



Funded by the European Union's Internal Security Fund — Police



SAFEZONE

National report

Country: Slovenia

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1. Radicalization in Slovenia

State of Art

In Slovenia like in other EU countries, radicalization of any kind and form represent a social, political and security issue. The level of radicalization into violent groups is not a major problem, but individual radicalization and related problems is growing. In general we have noted following forms of radicalization in Slovenia:

- Radicalization into violent torcida groups, especially in regards to football
- Radicalization to youth criminal groups that are involved in drug and guns smuggling or street fighting (related to some city quarters in capital and few bigger cities in Slovenia)
- radicalization to racists groups pointed toward Roma population and second-generation migrants from ex-Yugoslavia republics
- individual religious radicalization, especially during the war in Syria and recruitment to ISIS (some 42 youngsters sympathizing with ISIS and 4 went to Syria – 2 killed, 2 returned of which one imprisoned in Italy)
- radicalization to para-military groups (the first known case of such radicalization was registered in 2019, after the government did not react on illegal migration.



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The worst problem for national security represents the para-military organization that emerged lately and has recruited from first mentioned groups above, however the biggest problem for public security are violent torcida groups and violent youngsters groups fighting on the streets.

Two biggest and most violent torcida groups are the one from Maribor, supporting football club Maribor, named Viole (Violets) and the one supporting biggest football Club from Ljubljana FC Olimpia, named Green Dragons.

Whenever there is a game between two football Clubs, the most radical members of Viole and Green Dragons would meet on the streets and get into the fight. Since there are 50 to 60 or sometimes even more violent (mostly youngsters) involved in such fights, this can and does represent a security threat for other citizens, city infrastructure and private real estate like shops, bars, cafes ...

The police is not always successful in preventing such violent events, since youngsters would agree the location of fight via social media or SMS messages in advance, but late enough that the police can not protect the location.

Those youngsters would also fight the police if interfering in their fights, which can lead to serious public order escalations and damage causing.

Whereby other forms of radicalization are well examined and one of the researchers in this project has already participated in the EC-founded project MATES, where channels and methods of radicalization into violent groups were examined and exit methods developed, the radicalization into sport torcida groups is poorly examined in Slovenia.

There almost no research done on that field. The research team has found two diploma thesis from that field (Zakrajšek, 2014; Tanšek, 2007) and the learning material for Brdo Forum debate 2017 of the National council and platform for prevention of violence and terrorism. Therefore the research



Funded by the European Union's Internal Security Fund — Police and development of toolkits for prevention of radicalization in sports, through sports and for sports is more than needed in Slovenia.

2. Statistic data and existing project

With exception of the yearly police report, there is no statistical data existing on radicalization in Slovenia, which includes also the radicalization into torcida violent groups. At the moment there is one project running on that topic on the national level; Radicalization and holistic counter-actions in Republic of Slovenia (leader: prof.dr. Iztok Prezelj, Faculty for Social Sciences, Ljubljana)

<https://www.fdv.uni-lj.si/raziskovanje/institut-za-druzbene-vede/nacionalni-projekti/V5-1735>.

The second project on that field is our project SAFEZONE, that will partly deal with that kind of radicalization.

Therefore, the project team had to approach the data collection in two manners. Using the existing information on national level and the data, findings and results from MATES project and creation and execution of field study to gather important information. From the beginning of the project SAFEZONE in January 2020, the research team has executed 4 in-depth interviews with experts on the field of sport and education and is about to execute 4 additional with the members of the police and Slovene secret service.

Unfortunately the Corona Virus Disease 2019 and measurement taken by the Slovene government to prevent the spreading of the disease have prevented the researchers to continue with the field work.



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As soon as the quarantine and state restrictions will be dismissed, the research team will continue with their work.

In continuation we will present the results gathered throughout the executed in-depth interviews.

3. Data collection and current results and findings

The research team has planned the initial research to detect the state of art and gather some ideas on how to prevent the violent radicalization through sport and in sport clubs in Slovenia as follows:

Based on results from project MATES and existing literature on radicalization and prevention of radicalization through sport, the research team has created the semi-structured questionnaire with open questions, that helps the researchers in execution of in-depth interviews.

The research team has planned to execute 8 in- depth interviews (6 with sport experts and educators, one with the expert on radicalization form the police and 1 with expert for radicalization from national security).

The collected data will be analyzed descriptively, using the anthropological argumentation methods.

Once the results are structured and interpreted, new guideline questionnaires will be prepared for execution of focus groups, where the results will be discussed within broader group of experts. Also those participating in the first stage of the research will be invited to participate in focus groups.



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The research team plans to organize 3 focus groups: 1 with sport coaches and trainers, 1 with educators and sport teachers, 1 with sport secretary from Sport associations and Olympic committee and experts from police and national security.

The gathered information will be analyzed descriptively and statistically using the qualitative methods of coding.

4. Questionnaire and results

Analysis of conditions

Questionnaire 1 (sport coach/teacher)

1. Introduction

Here the participant briefly introduces him/herself. Till now we have interviewed two sport education teacher in primary schools, one martial arts coach and one administrative professional from the sport association in Maribor, second biggest city in Slovenia

2. How would you describe the role of sports in modern society?

All respondents described sport as important social activity with positive effects on social and family relationships. Sport promotes healthy life and respect between peers and toward teachers and parents. Sport also enhances the learning ability and should be introduced



Funded by the European Union's Internal Security Fund — Police already in kindergarten. Active learning through physical activity shows better learning outcomes and positive development of personality. Sport should be available to everyone and not oriented into professional sport as it is these days. Professionalism in sport might have contrary effects. Children should practice several sports and not be specialized only on one sport activity. Holistic approach in sport and learning is necessary.

3. Is Slovenia any different in this regard?

In Slovenia we do not have enough emphasis on holistic approach to sport. Professionalization and specialization is done in early childhood, and this develops unhealthy competition and might lead to disrespect of others. Yet Slovenia is still among those countries that offers enough sport education at least at the primary level of education and has a lot of sport clubs with affordable monthly prices.

4. How would you describe the role of sport in youth education? What about professional sport?

The role of sport education for youth is of great importance. Not only that promotes healthy socialization and healthy lifestyle. It also contributes to better learning results and development of healthy personality. Of course if specialization is done too early the effects might be not so positive. Unhealthy competition, pressure of parents, orientation toward winning for every price, regardless if you disrespect others are the possible outcomes of early specialization and professionalization.

5. Do you see any relation between engagement in sport and development of social skills?

All respondents mentioned that the relation between development of social skills and sport education or practicing sport is rather strong. Therefore it is important that the sport education promotes cooperation rather than competition. Through sport children learn how to communicate and cooperate with peers and adults. Sport also represents the means of



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6. What is your perception of radicalization? Who can be considered radicalized?

Radicalization starts when somebody is attracting youngsters into groups that are not obeying social rules and are in contrary to the established social order. Youngsters with problems in family, lack of love and attention, abused youngsters or those who are lacking the sense of life are more prompt to radicalization. Sport can surely prevent radicalization giving the meaning of life and occupying youngsters with physical activity. Although professional sport again has contrary effects, since those not practicing but rather watching sport can easily be pulled into violent torcida groups.

7. What is the role of sports in this regard? Can prevent or provoke radicalization? How does the sport enhance the establishment of hierarchy and rules?

Sport is excellent means to prevent radicalization, since develops social skill, opens broader horizon of perception of life and society, enhances positive feelings and develops healthy body and healthy social relationships. Sports, especially martial arts are also teaching respect, hierarchy and self-esteem of those practicing. Again all respondents have criticized the professional sports and those not participating but watching.

8. Do you have any personal experiences with that? What about your colleagues? Can you describe the case?

Three of the participants have some personal experiences with children being radicalized or at least being on the way to radicalization. All mentioned that sport and practicing sports have prevented or at least diminish the effects of radicalization. Those practicing sport can think with their own mind and developing open minded attitude toward life and society.

9. Can radicalization be perceived through participation in sport? How could it be?



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Radicalization can be perceived through sport by sport educator since the emotions are always aroused and exposed to reading while practicing. However, the teacher or coach must perceive the changes that can sometimes be result of growing up process. Therefor constant contact and conversations with parents are important.

10. What do you think how radicalization could be perceived and prevented through sport?

The answers in this question are very similar to those in the previous one, so in the next interviews we will muddle both questions and try to investigate deeper.

11. Which stakeholders should be involved and how?

All participants agree that parents, teachers, coaches, social workers, sport educators should cooperate in development of youth to perceive the early stage of negative and malevolent development of youngster that might lead to radicalization. There are also national and local sport associations and Olympic committee that should develop toolkits for prevention of radicalization and should cooperate in healthy development of youngsters through sports.

12. Any other suggestions.

Parents should motivate children to sports, since they are using too much smart and other technologies in their leisure time. The sport education i school is not enough. Those who not move and practice physical activity are lacking positive energy and are more prompt to malevolent influences of environment, including violent radicalization.

5. Conclusion

As we have noticed, sport has a very positive role in development of social skills in learning processes and development of healthy personality of children. Those not practicing sports and those being pushed to early specialization and professionalization are more sensitive for any kind



Funded by the European Union's Internal Security Fund — Police of malevolent influences in society. Especially those spending too much time with technology and coming from families that have unhealthy family relationships are especially vulnerable.

More will be examined in continuation of the research.