



AMATT TRAINING TO MEDIA OPERATORS

FOR OPTIMIZING EU POLICIES IN ORDER TO ENHANCE
THE EFFECTIVENESS OF TRAINING IN PROMOTING
SPORT BODIES TOP DECISION MAKERS AND MEDIA
OPERATORS' CAPACITY AND SPECIALIZED
COMPETENCES FOR PREVENTING AND COUNTERING
MATCH-FIXING





THE AMATT PROJECT HAS PILOTED IN FIVE COUNTRIES TRAINING INTERVENTIONS TO PROMOTE THE ACQUIRING OF SPECIALIZED COMPETENCES BY SPORT BODIES TOP DECISION MAKERS AND MEDIA OPERATORS. THE AMATT PROJECT MOVES FROM THE ASSESSMENT THAT THE PREVALINING FOCUS HAS BEEN SO FAR ON TRAINING ATHLETES/PLAYERS, WHILE STUDIES AND FIELD EXPERIENCE SHOW THAT THE ROLE OF MANAGERS AND DIRECTORS, AND OTHER RELEVANT STAKEHOLDERS SUCH AS THE MEDIA, IS EVEN MORE CRUCIAL.

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1. INTRODUCTION

AMATT is the first European project that includes journalists and media operators among its training target. This point of innovation, very celebrated at the Cluster Meeting held by EACEA in Brussels, arose after a discourse and content analysis of the media treatment of the phenomenon in the countries of southern Europe.

The analysis revealed a series of cognitive limitations on the subject and a lack of understanding about particular aspects of the phenomena, which generated incomplete information or, in some cases, erroneous information. The latter occurred, particularly, in confusion about the operation of the betting monitoring system, which led to confusing an alert in market movements with the certainty that a game has been manipulated.

In this sense, AMATT developed special training modules with the objective of having, implementing and sharing a pedagogical tool that would allow to "holistically and profoundly" teach "the complexity of the phenomenon of results manipulation, its link with the betting market, the operation and characteristics of the new global online betting market, and the network of crime that grows, consolidates and multiplies around the world of sports in order to manipulate competitions.

Training for media operators were organized in 5 countries partners: Portugal, Spain, Slovenia, Austria and Italy. More precisely, the training was dedicated to journalists of different media operators, different kind of media, and for several areas of specialization, from sport to justice, from politics to economics and society. In Portugal, post-graduate students of journalism and communication were also trained.



2. METHOD AND OBJECTIVES

A method of the training consisted of presentations and discussions on corruption in sport and match-fixing using the AMATT training modules.

The objectives of the training were:

- Improving awareness about corruption in sport and match-fixing;
- Showing the complexity of the phenomenon, being not only a matter of sport journalism, but also related with society, political, economic, criminal and judicial issues;
- Recognizing the engagement in match-fixing in different sports;
- Building capacity and competences to fight match-fixing; and
- Stimulating will to act towards match-fixing.



3. DESCRIPTION OF THE TRAINING PROCESS

During the training, a senior trainer went systematically through every objective together with attended journalists (participants) and/or students. Every objective represented one step towards a better understanding of sport integrity and, particularly, a match-fixing phenomenon in sports.

a. Improving awareness about match-fixing in sports

In the beginning, a senior trainer presented match-fixing in sports through relevant and credible references. The presented definitions of match-fixing are based on reports of local and international sports bodies, convention and report of European institutions regulating match-fixing policy and academic sources that investigated match-fixing as a common social phenomenon. Important reports discussing match-fixing in sports by sports body are Union of European Football Associations' (UEFA) *Invitation to express interest*¹ and *European football united for the integrity of the game*². Important definitions of match-fixing are discussed in the Council of Europe's *Convention on the manipulation of sports competitions*³ and the *European Commission's Match-fixing in sport*⁴. Last but not least are empirical studies by several journalist and academic that have been successfully researching in the topic, such as Declan Hill, Stefano Caneppele, Dino Numerato, Minhyeok Tak, or Marcelo Moriconi.

A senior trainer presented match-fixing through above reliable references on one hand and through practical examples of match-fixing that happened in sports.

General Findings

Awareness about match-fixing in sports of those journalists who have been already reporting about match-fixing in sports is higher than of those journalists who were not interested in sports. However, knowledge of the complexity of the subject varies greatly from country to country, and perceptions are strongly influenced by the history of home sports corruption. While in Slovenia, for example, session participants associate the manipulation of results mostly with gambling, in Portugal it is believed that this is a historical problem related to the culture of clubs and the links between sport and politics.

b. Showing the complexity of the phenomenon, being not only a matter of sport journalism, but also related with society, political, economic, criminal and judicial issues

Throughout the formations, following the AMATT stringing module, the trainers were deconstructing the phenomenon of result manipulation, accounting for the different actors, incentives, risk areas, opportunity structures associated with the phenomenon. This task is directly linked to the perception that the manipulation of results, in all the countries participating in the project, is a purely sporting issue, and should be informed and investigated like that. The training set out to explain the dimension of the new global betting market, with its characteristics and opportunity structures for

¹ Accessible at: https://www.uefa.com/MultimediaFiles/Download/ITT/uefaorg/Tenders/02/62/84/55/2628455_DOWNLOAD.pdf

² Accessible at: https://www.uefa.com/MultimediaFiles/Download/uefaorg/Clubs/01/93/51/24/1935124_DOWNLOAD.pdf

³ Accessible at: <https://rm.coe.int/CoERMPublicCommonSearchServices/DisplayDCTMContent?documentId=09000016801cdd7e>

⁴ Accessible at: https://ec.europa.eu/assets/eac/sport/library/studies/study-sports-fraud-final-version_en.pdf

crime. The participation of organized crime and the incentives to be interested in this activity. The historical characteristics of the manipulation of results, a practice that has been present throughout history. The operation of the betting monitoring systems and the set of political measures implemented in each country to combat the phenomenon.

General Findings

In all countries, the participants of the sessions agree that the phenomenon is seen as a strictly sports or sports related issue. The most surprised in the formations, in general, were journalists who are dedicated to other areas, such as justice, police news, or even news of general interest. These journalists found in the phenomenon of the manipulation of results an interesting and relevant topic to carry out investigations and articles focusing on variables not strictly sporting (fundamentally issues related to the infiltration of organized crime in sport and the current operation and characteristics of the betting-market). In general, participant agreed that media in their countries do not report appropriately about match-fixing in sports.

c. Recognizing the engagement in match-fixing

Related to the previous point, senior trainer emphasized the engagement in match-fixing and the importance of being vigilant and investigative about it. He presented some scandals to discuss with the trainees whether this was match-fixing, corruption in sport, or natural practices within the activity.

General Findings

Journalists who were more interested in sports recognize or suspect irregularities more often than those who are not interested in sports. Participants mentioned the importance of know-how approach to recognize and report about match-fixing. Recognizing match-fixing is not as easy as it is a secret/hidden deal between involved actors. Recognizing match-fixing as such is generally recognized but only due match-fixing affairs that happened in the past. Thus, recognizing demands certain skill or, so to speak, recognizing is a skill for itself.

d. Building capacity and competences

Using AMATT training materials, senior trainers highlighted strong informative, advocate, researching and protective approaches to cooperate with stakeholders like media operators who are interested in building sports integrity in the country partners. The objectives and recommendation of the Council of Europe Convention against Manipulation of Sport Competitions were presented and debated. Special attention was put in explain the built of multi-stakeholders National Platforms. The role of media in that process, as provider of information and investigative actor, was discussed.

General Findings

The main question for participants was what they think are relevant competencies and skills necessary to investigate and report about match-fixing for media operators. They listed the following ones:

- knowledge about sports in general;
- a certain knowledge about law;
- knowledge about the betting system;
- having an investigative streak;
- willing to collaborate with sports bodies;
- status of “desirability” (a journalist who is not undesirable in public).

Participants believe that only some of media operators have enough knowledge and (more important) human and economic resources for investigating and reporting about match-fixing. They do not know if training or education is essential for the match-fixing issue.



e. Stimulating will to act

There is a difference between the action of a watchdog organization (like the Transparency International chapters involved in AMATT) and media. Senior trainers discussed the importance of reciprocal collaboration between both. Firstly, the target group of both is different. The target group of TIs is decision makers working in a sport while the media's target group covers the general public who is interested in the sport. Any action of each is adjusted to the different target groups but both narratives are compatible and even inevitable for a long-term impact.

A reason to act towards match-fixing in sports depends, among others, on one's policy set. Again, if journalists are interested in sports there is more possibility to act towards irregularities in sports. In that case, no special stimulation is needed. However, collaboration with a watchdog organization seems fruitful to reach various stakeholders who are interested in making changes.

General Findings

Participants claimed that investigating match-fixing is anything but an easy task. According to them, investigating and reporting about match-fixing is dangerous and journalist risks disapproval from the public (i.e. fans) or relevant stakeholders (i.e. officials) or even athletes themselves. They concluded that, in some way, an investigative journalist is a whistleblower to whom critiques and threats are aimed at him. Participants see the importance to cooperate with watchdog organizations like TIs because of needed protection and advocacy.

In terms of cooperation with other actors, journalists recognize the existence of pressures or limitations in informative terms due to the relationship of power that links some clubs with politics. This influence peddling process is more visible in football. This influence of external power factors in the informative treatment of sports integrity was, in fact, revealed in the data collection made during the development of AMATT. Judicial and police actors consider that, many times, the actions of the media are an obstacle rather than an aid to develop judicial processes.





4. FINAL COMMENTS: SUMMARY

The training for media operators offered participants information and material to better understand match-fixing in sports and methods of how to approach match-fixing in the partners countries. One part of the training was focused on giving information about match-fixing in sport on the normative level and emphasizing necessary changes that should happen (or are about to happen) at that level. The second part of the training was more focused on TI's and media operators' approach and their contribution to fighting match-fixing since methods of how they oppose match-fixing differ. The training enabled the exchanging of good practices between TI chapters and media operators.

From AMATT's point of view, introduced information about match-fixing was useful for participants but it lacked practical guidelines for journalists to work on the field. Considering that public discourses on match-fixing are controversial, discussions of match-fixing on the regulative level was an important first step for media operators to improve awareness about the phenomenon and get a framework to get started investigating match-fixing.

Participants see the usefulness of the training and all discussed information about match-fixing. They did not get practical tools to work on the field, but they see the importance to collaborate with other stakeholders to get advocative support. They claimed that reporting and investigating match-fixing in sports depends mainly on the personal interest of the journalists. The reason why media is not interested in investigating match-fixing is an issue of the mass media's policy. Participants agreed that the investigation of the match-fixing phenomenon is work for investigative journalists and media who has a corruption-oriented policy. In other words, media who is more alternative and do not copy-paste news from international media. Participants concluded that match-fixing is a complex problem that extends beyond national borders. Collaboration with local and international organizations is inevitable. Participants are not familiar with any match-fixing training and educational program.



5. KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

- a) Training journalists is very important: as a pioneering project on this issue, AMATT sets up a presenter for this target to be incorporated into future financial projects by the European Commission.
- b) Lack of information about the breadth and complexity of the problem: the phenomenon of the manipulation of results must cease to be understood as a problem strictly in the world of sport and must be understood "and informed" as a social, economic, criminal flaw. judicial and also, logically, sports;
- c) Promote new approaches and related topics for a broader and more effective information agenda: the AMATT training module has proved effective in providing a holistic understanding of the problem, generating interest on the part of the journalistic collective not from the world of sport, and creating a more complete informative agenda about the phenomenon;
- d) Ignorance of the functioning of the betting market and its opportunity structures for crime: the issue of greater ignorance throughout the sessions has been the understanding of the functioning of the global betting market, its international characteristics and its opportunity structures for the crime. Many participants in the sessions recognized errors in the informative treatment carried out by themselves due to not understanding in depth how the monitoring alerts work or confusing the suspension of a bet due to an alert with a confirmed match-fixing case. It is necessary to train the journalistic collective in this subject;
- e) Practical Guide: it would be appropriate for the European Commission to see in a positive way promoting future actions and projects related to a toolkit for journalistic work on match-fixing. The preparation of such a tool is beyond the possibilities and obligations of AMATT, but it would be very useful for ongoing training;
- f) Political relationship - sport and its relation to informative treatment: in general, it is very important to promote studies that evaluate the obstacles that the public and private interests of the political-sport relationship generate for the fight against the manipulation of results. In all participating countries, spurious relationships were reported between the media and clubs and between clubs, politics and the information agenda. Particular interests are, in many cases, p + or above collective interests in pursuit of sports integrity. both in the political sphere, as in sports, as in the newspaper.



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