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Convention on the Manipulation of Sports Competitions

Group of Copenhagen – Network of National Platforms

Data base – country fact sheet

BELGIUM

1. Administrative issues / State of progress

State of Progress

- First exploratory meeting with potential stakeholders in Brussels on 22 April 2016 to draw a picture of the project and define the needs.
- Followed by the drawing up of a 'declaration of intent' that was presented at the stakeholder meeting on 16 December 2016.
- On 16 December 2016, the partners of the National Platform signed a Declaration of Intent, thereby formalising their commitment to cooperate and operate jointly as a National Platform in accordance with Article 13 of the Macolin Convention.
- Belgium ratified the Macolin Convention on 1 July 2024, with the Convention entering into force in respect of Belgium on 1 November 2024.

Legal Status

- In 2010 a first Declaration of Intent was concluded between the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of the Interior, the General Prosecutor's office, the federal prosecutor and the Commissioner general of the Federal Police leading to the appointment of a national coordinator Football Fraud at the Prosecutor's office and a national coordinator Match Fixing within the Anti-Corruption Unit of the Federal Judicial Police.
- The Declaration of Intent which was officially signed on 16 December 2016 under the auspices of the Minister of Justice provides a firm legal status to the National Platform.

Responsible Secretariat

- Steering group of the National Platform.
- The secretariat is hosted at the Federal Police (Ministry of Interior) in Brussels.

Contact persons / Coordinator

- National Coordinator: Christine Casteels, christine.casteels@police.belgium.eu
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Organizational form and composition of NP (bodies/entities)

- The National Platform consists of a steering group and a general assembly.

- ❖ Members of the general assembly: Ministry of Interior; Flanders, Walloon and German-Speaking Ministries of Sports; Federal Prosecutor's office; Sports federations (football, tennis, basket, cycling, hockey); Belgian Olympic and Belgian Paralympic Committee; Gaming Commission; National Lottery; Athletes Union.

- ❖ Members of the steering group: Federal Judicial Police; Federal Prosecutor's Office; SPOC Directorate of Physical Education and Sports (Walloon), SPOC Agency for Sports Flanders, SPOC German-speaking Community Sports.

- ❖ Signal Concertation stems from the very first Mini-Platform created in 2010 and is composed of the Federal prosecutor, the Federal police and the entity (partner of the platform) concerned; they convene ad hoc when the occasion requires it.

2. Structure / Operational Aspects

Priorities / functions of the NP

The National Platform's common goal is to 'maintain trust in sports'.

Objectives

- Improve information-exchange between stakeholders in order to detect early signs of fraud/misconduct relevant to the fight against manipulation of sports competitions;
- Establish contacts and adequate information channels;
- Determine best course of action (prevention - repression).

The National Platform emphasizes prevention, detection, education and information exchange in order to fight manipulations in sports, detection and sanctions being two other constituent parts. The National Platform can issue recommendations regarding policy and best practices.

Operational procedures

- ❖ The Steering Group meets at least six times a year and organises at least two general assemblies per year.
- ❖ Informal bi-(multi-)lateral contacts are possible and indicated for some specific topics.

Implementation

Declaration of intent was signed on 16 December 2016.

Funding of the National Platform (estimated yearly budget, sources)

Only contribution in kind by all partners: Every stakeholder takes charge of proper expenses. The Steering group meets alternately at the office of one of the members (to spread costs).

3. Development Process

Origin of the initiative

- ❖ 2010: In the wake of some investigations in Belgium (e.g. Ye) the Ministers of Justice and the Interior, the Prosecutor-general's office and the Commissioner General of the Federal police decided to create a national SPOC Football Fraud at the Prosecutor's office and a national SPOC Match Fixing within the Anti-Corruption Unit of the Federal Judicial Police.
- ❖ 2014: Article 13 in the Council of Europe's Convention of Macolin incites participating countries to create a NP.

- April 2016: the Federal police hosted the 8th Interpol expert match fixing task force meeting, followed by a PDM (partnership development meeting) accompanied by Interpol and IOC with all Belgian stakeholders (government, private, sports federations) to brainstorm a National Platform.
- June 2016: first national meeting – extension of the existing 'mini-platform' (Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Interior, Prosecutors-general and police).
- October 2016: drawing up of 'declaration of intent'
- December 2016: signing of the declaration and official start of the National Platfor
- July 2024: Belgium ratified the Convention on the Manipulation of Sports Competitions (Macolin Convention).
- November 2024: The Macolin Convention entered into force in respect of Belgium.

Leading actors involved in the development process

- Ministry of Justice – Federal police, Ministry of Sports Flanders – Sports Wallonia – German-speaking Sports

Work carried out to mobilize actors? How many meetings necessary / agendas?

- Through Steering Group meetings and the organisation of General Assemblies, the National Platform reinforced its structure and governance. This process resulted in the adoption of an action plan and the establishment of agreed internal functioning modalities.

Process in defining priorities and objectives (assessments, analysis, documents produced / published)

- Decided during the meetings (cf. supra).

Previous situation (domestic law in application, difficulties in proceeding)

- Since 2010 a mini-platform has been operated successfully but some domestic issues arose with jurisdiction / finding the right partners – course of action etc.

Challenges in defining tasks and responsibilities / Reasons for inclusion or exclusion of main actors* (and inclusion/exclusion of representatives)

- The main challenge are the limited resources available – there is no external funding or extra staff.
- Thus far the main actors are very enthusiastic and willing to contribute to the project using proper means and staff.