

RELIGIOUS RADICALISATION OUTSIDE THE FOOTBALL ENVIRONMENT

AIM

Reduce the salience of negative group norms pertaining to the most radicalised groups and possibly create positive norms against radicalised and violent behaviours to be shared with the wider community

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If religious radicalisation is found outside the football environment, several activities may be undertaken which partially differ from the activities carried out within the football environment. There are two steps which may be followed (see Figure 6):

Step 1. Establishment of a work group between religious institutions and football fans. A first step should be that of establishing a link between religious institutions and football fans and clubs aimed at creating and consolidating a work group. A cooperative dialogue between these two actors should be a priority.

Step 2. Include football fans and religious institutions within public events. Secondly, following a collaboration between these two actors, several events may be organised with the aim of:

- a) including football fans and religious institutions within public events aimed at promoting a positive relation between sport and religion; Including religious institution as well as football fans and associations within public events is of extreme importance given that the most at risk of radicalisation individuals are often isolated from the rest of the population, which leads to enhance the perception of a psychological and physical distance with the rest of the community.



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- b) creating a new positive norm against radicalisation to be shared with the wider community through organisation and participation to different public events.

Examples of possible activities carried out outside the football environment are presented in Figure 7 and discussed in the following pages.

Figure 6. Hypothesised steps and aim of the Action Phase relative to religious radicalisation “outside the football environment”

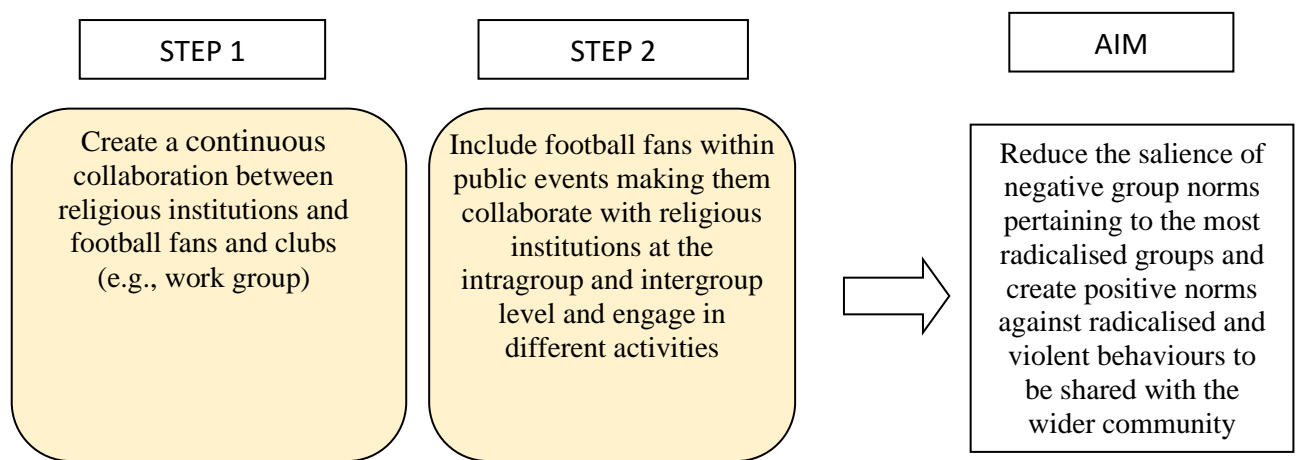


Figure 7. Example of activities which may be carried out outside the football environment to fight religious radicalisation



ACTIVITIES WHICH MAY BE CARRIED OUT OUTSIDE THE FOOTBALL ENVIRONMENT TO TACKLE RELIGIOUS RADICALISATION

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- **Institutional work** aiming at creating a cooperative network between football fans, football clubs and religious institutions to enhance communication among these actors on possible problems and suggestions for improving well-being of the community with the aim of conducting and organising activities together.
- **Public events** linking religion and sport (i.e., football) which may include activities also carried out within the football environment such as:
 - **Seminars** relative to the topic of violence and radicalisation linked to religious radicalisation and its risks. These should be held by football clubs and fan associations as well as football players
 - **Football festivals** in which different fans (more or less prone to religious radicalisation) play in mixed teams
 - **Family activities** where fans may also spend quality and positive time with their children organising football festivals

These activities contribute to make positive norms against radicalisation salient which, once stated openly, are hard to ignore.

Importantly, these activities should first be carried out at the intragroup level and only then at the intergroup level (if perceived safe and feasible!)

Figure 7 shows examples of activities which may be carried out outside the football environment to fight religious radicalisation. These will be further discussed below.

- **Institutional work.** A priority which characterises the activities outside the football environment is that of creating a network between football fans, football clubs and



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religious institutions. This is the basis for the subsequent organisation of public events which aim to also include the wider community. Indeed, establishment of an institutional work between these actors should be regarded as a necessary step and should not only include ad hoc meetings but should be based on a continuous collaboration, with periodic monitoring meetings. Not only this would allow to better understand which priorities football fans, football clubs and religious institutions have in the fight against radicalisation but also convey a clear message to the wider community which clarifies that sport and religion may collaborate together to enhance well-being and discuss solutions. Importantly, involving religious institutions should be regarded as something which cannot be put aside, since individuals associated to violent radicalisation may tend to be physically and psychologically close to religious institutions to enhance perception of affiliation and meaning in life. In this case, collaborating with religious institutions may represent an advantage as it may allow to easily engage with at risk of radicalisation football fans directly through connecting with religious institutions.

- **Public events.** Through public events in which religion plays a major role (e.g., Events which revolve around **Religion and Sport**), it is possible to bring football fans as well as religious communities within the wider society showing the latter their active role in the fight against radicalisation. By including fan associations and football associations, the possibility of also attracting the most radicalised football fans increases. In these events, *seminars* held by football fans and football players, *football festivals* involving football fans and the community and *family activities* may be carried out with the aim of attracting as many people as possible. Having football



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fans, football association and religious institutions engage in these activities as main promoters of positive norms is of primary interest. Aim of these activities is to:

- 1) bring religious institution and communities within the wider society, based on the fact that the most at risk groups often live in a sort of isolation, separated from the rest of the community with a less strict view of religion. Bringing visibility to the most radicalised groups by making them join in public events may break the unity within this group by allowing them to mix with less radicalised points of view;
 - 2) make positive norms against radicalisation salient which may also stem from the religious environment. Once these positive norms and principles are openly shared by football fans most at risk of radicalisation with a wide audience, it will be hard to ignore them, especially for those who publicly promoted them at first. If so, this would create a negative state (e.g., discomfort) within the individuals (see, Cognitive Dissonance Theory; Festinger, 1957) and the only way to reduce it would be that of reducing the gap between their thoughts and their behaviour. Thus, following the positive norms openly shared with the wider community should reduce this negative feeling.
- **Games:** to include as more individuals as possible and incentivate their participation in the event, games (e.g., choosing from a list of possible candidate winners in a football tournament; quizzes etc.) should be included. This would allow individuals to have the possibility of winning free tickets for football matches, t-shirts and



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autographed footballs by football players. Incentives for making the most at risk fans participate should be discussed in advance in order to reach more individuals as possible.

As for all the activities mentioned so far, these should be first carried out at the intragroup level and only after at the intergroup level. This means that at as a first step, football fans, football associations and religious institutions should engage in activities mainly with individuals pertaining to their group, this is include religious institutions of the same religious affiliation and organise public events in this respect (e.g., Catholic or Protestant). Only at a later stage, and only if perceived feasible and safe, individuals may engage in the same activities but at the intergroup level by including different religious communities, football fans and associations together. This last step should only be considered if the conditions make it possible (i.e., safe) and if activities at the intragroup level have shown to be succesful.



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