



EVIDENCE-BASED PREVENTION OF SPORTING-RELATED MATCH-FIXING

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Erasmus+ Programme
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NATIONAL ACTION PLAN: BASKETBAL VLAANDEREN



Centrum Ethisiek
in de Sport





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2. INTRODUCTION

"Basketbal Vlaanderen" is the driving force for the basketball sport in Flanders. The organisation promotes the sport and organizes basketball activities for all ages and levels. Basketbal Vlaanderen supports clubs and members in the best possible way. The four values of Basketbal Vlaanderen are respect, (dare to) dream, fair play and diversity. Within the concept of fair play there is also attention for match-fixing.

Match-fixing, according to an international, widely accepted definition, is seen as (Council of Europe, 2014, art. 3.4) :

An intentional arrangement, act, or omission aimed at an improper alteration of the result or the course of a sports competition in order to remove all or part of the unpredictable nature of the aforementioned sports competition with a view to obtaining an undue advantage for oneself or for others.

Match-fixing generally takes on two forms: betting-related and sporting-related. On the one hand, there is betting-related match-fixing, where a sum of money is bet on a match or on specific events during a match and the match or its outcome is then manipulated in such a way as to generate a betting profit. On the other hand, there is match-fixing for sporting reasons, this is the form where a match or competition is manipulated purely to change the sporting result or outcome. For example, with the aim of avoiding relegation, securing promotion or winning a tournament or championship.

This document is an action plan which is tailor-made for Basketbal Vlaanderen with the aim of supporting the federation with a four-point action plan and to encourage the approach towards sporting-related match-fixing.

The action plan was made by the Centre for Ethics in Sport (ICES) and falls within the scope of the Erasmus+ project "Evidence-based Prevention of Sporting-related Match-Fixing", or EPOSM in short. This project aims to increase knowledge and awareness about sporting-related match-fixing. The EPOSM project covers seven European countries: Austria, Belgium, Croatia, the Netherlands, France, the United Kingdom and Switzerland.

Several sports are covered in the project. For Belgium, next to basketball, football and tennis are also covered.

After a brief introduction to the context of the EPOSM project, this action plan will outline the problems and cases that have come to light in Flemish basketball in recent years. Additionally, an overview is given about the actions that have already been taken regarding (sporting-related) match-fixing. Finally, a four-point plan is formulated, indicating the next steps to be taken.



3. ERASMUS+ PROJECT EPOS M

3.1 Project Overview

The EPOS M project is co-funded by the Erasmus+ programme of the European Union. In the period from January 2020 to December 2021, European academic institutions cooperated with experts on sporting-related match-fixing in different sports disciplines. The collaboration has multiple objectives:

- Create awareness about the prevention of sporting-related match-fixing.
- Encourage moral judgement against sport-related match-fixing, as sport-related match-fixing threatens the credibility and attractiveness of sport.
- Sharing knowledge on the subject across the partner organisations in connection with training procedures.

A wide and diverse range of partners are involved in this project. The coordination of the project is done by the sport management team of Ghent University. The other partners are the Croatian Olympic Committee, the Universities of Utrecht, Loughborough and Lausanne, as well as Panathlon International, CSCF - the Foundation for Sports Integrity, IRIS - Institut de Relations Internationales et Stratégiques and the Play Fair Code. The Council of Europe is an associated partner.

In the first phase of the Erasmus+ project, the partners conducted an online questionnaire on match-fixing in general, and sporting-related match-fixing in particular, in the 7 involved countries. Various stakeholders within the 3 sports (different for each country)¹ were reached, being: current and former athletes, coaches, board members, etc. The results of the survey in Belgium are discussed in the next section.

Following the survey and its initial results, criteria were formulated for the elaboration of the national action plans and the workshops. These criteria were determined by Panathlon International in consultation with the various project partners. The project partners are responsible for the training component in the project. On the basis of these criteria, an action plan is made for each sports federation involved, and subsequently workshops will be organised. In Belgium, these tasks will be elaborated by the Centre for Ethics in Sport (ICES).

¹ For Belgium: basketball, tennis and football



3.2 Results of the EPOSM study in Belgium

As already mentioned, the first phase of the EPOSM project consisted of an online survey on (sporting-related) match-fixing. The results are summarized and discussed below.

3.2.1 International Results

First, it can be seen that across all the international participants in the survey, almost 20% of respondents said they had come into contact with (in)direct offers of match-fixing. More specifically, 17.5% of all participants personally knew at least one person who had been approached for match-fixing. Moreover, 8.4% indicated that they had ever been approached themselves for a match-fixing proposal. The total international sample consisted of 5014 respondents who are or were active in many different sports such as football, basketball, tennis, handball, hockey and cricket.

3.2.2 Results for Belgium

When we look at the results of the survey for Belgium, we see that the overall results for Belgium are slightly higher than the international results. However, these figures should be put into perspective due to the large heterogeneity of the international and Belgian sample. Specifically for this action plan, it can also be stated that the Belgian basketball sample ($n = 75$) is rather small.

Of the 960 respondents in Belgium, 323 (33.6%) indicated that they **personally knew one or more people who had been approached for match-fixing**.

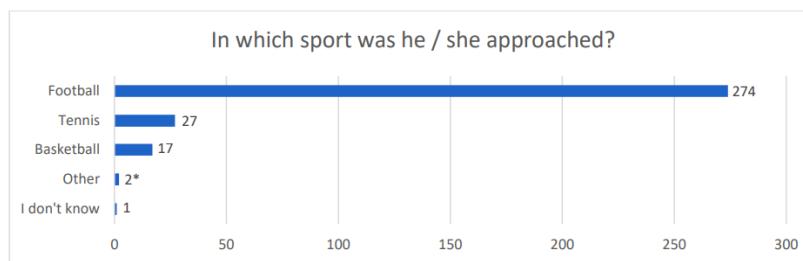
Table 7: Respondents who personally knew someone who had been approached for match-fixing ($n = 960$)

	"Do you personally know anyone who has been approached to fix a game / match?"	
Yes, I know one person	152	
Yes, I know two persons	42	
Yes, I know three or more persons	129	
No	637	

323

In 17 of the 323 cases, the person approached (whom one knew) was (had been) active in basketball.

Figure 2: Sport discipline of the approached person they knew best ($n = 321$)



In addition, 7 of the total of 75 respondents who are or were active in basketball indicated that they had **once been approached with a match-fixing proposal**. In relative terms, this is 9.3% of all respondents in the basketball sector. In most cases, this approach concerned sporting-related match-fixing.

Table 8: Cases of having been approached themselves in the Belgian sample (n = 958)

"Have you yourself ever been approached to fix a game / match?"		
Sport discipline	No	Yes
Football (n = 792)	648	144 (18,2%)
Tennis (n = 69)	61	8 (11,6%)
Basketball (n = 75)	68	7 (9,3%)
Other (n = 22)	18	4 (18,2%)

Table 10: Motive of the match-fixing cases (n = 159)

	Total (n = 159)	Football (n = 140)	Tennis (n = 8)	Basketball (n = 7)	Other (n = 4)
What was the motive of the people who approached you?					
Only betting-related match-fixing	3	2	0	1	0
Both betting- and non-betting-related match-fixing	1	1	0	0	0
Only non-betting -related match-fixing	121	110	4	6	1
Both non-betting-related and "other motive"*	4	3	1	0	0
Other motive*	27	22	2	0	3
I don't know	3	2	1	0	0

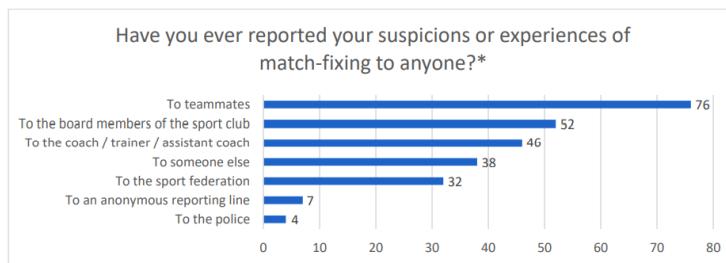
*The exact "other motive" could not be identified due to a software bug.

Finally, there are also striking figures regarding the **reporting** of suspicions and/or experiences of match-fixing. For example, 177 or 51.0% of the 347 respondents who had been approached personally and/or who knew someone, had never reported their suspicions or experiences of match-fixing to someone. On the other hand, 166 respondents or 47,8% did report their suspicions or experiences of match-fixing to someone.

347 respondents reported (proposed) match-fixing incidents

Of the 347 respondents who indicated (proposed) match-fixing incidents, 177 respondents (51,0%) had never reported their suspicions or experiences of match-fixing to anyone.
On the other hand, 166 respondents (47,8%) had reported their suspicions or experiences of match-fixing to someone (see Figure 21).

Figure 21: Reporting suspicions or experiences of match-fixing to anyone (n = 166)



Finally, the most striking findings are listed.

- Of the total of 960 respondents in Belgium, 323 said they knew one or more people who had been approached for match-fixing.
- Seven of the 75 interviewees who had been active in basketball reported that they had ever been approached with a match-fixing proposal.
- Less than 50.0% of the 347 respondents who said they knew one or more people who had been approached for match-fixing and/or indicated that they had been approached themselves, shared their suspicions and/or experiences with others.

4. THE CURRENT SITUATION REGARDING (SPORTING-RELATED) MATCH-FIXING

In this section, the situation with respect to (sporting-related) match-fixing in relation to Basketbal Vlaanderen will be discussed. Thus, the Belgian situation as well as the specific situation within the federation will be highlighted.

4.1 Status of the European Convention on the manipulation of sporting competitions

The European Convention on the Manipulation of Sports Competitions (Macolin Convention) is the only international legally binding instrument on match-fixing. It requires public institutions to cooperate with sporting organisations, betting operators and organisers of sport competitions to prevent, detect and sanction match-fixing. It also establishes a framework for efficient international cooperation on the subject.

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The treaty entered into force on 1 September 2019. Belgium has already signed the Convention in 2016 but has not yet ratified it. Thus, it is not yet applicable in Belgium.

Despite the fact that the Convention is not yet applicable in Belgium, the National Platform - a 'key-element' of the Convention (Article 13 Macolin Convention) - is already present in Belgium. At the end of 2016, the National Platform to Combat the Manipulation of Sports Matches was already established in Belgium. The National Platform is a consultative body with a wide diversity of stakeholders: the federal government, the communities, the federal police, the gaming commission, the national lottery and representatives of the sports sector.

The aim is to create a forum where ideas about prevention can be exchanged, problem behaviour can be detected and repressive action can be debated, either disciplinary within the federation or criminal law. The aim is to learn from each other's initiatives, share good practices and contribute to the development of a relationship of trust between the stakeholders in relation to the broader issue of sporting fraud.

The General Council meets twice a year, the Steering Committee meets more often.

4.2 Legal framework of match-fixing

In Belgium, there is no specific legislative framework regarding general match-fixing. As in some other European countries, match-fixing is punishable on the basis of general criminal legislation, more specifically anti-corruption legislation. These are Articles 496 and 504bis of the Criminal Code, concerning private bribery and fraud.

In addition, match-fixing often goes hand in hand with activities such as money laundering, forgery and forming a criminal organisation, which are covered by other articles of the Criminal Code.

In addition to the criminal law aspect, there is also a disciplinary framework for match-fixing, established by Basketbal Vlaanderen.

4.3 Regulatory framework of Basketbal Vlaanderen on match-fixing

4.3.1 The Internal Regulations

In the legal part of the Internal Regulations of Basketbal Vlaanderen, the article 505, §1 is dedicated to cheating and bribery, which also includes match-fixing.

It is mandatory for members and clubs to refrain from any form of cheating or bribery. There is also an obligation to report any fact which suggests that fraud or bribery will occur. Failure to report such facts is also a disciplinary offence (§2).

A club guilty of match-fixing will be obliged to relegate to a lower division (§4). An individual who is a member of Basketbal Vlaanderen and is guilty of match-fixing can be removed or deleted (§6).



The Internal Rules are applicable to the members of Basketbal Vlaanderen. Article 76.1 of the administrative part of the Internal Regulations states: 'Any conduct that is transgressive and that compromises the good operation, the good name or the reputation of vzw Basketbal Vlaanderen or that is contrary to the laws, statutes, regulations, codes of conduct and values of vzw Basketbal Vlaanderen, its affiliated clubs or inciting, facilitating or assisting in the commission of an offence shall be subject to disciplinary sanctions, as shall the failure to assist the victim of such conduct.'

4.3.2 Codes of conduct

Basketbal Vlaanderen has no ethical code or code of conduct that applies directly to its members. There is a code of conduct for the administrators of Basketbal Vlaanderen, however, without provisions on match-fixing.

In addition, Basketbal Vlaanderen has established 5 different codes of conduct for the different stakeholders of its member clubs, being directors, officials, parents, players and trainers. Only the code of conduct for the officials contains a provision on match-fixing.

4.4 Sporting-related match-fixing in Flemish Basketball

In the Flemish basketball landscape some situations are known that are susceptible to sporting-related match-fixing. Here we highlight two of them:

First, there are 'end-of-season matches'. These are matches where for one team only the importance of winning for the honour is attached to the match. While for the opponent much bigger interests are attached. Because of the difference in interests, there is a danger that both parties will (un)consciously manipulate such matches by trying to make a deal or by deliberately not giving their full effort. A bigger interest of one party could be, for example, that it wants to promote to a higher division or not to relegate to a lower division. Since relegation and promotion normally occur at the end of the season, this phenomenon is called an end-of-season match.

Closely related to this is the situation where both teams make a bargain because they both still have big interests. For example: Team A needs a win and team B is satisfied with a loss with less than 10 points difference. So both have an advantage if team A wins with less than 10 points difference from team B.

Also similar is the 2nd situation. This situation has to do with the competitive format of basketball leagues, namely the play-off system.

This means that the best teams of the first part of the competition will decide at the end among each other who will become the champion of the competition. At the end of the regular season (part 1), it can therefore be an advantage not to win a game and end up in a different position in the standings (of part 1) to meet a different opponent in the play-offs. The play-off league system is based on the American basketball system with the popular NBA league (National Basketball Association).

The same can happen in international tournaments (World Cup, European Championship, Olympic Games). After the group stage, the final round is played and also there, it may be important to finish in a certain position in the first phase in order to meet another opponent in the next round. This could be



solved by drawing lots after the first round to decide which teams will play against each other in the second round.

5. THE CURRENT FIGHT AGAINST SPORTING-RELATED MATCH-FIXING

This section, we look at what actions have already been taken by Basketbal Vlaanderen in the fight against sporting-related match-fixing.

The description of the instruments already adopted and actions taken, will be based on the Integrity Management Framework (IMF).

5.1 The Integrity Management Framework

The Integrity Management Framework was originally developed for the OECD (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development) by Jeroen Maesschalck and Janos Bertok.¹ The model or framework can be used to map out an organisation's integrity policy (or part of it, such as match-fixing) and to see where reinforcement might be needed.

The central premise of the Integrity Management Framework is that a good integrity policy (in this case, the match-fixing policy) must be based on three pillars:

- 1) The instruments of match-fixing policy.
- 2) The processes: necessary to bring the instruments to life and keep them working.
- 3) Structures: In order to have an impact, the match-fixing policy must be incorporated into the organisation's chart. There also needs to be explicit accountability for the organisation's match-fixing policy.

Going deeper into the instruments (the first pillar of the IMF), we can divide them into four groups according to the specific function that each of them has in the integrity policy, in this case match-fixing policy. The table below lists the different groups, their functions and examples of the instruments.

¹ May 2009, Towards a Sound Integrity Framework: Instruments, Processes, Structures and Conditions for Implementation.



Group of instruments	Function of the instruments	Which instruments?
Determining and defining match-fixing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - These instruments are suitable for determining and then describing the behaviour expected from those involved in match-fixing. - Which values are important and which rules must be followed? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A risk analysis - Analysis of ethical dilemmas in the sport in question - Code of Conduct - Code of Ethics - Disciplinary code
Guidance on match-fixing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The aim of these instruments is to provide guidance to those involved, so that they know what is expected of them with regard to match-fixing. - And encourage them to stick to it. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ethical leadership of the executives and within the organization - Training and education (including dilemma training) - Coaching and counselling
Monitoring of match-fixing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - These instruments can be used to determine the extent to which the match-fixing policy is followed/complied with. - Passive monitoring: reporting violations - Active monitoring: detection of violations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Complaints system - Match-fixing hotline - Whistleblower policy - Investigating the reports - Analyse the messages - Mapping violations by means of surveys
Enforcing and strengthening match-fixing policies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Action must be taken when the rules are broken (proportionate, uniform and fair) - Within the organisation(s), certain persons must be appointed to deal specifically with match-fixing. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Informal sanctions - Formal sanction procedures - Procedures for crisis communication - Appointing a SPOC (Single Point of Contact), an API (contact person for integrity), clearly defining his powers and facilitating his activities



5.2 Current instruments of the federation in the fight against match-fixing

In the table below, the current instruments are placed within the model.

Group of instruments	Which instruments?
Determining and defining match-fixing	<p>5.2.1.1 A risk analysis Basket Vlaanderen has not undertaken any official risk analysis on match-fixing. The risk factors include end-of-season matches, the limited number of players on a basketball court during the game (for both 3x3 and 5x5), and the great influence one player can have on a game.</p> <p>5.2.1.2 Code of Conduct Basketbal Vlaanderen has established a code of conduct for each stakeholder. See 3.III.a. for a detailed discussion.</p> <p>5.2.1.3 Disciplinary code Basketbal Vlaanderen has also drawn up a disciplinary regulation. See 3.III.b. for an extensive discussion.</p>
Guidance on match-fixing	<p>5.2.1.4 Training, education, coaching and consulting (including dilemma training) Basketbal Vlaanderen does not provide training on match-fixing itself. However, trainings of VSF, VTS and ICES are shared as much as possible.</p>



Monitoring of match-fixing	<p>5.2.1.5 Match-fixing hotline</p> <p>When the report comes from an official, it will be sent to the Judicial Councils of Basketbal Vlaanderen via the match report.</p> <p>A report of a person, official or otherwise, outside of the match report can be made informally through the Integrity Confidential Advisor (the Federation API).</p> <p>5.2.1.6 Investigating the reports</p> <p>The reports are investigated in several steps.</p> <p>Without passing judgment on the facts themselves, reports are received and subjected to an initial analysis by the integrity counsellors.</p> <p>If the report contains sufficiently concrete elements, it is passed on to the judicial councils.</p> <p>Members may also immediately file a complaint through the judicial councils.</p> <p>5.2.1.7 Mapping violations by means of surveys</p> <p>Here, we can point to the first phase of the EPOSM Project, namely the survey and its results on match-fixing among people involved in basketball. This survey serves as an instrument under this topic of match-fixing policy and provides some interesting insights.</p>
Enforcing and strengthening match-fixing policies	<p>5.2.1.8 Formal sanction procedure</p> <p>When members of Basketbal Vlaanderen flout the regulatory framework of the federation they commit a disciplinary act for which they may be prosecuted and punished.</p> <p>The public prosecutor can then set up an investigation commission. Subsequently, the file can be brought before the judicial councils, after which this council will make a decision in the first instance. Prosecution of match-fixing is possible on the basis of Article 505 of the Legal Section of the Internal Regulations.</p> <p>The ruling can still be appealed before the Belgian Court of Arbitration for Sport (BAS).</p> <p>5.2.1.9 Procedures for crisis communication</p> <p>Basketbal Vlaanderen has a procedure for crisis communication that dates back to 2014. A review of the procedure will be commissioned.</p>



	<p>5.2.1.10 Appointing a SPOC (Single Point of Contact), an API (integrity contact person), clearly defining his powers and facilitating his activities</p> <p>Basket Vlaanderen has appointed two employees who work on integrity and ethics. They are the contact persons for integrity of Basketbal Vlaanderen. The fact that this important role is done by two colleagues is a plus. This offers the certainty that the API is always available and that both can consult collegially without violating the confidentiality. The advice to appoint a man and a woman for this role was also followed.</p>
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6. STRENGTHENING THE INTEGRITY MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK

Basketbal Vlaanderen has built a regulatory framework. Yet there are still some things that can be upgraded. The four-point action plan focuses on easy-to-implement practical adjustments.

In the white row below the action point, there is usually a tip or a point for attention. A **tip** means a recommendation on **how** the action point could be carried out. A **point of attention** is a point that one should pay extra attention to when executing the action point.

6.1 Attention to sporting-related match-fixing

Action point	Check?
Pay more attention to sporting-related match-fixing.	
Point of attention <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Consider sporting-related match-fixing as one of the priority ethical issues.	
Communicate to players, trainers, officials, administrators etc. about sporting-related match-fixing as a first step in raising awareness.	
Tip <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Using an infographic, inform stakeholders about sporting-related match-fixing, what it entails, the forms it takes, the dangers and how to report it.	
Carry out an official risk analysis of match-fixing (as referred to in 4.II). This analysis identifies all forms of match-fixing, the dangers and risk factors.	
Point of attention <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ The new 3x3 format has some risk factors for match-fixing (less players, no coach during the match,...).	



Raise awareness around the risk of end-of-season matches.	
Tips <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ For example by means of an infographic.▪ Raising awareness is best done both at the beginning of the season (general briefing) and at the end of the season (risk period).	
Explicitly include sporting-related match-fixing in the disciplinary regulations.	
Tip <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Make clear to the members of Basketbal Vlaanderen that sporting-related match-fixing can also be prosecuted.	

6.2 Organisational and institutional

Action point	Check?
Inform and train the Judicial Councils on match-fixing.	
Point of attention <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Judicial councils have limited affinity with the topic of match-fixing.	
Analyse league formats to curb end-of-season matches.	
Tip <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ For less competitive basketball players, league formats are devised without promotion and relegation, for example with a free entry/exit.	
Create one page on the website where all information about match-fixing is collected and framed. Also define the role of the contact point.	
Tip <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Make the page easily accessible through the search engine.	
Analyse codes of ethics using scientific research related to the effectiveness of codes of ethics.	
Tips <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ The scientific studies on this are :<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Ethical Codes in Sports Organizations: An Empirical Study on Determinants of Effectiveness, Els De Waegeneer 2016- Ethical Code Effectiveness in Football Clubs: A Longitudinal Analysis, Bram Constandt 2017	



Invite every basketball club to include in its rules and regulations provisions on match-fixing and specifically sporting-related match-fixing.	
Tips <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Basket Vlaanderen has drafted some standard provisions that will be offered to basketball clubs to integrate in their rules, in order to enhance uniformity.	

6.3 Notifications

Action point	Check?
Inform the members of Basketbal Vlaanderen on how to report match-fixing information and the importance of their reports.	
Point of attention <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ This is important because the number of reports received by Basketbal Vlaanderen does not correspond to the results of the EPOSM survey.	
The place where a report of match-fixing can be made should clearly indicate what will happen to the report and which procedure the report will follow.	
Point of attention <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ The notifier must be able to see transparently what will happen to his report. A notifier needs this information to be able to assess the consequences of his report.	
Tips <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ To indicate with a diagram the possible consequences of a report.▪ What are the options of a reporter (formal/informal).▪ Possible inspiration for this : https://www.unia.be/nl/over-unia/wat-gebeurt-er-met-je-melding	
A report can be made anonymously if desired. The match-fixing hotline should be informed that an anonymous report is possible.	
Point of attention <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ The possibility of reporting anonymously increases the willingness to report.	

6.4 Education and training

Action point	Check?
Incorporate match-fixing as a subject in the training and education of players, trainers, officials, coaches etc.	



Tip :	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not trying to determine <u>for</u> the participants what match-fixing is or is not. But we do <u>want to encourage them to think about</u> cases, dilemmas, match-fixing and the grey areas surrounding it.
	Examine whether training could be offered via e-learning.
Tip	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The advantage of e-learning is that you can more easily reach a young(er) audience and also a larger audience.
	The federation is looking into the possibility of offering a fixed training programme on match-fixing.
Tip	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The federation can cooperate with different partners for this
	Try to reach as large an audience as possible of basketball players and people involved and raise awareness about sporting-related match-fixing.
Tip	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Easily accessible dilemma training courses are an excellent tool for this.

7. REFERENCE LIST

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