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Subject : **Seminar on Football hooliganism (Blackburn, 27-28 February 1998)**

Attached is a report of seminar on football hooliganism held in Blackburn on 27-28 February 1998.

The Report gives an account of progress in implementation of the Council resolution on preventing and restraining football hooliganism [ENFOPOL 121 8246/97] and contains a number of recommendations for future action which will be considered by the Police Co-operation Working Group during the UK and Austrian Presidencies.

REPORT OF THE SEMINAR ON FOOTBALL HOOLIGANISM HELD IN BLACKBURN ON 27-28 FEBRUARY 1998.

Introduction

1. On 9 June 1997 the Council adopted a resolution [ENFOPOL 121 8246/97] on preventing and restraining football hooliganism through the exchange of experience, exclusion from stadiums and media policy. The resolution asked for a report on actions taken at national level on these points to be made to the Council in the second six months of 1998, accompanied if appropriate by proposals for further initiatives.
2. Under the aegis of the Police Co-operation Working Group a group of experts from Belgium, France, Germany, Netherlands and the United Kingdom have co-ordinated work on implementing the resolution. Netherlands initially chaired meetings of this expert group, whose work continued during the Luxembourg Presidency. This report to the Council has been compiled by the UK Presidency.

1. ANNUAL MEETING OF EXPERTS

1.1 The resolution called for an annual meeting of experts on football hooliganism to exchange experience, consolidate contacts and prepare a situation report. The first such meeting was the seminar on the policing of football held in Blackburn on 27 - 28 February 1998.

1.2 Representation at the experts' meeting was extended beyond the Member States of the European Union to include a wider range of countries sending teams to the World Cup this year. As a result, the seminar was in two parts: an open session at which policing experts were joined by representatives from footballing associations including FIFA and UEFA, supporters groups, other individual interested parties and the CFO (French World Cup Organising Committee); and closed sessions involving EU policing experts and limited attendance by experts from other countries and organisations (see below). There were 23 countries represented: the 15 Member States, 6 Central East European States and in view of the World Cup 2002, Japan and Korea. There were some 106 delegates at the seminar.

1.3 The open session concentrated on safety and security arrangements for the World Cup 1998. CFO provided a presentation of their proposals for controlling hooliganism both inside and outside the stadium. Members states whose countries had qualified for the Finals then provided a presentation on the arrangements made and liaison they had undertaken in the lead up to France '98. Japan and Korea also provided details of their safety arrangements and plans for the World Cup 2002.

1.4 The separate closed sessions discussed the working business of the experts' meeting. For part of these sessions, the footballing authorities were present to comment on ticketing policy. At all sessions, representatives from the Central and East European States and Japan and Korea were in attendance.

2. TICKETING

2.1 The Netherlands proposed an extensive programme of ticketing controls aimed at ensuring segregation of rival supporters and minimising the possibility of tickets being sold on the black market. The measures proposed were aimed at providing:

- segregation of supporters;
- balanced allocation of tickets to competing countries;
- removal of the scope for tickets to be sold outside authorised agencies
- inclusion on tickets of details of the purchaser/holder

2.2 It was proposed that these measures would be implemented by the organisers and would form part of the agreement they would make with police and government before accepting the responsibility for organising and running an international competition. The point was made that safety and security should prevail above commercial interests.

2.3 The football authorities present acknowledged that an acceptable method of ticket allocation was important but felt that an organising authority had a wide range of interests to take into account when developing arrangements for individual tournaments so that there would be difficulty in complying with the arrangements proposed.

2.3 Given the differing views expressed concerning the scale of the difficulties and necessary remedies it was agreed that an option would be to set up an *ad hoc* working group involving policing and football organisations to consider the issue further and establish good practice in ticketing arrangements for use in all major club and international tournaments. As a first step it would be necessary for individual delegates to obtain the views of their respective governments and football associations as to what they perceived to be the salient considerations.

3. STADIUM BANS

3.1 The resolution (ENFOPOL 121, 8246/97) invited the responsible Ministers to ask their national Sports Associations to examine whether a stadium ban could be applied to matches on a European level on the basis of civil law.

3.2 Following discussion of this proposal by experts the Netherlands tabled a paper at a meeting of the Police Co-operation Working Group on 19-20 November 1997 which contained proposals for handling the question of mutual enforcement of stadium bans (ENFOPOL 210). This suggested that, because different approaches were taken to stadium bans in different Member States (some using sanctions under the criminal or public law, some under civil law), securing mutual enforcement of bans - with particular reference to international matches - was something which could only be secured by and through European and national football associations.

3.3 The Netherlands paper proposed a framework letter to the associations and asked Member States to invite their Ministers to write accordingly. This proposal met with objections from a number of Member States. Some about the principle and others about the practicalities.

3.4 At the Blackburn seminar Italy tabled a proposal that a pilot study should be undertaken to develop a common strategy to eliminate hooligans from sporting events. The basis of approach would be to provide an international system of stadium bans which recognised the domestic legislation of Member States and enabled the exchange of information on such bans either through civil or public law. The intention was that the responsibility for implementation of the measures at international level should lie within the competence of the national football associations and that the role of the state should be limited to ensuring that associations had sufficient regard to the problem of hooliganism.

3.5 Those present supported the principle of international stadium bans. However practical objections were raised on a number of issues: firstly, there could be difficulties because some countries instigated stadium bans without recourse to the law; secondly, there could be problems with transferring intelligence information between countries where legal process had not been undertaken; thirdly, it was questionable whether football associations - both at national and international level - would be willing to take on the responsibility for monitoring, information exchange and enforcement; and fourthly, there were doubts as to the ability of the state to ensure that footballing bodies effectively undertook this responsibility.

3.6 In the light of the discussion undertaken, the seminar recognised that there were still difficulties to overcome not least in respect of the involvement of the football authorities. There was a need to apply some form of national ban at an international level and differences between national jurisdictions emphasised the need to establish some form of pilot study. However, it was agreed that in the first instance further detailed work was necessary to establish the difficulties which existed and what form the pilot study should take bearing in mind the various sensitivities. It was proposed that Belgium, Germany, Italy, Netherlands and the United Kingdom would form a small experts group to take this forward, with other Member States contacting their respective football associations and notifying that experts group of their response.

4. CHECKLIST ON MEDIA POLICY

4.1 The resolution asked for a checklist on media policy to be developed for use by the relevant policing authorities with recommendations for a media strategy relating to international football championships.

4.2 A checklist has been drawn up (ENFOPOL 211) which has been approved by the EU Police Co-operation Working Group as a model on which the authorities concerned can draw when planning their media strategy for a particular international event.

4.3 The delegates at the Blackburn seminar welcomed the media strategy and proposed that the checklist should be subject to review after the World Cup Finals in France.

5. ANNUAL SITUATION REPORT

5.1 The resolution required an annual situation report to be compiled showing the situation regarding football hooliganism in the Member States. Reference should be made to any developments and special attention paid to international networks of supporters groups.

5.2 A questionnaire was drawn up - ENFOPOL 216 - which was distributed to Member States. Replies were received from 14 countries and responses collated and analysed by representatives from Germany, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom. A summary of the responses received was tabled at the Blackburn seminar and discussed by delegates.

5.3 The questionnaire represented the first step towards an annual report. It involved devising a comprehensive questionnaire in order to obtain information from Member States on measures in place and their effectiveness. The responses assisted in highlighting the main sources of difficulty within Member States and behavioural patterns of supporters particularly when they travelled to other countries. Some responses provided little in the way of detail which suggested that some Member States either did not have the infrastructure to gather the information needed to respond to the questionnaire; or that the scale of the problem of football hooliganism was limited.

5.4. The Blackburn seminar concluded that the questionnaire had been extremely useful. It had provided information on the systems and methods in place in different Member States and an indication of the level of resources devoted to football intelligence networks.

5.5 Delegates welcomed the results of the questionnaire which had provided an overview of the position. Importantly, the questionnaire had provided a useful pointer as to the issues to be addressed by those Member States and associated States where the problem of football hooliganism was not (yet) so explicit, pointing the way to a pro-active approach.

5.6 The experts meetings concluded that a report should be drawn up on the basis of responses to the questionnaire and that the questionnaire should be developed as an instrument for action and a pointer to best practice rather than simply a record of factual information.

6. INFORMATION EXCHANGE

6.1 Belgium considered that the arrangements for exchanging information between Member States were not providing spectator and match information in sufficient time and quality in advance of matches. It was important that there should be a unique national contact point which provided: basic foreign language skills; for 24-hour a day contact seven days a week; access to relevant information sources; and categorisation of risk in respect of supporter intelligence information.

6.2 The expert meeting recognised that unstructured intelligence was a concern especially since agreed formats were in place for the exchange of information. It would be useful to reinforce the common standardised European approach to risk categorisation and this would be discussed further by the experts' group.

7. CONCLUSIONS

7.1 The expert meeting reflected a high level of co-operation between Member States in the policing of football. Delegates recognised that individual Member States had distinct judicial systems and that in areas such as common international stadium bans further work was needed. The group was optimistic however, that with further discussion and consultation, effective proposals could be developed to meet outstanding concerns in combating football hooliganism.

7.2 The wide representation at the seminar enabled other interested groups to provide a useful contribution.

7.3 The contribution from the French delegation in terms of safety and security arrangements for this year's World Cup was particularly welcomed by many delegates and was helpful in emphasising to the meeting the very detailed and careful preparations which have been made for this year's Finals.

7.4 The meeting concluded that further work was needed on a number of aspects of the arrangements for combating football hooliganism. The principle outstanding tasks were as follows:

Ticketing:

the Police Co-operation Working Group should consider the possibility of establishing an ad hoc working group of policing experts and football organisations to establish good practice in ticketing controls. As a first step delegations would be invited to identify the salient considerations involved.

Stadium bans:

a further meeting of the expert group of forerunner countries (Belgium, Germany, Italy, Netherlands and the United Kingdom) was needed to consider the practical difficulties involved and to look into the proposal for a pilot study.

Media policy:

the strategy agreed earlier by the EU Police Co-operation Working Group should be reviewed in the light of the experience of Member States during the World Cup Finals in France.

Annual Report:

an Annual Report should be drawn up reflecting responses to the questionnaire issued in ENFOPOL 216 (12172/97). The questionnaire should be repeated on an annual basis and responses used to identify and develop effective approaches for use in Member States.

Information exchange:

consideration should be given to ways in which the existing arrangements could be improved with particular reference to risk categorisation in the context of supporter intelligence, periods of cover and language skills.

