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Subject: Council Conclusions on sports-related violence
– *Council Conclusions (7 June 2021)*

Delegations will find in the annex the Council Conclusions on sports-related violence, approved by the Council (Justice and Home Affairs) at its 3799th meeting held on 7 June 2021.

**COUNCIL CONCLUSIONS
ON SPORTS-RELATED VIOLENCE**

1. UNDERLINING that the European Union's objective is, amongst other things, to provide citizens with a high level of safety within an area of freedom, security and justice, by developing common action among the Member States in the field of police cooperation as laid down in Title V of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union¹, whilst continuing to respect fundamental rights and freedoms,
2. RECALLING that the new EU Security Union Strategy 2021-2025 stresses the need to tackle terrorism and prevent radicalisation, disrupt organised crime and fight cybercrime,
3. HAVING IN MIND the strategic priorities and guiding principles of cross-border law enforcement cooperation contained in the EU Strategic Agenda 2019-2024, the communication from the Commission on the new EU Security Union Strategy 2021-2025, the Council conclusions on the Internal Security and European Police Partnership of December 2020, the Prüm Decision (2008/615/JHA), and the 2016 EU Football Handbook²,

¹ Prüm Convention (10900/05); also, Council Resolution concerning an updated handbook with recommendations for international police cooperation and measures to prevent and control violence and disturbances in connection with football matches with an international dimension, in which at least one Member State is involved (12795/16 - OJ C 444, 29.11.2016, p. 1–36); Council Resolution concerning a handbook with recommendations for preventing and managing violence and disturbances in connection with football matches with an international dimension, in which at least one Member State is involved, through the adoption of good practice in respect of police liaison with supporters (12792/16); Council Resolution concerning the costs of hosting and deploying visiting police delegations in connection with football matches (and other sports events) with an international dimension, in which at least one Member State is involved (12791/16); Council Resolution on the use by Member States of bans on access to venues of football matches with an international dimension (2003/C 281/01); Council Decision concerning security in connection with football matches with an international dimension (2002/348/JHA, amended by Council Decision 2007/412/JHA);

² Council Resolution concerning an updated handbook with recommendations for international police cooperation and measures to prevent and control violence and disturbances in connection with football matches with an international dimension, in which at least one Member State is involved ('EU Football Handbook' - 2016/C 444/01)

4. RECALLING that sport, and major sports events in particular, reflect prosperity, promote the sharing of experiences and values, and directly correlate with the well-being and development of European society and its citizens,
5. ACKNOWLEDGING the relevance of sports events in the social, economic, cultural, and political context, and STRESSING the impact of COVID-19 on Member States' economies, social and cultural initiatives, as well as on the international police cooperation and law enforcement agencies, that will have to adapt their security strategies to this new environment at European, national, and regional level,
6. STRESSING the importance that sports events represent in terms of mass gatherings which bring together many fans from different countries, whose safety, security and health must be a priority for all,
7. RECALLING that the European Union often and repeatedly hosts numerous major sporting events with an international dimension, among which the UEFA Champions League and the UEFA European Football Championship are both very popular and important in the global sports context,
8. EMPHASISING the fact that the new model chosen by UEFA for the next UEFA EURO championship (June-July 2021) poses, in itself, a unique challenge to security, since the competition will take place in 11 European cities simultaneously,
9. RECOGNISING the important role played by EUROPOL in supporting Member States and their competent authorities in promoting cooperation among law enforcement agencies,

THE COUNCIL:

10. EMPHASISES that the organisers of major events, be they political, cultural or sports-related, that take place during the COVID-19 pandemic, should continue to adopt measures and procedures that prevent the spread of the virus among all actors involved: the general public, teams, referees, event managers and coordinators, law enforcement officers, civil protection, medical and emergency staff, private security personnel, media and other staff,
11. STRESSES the relevance of international police cooperation and information exchange in ensuring a safe and secure UEFA EURO 2020 competition, including through digital platforms, particularly since the matches scheduled will take place across a large number of European cities,
12. STRESSES the fact that in order to ensure effective international cooperation, those Member States receiving the assistance of spotters sent by other Member States should, as far as possible, indicate the requested size and composition of such deployments as well as the applicable procedures. This should not preclude any subsequent adjustment resulting from dynamic risk assessment,
13. ACKNOWLEDGES that monitoring the movement of risk (i.e. potentially problematic) supporters across Member States may be vital in order to prevent public disorder and associated criminal activity, notwithstanding the absence of the general public at the sport venues. The Council therefore ENCOURAGES effective international cooperation through the deployment of specialised law enforcement *spotters as well as other liaison officers at the International Police Cooperation Centre*, even if a sports event takes place without the general public attending.

14. RECOGNISES that, in view of several recent incidents of sports-related violence involving risk supporters in a number of European countries, it is crucial to address this issue not only in the context of sport stadia and other sports venues, but also in the context of other activities related to this phenomenon. Thus, in order to prevent and mitigate potentially dangerous incidents, the Council DEEMS it relevant to address the issue by adopting a holistic approach. The scope of preventive measures should be enlarged to cover locations other than sports venues, which attract significant numbers of supporters and may thus represent a security risk. Police preventive measures in locations such as public transport, airports, hotels, training centres, locations used by teams and referees, nightlife areas and other public spaces are crucial to the overall security of major sport events.
15. EMPHASISES the importance of close cooperation between all relevant stakeholders within the international sport events framework, specifically between those directly responsible for the safety, security, servicing and management of major sporting events,
16. EMPHASISES the importance of drawing up a final report and evaluation of the tournament, which should be distributed among relevant stakeholders, through NFIPs and the Europol Platform for Experts created for this purpose. The focus of the report should be on public security and law enforcement issues and should promote a debate on identified security, including COVID 19-related vulnerabilities and difficulties,
17. STRESSES the importance of protecting public spaces during major sport events, as well as ensuring the protection of private spaces that are open to the public, namely through the implementation of security-by-design concepts as well as the use of surveillance and detection systems that incorporate artificial intelligence, whilst respecting fundamental rights and freedoms and in line with national legislation,
18. CALLS on Member States, through their law enforcement agencies, to continue to monitor online content, with a view to preventing and mitigating the dissemination of messages that incite violence, extremism, radicalisation and xenophobia,

19. STRESSES the need for Member States to increase the risk assessment of risk supporters, especially those with extremist ideologies, so as to identify, prevent and limit possible hostile and criminal activity during international sport events. The Council therefore CONSIDERS that cooperation between police spotting and crime investigation as well as prevention/proximity policing should be enhanced in order to promote the sharing of relevant information,
20. EMPHASISES the importance of strengthening cooperation between EU law enforcement agencies and networks and the Council of Europe expert groups, in order to prevent sports-related violence and to tackle racism, xenophobia and extremism among supporters,
21. Within the police cross-border cooperation framework, COMMITS to supporting and strengthening expert working groups which have the relevant police expertise within the European Union in the context of sports-related violence and extremism, but also across the globe when it comes to major sporting events in collaboration with INTERPOL.
22. INVITES the NFIP network, supported by Europol, to draw up and present an annual report on the threat assessment and violence associated with sports-related events.
23. STRESSES the importance of the role of the NFIPs³ as the direct central contact points for police information exchange and for facilitating international police cooperation in connection with football matches with an international dimension. REMINDS Member States to ensure that their NFIP is sufficiently resourced to carry out the assigned tasks.
24. Since according to practitioners Council Decision 348/2002 requires an update in order to reflect the current best practices and police approaches, INVITES the Commission to closely collaborate with the NFIP network and explore the possibility of presenting an appropriate legislative proposal.

³ The European Commission is supporting the NFIP network through the project “NFIP Network: Event Policing & International Cooperation EURO 2020” (grant decision: EAC-2018-0474).