

**COMMITTEE ON SAFETY AND SECURITY  
AT SPORTS EVENTS (T-S4)**

COUNCIL OF EUROPE CONVENTION ON AN  
INTEGRATED SAFETY, SECURITY AND  
SERVICE APPROACH AT FOOTBALL MATCHES  
AND OTHER SPORTS EVENTS (CETS No.218)

COUNCIL OF EUROPE



CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

Strasbourg, 26 April 2021

T-S4(2021)17

## **LEADERSHIP DIALOGUE**

### **on racism and hate speech at sports events**

**14 April 2021**

#### **HIGHLIGHTS**

Sport is an incredibly powerful instrument for upholding human rights and promoting the values of respect, fairness, tolerance, equality, inclusion and solidarity.

It is also the mirror of our societies and this mirror sadly continues to reflect social and political tensions, sometimes magnified by the exposure that incidents of racism and hate speech gain at large sports events.

How can this pressing issue be effectively addressed and what needs to be undertaken immediately for both a rapid and profound change to happen?

At an on-line event organised by the Council of Europe on 14 April 2021, leading figures from the world of sport and the fight against racism and discrimination discussed the incidents of racism and hate speech that regularly target players, referees and other participants on the occasion of sports events.

The Council of Europe organised this Dialogue on the occasion of the first meeting of the Committee of the Council of Europe Convention on an integrated safety, security and service approach at football matches and other sports events (known as the Saint-Denis Convention). The objective was to gather elements to inspire the future action of this Committee to address racism and hate speech as part of the forms of violence and misbehaviour covered by this treaty.

## Speakers

- Mr. **Bjørn Berge**, Deputy Secretary General, Council of Europe
- Ms. **Maria Daniella Marouda**, Chair of the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI), Council of Europe
- Ms. **Roxana Maracineanu**, French Minister of Sports
- Mr. **Mr Michele Uva**, Football and Social Responsibility Director, UEFA
- Mr. **Clarence Seedorf**, Football legend and coach
- Mr. **Ronan Evain**, Executive Director, Football Supporters Europe

Dialogue facilitated by **Jeroen Schokkenbroek**, Director of Antidiscrimination, Council of Europe.

## Participants' insights

The participants acknowledged the serious impact of such unacceptable behaviour, identified emerging challenges and exchanged on how to prevent and respond to this phenomenon, building on existing guidance and solutions and proposing new paths for action.

Sport is a powerful tool for promoting human rights and social cohesion but is also an area in which, for decades, racism and hate speech have been thriving.

The persistence and seriousness of manifestations of racism, xenophobia, antisemitism, sexism and other forms of hate speech in sports events is extremely worrying. In 2008 already, the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) issued its General Policy Recommendation No. 12 on combating racism and racial discrimination in the field of sport, which includes a number of measures that should be taken to counter this phenomenon. Moreover, ECRI regularly raises the issue of racism and intolerance in sport during its country-based monitoring reports.

Several participants expressed concern about the lack of determined action by sports organisations, implying that sanctions were not always effective and fair and that more needs to be done to engage with athletes, supporters and the media. Structural problems were also mentioned as creating fertile ground for discrimination, in particular against people from different ethnic origin, women and LGBTI people. Inclusive education, gender equality and changes in sport governance to guarantee diversity in their management were often mentioned as steps needed to address structural problems. Governments should also enact clear laws, develop policies and engage with the sport movement to address the problem.

## Call for action

The following proposals were put forward during the dialogue:

1. Making sure that all stakeholders act according to their respective individual and shared **responsibility** to dismantle the structural, cultural and social patterns which continue to normalise unacceptable behaviours. Public figures and officials should lead by example, pro-actively promoting a culture of tolerance and respect. The various stakeholders should hold each other to account.
2. Providing the appropriate **legal, regulatory and operational frameworks** needed to make sports events safer, more secure and more welcoming for all.
3. Ensuring **equal opportunities** in access to sport for all.
4. Promoting **diversity and participation** in sports organisations' governance.
5. Enacting **specific legislation against racism and hate speech** with clear definitions, sanctions and remedies. Clearly prohibiting (and when necessary sanctioning) some behaviour, such as a football player covering his or her mouth when addressing an adversary or the referee.
6. **Investigating, prosecuting and sanctioning** racist acts and hate speech.
7. **Countering online hate speech** effectively, with social media and other internet service providers making sure their services are not used for incitement to hatred.
8. Investing in the **education** of children and young people, raising their interest in sport, enhancing their awareness of racism and hate speech and promoting tolerance and non-discrimination both in physical education at school and outside school in sport schools and clubs.
9. Investing in **coaching the coaches**, ensuring that a human rights' module is integrated in the training of professional coaches.
10. **Engaging with supporters** for the effective prevention, reporting and reaction to incidents.
11. Continuing to raise **general awareness** on racism and hate speech in sports, notably with media not only reporting on such incidents, but also on the sanctions incurred or imposed.
12. **Engaging with sponsors and the advertising** industry in order to combat stereotypes.
13. **Enabling closer cooperation** between local authorities, sports federations, leagues and clubs, athletes, coaches, referees, supporters' organisations, minority representation groups, victims' associations and the media.
14. **Facilitating and institutionalising dialogue** between all parties, with the setting-up of a dedicated forum for exchange and cooperation.
15. **Sustaining the financing of measures** such as awareness-raising campaigns, supporting solidarity between clubs at national level (to enable the smaller clubs to benefit from support from bigger ones) and reattributing pecuniary penalties imposed on clubs to finance such measures.
16. Using **the Saint-Denis Committee** as a platform for international cooperation to combat racism and hate speech at sports events.