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Cooperation in the process of ensuring safety of football matches – results of qualitative empirical research

Abstract

In this paper, the author presents the research results conducted within the project titled “Cooperation in ensuring safety of football matches”, funded by the National Science Center (grant number 2016/23/N/HS5/00962). The article specifically focuses on the findings of qualitative research, synthesizing the conclusions drawn from them in conjunction with the analysis of applicable law and the results of quantitative research. Within the project, factors that promote and hinder cooperation among entities involved in ensuring the safety of football matches were identified, as well as factors associated with this cooperation that impact the safety of participants in such events.

Keywords: cooperation, safety, security, mass events, policing, criminal prevention.

Introduction

The multi-stakeholder integrated approach to safety during football matches is explicitly expressed in the Council of Europe Convention on an Integrated Safety, Security, and Service Approach at Football Matches and Other Sports Events (CETS No. 218). It is also firmly rooted in the Act of 20 March 2009 on Mass Events Safety (Journal of Laws of 2023, item 616), which effectively establishes the necessity of cooperation among various public and private entities in the process of ensuring security and protection at such events. Regardless of their primary purpose, the safety, security and services measures during football matches and other sports events unavoidably overlap, are interrelated

and mutually influence each other. They need to be balanced, coordinated, mutually complementary and designed and implemented as part of a comprehensive strategy.

The purpose of this study is to present the findings drawn during the implementation of the project titled „Cooperation in ensuring safety of football matches” (No. 2016/23/N/HS5/00962), funded by the National Science Centre (www.ncn.gov.pl). The main objective of the project was to identify factors that facilitate or hinder cooperation in securing football matches, as well as factors associated with such cooperation that impact the safety of participants in these types of events. In this article, the author focuses primarily on presenting the results of qualitative empirical research. The research results, including a comprehensive analysis of the legal framework and quantitative studies on security-threatening incidents during football matches, have been presented in other publications by the author, particularly in widely available articles published on open-access databases (i.e. academia.edu, researchgate.net).

The process of ensuring safety at a football match can be divided into several stages, starting from the procedure of issuing permits for organizing such a mass event and ending with the safe return of participants after its conclusion. Each stage involves different categories of entities, making them responsible to varying degrees for the actions taken in this context. Collaboration in performing separate tasks can take various forms, which can be classified based on several criteria. Among the most relevant forms of collaboration from the perspective of this study, terms such as cooperation and coordination should be highlighted. Due to the involvement of multiple distinct entities in carrying out this task, including various types of public administration and entities outside of that administration, the inadequacy of previously formulated definitions of cooperation becomes apparent.

Cooperation itself is the subject of research in both law and economics. In the context of administrative law, cooperation is understood as a specific form of collaboration between the administration and non-governmental organizations (foundations, professional and economic associations, private entities, social organizations, churches etc.). From an economic perspective, the key characteristic of cooperation is the participation of multiple entities (entrepreneurs) in the same production process (or in different, interrelated production processes)¹. Therefore, it involves the coordination of activities among multiple entities in terms of the subject matter (material), time, and space. Cooperation (or sometimes used synonymously with it, the concept of coordination) in the field of public administration is also defined as a situation in which an authority obligated to carry out a specific task seeks the involvement of a cooperating author-

¹ M. Waligórski, *Kooperacja jako forma aktywności administracji publicznej*, [w:] J. Łukasiewicz (ed.), *Nauka administracji wobec wyzwań współczesnego państwa prawa*, Rzeszów 2022, pp. 544–545.

ity at various stages of implementation to seek their position, opinion, or agreement on how to execute the task². On the other hand, in the field of management sciences, cooperation is described as an organized form of collaboration that leads to the harmonization of actions undertaken for specific goals, which is understood as the synchronization of partial actions in time and space³. It is important to note the close synonymy between the terms cooperation and coordination. The literature indicates that both concepts involve the pursuit of harmonizing actions. However, in the case of coordination, the coordinating body possesses a certain hierarchy or authoritative power over the coordinated entities, while cooperation is characterized by the equality of partners (organizational independence, lack of hierarchical subordination)⁴. Cooperation is also marked by voluntary collaboration based on agreements between the entities (lack of normative command to cooperate in a specific manner)⁵.

When constructing a definition of cooperation for the purpose of research on the collaboration of football match organizers in a broad sense, it is valuable to rely on the definition of cooperation used in the field of public administration. In this context, cooperation is one of the forms of collaboration between public administration and private entities which can perform functions assigned to the administration on the basis of subsidiarity. Indeed, assigning responsibility for the safety during a mass event to the organizer is nothing but the implementation of the subsidiarity principle. The law entrusts the responsibility for the safety of event participants to a private entity outside the structures of public administration, which, in principle, is responsible for ensuring safety in general. However, the process of ensuring the security of football matches does not solely involve actions during the event. Due to the distribution of responsibilities among various entities at different stages of the process, the need for cooperation becomes even more significant. It cannot be unequivocally and categorically stated that a single entity bears the overall responsibility for ensuring the proper security of a football match. Furthermore, the fact that a variety of entities are involved in this process (government administration, local administration, entities outside the realm of public administration) further emphasizes the need for harmonizing actions in this regard.

Cooperation can therefore be understood as a process aimed at harmonizing actions between at least two collaborating entities whose task areas are similar (criterion of objectives), while not being characterized by a relationship of hierarchy (institutional and organizational criterion). However, the criterion of voluntary cooperation, as proposed in some definitions, should be rejected. This

² E. Knosala, *Zarys nauki administracji*, Kraków 2006, pp. 132–133.

³ J. Hausner, *Zarządzanie publiczne*, Warszawa 2008, p. 31.

⁴ Z. Leoński, *Nauka administracji*, Warszawa 2002, p. 128.

⁵ E. Bardach, *Getting Agencies to Work Together: The Practice and Theory of Managerial Craftsmanship*, Washington 1988, p. 19.

is because there may be situations where regulatory norms mandate cooperation with another entity without precluding the form of cooperation and without granting directive powers in this regard. Therefore, if in such a situation (while fulfilling the aforementioned conditions) there is no relationship of hierarchy that gives one entity imperative powers over the other entity (especially concerning the manner of task execution), then such a relationship can be referred to as cooperation.

1. Legal outline

Convention on an Integrated Safety, Security, and Service Approach at Football Matches and Other Sports Events is based on a multi-stakeholder integrated approach to the safety, security, and service management during football matches. It recognizes that irrespective of their primary objectives, measures for safety, security, and service during football matches and other sports events are interdependent, interconnected, and mutually influential. They need to be balanced and cannot be developed or implemented independently of each other. Therefore, a range of public and private institutions and other stakeholders, including the fans themselves as participants in the sporting event, share a common goal of ensuring safe football matches. Furthermore, the tasks and actions of individual institutions involved in the planning and operational activities related to football or other sports disciplines should be coordinated, mutually complementary, proportionate, designed and implemented within a comprehensive strategy for safety, security, and service provision. It requires the establishment of effective international, national, and local partnerships by relevant institutions with the aim of preparing an integrated and sustainable multi-stakeholder approach to ensuring safety, security, and service provision. The process of ensuring the security of a football match, as defined in the title of this paper refers to the entirety of defined objectives, planned and executed tasks and activities aimed at achieving a safe environment, free from threats (criminal, health and disorderly conduct) during this particular type of mass sports event.

„Safety measures” refer to all measures developed and implemented with the primary objective of protecting the health and well-being of individuals and groups participating actively or passively in a football match or other sports event within or outside the stadium, as well as those residing or working near the event venue. „Security measures” refer to all measures developed and implemented with the primary objective of preventing and reducing risks or responding to any instances of violence, criminal activity, or disruption of order related to a football match or other sports event, within or outside the stadium. „Service measures” refer to all measures developed and implemented with the primary objective of providing comfort and a sense of appreciation and welcome

to individuals and groups participating in a football match or other sports event, within or outside the stadium.

It is worth to mention that the Polish legislature did not formulate such a separation at all. The separation of security measures from protective and service measures did not occur explicitly, even after the ratification of the Convention, in the content of the Act on Mass Events Safety. Event safety was defined as a set of coordinated activities aimed at ensuring safety and public order in relation to a mass event. This definition encompasses the concepts of „safety measures” and „security measures” defined in the Convention. The objectives set for both types of measures are closely related and effectively complement each other. Both safety and security measures aim to protect participants in sports events from health and life-threatening hazards, particularly as a result of violating established participation rules (derived from both universally applicable laws and regulations established by event organizers). Meanwhile, service measures aim to provide comfort derived from participating in the event. Thus, considering the aforementioned circumstances, for the purpose of this work, the term „ensuring safety during a football match” should be understood unconditionally as encompassing both safety and security measures defined in the Convention and, to a certain extent, service measures as well (e.g., transportation-related aspects for event participants). The Convention provisions should be implemented regarding football matches or tournaments taking place on their territory, involving professional football clubs and national teams. This means that the Convention should apply to all matches involving teams from the top three levels of football competitions in Poland (Ekstraklasa, I Liga, II Liga), as these are professional leagues.

The need for cooperation in ensuring the safety of a football match can be considered from four perspectives:

1. Subjective perspective: between institutions and organizers in a broad sense.
2. Objective perspective: in terms of ensuring safety, security, and services.
3. Local perspective: within and outside the event venue.
4. Temporal perspective: before, during, and after the event.

According to Article 4 of the Convention, the parties are obligated to adopt „national and local coordination arrangements” aimed at developing and implementing a multi-entity integrated approach to safety, security, and services. It is worth noting the significant emphasis on risk analysis granted by the Convention. In the case of mass events in Poland in general, a uniformed model for conducting such analysis has not yet been established. The regulations established by universally applicable laws generally only require conducting such analysis but do not specify the rules or methods to be used. Even internal legislation, particularly regulations established by the Chief of Police, does not sufficiently address this matter. An exception in this regard is the Instruction for issuing opinions

on mass events by the State Fire Service, which regulates these issues. The literature on the subject emphasizes the importance of standardizing the issuance of opinions, including conducting risk analysis, throughout the country⁶.

A multi-entity integrated approach to safety, security, and services encompasses tasks and actions both within the event venue (the stadium) and beyond, in public places affected or potentially affected by the organized event. This obligation of cooperation is not explicitly expressed in the Mass Events Safety Act. The provisions of the Convention are much more decisive and far-reaching than domestic law. However, it should be noted that ratified in 2017, the Convention largely confirmed the existing state of affairs in Poland prior to its ratification, which was already legally and substantially established in relation to the organization of the UEFA Euro 2012 final tournament.

The most important national source of law that comprehensively covers the regulation of organizing and ensuring the safety of mass events, including football matches, is the Act on Mass Events Safety. This Act regulates the procedural rules necessary to ensure the safety of mass events, the safety conditions of such events, the principles and procedures for granting permits for organizing mass events, as well as the responsibilities and obligations of the organizers of mass events, including football matches. It is worth noting the particular method of systematizing various types of mass events. Football matches are subject to a kind of „special provisions” within the Act, contained in Chapter III (articles 13 to 18 of the Act). These provisions impose specific obligations on the organizer of a football match, which differ from other mass sports events or, more broadly, mass events. These obligations include aspects related to the identification of individuals, data processing, ticket sales rules, stadium projects, and admission regulations.

While this Act is comprehensive in nature, it should be noted that it does not exhaustively regulate the issue of ensuring the safety of mass events, including football matches. The claim of comprehensiveness of the Act is true only with regard to the organizer in strict sense. Other entities involved in ensuring the safety of such events, referred to as organizers in broad sense, undertake (or may undertake) a series of preventive actions outside the venue of the event, including long-term actions, primarily based on specific provisions.

According to Article 5 of the Act on Mass Events Safety, the organizer in strict sense is responsible for the safety of the mass event. However, this responsibility is limited to the place (stadium) and duration (period from the moment the facility or area is made available to the participants of the mass event until they leave the facility or area) of the mass event. It is worth noting that such a definition of the duration of the event does not coincide with the literal or colloquial

⁶ S. Parszowski, A. Kruczyński, *Imprezy masowe. Organizacja, bezpieczeństwo, dobre praktyki*, Warszawa 2015, p. 30.

understanding of the duration of the event. The obligation to ensure the security of a mass event (defined in the Act as „a set of coordinated activities undertaken to ensure safety and public order in connection with a mass event“) lies with the organizer, as well as, to the extent specified in the Act on Mass Event Safety and in specific regulations, with other entities referred (organizers in broad sense).

The Act grants the organizer in strict sense two fundamental tools to ensure the safety of a mass event: the security service and the information service, both headed by security manager. For individuals who only occasionally attend football matches, the differences between the information service and the security service may appear superficial. This phenomenon is mainly due to the significant number of similarities and common features that can be attributed to both services. While the universally applicable laws do not dictate the colors of the vests typically worn by members of each service, the most commonly encountered practice involves yellow vests for the information service and orange vests for the security service. Members of the security service act to maintain safety and public order during the duration and at the venue of the mass event. On the other hand, members of the information service work to ensure the safety of event participants, particularly by providing them with information about the adopted organizational solutions. The specifics of these tasks are determined by the organizer through the security manager.

The Act on Mass Events Safety provides detailed regulations regarding various aspects, including the procedure for issuing permits for organizing mass events (along with the competences of organizers in a broad sense) as well as the control and enforcement mechanisms available to public entities in relation to event organizers. It should be noted that, for a comprehensive understanding of the tasks and competences of organizers in a broad context, reference to specific provisions is necessary, particularly to laws governing the activities of entities such as the Police, State Fire Service, and local self-government units.

2. Cooperation in empirical research

The knowledge and opinions of respondents - entities professionally involved in ensuring safety during football matches - significantly complement the data obtained in previous exploratory stages of conducted research, particularly in terms of information on the application of applicable regulations and the diagnosis of the causes of incidents during such events. The research aimed to also explore the experts' opinions on factors related to effective cooperation with other entities involved in ensuring the safety of football matches. The research questions were focused on five fundamental aspects:

- respondents' opinions on the level of safety at football matches;
- respondents' opinions on responsibility for the safety of football match participants;

- respondents' opinions on the provisions of the Act on Mass Events Safety, particularly regarding the procedure for granting permission to organize football matches;
- respondents' opinions on the areas of cooperation with other entities and their most important forms;
- known and recommended good practices in cooperation with other entities involved in ensuring the safety of football matches.

Interviews were conducted with:

- representatives of the strict sense organizer, particularly individuals serving as security managers;
 - representatives of the Police, especially City Police Headquarters responsible for securing football matches (acting on behalf of Police City Commanders);
 - representatives of local government, acting on behalf of the respective city mayors' officials involved in the process of granting permits for mass events.
- In-depth interviews were conducted in four cities in Poland where football matches at the highest professional level, the Ekstraklasa, were being played during the research. In addition to the above, four individuals who had previously served as security managers at Ekstraklasa matches or international competitions participated in the in-depth interviews. In-depth interviews with experts were conducted on the condition of their anonymity.

In general, all respondents expressed positive views on the level of safety at football matches, as well as the level of security felt by the participants of such events (spectators). According to their opinions, these are safe gatherings, although not entirely free from incidents. Regarding the occurrence of incidents related to aggression and violence, individual respondents, depending on their perspective and roles in the match security process, pointed out significantly different areas where such incidents occur. Representatives of the event organizers primarily highlighted incidents that take place in the stands, gastronomic areas, or restrooms. On the other hand, representatives of the police paid much greater attention to incidents of aggression and violence that occur outside the event venue, both before and after its commencement.

Respondents with more experience in organizing the security of football matches stated that in their opinion, the number and intensity of incidents at stadiums have been systematically decreasing for several years. Representatives of the police and local government units also emphasized that in recent years, including the period before the restrictions related to the pandemic, the number of incidents involving away team supporters has significantly decreased.

The majority of respondents positively evaluate the security provision model formulated in the Act on Mass Events Safety concerning football matches, including the strict responsibility of the event organizer for the safety of participants during the event. This statement is especially true for respondents not

directly affiliated with the mass event organizer. However, the most doubts in this regard were expressed by representatives of the event organizers themselves. Their concerns primarily revolved around the adequacy of this solution, particularly concerning the insufficient tools available to ensure the safety of participants, especially in relation to incidents involving aggression and violence. The issue of high and not always proportional costs incurred by the organizer in maintaining informational and security services was also raised. According to some respondents, the requirements regarding the size of these services imposed by the law are inadequate. For example, one security manager stated that in cases where the risk of incidents involving aggression or violence is minimal, greater emphasis should be placed on the size of the informational service. In such situations, members of the security service already perform a significant portion of the tasks typically assigned to the informational service. It should be noted that the cost of the presence of a security service member during a mass event typically significantly exceeds the cost of an informational service member.

On the other hand, in cases where the risk of incidents involving aggression and violence is assessed as more likely, opinions from security managers indicated that the security agencies hired by organizers to act as security services did not always fulfill their duties adequately. A significant majority of respondents in this category pointed out that they have encountered situations in which the security service performed its tasks ineffectively, including one respondent who mentioned an incident where an order to use direct coercive measures was met with refusal to comply.

Some security managers pointed out the reluctance to seek assistance from the Police. According to them, Police intervention is often associated with a high probability of the authorities using repressive powers, such as excluding fans from the sectors where incidents of aggression and violence occurred in subsequent matches. This, in turn, results in significant financial and reputational losses for the organizer. It was also noted that in such situations, there is usually an accumulation of penalties imposed by both the authorities and the football association (with financial penalties being the most burdensome for the organizer, while bans on organized fan group travel are seen as less severe).

While the dysfunctions described above were primarily indicated by respondents representing the event organizers, similar observations regarding the functioning of security services were also shared by one respondent responsible for the security of mass events from the Police perspective. According to this respondent, the police have significantly greater capabilities for using force in the event of serious incidents related to aggression and violence in the stands. In their opinion, the provision contained in Article 22 of the Act on Mass Events Safety allowing for requesting assistance from the Police if the actions of the security service prove insufficient, is ineffective, especially during mass events where the risk of aggression and violence in the stands is identified as significant.

From their experience, it appears that the response from cohesive Police units is usually delayed in such cases, which, from their perspective, represents a reactive approach that overlooks preventive measures to avoid such incidents.

The situation is further complicated by the fact that the interests of the event organizer (i.e., the entity that actually bears the costs of securing the match) and the person representing them in terms of security (i.e., the security manager) are not fully aligned in this regard. The organizer's interest lies in ensuring the safety of the match participants with minimal cost, i.e. in an efficient manner from a business perspective of the entire undertaking. On the other hand, security managers have an interest in having a larger number of security services, as it facilitates event security planning and provides greater response capabilities in crisis situations. During one of the interviews, a former security manager at football matches raised the point that while the safety of mass event participants is an extremely important value that must be protected unconditionally, the organizer's primarily financial interest is to have as few matches classified as high-risk mass events as possible. This significantly increases the costs incurred by the organizers in securing the event (while also preventing them from generating profits from the sale of low-alcohol beverages). The interviewee explicitly admitted that while serving as a security manager and being responsible for preparing the application for the permit to organize a series of matches, they faced pressure from the club owner (organizer) to strive for minimizing the number of matches classified as high-risk events. In cases where matches were considered high-risk mass events, the interviewee's superior consistently insisted on submitting an application requesting a smaller number of security and information services compared to the requirements stipulated by the law (the right to submit such an application arises from Article 26 of the Act on Mass Events Security).

From the perspective of each party involved in this process, participation in the procedure allows them to familiarize themselves with the positions of the other parties and enables them to prepare for fulfilling their obligations well in advance. For the event organizer, obtaining such a decision primarily provides certainty (or at least a high probability) that home matches will be played with the presence of the audience. It also ensures an understanding of the expectations from the supervising authority regarding the conduct of the mass event. For representatives of local government units, issuing this type of decision, combined with knowledge of the fixture schedule, allows for proper management of security within the city, especially in the context of other potentially conflicting events such as planned mass events or assemblies. This is also a significant factor from the Police perspective which participates in securing such events.

The lack of proper coordination of the aforementioned procedures can result in disproportionately high „costs” incurred for securing two events taking place at a similar time and in close proximity. As an example provided by the

respondents, the simultaneous occurrence of a high-risk match and a pride march which took place a few hundred meters from the venue but essentially on the transportation route between the stadium, public transport stops, and the city center. Although these events did not result in any incidents themselves, according to the respondents, the forces and resources required to secure both events simultaneously were significantly greater than if they were organized with a few hours time gap. According to a representative of local government units, the deadlines defined in the Act on gatherings and the grounds for issuing a ban on organizing an gathering do not sufficiently prevent such situations in a satisfactory manner.

A significant number of respondents associated with the decision-making authority mentioned that they encountered situations where the actual number of security and information personnel differed from the declared numbers, especially during inspections conducted after the match. However, in none of these cases did the discovery of such discrepancies result in the interruption of the mass event during its course. It also did not lead to a change or revocation of the decision allowing the organization of the matches. According to the respondents, simply communicating such shortcomings resulted in their elimination by the organizers during subsequent events.

Interestingly, the presented positions do not allow for determining which group of respondents prefers or positively/negatively evaluates a particular solution. The main criticism in this regard is the dilution of responsibility due to the multitude of „leaders“ at different stages of event security and depending on the secured area. Key elements of proper match security preparation highlighted by the respondents include the precise definition of responsibilities, task allocation, transparent briefings, and ongoing supervision of tasks being carried out.

The significant majority of respondents emphasized the importance of continuous information exchange. This is a crucial element for both supporters of horizontal and vertical arrangements, enabling efficient decision-making and increasing the likelihood of accurate decisions in response to the situation at hand. This is particularly relevant for ad hoc actions and crisis situations.

Respondents, especially security managers, often pointed out that personnel changes in managerial positions pose certain challenges to effective cooperation. Some respondents associated with the authority granting permits for mass events pointed out that problems with proper information exchange with the actual organizers mostly occur when local government authorities exercise their powers to control the course of the mass event.

On the other hand, among the actual organizers, there were accusations that both planned and implemented long-term actions (particularly referring to the activities of provincial interdisciplinary teams for mass event security, including the meetings they had the opportunity to participate in) are superficial and do not fully address the problems that organizers of matches have to deal

with. They believed that too much emphasis is placed on numbers and statistics. One respondent also stated that in his opinion the local government authorities granting permits for matches attach too much importance to the defined procedures in the law, completely neglecting the actual problems faced by the organizers. During the research, a kind of mutual „dislike” between the actual organizers and the representatives of the authority granting permits and overseeing the course of the football match could be observed. One of the respondents even mentioned that in the relationship with the authority, he, as a representative of the organizer, is effectively a petitioner, while viewing the role of the authority more as that of a controlling or even supervising entity due to its repressive powers. Similarly, a representative of local government units also indicated negative experiences with security managers, perceiving the relationship more as a „necessity” rather than a partnership. This kind of reluctance was also noticeable in other topics discussed during the interview.

The organizers most commonly pointed out the widespread lack of knowledge of regulations by supporters, whether it be the facility regulations or the mass event regulations. Excluding obvious and intentional attempts to violate the regulations (or even the provisions of the Act on Mass Events Safety), such as trying to enter the event premises with dangerous objects or prohibited substances or beverages, there are relatively frequent cases where entry is denied to individuals carrying drinks in glass bottles, thermoses, cameras with professional lenses, drones, helmets, umbrellas, or even... animals.

Police representatives drew attention to the improving behavior of individuals attending or returning from matches. According to the respondents, the number of incidents related to traveling fans has been decreasing from year to year. Of course, this does not mean that no prohibited acts are committed in connection with football matches. However, compared to the early 2000s, cases of physical aggression, robberies, or acts of vandalism occur much less frequently. Interestingly, during the interviews, the vast majority of respondents did not mention the role of SLO (Supporters Liaison Officer), even in the context of the question about the role of fans in ensuring the safety of mass events.

Among the recommended examples of good practices supporting cooperation with other entities involved in the process of securing football matches, the most frequently mentioned category was training and practical exercises. However, according to the respondents, the vast majority of such training programs insufficiently consider the „externality” component, which refers to collaboration with other entities. Respondents believed that training programs offered by continuing education institutions primarily focus on tasks characteristic of the trained entity, primarily centered around command and leadership activities. Security managers expressed their opinions most frequently in this regard, emphasizing their participation in a series of training sessions, albeit predominantly focused on the functioning of order and information services. Some of these

training sessions were planned and implemented under the supervision of security managers themselves, while others were conducted by security agencies providing security services for football matches as order services. Additionally, some training sessions were conducted by external experts. However, it was emphasized that the quality of the offered training varies significantly, and respondents often expressed dissatisfaction with the practical experience level of the instructors. Specialized or advanced training sessions, which go beyond the minimum requirements of basic training, were clearly better evaluated. According to the respondents, these sessions were most frequently conducted by a more experienced teaching staff.

Attention was also drawn to the sporadic utilization of opportunities for conducting joint exercises on the stadium with other entities involved in the process of securing football matches. According to some respondents, exercises of this nature should take place at least once a year and should address the specific threats related to football matches, particularly in crisis situations that require prompt and decisive action involving multiple entities. However, according to the interviewees, such exercises currently take place exclusively in the scope of fire protection.

In this context, among the good practices in cooperation related to football matches, there is also a mention of agreements regarding the transportation of participants of such events, especially in the context of supporters of the home club. Although coordinating with public transport providers for the transportation of fans within the city is not a novelty, despite the adoption of the Convention by Poland, this issue remains largely outside the scope of the Mass Events Safety Act. Therefore, any agreements made in this regard between the organizers, transport providers, police, and local government units should be perceived primarily as a good practice.

Another commonly mentioned good practice is the establishment of a command post where the management of football match security and the coordination of actions undertaken by entities under the supervision of the security manager take place. Among the entities that, according to the respondents referring to this example of good practice, should be mandatory participants in the command post, in addition to the security manager, are: the head of order and information services, the operations commander of the police and fire brigade or authorized representatives in constant contact with them, the medical coordinator, the supervisor of video surveillance, as well as representatives of public administration entities responsible for overseeing the course of the mass event, such as voivodeships and local government units.

Another example of a good practice mentioned during in-depth interviews was the distribution of the main operational plan for securing the match along with sector plans that outline specific tasks for each service and individual. According to the respondent, this allows for better coordination of planned ac-

tions, especially due to working with the same set of basic data. Further task allocation based on their type (including security services, information services, medical coordinators, or service and maintenance personnel) and stadium zones (such as entrances, stands, sectors, pitch area, or catering zones) is then carried out based on the main operational plan for event security.

As an example of a good practice, although not always successful, the joint efforts of the organizers and the police to limit the use of pyrotechnic materials during the match were mentioned. All areas accessible to the organizer were inspected using police dogs and all vehicles entering the stadium area were also checked. However, these efforts often do not yield the desired results because, according to the respondent, sometimes the organizer does not have access to all areas of the stadium. Some areas are being rented to commercial entities that provide services there. Therefore, preventive actions taken in this regard are often insufficient. Moreover, in cases of intense use of pyrotechnic materials in the so-called „mill”, the individuals using them often wear protective clothing (such as painter's coveralls) which undermines the control measures conducted by the Police after the match.

3. Research findings and recommendations for legal reform

The conducted research has revealed the existence of numerous factors that can hinder cooperation in the field of safety, security and service of football matches, ultimately leading to a decrease in overall safety levels during such events. An analysis of the content of the prevailing laws in this area, as well as practical insights from respondents who are experts in professional football match security, allows to conclude that the existing procedures and tools available to organizers may prove insufficient in ensuring a safe course of football matches, especially in cases involving serious incidents of aggression and violence in the stands. Although the law does provide the option to request assistance from the police in crisis situations, the practice demonstrates that submitting such a request can have negative consequences for the organizer which hampers the utilization of this instrument. Consequently it is justified to state that the tools at the disposal of organizers for match safety and security, considering their actual capabilities and the consequences of their utilization, may, in some cases, be inadequate in relation to the responsibility for the safety of participants during football matches. Respondents in the study attributed significantly greater importance to cooperation in non-urgent actions, particularly in organizational, planning and long-term effect activities. In the case of crisis actions, the majority of respondents deemed a firm, directive management approach to be more effective.

Dispersion of responsibility for the safety of football fans in time and space, coupled with relatively limited regulation regarding minimum requirements for their cooperation, contributes to the emergence of dysfunctions in jointly undertaken actions. The research also allowed for the diagnosis of potential problems in intra-institutional cooperation, particularly in the relationships between security managers and club authorities, as well as between security managers and the services under their supervision.

During the research, factors conducive to fast and efficient information exchange between institutions were identified, especially through proper organization of the command center and ensuring communication channels. Nevertheless, the current solutions in the area of long-term joint project planning raise several concerns and at least some of these concerns can be mitigated through appropriate changes in the existing legal regulations. The research also revealed that despite a decrease in the overall number of serious incidents occurring at stadiums in Poland accompanied by an increase in attendance, the issues faced by organizers in terms of cooperation with public entities have remained relatively consistent over the years.

Taking the above into consideration, the primary focus on the *de lege ferenda* postulates should be pointed at fully implementing an integrated approach to the safety, security and service of football matches into the Polish legal framework. This can be achieved by incorporating the service component which is currently largely excluded from the scope of regulation in the Act on Mass Events Safety (currently - with exception of regulations regarding the distribution of low-alcohol beverages). This component, to some extent, requires cooperation between the organizer and public entities. An example in this regard could be transportation and pedestrian or vehicular traffic concerning home team supporters who are not traveling as part of organized groups. Despite being addressed in various best practice manuals (also applied in Poland during the organization of the final tournament of EURO 2012⁷) this issue has not been regulated in the prevailing legal provisions and the methods of implementing such cooperation significantly differ among different entities.

It is important to note that the provisions of the Convention will not fully apply in Poland due to regulations concerning the classification of matches as mass events. The signatories of the Convention committed to taking necessary steps to implement its provisions regarding football matches or tournaments played on their territory by professional football clubs and national teams. This means that the Convention should apply to all matches involving teams from the top three professional leagues in Poland (Ekstraklasa, I Liga, II Liga), as these leagues are considered professional leagues. However, this scope of application

⁷ M. Sabat, *EURO 2012 w Polsce. Organizacja turnieju oraz zapobieganie zagrożeniom bezpieczeństwa publicznego*, Warszawa 2012, pp. 85–90.

is not fully correlated with the existing Polish law, particularly the Act on Mass Events Safety. The provisions of the act often do not apply to matches organized in the third-tier league (II Liga), which still remains a professional league.

Strengthening the integrated approach to the safety, security and service of football matches should involve creating new or modifying existing forums that facilitate long-term planning of joint actions and enable reliable assessment and evaluation of current initiatives. To achieve this, it is proposed to expand the mandatory composition of the regional interdisciplinary teams responsible for mass event safety to include representatives of all entities involved in securing the matches. Alternatively, considering the specific threats associated with such mass sports events, specialized task forces could be established in this area. It should be noted that the Convention includes the evaluation of adopted strategies and actions, including cooperation among institutions and entities involved in the integrated approach to the safety, security, and service of football matches. According to the respondents, the evaluation currently takes place to a very limited extent. However, it cannot be ruled out that even when evaluations are conducted, the findings may not reach the intended recipients due to communication flaws. Therefore, standardizing the evaluation process is also recommended.

Another noteworthy proposal is to align the procedure for granting permits for mass events with the provisions of gathering law. The example mentioned in the paper, where a high-risk match and an equality march took place at a similar time and nearby location, revealed not only the associated risks but also the inefficiency in deploying police forces simultaneously for both events.

Overall, the focus should be on enhancing collaboration, coordination, and communication among all relevant stakeholders involved in the safety and security of football matches. By implementing these postulates, it is possible to improve the overall safety and effectiveness of measures taken during such events.

Another issue worth considering in the context of interinstitutional cooperation is the lack of regulations regarding the modification of the decision allowing for the organization of a football match. In cases of emergencies where there is a need to reschedule the event to a nearby date, this can lead to violations of the law or, at best, legal uncertainty. Given the above, it would be reasonable to formulate clear rules regarding the modification of decisions concerning mass events, as general provisions applicable in such cases, as contained in the Administrative Procedure Code, seem inadequate, especially considering the purpose for which the requirement of obtaining such permission was established, as well as the entire procedure aimed at ensuring that the resulting decision complies with the universally applicable law.

In the context of cooperation, attention should also be paid to Article 20 of the Act on Mass Events Safety, which authorizes information and security services to inspect the contents of baggage and clothing of individuals in case of

suspicion that they are carrying or possessing prohibited items, such as weapons, dangerous objects, explosives, pyrotechnic articles, etc. Although it is an established practice to subject every person entering a mass event to such inspection, an analysis of the content of this provision indicates that such actions can be carried out only if there is suspicion that the person is bringing such items into the event area. It should be noted that there is a body of legal precedents, starting from the rulings of the Constitutional Tribunal to the case law of general courts, which consider these types of practices by public officials, based on similarly formulated provisions (narrowed in some cases to reasonable suspicion), as illegal. It is illegal to *a priori* suspect every person entering a mass event of violating its regulations or even the Act on Safety of Mass Events.

The several-year period of the current regulations of the Act on Mass Events Safety, which began with the preparations for organizing the final tournament of EURO 2012, seems to be a sufficiently long period for evaluating the implemented provisions. This study has identified factors that facilitate cooperation in the integrated approach to the safety and security of football matches, as well as factors that hinder such cooperation. In the context of Poland's ratification of the Council of Europe Convention on an Integrated Approach to Safety, Security and Service at Football Matches and Other Sports Events, it would also be reasonable to align the remaining provisions of the universally applicable law with its content.

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Laws and regulations

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Kooperacja w procesie zapewnienia bezpieczeństwa meczów piłkarskich – wyniki jakościowych badań empirycznych

Streszczenie

W niniejszej pracy autor przedstawia wyniki badań prowadzonych w ramach projektu pt. „Kooperacja w procesie zapewnienia bezpieczeństwa meczów piłki nożnej”, finansowanego przez Narodowe Centrum Nauki (nr 2016/23/N/HS5/00962). Artykuł w szczególności koncentruje się na wynikach badań jakościowych, syntetyzując wnioski z nich wyciągnięte z wynikami analizy powszechnie obowiązującego prawa oraz wynikami badań ilościowych. W ramach projektu zidentyfikowano czynniki sprzyjające i utrudniające kooperację podmiotów zaangażowanych w zapewnianie bezpieczeństwa meczów piłki nożnej, jak również zidentyfikowano związane z tą kooperacją czynniki, które przekładają się na bezpieczeństwo uczestników tego rodzaju imprez.

Słowa kluczowe: kooperacja, bezpieczeństwo, imprezy masowe, prewencja kryminalna.