

REMEDIES FOR THE HOOLIGANISM FACTOR IN THE FOOTBALL INDUSTRY: THE PARADIGM OF CYPRUS

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ABSTRACT

The research relies on an extensive theoretical study taking into consideration the Decisions, Resolutions and Recommendations of the European Union and the Council of Europe, together with the enactments and amendments of the Cyprus law on violence in sports, to identify the key actions taken by the authorities in Cyprus, as a response to football hooliganism in an effort to improve the business of football. A problem, that for decades has been one of the biggest management issues and the main challenge in the industry.

The findings show that the Cyprus authorities managed through a series of key actions to develop a national integrated approach framework, implementing a three-pillar concept on safety management, in an effort to respond positively against football hooliganism. Therefore, the paper provides a valuable theoretical framework that can be adopted by Safety Managers.

An effective safety management is relying on an ongoing risk assessment and Managers must continuously supervise, control and practice all forces and technology systems, separately and together, in order to build an integrated operational readiness and successfully organise such multi-complex events, preserving at the same time, the balance between the three safety management elements. A safe environment creates value and the success of the football business relies on how well fans are treated and how comfortable and safe they feel at the venue.

Additionally, the findings of this research create the urge for empirical research to test the degree of application of the strategic framework and identify the volume and correlation between the created value and football as a business.

Keywords: football, hooliganism, safety management, regulatory framework, Legislation, Council of Europe, business value, integrated approach

INTRODUCTION

For decades hooliganism has been one of the major problems in football. A number of European countries have been affected by hooliganism, with United Kingdom, Germany, Netherlands and Italy

being among the countries that have experienced the biggest problems over the past years (Spaaij, 2007). According to Frosdick and Marsh (2005), hooliganism is defined as the fans' disruptive, antisocial and violent behaviour, intervening with any normal sporting activity. Disorder incidents usually involve clashes between rival fans, insults or racist behaviour, object throwing, flares or other flammable objects usage, pitch invasion, property damages, etc. (Carnibella et al., 1996).

Football hooliganism in Cyprus

The first football hooliganism incident in Cyprus was recorded back in 1939 between rival spectators. As a result, eight fans were arrested by the police and fined by the District Court. Hooliganism in Cyprus is strongly influenced by and directly related to a variety of historical, cultural and political factors. Football-related violence inevitably constitutes a social phenomenon, concerning most of the public opinion, and is always top news in mass media (Cyprus Sociological Association, 2001).

Football hooliganism is one of the main challenges and greater management issues in Cyprus (Kartakoullis and Theophanous, 2009), affecting the football business in terms of attendance and income. There exists a long list of disorder incidents in the last decade, involving street battles, car bombings, pitch invasions, riots, object throwing and many more.

A large amount of disorder incidents in Cyprus serve as examples of bad safety management in the workshops organised by the Union of European Football Associations (UEFA), classifying us as one of the most problematic countries in relation to football violence. According to the UEFA Incident Index, Cyprus has the third worst home record and sixteenth worst away record for the years 2016 - 2018. The incident assessment reports point out anarchic fan behaviour, extensive use of pyrotechnics, use of political banners, etc., and suggest immediate actions by the agencies.

Research methodology and aim of the study

Since 1985, the Council of Europe incited a series of additions and amendments in football grounds safety management, based on European best practices. These Decisions and Resolutions combine a series of theoretical studies and empirical research, staged by the Council of Europe, and currently they constitute a European "safety manual" that every member should implement. Therefore, methodologically, the research relies on an extensive theoretical study taking into consideration the Decisions and Resolutions of the European Union, the Conventions of the Council of Europe, the Recommendations of the Standing Committee and the Cyprus law on violence in sports. Cyprus is one of the first and few countries that harmonized their legal and judicial system with the recommendations made by the Council of Europe.

The purpose of this paper is to theoretically recognise the generic football safety management guidelines introduced by the Council of Europe and decode the key actions taken by the authorities in Cyprus as a response to football hooliganism, in order to draw critical lessons from the case study.

Significance of the study

The paradigm of Cyprus as a peculiar field of study, due to its unique characteristics, can be used as a pilot study for countries aiming to resolve the problem of football hooliganism. The findings of this research can provide invaluable insight for small-size football industries and draw explicit theoretical and practical conclusions towards scholarly advancement and managerial implementation in the context of improving the business of football by implementing pre-existing theories and well-established European practices.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Safety management in football grounds

Most people prefer watching a football game at home, but many of them take the opportunity to travel to the stadium, enjoy the event, be part of the spectacle and support their team. All safety measures must cover the entire event flow, involving every stage, and start from the time the game is officially set, until fans return safely back home. This event flow involves several steps and interconnecting stages with the event itself being the highlight. Match organisers need to structure and implement a safety plan, aiming to provide the best possible welcoming environment (Yiapanas, 2016). The main goal in football grounds safety management is to maintain public order and safety inside and outside the sports facility, before, during and after the sporting event (Great Britain: Department for Culture, Media and Sport, 2018).

Safety is based on an ongoing assessment of risks posed by the operation of the sports venue, identifying those areas that are most vulnerable to these risks, while determining what can be done to limit them to an acceptable level. Since minimizing risk always costs money, the challenge is to minimize them at the lowest possible cost. This involves a sequence of actions and practices aiming to provide a safe and secure environment to every participant. These procedures guide, advice and support match officials, providing best practices to accomplish their goal (Frosdick and Whalley, 1999).

These principles and guidelines are the backbone and the central philosophical foundation for every safety plan, that defines the order of priorities and outlines of the operations and actions. It is the compass of preserving a general direction and strategy in implementing adaptations or improvements to the safety

system in every sport venue, and in this respect, will give the relative weight and importance to each of the various elements which together constitute an integrated safety management plan (Whalley, 2008). According to Frosdick and Chalmers (2005), all partners involved in a football match share the same concern and responsibility to preserve a balance between the three elements of safety management.

Football disasters and aftermath - The emergence of a regulatory framework

Over the past decades, several football tragedies occurred in different venues all around Europe. The official reports fundamentally changed the procedures and the safety management concept. Today, safety is considered a top-level priority for every agency. The causes of the major tragedies vary. Poor safety and security management, closed exit doors, inadequate segregation of fans, overcrowding, bad communication between the agencies, riots, fire, etc. (Darby et al., 2005).

Until the mid-80s, football hooliganism was not an issue of concern for the European institutions. The Heysel disaster in 1985 together with the Hillsborough disaster in 1989, are the two incidents that incited a series of additions and amendments in football grounds safety management (Elliot and Smith, 1993). These disasters led to serious sports grounds redevelopments and to numerous important safety guides publications.

Immediately after the tragic incidents in the European Cup final in Heysel in 1985, the Council of Europe under the Convention on Spectator Violence and Misbehaviour at Sports Events (Rec. 85/No.120), invited all the parties to establish a strong co-operation and unity between their agencies and the authorities, to prevent violence and control any disorder incidents at sports events (Council of Europe, 1985). According to Marsh et al. (1996), the different agencies started making efforts to launch a cross-border cooperation between the police and football authorities against hooliganism. The Council of Europe adopted the European Convention on Spectator Violence and Misbehaviour at Sports Events proposals and asked all member countries to respond immediately to football violence (Tsoukala, 2010; Anderson and Apap, 2002).

The integrated Safety, Security and Service approach strategic framework

The Council of Europe structured a strategic framework aiming to enforce all parties to “adopt an integrated, multi-agency approach towards safety, security and service, based upon an ethos of effective local, national and international partnerships and co-operation; to ensure that all public and private agencies, and other stakeholders, recognise that safety, security and service provision cannot be considered in isolation, and can have a direct influence on delivery of the other two components; and take account of good practices in developing an integrated approach to safety, security and service” (Council of Europe, 2016, p.1).

The trinity of *service*, *safety* and *security* formulates a three-pillar concept. Although these terms are used together and in balance, they are three different elements. Chalmers and Frosdick (2011) define service as the most visible element that refers to any measures designed and implemented with the primary aim of making individuals and groups feel comfortable, appreciated and welcome, providing an exciting spectacle. This implies having suitable facilities, such as sanitary facilities, food and beverages, goods and products, etc.

Safety, as the less visible fragment, refers to any measure designed and implemented with the primary aim of protecting, looking after the health and wellbeing of the fans who attend a football event. Safety mainly deals with the structural design and maintenance of the venue in order to prevent buildings from collapsing. It manages venue capacities and aspects such as human behaviours, emergencies and evacuations in case of serious incidents. Finally, security refers to any measure designed and implemented with the primary aim of preventing and reducing the risk, and responding to any criminal activity, inside and outside the venue. It mainly deals with issues such as crime prevention and detection, terrorist attacks and serious threats (Chalmers and Frosdick, 2011).

The three elements are interconnected (Figure 1) and in cases where an overemphasis on security might happen, this could cause safety and service problems. Therefore, safety and security must always be kept in wide-ranging balance (Frosdick and Whalley, 1999).

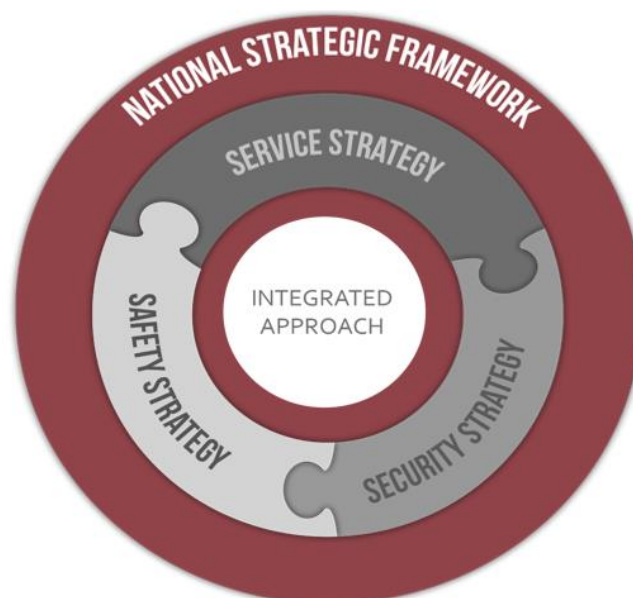


Figure 1. Integrated safety management approach (Adopted from UEFA training manual)

The Standing Committee issued a number of Recommendations with regard to the three-pillar concept of safety, security and service. Recommendation Rec.2011/1 involves good practices on how to establish the core functions of safety officers and safety stewards and how to gain the maximum through

appropriate training. In addition, the Standing Committee encouraged clubs and other agencies, to develop a stewarding system, based on specific principles (Rec.91/1), to promote the use of advisory police spotters (Rec.88/1), to adopt effective policies and measures in order to prevent and combat racist, xenophobic, discriminatory and intolerant behaviour in football (Rec.2001/6), and to forbid the use of pyrotechnical devices at sporting events (Rec.2008/3).

RESEARCH FINDINGS

Various committees were appointed, mainly following serious disorder incidents, to resolve the problem, but unfortunately, they were unable to combat football violence. The lack of implementation of the law created a culture of immunity that fans were aware of. It is clear that such a situation influences the behaviour of potential troublemakers. Since there is common agreement that football violence constitutes a serious social phenomenon in Cyprus, then the responsibility for it lies on everyone's shoulders. The Council of Europe and UEFA performed several consultative visits to evaluate the situation and proposed measures that could minimise the problem.

Actions taken, as a response to the football hooliganism problem in Cyprus

Cyprus ratified the European Convention (19.VIII.1985) on Spectator Violence and Misbehaviour at Sports Events and in particular football, on 22nd June 1987 and entered it into force on 1st August 1987. Following the recommendations, resolutions and guidelines of the European Council, the Cyprus government, in 1994, brought into effect the Spectator of Violence, Misbehaviour and Relevant Offences at Sports Events Law, L5(I)/1994, adopting most of the Standing Committee's Recommendations (Rec.93/1) concerning measures to be taken by the organisers and the authorities (Council of Europe, 2015).

The law consists of twenty Articles, securing adequate public order resources to counter-brake violence and disorder incidents, inside and outside the sports venue. It also facilitates strong collaboration between the police and the agencies involved (Spectator of Violence, Misbehaviour and Relevant Offences at Sports Events Law 1994).

The Council of Europe, in 2002 (Decision 2002/348/JHA), imposed on every member state to establish a National Bureau for exchanging information with other member states in connection with football games with an international dimension (Council of Europe, 2002). Cyprus, in order to align with the Resolutions, established in 2005 the National Football Information Point - NFIP and in conjunction to this, the existing law was amended in order to foster several legal procedures and regulations for the operation of the bureau in Cyprus. The amended law incorporates a handbook for the NFIP cooperation

and introduces measures to prevent and control violence and disorder incidents in connection to games with an international dimension (Spectator of Violence, Misbehaviour and Relevant Offences at Sports Events (amended) Law 2005).

The enactment of the new law (For the Prevention and Tackle of Violence in Sports Venues Law of 2008, L.48(I)2008) was a massive step forward. It came after a long and painful period of numerous disorder incidents and extensive discussions involving all the agencies and the authorities. After years of hard work, the new law was passed by the House of Representatives on 11th July 2008. This was the twitch of turning the condition around. The new law was based on the preexisting law and the Recommendations (Rec.93/1) of the Standing Committee (Council of Europe, 2015).

From this point on, stakeholders such as the clubs, the stadium owners, the federation, the police and other public authorities have a clear understanding of their responsibilities. Infrastructure and the appropriate technology such as a CCTV system, an access system, an electronic ticketing system and a public audio system are the flagship of the implemented law.

Since infrastructure is considered a vital safety security and service element, ground owners are legally bounded to ensure that all necessary measures have been taken and the venue is able to accommodate safely the fans, having the adequate ingress and egress, wide gangways, proper segregation, clean seats and sufficient services and medical assistance.

In addition, every agency must establish good communication, before, during and after the game, and exchange every necessary information that will assist every party to accomplish its aim. The ground's regulations and procedures must ensure that no alcohol selling is permitted, and dangerous objects are possessed.

Another major asset was the legitimization of the safety officer (with immediate application) and a stewarding system that would be implemented at a later stage with the preparation of the regulations under which the system would operate (Council of Europe, 2013). The role of the Safety officer was legally introduced, obligating the ground owners to appoint a trained and experienced individual (Article 43) who will be responsible for the safety of the spectators.

The position covers a series of actions such as crowd management and supervision, assessing risks, preparing and executing emergency plans, etc. Together with the stewards, the safety officer has full control of what is happening inside the stadium, while the police have the responsibility of maintaining public order and preventing criminal offences outside the venue (For the Prevention and Tackle of Violence in Sports Venues Law of 2008).

Closing the backlog from the law enactment in 2008 (Article 18, L.48(1)/2008), the House of Representatives passed in 2012, the implementation of safety services and stewarding regulations. As a starting point, the Cyprus Stewarding Commission (CSC) was formed (Article 3, 119(1)/2012), with their main responsibility being to recruit and train stewards and at the same time maintain an adequate stewarding system. Stewards constitute one of the main components of safety and service towards the spectators visiting the venue.

Their duties and responsibilities are now well-defined. Stewards are empowered to perform a variety of tasks such as venue inspections, flow monitoring, ticket control and body search, crowd management, fans segregation, ensure safe exit and prevent overcrowding, maintain free and uninterrupted access to every exit gate, respond to emergencies and in general terms assists fans in any possible way (Safety services and stewarding regulation 2012).

In 2013, a consultative team delegated by the Standing Committee of the European Council carried out a consultative visit to Cyprus under the program for monitoring commitments on the implementation of the Convention. Their aim was to assist the authorities and other relevant stakeholders in their learning process in the field of safety and security at sport events. The consultative team recognised the progress achieved over the past years, by putting in place, at several levels, a structure which was based on recognised European good practice and which was in line with the Convention and most importantly, the Standing Committee recommendations. (Council of Europe, 2013).

In June 2014 assessing a series of serious disorder incidents, the authorities decided to proceed with explicit law amendments, adopting various recommendations from the consultative delegation of the Council of Europe. The aim was to strengthen the preventing measures and eliminate anonymity inside the sports venues (Yiapanas, 2016).

An independent agency was established, the Stadium Licencing Authority (SLA), to annually check all stadiums on safety and security issues and attest and certify the appropriateness of the venue to organise sports events. The venue owners are now obliged to submit documents regarding their venue capacities, the evacuation plan procedures, the infrastructure conditions, the ground regulations, the ingress and egress volumes and procedures, the existing technology and systems, etc. (For the Prevention and Tackle of Violence in Sports Venues (unified) Law of 2014).

The pinpoint of the unified law was the institution of the fan card register, as the authorities believe that this measure will end anonymity and exclude troublemakers from sporting events. This measure was not implemented until 2018, due to a series of questions and issues from several stakeholders, involving data protection and data ownership. The authorities assigned this project to the Cyprus Sports

Organisation, a semi-governmental organisation and the highest sport authority in the country, linked to the Ministry of Education and Culture.

The unified law now segregates and defines the duties, the responsibilities and the role of each individual partner agency, establishing in this way a balanced approach towards safety, security and service. Immediately after the House of Representatives passed the amendments, the authorities established a communication strategy, to explain the importance and content of the new Articles and how they will eventually implement the integrated multi-agency safety, security and service approach.

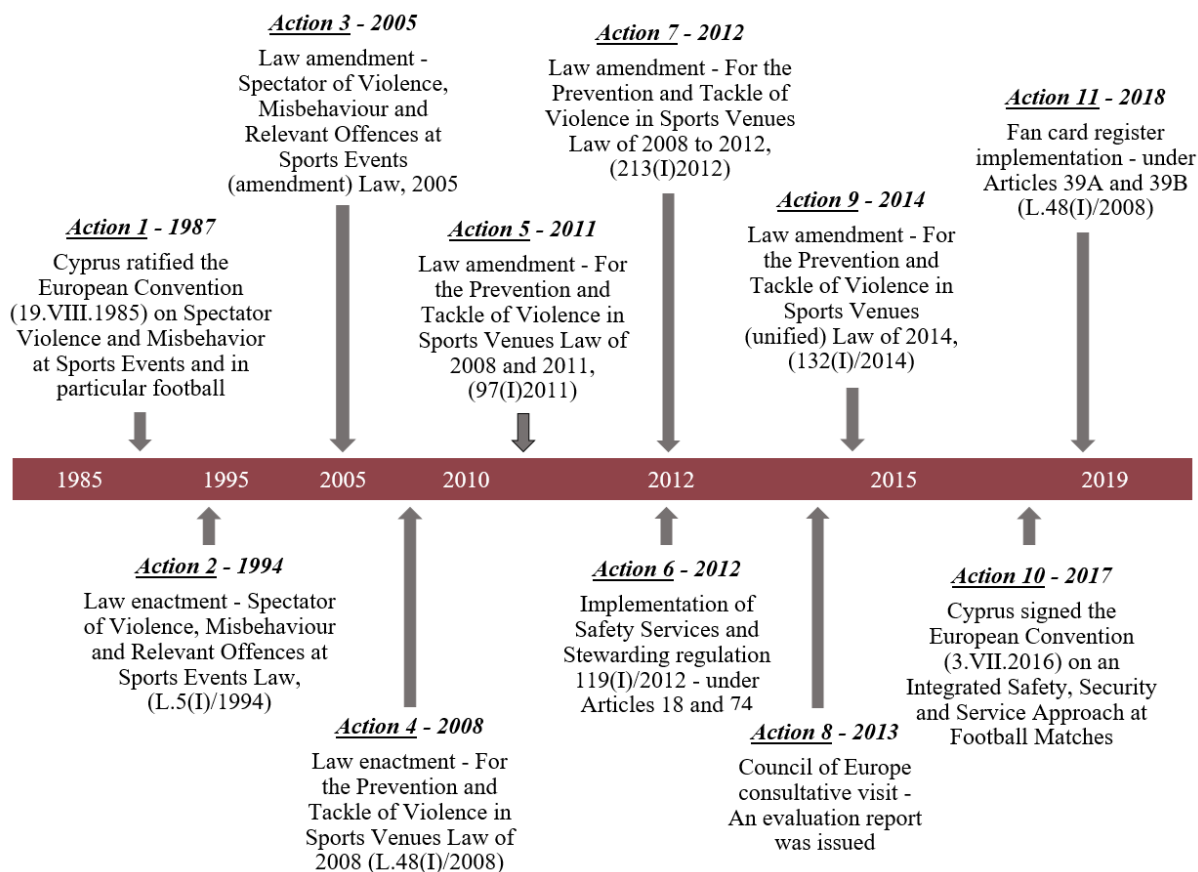


Figure 2. Chronological roadmap of the key actions as a response to the football hooliganism and violence problem in Cyprus

On 4th May 2017, Cyprus signed the European Convention (3.VII.2016) on an Integrated Safety, Security and Service Approach at Football Matches and Other Sports Events. This Convention goes beyond the scope of the Convention of 1985, as it requires the Agencies to implement additional provisions, notably with regard to international co-operation and treatment of offenders. All parties are now required to develop effective exclusion arrangements. European experience evidences that this measure is the most effective for preventing repeat offences. Football-related offenders should receive

appropriate sanctions, not only within the country of residence or citizenship, but also within the country where the offence was committed.

The Convention incorporates the key principles and measures through good practices, which are widely held to reduce safety and security risks in football. This approach is aiming to provide a safe, secure and welcoming environment at football matches (Council of Europe, 2016).

Cyprus is now accountable to promote on a national level, a multi-agency, integrated approach, with the responsibilities of each agency clearly specified. The agencies, within the limits of their respective constitutional provisions, must take every necessary step to give effect of this Convention in respect of football games and adopt an integrated, multi-agency approach towards the three-pillar concept of safety, security and service.

CONCLUSIONS

Research implications

It was a common belief that football violence constituted a serious social phenomenon in Cyprus. Disorder incidents evidenced the fact that football venues were not safe, with the authorities struggling for decades to find a solution to this multi-level problem. Unfortunately, the various committees seemed unable to develop a national strategic framework, and this, over the years, created a culture of immunity.

The authorities turned their hopes to the Council of Europe, who organised a number of consultative visits in order to evaluate the situation and recommend a series of actions. It became apparent that the existing law needed considerable amendments in order to provide the necessary means to the authorities for efficient safety in football grounds. It was also noted that every agency needed to recognise its responsibility and build a strategic framework that takes into consideration the existing international safety management principles and concepts.

The amendment of the law in 2005, but essentially the enactment of the new law in 2008 and the amendments in 2014, were the major actions taken by the authorities as a response to the football hooliganism problem in Cyprus.

Cyprus authorities managed through a series of key actions, and by adopting the Recommendations of the Council of Europe, to develop a national integrated approach framework, implementing the three-pillar concept of safety management, in an effort to respond positively against football hooliganism. Currently a strong legislation exists, and every agency has a clear understanding of their duties and responsibilities, enabling them to provide a safe and secure environment in sports events. It is now documented that these actions fulfil the needs of the safety management principles.

Managerial implications

Overall, the paper presents a number of key actions based to the Recommendations Resolutions and guidelines of the European Council that can be implemented on a national level as a response to football hooliganism. The authorities managed to build a national strategic framework and establish a strong legislation, clearly segregating the duties and responsibilities of each agency.

The theoretical findings of this research are certainly improving the business of football and undoubtedly consist a valuable and essential tool for managers to adopt. The integrated strategic framework, based on European experience and best practices, efficiently supports match officials to accomplish their goals.

An effective safety management is relying on an ongoing risk assessment and Managers must continuously supervise, control and practise all forces and technology systems, separately and together, in order to build an integrated operational readiness and successfully organise such multi-complex events, preserving at the same time the balance between the safety management elements. A safe environment creates value and the success of the football business relies absolutely on how well fans are treated and how comfortable and safe they feel at the venue and in every stage of the event-flow. Fans need to live the experience of a football match in its wholeness and if they enjoy the event, most probably they will revisit the venue, support their team and spend more money.

Further research

This paper provides the theoretical groundwork for the generic football safety management concepts, identifying the key actions taken by the authorities in Cyprus in order to respond to football hooliganism. The findings of this research create the urge for empirical research, in terms of validating the extensive theoretical findings and test the degree of application and implementation to the explicit environment.

Additionally, there is the need of identifying the volume and correlation between the created value and football as a business and provide practical implementation of the framework as a strategic tool.

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