

POLITICAL RADICALISATION WITHIN 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 behaviour

1

If political radicalisation is found within the football environment, there are several actions which should be taken. Organisation of the main steps to be carried out in this context mainly replicate those carried out for religious radicalisation but with a focus on political groups (see Figure 8).

1. **Identification of the most at risk of radicalisation groups.** Also in the case of political radicalisation, it is of extreme importance to first identify groups of fans that are majorly prone to express radicalised beliefs within the stadium. These groups are also likely to be easily spotted and recognised among the crowd. Nevertheless, effort should be made to establish a figure who could monitor group and fan dynamics during matches and identify the most at risk individuals. As for other radicalised groups, these groups usually have an identity as well as norms they follow which are hard to change if groups are kept together. Breaking the unity within these specific groups is thus, as mentioned earlier, a priority. Contact with individuals outside of the radicalised group (but still within the same group of fans), should help shift the focus from specific (mainly negative) norms to more positive norms, thus weakening the impact of such negative norms on the group. Again,



Project supported by



special attention should be devoted to the individuation of the most radicalised fans because introducing them in the activities should be a priority and an aim of the project.

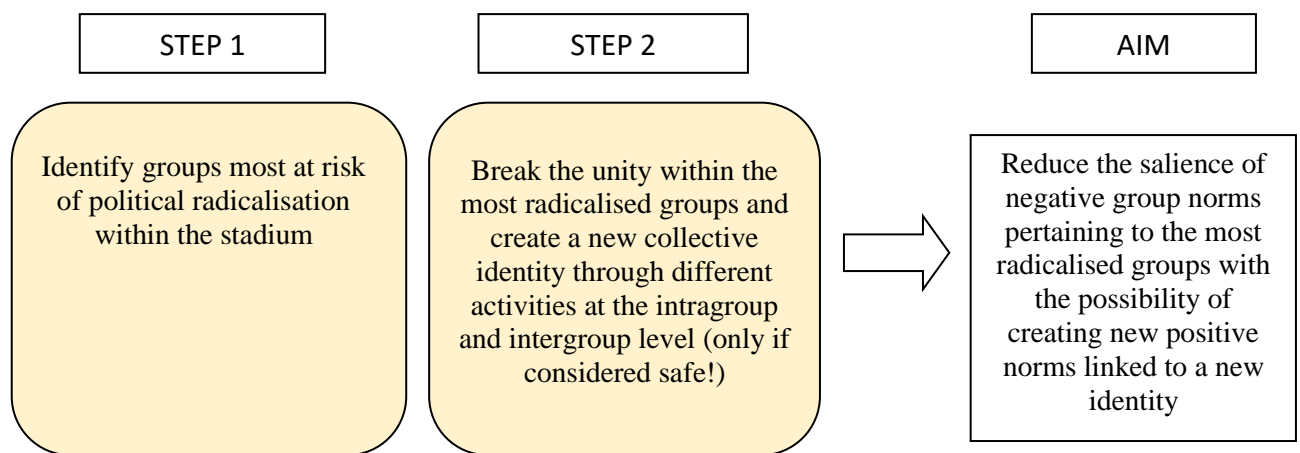
- 2. Break the unity within the radicalised groups and creation of a new collective identity.** As in the case of religious radicalisation, this step aims at dividing the fans (the number will vary according to the number of individuals chosen to be part of such intervention), within the most radicalised groups by breaking the unity within it, this is make different subgroups of fans which support a specific team work together in activities with the aim of reducing the salience of negative norms and possibly creating positive norms against radicalised and violent behaviours. Fan associations including groups of fans most at risk of radicalisation within the football environment should be involved in common activities which enhance cooperation and mutual communication, for example by organising events which may include football festivals and seminars regarding the risks of radicalisation (see Figure 9 for a full list of possible activities). During these events, the strength of the negative norms used by the most at risk groups of fans should be reduced and a new collective identity (“we are all team supporters”) should emerge.

Activities within the football environment should be first carried out at the intragroup level and only after at the intergroup level. While within the religious context the intergroup level is quite clear to determine, when considering political radicalisation the intergroup context may be more difficult to identify since political radicalisation may include a wide range of “antagonist” groups. Yet, one group which may be often regarded as antagonist may be represented by the police forces. Nevertheless, the inclusion of the police within the



activities should always be done gradually and should be carefully considered in order to guarantee safety. In the current guidelines, special attention will be given to this specific intergroup context when considering political radicalisation.

Figure 8. Hypothesised steps and aim of the action phase relative to political radicalisation “within the football environment”



A list of activities which may be included in an event aimed at fighting political radicalisation is summarised in Figure 9.



Figure 9. Example of activities which may be carried out within the football environment to fight political radicalisation

ACTIVITIES WHICH MAY BE CARRIED OUT WITHIN THE FOOTBALL ENVIRONMENT TO TACKLE POLITICAL RADICALISATION

1. **Football festivals** in which different fans (more or less prone to political radicalisation) play in mixed teams;
2. **Family activities** where fans may also spend quality and positive time with their children organising football festivals
3. **Discussion** among football fans on possible problems and suggestions for improving well-being and positive engaging of football fans
4. **Seminars** relative to the topic of violence and radicalisation and its risks. These should be held by football clubs and fan associations (if feasible)
5. **Games:** participation at this event should allow participants to possible win free tickets for a football match.

These activities should contribute to the creation of a Common Identity (i.e., new identity) between the most radicalised football fans and others.

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

As can be seen in the Figure 9, there are several activities which may be organised:



- **Football festivals:** they provide football fans the possibility of playing in mixed teams composed of different fans (less and more prone to radicalisation) pertaining to the same group (intragroup level) or different groups (intergroup level) with the aim of breaking the unity (and thus negative norms) within the most radicalised groups of fans. When carrying out activities at the intergroup level, in the case of political radicalisation, football festivals may also include institutions like the police department which is usually perceived in a negative way by fans most at risk of political radicalisation. Categorisation of the police as an "enemy" may represent an obstacle in the fight against radicalisation as it may exacerbate, in some circumstances, conflict within (and outside) the football environment. Thus, recategorising police forces as a partner and not as an enemy by football fans (especially by those most at risk of radicalisation) should be a primary goal. Through football festivals where football fans and police forces are teamed up in a same team should help them realise that they have something in common (i.e., common identity) and thus reduce the perception of distance and conflict which is something typical of this type of relationship.
- **Family activities:** these activities may focus on providing occasions for families to use sport as a vector of family bonding. Through sport it is possible to strengthen family relationship by spending quality time within the football environment. Family events should aim at showing the positive side of football and teaching children how to relate with other football fans. Again, football festivals and additional activities may be organised to engage with this specific target.



Project supported by



- **Discussion:** this activity includes discussion among football fans and football associations on possible problems and suggestions for improving well-being and positive engaging of football fans. Again, giving football fans an active role in this sense, by organising events where to discuss on several topics concerning possible issues which fan clubs may face during football initiatives and improvements they may suggest in order to counter radicalised behaviours within the football environment should be aimed for. One example may be represented by the creation of an App which football fans may download and use to report all negative issues as well as violent situations witnessed within the stadium. The same App could be also used to report suggestions for improvements. Final aim of these discussions will not only be that of actively including fans' opinions and suggestions within football clubs' potential activities but also make fans feel part of a wider group, thus possibly creating a more inclusive positive identity.
- **Seminars:** they allow football fans and clubs to take an active role in the fight against political radicalisation by presenting clear and focused messages against radicalisation. These seminars could include the presentation of the phenomenon with a specific focus on the football environment and its risks. Ideally, the seminars could also involve some football players as testimonials of the fight against violence and religious radicalisation.
- **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



Project supported by



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.

These activities may contribute to the creation of a common identity (e.g., as teams supporters) between the most radicalised football fans and others at the intragroup level and possibly at the intergroup level. Of course, generating a common identity in the former case should be easier since, although different in their level of risk regarding radical behaviour, they still share the same group (e.g., right-wing or left-wing). Collaboration and engaging in activities at the intragroup level may also contribute, as mentioned earlier to decrease the salience of negative group norms associated with the most radicalised groups. Importantly, in the case of more radicalised groups, the intergroup level should be carefully considered and specific conditions (e.g., safety) should be explored prior the decision of implementing this second step.

7

Importantly, the activities outside the football environment should include football fans independent of whether political radicalisation is present within the football environment or not. If the football environment is not familiar with radicalisation issues, football fans should still be included in the activities carried out outside of the football environment since football may represent an important tool which allows connecting with the community and a means to reach a wider audience.



Project supported by

