

Sporting Integrity Forum gives backing to future Council of Europe convention against match fixing

The Council of Europe, Sorbonne University and International Centre for Sport Security lead Sport Integrity Forum at the European Parliament

Brussels; 5th December 2013; A Forum on Sport Integrity, held today at the European Parliament, has given its backing to the forthcoming Council of Europe convention on match fixing.

Currently being drawn up, the convention, which will be a major step forward for Europe and around the world, was presented as part of a call, led by the ICSS, the Council of Europe and Sorbonne University, for greater collaboration between European governments in the fight against sports-results manipulation.

The “**SPORT INTEGRITY: FROM EUROPE TO ADDRESS A GLOBAL ISSUE**” forum brought together leading European decision-makers and representatives from youth organisations to discuss global research and the latest findings around sport integrity. Opened by **Androulla Vassiliou, European Commission, Commissioner for Education, Culture, Multilingualism, Sport, Media and Youth**, it explored existing links to match fixing and its economic and social consequences for European countries.

The event highlighted a number of initiatives that can and will be introduced to safeguard the integrity of sport, alongside the introduction of the Council of Europe convention on match fixing which, for the first time, will provide legally-binding standards for governments across Europe and potentially beyond. Presenting the convention at the forum, **Stanislas Frossard, Executive Secretary - Enlarged Partial Agreement on Sport, Council of Europe**, said:

“The global sport betting market has an estimated annual turnover of between €400bn and €750 bn, with illegal betting thought to represent around one-third of that figure. This is a huge and growing problem which threatens not only the integrity of sport but also the rule of law.

“The Council of Europe convention will set legally-binding standards to help tackle match fixing whilst encouraging cooperation between public authorities, sports organisations and betting operators.

“Countries including Australia, New Zealand, Canada, Japan and Morocco are already working with us on the convention, which will be open to countries across Europe and around the world. Legal opinions and background information from the Sorbonne-ICSS project were made available to the drafting group and have made a significant contribution to its work.”

The forum also stressed the importance of European Union initiatives, such as “Erasmus +” and the European Sport Day, as vehicles to promote ethical values in sport to young people. It discussed a number of programmes at international level such as Save the Dream, a joint initiative of the ICSS and the Qatar Olympic Committee, as well as projects that will be introduced at a national level to promote and protect sport integrity values in young people.

Ennio Di Francesco, Governing Board Member, Italian Committee Sport Against Drugs of CONI spoke about the importance of promoting sport integrity values in schools, whilst **Giusy Versace, President, Disability No Limits**, European Athletics Champion and aspiring Paralympian, closed the session highlighting the power of sport and how it can improve the lives of people with a disability. Disability No Limits is a charity that raises funds for high-tech aids for economically disadvantaged people with disabilities.

Member of the European Parliament, Santiago Fisas Ayxela said: “As a Member of Parliament, I decided to host this event given the current focus on the human rights dimension of violations to the integrity of sport. We need to work on a comprehensive approach, including the development of international legal standards, information exchange mechanisms and, perhaps most importantly, educational programmes to protect belief in sport’s core values, and the dreams of children for fair sport.”

ICSS President Mohammed Hanzab stated: “With the alarming growth of sports-results manipulation and breaches to sport integrity recently emerging in the UK and Australia, today’s forum at the European Parliament has provided many decision makers from the world of sport and government, as well as representatives of youth organisations, with the opportunity to discuss match fixing and draw attention to the effect on civil liberty when the integrity of sport is violated. As two of the most serious topics currently facing sport, it was important to raise awareness and ensure the international community work together to solve these issues.

“Whilst there is an easy way to solve these issues and with many criminal organisations operating across several countries and regions, this forum has reinforced the need to develop a trans-national approach to protecting the integrity of sport. At the ICSS, we are proud to be working with the Sorbonne University to develop new research and frameworks in this area, as well as supporting the efforts of the Council of Europe as they develop this new convention against match fixing.”

-ENDS-

NOTE TO EDITORS:

About the International Centre for Sport Security (ICSS)

The ICSS is an international, independent and non-profit organisation. With an aim to improve security, safety and integrity throughout the world of sport; the ICSS works with governments, federations, clubs, leagues and event organisers. The ICSS provides expertise, services and global knowledge - advising on event and venue safety, strategic security and investigations into corruption in sport.

The Council of Europe and the match fixing convention

The 47-nation Council of Europe promotes human rights, democracy and the rule of law across the continent and beyond. It has developed over 200 legally-binding treaties (or “conventions”) including the European Convention on Human Rights and ground-breaking international agreements on corruption, cybercrime and data protection.

The forthcoming convention on the manipulation of sports-results will set international standards on preventing match fixing and prosecuting offenders, whilst also providing a framework for improving cooperation between public authorities, sports organisations and betting operators.

43 countries – including Australia, Japan and Morocco – are already involved in negotiating the convention, which will be open to countries around the world.

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