

# Criminal activity is undermining European sport

EU needs to do more to maintain the integrity of sporting activity, argues **Petra Kammerevert**

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**B**y drafting a new anti-doping law this month, the German federal government has taken a necessary first step in maintaining the integrity of sport. Not only are athletes who use illegal drugs damaging the reputation of sport, they are also undermining the fundamental values which sport is supposed to represent: fairness and respect for opponents and teammates. Doping is nothing but cheating, particularly when sporting success brings with it enormous financial benefits. It is therefore high time that doping was made punishable by criminal law.

We may well praise the interior minister Thomas de Maizière for this approach, however, an anti-doping law is not enough here.

The great corruption and betting scandals of recent years, such as the 700 or so matches under suspicion of being fixed that were uncovered as part of the VETO investigations continue to threaten the integrity of sport. Nowadays sport is not just about winning or losing, it also involves a lot of money. We know that sport is a billion-euro business and we have to face up to the fact that it is affected by criminal activities.

Match fixing is a growing problem that is supported by pro-

fessionally organised criminal structures. With the help of sport legislation, perhaps action can be taken against those athletes who are guilty of match fixing. However, this is not an effective way to deal with globally operating betting fraudsters. For this reason, in 2013 the European parliament adopted a resolution asking EU member states to specifically include match fixing in their national criminal law and to provide for appropriate sanctions to be taken. Each member state was also asked to establish regulatory authorities to identify and combat corruption and illegal activities in sport.

Responsibility should not be limited to a political level. Maintaining the integrity of sport should also be up to legal betting providers, whose business model could suffer serious damage if their customers lose confidence in the fairness of sporting competitions. Self-regulatory organisations, such as the European sports security association, that collect detailed information on suspicious betting activity from providers and forward it to the relevant sports and supervisory authorities, are therefore undoubtedly positive.

Finally, responsibility for the problem needs to be established on an individual level. Sports associations need to draw up a code of conduct for their employees and officials (athletes, coaches and referees), outlining the dangers of match fixing and setting clear bans and sanctions. It is not only a matter of convincing individual players of the moral righteousness of fairness and respect, but also threatening and enforcing credible sanctions. In this way it will be possible to deprive organised betting fraud of the influence it has on the outcome of sporting competitions.

To be successful in this regard, throughout Europe, we also need the coordination and support of the new European commission, now required to assume its new responsibility from the Lisbon treaty in sport. It must ensure that there is unanimity throughout Europe in initiating criminal proceedings, not just in regards to doping but also match fixing and betting fraud. This is the only way to reduce the influence of organised crime in sport.

In recent years, we have been able to observe how manipulative interventions in sporting competitions have damaged the reputation of certain sports. Not only are the integrity and fundamental values of sport at stake, but also people's enthusiasm to continue following sporting competitions. ★



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