

Match-fixing has reached extensive proportions, and the highest levels, in football, tainting World Cup qualifiers and Champions League matches in the process. Europol, its partner agencies and UEFA have had some notable successes—but enormous challenges still lie ahead.

Think of “match-fixing” in football and you probably think of throwing the result. But these days that’s just one part of the fixing racket. With players, match officials and coaches in on the act, even the number of throw-ins and the exact timing of penalties are subject to manipulation, in what are known as spot fixes.

This wild growth in the manipulation of even the most minute details of the game can be laid at the doorstep of one phenomenon: the growth in online betting.

And with the huge sums to be earned from making the unpredictable predictable, the use of violence and intimidation is itself a predictable outcome.

## TEAMING UP FOR TRANSPARENCY

Sports manipulation knows no borders, and that’s why a coordinated international response is required to tackle it. Experts at Europol work with law enforcement authorities across the EU to identify links between suspicious matches and suspects, and to uncover the organised crime groups orchestrating these multi-million euro frauds against sport. In addition, since 2011, Europol has been assisting EU law-enforcement authorities in analysing data from investigations into sports corruption, primarily football matches. And it has now opened a Analysis Project Sports Corruption, in which 14 Member States, 2 non-EU countries, and INTERPOL participate.

Europol is also supporting a joint project of the EU and the Council of Europe on sports manipulations, ‘KEEP CRIME OUT OF SPORT’. The project is giving effect to the 2014 Convention on the Manipulation of Sports Competitions, which was adopted by the Council of Europe. The project publishes a practical how-to guide on how to fight sports manipulations.

Overall, Europol’s key contributions to ending these manipulations lie in:

- › analysing criminal intelligence
- › producing analytical reports
- › hosting operational meetings
- › deploying mobile offices and experts to provide on-the-spot assistance during law-enforcement operations.

Europol deployed these techniques in one of the most important sports-fraud investigations ever, Joint Investigation [VETO](#), for which it teamed up with Eurojust. The Joint Investigation Team (JIT) was made up of Europol experts and teams from 13 European countries.

Among the suspicious matches identified were World Cup and Euro 2016 qualification matches, two UEFA Champions League matches and several top-flight matches in European national leagues. And another 300 suspicious matches were identified outside Europe.

The investigation resulted in the identification of almost 400 suspect matches and the arrest of more than 50 individuals.

Europol also teamed up with UEFA in 2014, when the two organisations signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) aimed at bolstering the fight against match-fixing in European football.

At Euro 2016, Europol and UEFA formed a working group with the French police and the Ministry of Justice, France’s online gambling authority ARJEL, UEFA’s monitoring partner Sportradar and the French state lottery. The result was positive, with no concerns about integrity arising in relation to any matches.

Still, match-fixing remains a lucrative growth area that will continue to require a significant commitment of both resources and ingenuity on the part of all those with a stake in seeing the beautiful game go on untainted.

NUMBER OF ITEMS FOUND: 23

SEARCH



TYPE

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TARGET GROUP



12  
Apr  
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PUBLICATION/DOCUMENT

12  
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2021

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NEWS/PRESS RELEASE

05  
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EVENT

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