above, the Bulgarian Ministry of Interior has drawn up a draft Act on Preserving Public Order and the Measures against Disturbances committed before, during and after Sports Events that was submitted to the Bulgarian Parliament. We hope and expect to have it adopted during the autumn session of the Parliament in 2004.

The draft Act has considered the current European ideas on combating football hooliganism. It provides the requirements to the spectators, to the organisers of sports events and to the owners or users of sports facilities. It is proposed that the video record should be accepted as evidence before the court for proving public disorder according to the above Act and according to the provisions of the Criminal Code. A new punishment prohibits attendance of football matches in Bulgaria and outside the country for a certain time period for those violating the Act. It is foreseen to have a National Information Centre within the National Police Service Directorate. In fact we could say that the officer dealing with football hooliganism there is the first member of that Information Centre. If the Parliament adopts the Act as proposed, we would be allowed to officially provide information on registered football hooligans, whose behaviour could be dangerous for the public peace and order in the country hosting a football match.

We work on improving the co-ordination among the police structures combating football hooliganism. Furthermore, we aim to have the support of other governmental and non-governmental organisations.

We also have to clarify and enhance the statute of the stewards and their obligations to co-operate with the police during sports activities.

Most of the Bulgarian spectators visiting football matches outside the country respect the law and order and the law enforcement bodies in the hosting country. We have no reported cases when they have used pyrotechnical devices abroad. Only some individuals could be referred to as category 'B'. Almost all of them belong to category 'A'. One of the reasons is that the majority of the population can not afford to visit football matches abroad and usually it is well-educated people, who do not create any problems, who travel abroad.

Football hooliganism in Bulgaria is still at the first stage – young people create problems at and around the stadium, but their action or reaction is connected with the game. We still do not have cases when fans supporting different fan clubs arrange fights somewhere.

B. Consultative visit report

Since the visit took place just after a regional seminar, it was possible to comprise the team of:

- Mr Radim BUREŠ, Chair of the Standing Committee of the European Convention on Spectator Violence and Misbehaviour at Sports Events and in particular at Football Matches (T-RV)
- Mr John DE QUIDT, International expert on licensing of sports facilities
- Mr Jo VANHECKE, Vice Chair of the T-RV, Head of the Football Unit, Ministry of the Interior of Belgium
- Mr Stanislas FROSSARD, Secretary of the Standing Committee of the T-RV, Council of Europe
- Ms Tanya PETROVA, Assistant, Sport Department, Council of Europe

1. Introduction and overview

The Council of Europe team was informed that violence and disorder in football stadiums in Bulgaria is a recent phenomenon. It is often linked to drunkenness, though some extreme political groups have become involved. Throwing objects inside the stadium, for example pyrotechnical material, is also a problem.

The Bulgarian authorities are to be commended for their commitment to resolving the problem before it escalates. They have clearly made considerable advances over the past few years. They drew particular attention to:

- the overhaul of their legislation;
- the introduction of procedures for liaison and for the allocation of responsibilities between different parties;
- the upgrading of the National Stadium to a high standard.

The Bulgarian authorities are nevertheless aware that there is still much to do. They have identified many of the remaining weaknesses themselves and have emphasised that they are committed to eradicating them.

The Consultative visit was well organised, efficiently managed, and had clear objectives. It took place at a moment where a number of measures have already been taken by the Bulgarian authorities and therefore, it allowed the team to identify and focus on the key issues. This report addresses these thematically, with reference to particular meetings and visits, a full list of which is attached, in Appendix 1.

2. Summary of the discussions

Talks with Vassil Ivanov, Minister of Youth and Sport of Bulgaria

At the first meeting on 29 September, the Minister for Youth and Sport of Bulgaria set the context for the visit. He explained the recent history and economic position of Bulgaria. Sporting success is a great source of pride for Bulgaria, which works very hard to promote sport at all levels and develop a successful policy on this subject. The government was committed to meeting its international obligations, to playing a full role in international sport and to bringing its facilities up to international standards.

The Law for Physical Education and Sport in Bulgaria was adopted in 1996. The law regulate obligations linked to the physical education and sport. The main objective regarding physical education is to improve health and good physical development for all.

According to the Constitution of the Republic of Bulgaria the European Convention on Spectator Violence has become part of the domestic law of the country.

The authorities also work closely with fan clubs. There is no history of spectator disorder at stadiums and very little record of any incidents outside. On the other hand, tackling spectator violence remains a high priority for the Bulgarian authorities. Fan clubs try to “educate” their fans in fair play, tolerance, and good friendship. The situation may change if supporters from other countries come to visit Bulgaria in large numbers. It would therefore be advisable for the Government to monitor any incidents so as to be able to respond to any increase.

Meeting and discussion with members of the Bulgarian Parliament on the new draft law against football hooliganism.

The Consultative Team had a discussion with representatives of the Bulgarian Parliament. Mr. Vassil Vassilev, Ex-director of National Police Services, now Advisor in Standing Committee on Internal Security and Public Order and Mr. Valyo Miltenov, Member of Parliament and Member of Commission of Appeal in Bulgarian Football Union, presented their views on the situation and the present projects of the Parliament.

A draft Act on Preserving Public Order and the Measures against Disturbances committed before, during and after Sports Events was submitted to the Bulgarian Parliament in autumn 2004.

This new legislation is intended to fill the present gaps in the organisation of safety and security and to provide legal provisions for some decisions as well as for the prosecution of offenders. The provisions are applicable to the spectators, to the organisers of sports events and to the owners or users of the sports facilities. This new Decree will introduce stadium bans and allow the use of CCTV video recordings for the prosecution of offenders.

Talks with delegates from the Ministry of the Interior of Bulgaria

The National Report gives information concerning the obligations and responsibilities of the security services in Bulgaria. Two other important issues were discussed during this meeting:

- Police co-ordination between different regions in Bulgaria to prevent violence

Delegates from the Ministry of the Interior explained that their work is more connected to the co-ordination and application of their methods. The National Police Service provides information about the football matches, the organisation of the event, the movement of the fans inside and outside of the city. All this data is sent to the Regional Police Services. In each RPS there is a policeman who is responsible for football hooliganism, and the link between the capital and the

respective region. Usually this policeman belongs to the Criminal Service and he has many responsibilities, different and others often more important in his eyes than football hooliganism.

Regarding the fans' movement for example, the National Police Service receives information from the Regional Police Services and the Road Police Service. The aim is to separate the arrival of the fans in the town or at the stadium, to avoid provocations or possible violence.

There is no way of employing somebody full-time who is responsible for football hooliganism because firstly, it would be very expensive and secondly, there are not so many football clubs in the provinces. The football clubs in Bulgaria are concentrated in Sofia, as are the most important financing and human resources.

- Possibility to delegate a part of the police responsibilities to the clubs

Until now, the police is the only responsible body for the organisation of security and public order issues before, during and after football matches. At the same time, the Ministry of the Interior admits that without a clear legal framework it is very difficult to work and hold somebody responsible.

The organiser of the football event is in charge of the organisation and decides how to manage the security during the competition. Organisers are not obliged to sign an agreement with the National Police Service. They may hire a private company, but in reality, 90-95 % of the football clubs appeal to the police services.

In the Ordinance for running a football championship, drawn up by the Bulgarian Football Union, all high-risk matches have to be supervised by the Police. From this year this obligation no longer exists and a Commission for high-risk matches with the same goal was hence created.

The National Police Service tries to reduce the presence of the policemen during popular sports events by increasing the number of spotters and well-prepared staff responsible for the security in and outside the stadium.

Visit of the 'Vassil Levski' national stadium and discussion with its Director

The Vassil Levski national stadium in Sofia was built in 1953. It has recently been renovated to meet international standards for training and competitions of both national and top club teams in football and athletics. The stadium has a seating capacity of 43,340 spectators. It is located central Sofia, 15 minutes by foot from the city centre.

The ring of the stadium represents a chain of indoor facilities such as training halls for rhythmic gymnastics, basketball, boxing, fencing, fitness, judo, table tennis, and aerobics, and naturally has all necessary service amenities. All international and national championship level equipment is available for use.

Responsibility for the stadium is divided between the government, the stadium management, the Football Association and the police. The Vassil Levski national

stadium was renovated thanks to the Ministry for Youth and Sport. The stadium management ensures that all the facilities are fully operational and is responsible for opening the gates. The police are responsible for crowd control and maintaining public order.

The Vassil Levski national stadium was visited by the Consultative Team of the Council of Europe. Although it has no roof, the stadium is in generally good condition, apart from some degradation of the seating deck (see section 3.4 below) and responds to international standards.

There are individually numbered fixed seats with backs. These are comfortable and have good leg room. Although there is a running track between the spectators and the pitch, the view is excellent from every seat. The team was pleased to see that the perimeter fence could easily fall down if there is any necessity.

The areas for visiting supporters are separated. There appear to be sufficient entrances and exits. These are kept unlocked and are staffed at all times during the match. In an emergency, spectators could escape onto the pitch through gates at the foot of each gangway. A very important point is that the first row is reserved for spectators with disabilities and their guides. There is enough space for wheelchairs.

All the toilet facilities, changing rooms and coffee bars were clean, hygienic and in good condition.

3. Key issues : appraisal and challenges

3.1 Legislation

The Consultative Team took note that, in compliance with the Convention and its recommendations, the authorities have:

- enacted legal procedures for permitting the use of the stadium;
- required stadium owners to appoint a security officer;
- prohibited the introduction of unauthorised objects into the stadium; and
- prohibited spectators from going onto the pitch.

However, there are still some gaps in the legal provisions:

- there is as yet no specific football-related legislation; this is before Parliament but it is unclear when it will be passed;
- there is no power to use CCTV pictures as evidence in the courts; and
- there is no power to impose stadium bans.

3.2 Co-ordination and responsibilities

The main advances in this area were identified as follows:

- The stadium owners / users pay for the police who are present inside the stadium.
- The police and FA agree which are the high risk matches; the number of police officers used is determined according to the level of risk.

- A pre-match liaison meeting between the police, security officer and fan clubs agrees the allocation of tickets for visiting supporters, the segregation arrangements and the routes to be taken by different groups.
- The police agree with the other stakeholders (fire service, medical services, etc) on their respective responsibilities.
- The clubs and football authorities (and some supporters clubs) work with schools to encourage good behaviour.
- There is good co-operation between the Ministry of Sports and the supporters' clubs.

On the other hand, the Consultative Team suggests taking appropriate measure to tackle the following problems:

- the unwillingness of the organisers to accept responsibility, with the result that the police are undertaking tasks that could just as well be undertaken at a lesser cost by others;
- the police costs are not fully reimbursed; there is thus no financial incentive for the clubs to take on additional tasks;
- the poor quality of the stewards, who are drawn from among the supporters and are not impartial;
- the lack of control over the stadiums when they are not in use, which enables spectators to bring flares into the ground, often on the day before the match;
- the confusion over the ownership of the stadiums, leading to lack of investment and uncertainties on responsibilities;
- what appears to be a reluctant attitude by the football authorities; and
- uncertainty as to the role of the local public authorities.

3.3 Policing

It was explained that the police tactics focus on prevention rather than cure. In particular they:

- use spotters;
- warn known troublemakers before the match;
- guard and search the stadium;
- search spectators on entry and deny them admission if they refuse to be searched;
- detain troublemakers as they leave the ground, rather than during an incident, in order to avoid provoking disorder; and
- exchange information with their counterparts in other countries.

However,

- they appear to rely heavily on deploying very large numbers of police officers
- they lack sufficient investigators to follow up incidents and identify and prosecute the perpetrators; and
- the proposed national information point has not yet been established.

3.4 Stadiums

- The pitch perimeter fence had adequate exit gates; in an emergency, the fence could be pushed over.
- The entrance, exit and circulation routes were clearly marked; there were colour-coded zones, coloured gangways and well-designed wide exit gates leading to a

spacious external concourse. The only criticism was that, because of the players' entrance, spectators would need to travel a considerable distance to exit the lower part of the main stand.

- It was clean, tidy and well maintained, with a nice visual appearance and good quality toilets.
- The layout of the barriers, in particular around the vomitories was well conceived. They were of a suitable design and strength though a few were lower than the usual norm.
- The main area of disappointment was the seating deck, where new concrete seat bases had been cast directly on top of the old structure. In some cases they were beginning to degrade and were having to be replaced. There was a certain amount of standing water in the foot wells on the seating deck.
- The CCTV system was able to produce good quality still photographs.

The team understands that most other stadiums in Bulgaria are not of the same standard, but that this will be addressed as resources permit.

4. Conclusions and summary of the recommendations

The Council of Europe team considers that the Bulgarian authorities have addressed the problem of violence and misbehaviour in a sensible and structured manner. It believes that their commitment to an integrated approach, in which all the agencies work together, provides a useful framework for future developments.

It suggests that the Bulgarian authorities may wish to take forward the following measures, many of which they have already identified themselves:

- to seek a greater assumption of responsibility by the owners of the stadiums and the clubs that play there;
- to introduce an effective system of stewarding;
- to introduce an effective system of stadium bans;
- to permit the use of CCTV pictures as evidence in the courts;
- to encourage the clubs and football authorities to engage positively in promoting a relaxed and enjoyable atmosphere for spectators that discourages violence and misbehaviour; and to ask them to take action against disturbing behaviour from players, trainers and other staff of the club;
- to promote preventative measures in the community in line with the Council of Europe recommendations;
- to work on strategies to deploy less policemen for football matches, i.e. by examining the possibilities to have some policemen working full time on the problem of football related violence (to work out long term strategies);
- to monitor carefully all incidents and analyse the reports giving special attention to the potentially very dangerous use of pyrotechnical devices;
- to clarify the question of ownership of stadiums which would help to develop the sense of responsibility among clubs and organisers and foster the development of infrastructure.

The Consultative Team thanks the Bulgarian authorities for hosting this Consultative visit and for its good organisation and for the very warm hospitality shown to them in Sofia, in particular to Minister Vassil Ivanov, Minister of Youth and Sport of Bulgaria.

The Consultative Team also wishes to express its thanks and gratitude to Mrs Mila Andreeva and her colleagues for their precious efforts, organisational skills and permanent assistance during the visit. The Team thanks Mr. Dimitar Hristov, Chief Expert, National Security Services, Ministry of the Interior for the excellent report he prepared on the issue.

Appendix 1
Programme of the visit

Compliance with Commitments project

Consultative visit on the European Convention on Spectator Violence and Misbehaviour at Sports Events and in particular at Football Matches

Sofia, 29 September 2004

Wednesday 29 September

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|--------------------|---|
| 9.00 a.m. | Talks with Vassil Ivanov, Minister of Youth and Sports of Bulgaria. |
| 10.30 a.m. | Discussion with delegates from fan clubs / supporters association |
| 10.30 a.m. | Meeting and discussion with members of the Bulgarian Parliament on the new draft law against the football hooliganism. |
| 12.00 p.m. | Talks with delegates from the Ministry of the Interior of Bulgaria
<i>Mr. Dimitar Hristov, Chief Expert, National Security Services, Ministry of the Interior</i>
<i>Mr. Vladimir Ivanov, Deputy Director, National Police Services, Ministry of the Interior</i>
<i>Mr. Vassil Stoykov, Head of Legal Department, Ministry of the Interior</i>
<i>Anton Tzonkov, Head of Unit Football Hooliganism, Ministry of the Interior</i> |
| 13.30 – 15.00 p.m. | Lunch |
| 15.00 – 16.30 p.m. | Visit of the National Stadium ‘Vassil Levski’ and discussion with its director |
| 16.30 – 17.00 p.m. | Meeting of the Consultative Team and conclusions of the Consultative visit |

Talks have been planned according to the needs of the Bulgarian authorities. These talks have been in line with the points focused on in the report:

- delegate from Ministry for Youth and Sport
- delegate from Ministry of Interior
- delegate from sports association (umbrella or football)
- delegate from local authorities
- delegate from fan clubs / supporters association
- delegates from sports clubs