

THE CONGRESS OF LOCAL AND REGIONAL AUTHORITIES

Recommendation 144 (2004)¹ on the prevention of violence in sport, in particular at football matches: the role of local and regional authorities

The Congress,

1. Thanking the municipality of Lisbon for its warm welcome and hospitality and the National Association of Portuguese Municipalities (ANMP) for its support in the organisation of the first conference on “the role of local and regional authorities in preventing violence at sports events, in particular football matches” (Lisbon, 23-24 June 2003);

2. Expressing satisfaction at the backing given to this conference by the Council of Europe’s integrated project “Responses to violence in everyday life in a democratic society” and the close co-operation established on that occasion with the Council of Europe’s Directorate of Youth and Sport (DG IV);

3. Reasserting the principles set out in its Recommendation 16 (1996) and Resolution 27 (1996) on sport and local authorities;

4. Pointing out that:

a. sport fosters social integration and participation and, in this respect, makes a valuable contribution to the democratic process;

b. sport plays an important role in promoting understanding between European citizens;

c. sport has significant economic benefits at the local, regional and national levels;

d. sport, an important activity in our societies, is an integral part of local community activities, and local and regional authorities should therefore endeavour to promote and support it;

5. Concerned at the violence and misbehaviour in and around stadiums and on the streets of cities hosting sports events, particularly football matches, and considering that appropriate policies must be implemented to prevent such behaviour, which is often the result of the excessive abuse of alcohol and drugs;

6. Considering that:

a. players and athletes contribute to the prevention of violence by their “fair play”,

b. coaches, trainers and managing directors of teams have an essential role to play in the prevention of violence;

7. Bearing in mind:

a. the work of the Council of Europe, which for over twenty years has been promoting a global approach to the prevention of violence at sports events, and in particular, the recent recommendations by the Standing Committee of the European Convention on Spectator Violence and Misbehaviour at Sports Events and in particular at Football Matches (ETS No. 120), which highlight the greater role that should be played by local authorities in preventing violence at sports events, notably through socio-educational action and fan-coaching measures;

b. the implications for local and regional authorities of the European Union’s initiatives and decisions concerning police co-operation to improve safety and security at international football matches;

c. the measures devised by FIFA (the International Federation of Football Associations), UEFA (the European Union of Football Associations), national football associations and the FESU (European Forum for Urban Security);

8. Aware of the diversity of situations in the countries of Europe as regards the degree of centralisation of public policy-making (policing and prevention),

9. Underlines:

a. the major role that local and regional authorities can and must play in preventing violence at sports events, whether as regulators, co-ordinators of safety or security measures, owners of sports facilities, employers of the staff running those facilities, protagonists in policies for the promotion of amateur or school sport or instigators of prevention-oriented social and educational measures;

b. the importance of good co-operation between local/regional authorities and police and security services;

10. Invites the Committee of Ministers to take note of the following principles asserted at the Lisbon Conference and bring them to the attention of the Committee for the Development of Sport (CDDS), the Standing Committee of the Council of Europe Convention on Spectator Violence and Misbehaviour at Sports Events and the relevant ministries in the member states:

a. As regards all sports events

i. local and regional authorities have a fundamental role to play in preventing violence in sport;

ii. preventing violence is not merely a matter for the police. It is not confined to security measures and logistics. Prevention of violence in general, and violence in sport in particular, has a significant social and educational dimension. In this connection, in view of the exclusion of certain young people, local and regional authorities can help to promote the social integration and participation of young people;

iii. before any sports competition it is essential to adopt an integrated approach whereby all the authorities and bodies involved in the smooth running of the event are

encouraged to co-operate in applying a common strategy. Each party (public or private) must be made aware of its own responsibilities and those of its partners;

iv. local and regional authorities can play the role of mediator between the diverging interests of competition and match organisers, stadium managers, football clubs, the police, fans and local inhabitants. In some countries sufficient attention has probably not been paid to this role so far, and this state of affairs should now be remedied;

v. spectators should be treated as visitors to be welcomed and entertained. Local and regional authorities should recognise fan embassies' useful role in providing spectators with assistance and information and the positive influence they can have on their behaviour;

vi. measures should be taken to deal with the misbehaviour of a small minority of individuals. In some cases these measures may be very strict, but they must remain proportionate to the problem being tackled and be carefully targeted so as not to penalise the vast majority of law-abiding fans who merely wish to enjoy the sports event;

vii. local and regional authorities should strive to create a festive atmosphere not only for visitors but also for local inhabitants;

b. As regards major sports events and competitions, in particular big football matches

i. local and regional authorities should plan the event carefully, well in advance. They should, in particular, provide for appropriate means of transport to be made available at the proper time;

ii. a major competition affords local and regional authorities an opportunity to promote their city or region, to show a positive image at the national and international levels, to boost the local economy and, in the longer term, to equip themselves with new infrastructure and facilities;

11. Invites those member states which have not yet done so to ratify the European Convention on Spectator Violence and Misbehaviour at Sports Events (ETS No. 120);

12. Invites the Committee of Ministers and the relevant ministries to continue their support for the work of the Standing Committee of the aforementioned Convention of the Council of Europe.

1. Debated and adopted by the Congress on 26 May 2004, 2nd Sitting (see Document CG (11) 11, draft recommendation presented by B. J. Van Voorst tot Voorst (Netherlands, R, EPP/CD and H. Lund (Denmark, L, SOC), rapporteurs).