



## A decade of experience in sports policing register

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### Abstract

**Aim:** The sports policing register, which is a decisive tool for the security of the sports events, has a decade-long history. The author took into account the experiences of the last ten years, supplemented with the most current aspects. To demonstrate how the creation of a sports policing register can clearly considered a legal and police innovation, and how it is evolving and renewing itself with the development of digitalization and technology, as well as the analysis and use of the ever-increasing amount of data available, thereby contributing to the safe conduct of sports events on an ever-wider scale.

**Methodology:** The paper is based on legislation, internal regulations, archival material and publications on sports law and professional material. Authors also collected and analysed the data set of the sport policing register from its introduction period to most recent period.

**Findings:** The writing of this article was prompted by the fact that sports policing records have a decade-long history, which is a decisive tool for the security of sports events. Today, safety is one of the most important factors that can make our everyday life and leisure time meaningful and of appropriate quality. Ensuring security is already an important factor in organising international events today, but will become even more important in the future.

**Value:** Many conclusions can be drawn from the statistics of the last 10 years operation of the sports policing register, but the most important of them is that there is a clear improvement in the safety of sporting events. This study presents

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in more detail than ever before the theoretical background and practical application of the registry, and uniquely analyses the data collected since its creation.

**Keywords:** Sports Law, sports events, safety, sports policing

## Introduction, materials and hypothesis

The authors hypothesized that with the development of digitalization and technology, as well as with the analysis and use of the ever-increasing amount of available data, sports policing is constantly developing and renewing itself, thus ensuring safety on an ever-wider scale. The creation of the sports policing register can be considered a legal and law enforcement innovation. With the professional classification of the matches, it can be seen from the figures that the participants in the sports events are committing fewer and fewer crimes and violations of the rules. The authors of the study represent several fields of science, which was important because of the multidisciplinary approach.

The theoretical foundations of the study are based on previous domestic and international literature on the changes in sports, the ‘consumption’ of sports and of course the sports policing. Due to the nature of the topic, the proportion of reports from domestic and international journals, data obtained from databases, and news agencies is significant. The information and data set on committed crimes and violations of rules, and on classified matches was provided by the police authorities of Hungary at the written request of the authors.

Huizinga (Johan Huizinga (1872–1945), Dutch cultural historian, philosopher of history and Indologist) noted that sports games had been taken more seriously since the late 19th century, with rules tightening and elaborate, foreshadowing that performance would get better and better. *‘By disciplining and organizing the game, something of pure game content is lost: the professionals’ gaming activities lack the voluntariness and carefree nature of play.* (Laczkó-Rétsági, 2015.) Of course, not everyone agreed with Huizinga, with Guttmann (Sir Ludwig Guttmann (1899–1980) was a German-British neurologist who created the Stoke Mandeville Games, a sporting event for the disabled that led to the Paralympic Games in England), for example, criticizing his concept and arguing for the game-like nature of the sport. Bourdieu (Pierre Bourdieu (1930–2002) was a French sociologist achieved wide influence in several related academic fields, like media and cultural studies) linked the widening gap between professional and amateur athletes to the commercialization of sport, while at the same time spectacle-centric sport separate from ordinary sports. *‘In*

*the case of sport, especially as a result of television broadcasts, there will be more and more viewers who do not understand or cultivate the given sport, and pay attention primarily to the external features of the given exercise, the result and the victory. This leads to the pursuit of victory at all costs and an increase in violence,* Bourdieu (Pierre Bourdieu, *On television and journalism*, Pluto Press, London, 1998.) said more than twenty years ago. Unfortunately, all this has been proven and the behaviour of spectators and fans has not become more non-violent in 2023-2024. I compiled excerpts from news sources available on infocommunication devices concerning football hooligans from around the world, and at the same time I processed the experiences of the Hungarian sports police register over the past decade.

First of all, I think it is important to state that sports policing is a specific part of sports administration. This narrower area can be clearly defined as professional policing, a series of laws regulate everything related to sports policing, supplemented by regulations of the trade unions, which also serve as guidelines for keeping sports police records and ensuring sports events (Tóth, 2016). The concept of sports policing can be placed in the system of administrative law, it is a common intersection of the public law part of sports law and the special, specialized administrative part of administrative law (Tóth, 2019).

The safe conduct of sporting events is not only in the interest of organisations cooperating in the provision of sporting events, as defined by law, since everyone participating in other sporting events is negatively affected by an emerging problem that disrupts order at the match. If a sporting event starts later than planned due to illegal acts by fans or disorderly behaviour during the sporting event, this also affects the sporting activities of the athletes, as they may not be able to perform at their best when the match starts. The same is true for sports professionals, who are increasingly injured as a result of fan behaviour. The cases referred to raise a number of questions, mainly how to prevent disturbance of order, violation of regulations, disorderly behaviour and unlawful behaviour.

Related to all this, the news that came to light when a man was stabbed to death during a pre-match clash between football fans in Athens and Zagreb in August 2023 is graphic ([URL1](#)). The AEK Athens-Dinamo Zagreb Champions League qualifier was postponed by UEFA due to violent and disorderly behaviour by fans. Fans attacked each other near the stadium the night before the match, throwing stones, flash grenades and incendiary bombs at each other. The man who was stabbed to death was 22 years old and died of his injuries in hospital. Among the injured was a minor who was hit in the head with a stone. Greek police arrested 96 people overnight, and the police operation and restoration of order lasted until the early hours of the morning.

Matches in the Greek football league were played behind closed doors for two months at the end of 2023 (URL2) due to repeated fan disorder. The measure also affected Europa League matches, including Olympiakos Piraeus and Topola SC in Vojvodina, as well as Panathinaikos-Maccabi Haifa in empty stadiums. The lockdown was lifted only on 12 February 2024, along with a series of other measures. It was considered important to install cameras and electronic identification systems in stadiums. The Greek government took this decision because of the regular and continuous serious disturbances at matches, before and after matches, hooligans injuring several police officers and receiving death threats from many sports officials and referees. In addition, clashes between enemy camps in 2023 have killed several fans.

Nine people were detained before the French league match between Marseille and Lyon, when a bus carrying Lyon's players and sporting officials was pelted with stones and bottles by Marseille fans, leaving the Lyon coach hospitalized with serious injuries.(URL3) Following the disturbance, officials decided to postpone the match and the arrests were announced by the French interior minister himself. The French sports minister said that these unacceptable actions overshadow the values of football and sport. Preparations for the 2024 Paris Olympics could also be overshadowed, not least because some of the group matches of the football tournament of the pentathlon event are currently being held in Marseille.

The southern French port city also saw heavy clashes between English fans and police during the 1998 World Cup. The away teams' bus was also attacked by local fans in 2016 and 2019. The 2021-2022 season was also particularly problematic in French football, when, in addition to Marseille, fans of RC Lens, Lille OSC, Montpellier, Angers and St. Étienne also caused minor or major disruptions.

In recent days, it appeared on news channels with the headline: 'Ankle broken, and fan who jumps onto the pitch after the Euro qualifier between Hungary and Montenegro in November 2023 at Puskás Arena can pay (URL4)'. The 47-year-old jumped onto the pitch in joy after the match was called off. According to the Metropolitan Prosecutor's Office, after the match, the man drunkenly stepped on the railing separating the grandstand from the pitch and then jumped into the area of the pitch closed to spectators, but landed so unluckily that he broke his ankle. Subsequently, stadium security personnel escorted the fan off the pitch and ambulances called to the scene removed him. The prosecutor's office asked for a fine to be imposed in a criminal order on the man accused of disorderly conduct at a sporting event, with a fixed ban from attending all sports events in Hungary.(URL5)

And the hair-raising news below came out in January 2024: ‘A footballer was shot in the arm during a match in Ireland.(URL6)’. The injured man was treated by paramedics at the scene and then transported by ambulance to a nearby hospital for further examination. Fortunately, the players did not end up in a life-threatening condition.

Also astonishing is the following news: ‘Blood was spilled in the stadium, the worst English football scandal in recent years took place at the end of January 2024.(URL7)’. According to the news, the big derby between Black Country in England, the former coal mining industry region, West Bromwich Albion-Wolverhampton football match in the fourth round of the FA Cup had to be interrupted in the 81st minute, when the teams met again for the first time in twelve years. In the match, after the away team’s second goal, a crowd brawl broke out between the teams’ fans and spectators poured onto the pitch. Subsequently, the referee called off the match, and the police and stewards were only able to restore order after a long struggle. Family members of the players were also endangered during the fan disorder, including a West Bromwich player rescuing his young child from raging vandals in his arms. As security officers backed a bleeding-faced West Brom fan off the pitch, Wolves fanatics shouted: ‘Let him die!’ The English Football Association issued an immediate statement condemning the incident and ordered an investigation.

Unfortunately, Hungary is no exception in terms of violent fan behaviour and behaviour: in mid-December 2023, Fradi and Fiorentina fans in masks and armed with metal bars and knives wanted to clash (URL8) on the eve of the Europa Conference League football match. Fortunately and, of course, thanks to prudent police activity, the clash was prevented and foiled. The Budapest Police Headquarters (BRFK) said in a statement that knives, metal rods, tool handles and pyrotechnic devices were seized from supporters of the two teams, among others. Two men of Hungarian nationality and one Italian citizen were arrested and prosecuted for offences related to a device that is particularly dangerous to public security. BRFK asked for fair cheering from those attending the match and said it would take immediate and decisive action against those who committed the violation.

## Legislative Environment

Since its entry into force on 13 March 2004, Act I of 2004 on Sport (Stv.) has served as the background legislation of organised sport in Hungary, comprehensively regulating the legal status of athletes and sports organisations, the

operation of sports federations, the competition system of sport, commercial contracts related to the field of sport, sports public bodies, defining the sport-related tasks of the state and local governments, and the state support system for sport, and rules related to the organisation of sporting events, which is the most important in relation to the research topic. The provisions of the Stv. have been slightly modified from year to year, entire chapters have been restructured several times, but the structure and basic findings of the Stv. have stood the test of time, they are a solid foundation for the organization and operation of Hungarian sport. However, continuous amendments were necessary, and the provisions of Act CVI of 2023 on the amendment of sports-related laws in the field of sports policing entered into force – with a few exceptions – as of 1 January 2024. Taking into account the practical proposals of the sports sector, the legislator modified the regulatory background underlying professional work in such a way that it fully meets the challenges of the twenty-first century and ensures an effective and expert-based symbiosis between the legal background and the expectations of live sports. (Explanatory memorandum to draft proposal T/5878 amending laws relating to sport. 2023. 1.)

The amended legislation contains a number of textual clarification provisions that are of major importance for the topic of publication, so ‘Section 77(u) of Act I of 2004 on Sport’ was replaced by the following: ‘sporting event’ shall mean a sporting event, competition, match and the hour and a half immediately preceding and the hour and a half immediately following it for the purpose of carrying out sporting activities, inside or outside a competition system.’

Until the amendment, the exact duration of the sporting event could only be inferred from the current provisions of the Stv. – together with the examination of the concepts of spectator and participant of the sporting event – which caused numerous problems during practice (e.g. in case of violation of track regulations). In view of this, the legislation clarified the sections on the concept of participant of a sporting event and the concept of sporting event, which now make it clear that a sporting event starts one and a half hours before the actual competition or match and lasts for one and a half hours after the end of the competition or match.

By adopting the amendment, it will be possible for the sports organization to make its decision on exclusion on the spot within the period specified by law and to inform the data subject directly, immediately. As a result of the amendment, the exclusion can take effect in a significantly shorter period of time than before, which may result in significant efficiency gains in the case of tournaments and substantial efficiency gains in the case of championships. The safety of sporting events will be positively affected if the exclusion of disruptors for

the future can be enforced immediately. This solution would eliminate abuses in the service of exclusion decisions.

Section 69(1) of Act I of 2004 on Sport was replaced by the following:

,1. The organiser shall specify in a clearly visible notice at the entry points of the sport infrastructure the conditions of participation in the sporting event and the rules of conduct (rules of conduct), which – summarised as general terms and conditions – must also be indicated on the ticket or season ticket.’ Thus, the amended Act contains a clear definition of the concept of the course regulations, which is necessary for the applicability of further rules on auditorium safety.

Section 76(1) and (2) of Act I of 2004 on Sport was replaced by the following:

‘(1) The spectator shall comply with the safety regulations set by the organizer and the rules of the course. The spectator may not engage in any activity that disturbs or frustrates the sporting event or violates or endangers the personal rights or property of those attending, arriving at or leaving the sporting event.

(2) For any infringement or damage resulting from the breach of the obligation set out in paragraph (1), the viewer shall be obliged to pay grievance fees in accordance with the rules of the Civil Code and shall be liable for damages in accordance with the general rules on liability for damages. If more than one spectator participates in a breach of the obligation set out in paragraph 1, they shall be jointly and severally liable.’

Summing up what has been written so far in the chapter, the amendment introduced the term course regulations already used in practice, which is defined as the set of conditions of participation and the governing rules of conduct. From the current provisions of the Stv., the exact duration of the sporting event could only be inferred indirectly, together with the examination of the concepts of spectator and participant of the sporting event. With this in mind, the concepts of participant of a sporting event and a sporting event were clarified, which made it clear that the sporting event starts one and a half hours before the actual competition or match and lasts for one and a half hours after the end of the competition or match.

## **Norms Governing the Safety of Sports Events**

In Hungary, there are several laws on the organisation and safety of sporting events. These laws establish clear responsibilities between public bodies and organisers. The basic legal framework for the security of sports events is regulated by Act I of 2004 on Sport (Stv.) and Government Decree 54/2004 (III.31.) on the security of sports events issued for its implementation.

According to the Stv., the primary task of the state is to ensure public safety at sporting events and to contribute to the safe conduct of sporting events. However, in the case of a specific sporting event, it is the responsibility of the organizer himself to take all measures necessary to protect the personal and property safety of the participants of the sporting event and to prevent crime, or initiate it with the competent authority. Furthermore, the organiser's responsibility lasts from the time the participants appear at the venue of the sporting event until the participants leave the venue of the sporting event.

In stadiums that are private spaces open to the public, the owner and the organiser shall be jointly and severally liable for ensuring the order of sporting events within the sport facility. In fact, the police guarantee order in an infrastructure completely independent of them. At sporting events falling within the scope of the Regulation, the use of an organizer is mandatory. According to the law, the primary task of the police is to maintain order in the public space, however, as a result of the preliminary risk assessment, it participates in maintaining the internal order of the facility on the basis of a contract or as a public task. In accordance with the dynamic risk assessment, the police may decide to reduce or increase the number of police forces involved in security. (ORFK internal document. 11. 2023.)

The organizer may only organise a match in a sports facility that has been jointly supervised by the organisations involved in the security tasks of the sporting event prior to the start of the competition system and after the inspection the police, disaster management and public health administration have consented to their use in the competition system. After the issuance of the consents, the sports federation is obliged to carry out the field certification of the sports facility. A sports federation competition can be held in the sports facility only on the basis of a permit issued annually by the sports federation before the start of the first competition. The permit cannot be granted without the consent of the three organizations named above, so sports events cannot be organized in such a sports facility without the participation of spectators.

Based on the proposal of the Committee for the Safety Classification of Sports Events (Certification Committee), the National Police Headquarters decides on the classification of sporting events according to security risk in accordance with the Act on the General Administrative Code. The Qualification Committee consists of experts delegated by the ORFK, disaster management, the National Ambulance Service, the President of the National Office for the Judiciary, the Prosecutor General's Office, the Minister responsible for sports policy and the national sports federations of sports. The classification of a sporting event according to safety risk can be normal, increased and high-risk.

In the case of a sporting event with a normal safety risk, the organiser and organising body are responsible for the safe conduct of the event. A police representative may be present at the event. At a sporting event with an increased security risk, the organizer is obliged to request the police station competent for the place of the event within 15 days prior to the date of the competition/match to cooperate in maintaining order within the sports facility for a fee in areas where it is justified to support the tasks of the organizer commissioned by the organizer. The manner in which police forces may be used must be clarified contractually. The organizer and the organising body used by him on the basis of the contract are responsible for managing the security of the high-risk event. The commander of the police unit shall decide on the deployment of contracted police personnel. In the event of a match with a high security risk, maintaining order within the facility is also the responsibility of the organizer, however, the police carry out internal security as a public task. The Police are responsible for the measures taken by them, direct the execution of the law enforcement tasks of the match, and may carry out the organizer's actions in consultation with the commander of the police security.

During the duration of the event, the organizer or organizing body is obliged to cooperate with the police according to the needs of the police, to facilitate and support their work in the interest of security. The police – in the course of the security tasks to be carried out by the organizer and the director in order to guarantee the protection of persons and property – shall carry out supplementary security activities upon request or, if necessary, at their own discretion. The Stv. details the conditions of organization, the organizer's liability, the obligations of the organizer and the appointed director, the exact identification of the director, the entry procedure, the method of disqualification, camera surveillance, and the description of the behaviour expected of the spectator.

The Stv. also stipulates that the sports organization is obliged to cooperate with the organizer of the sporting event and the police in organizing the safe participation, isolation and supervision of fan bases at the sporting event. A special provision is also included in an internal instruction, according to which effective cooperation must be established with personal and property protection companies implementing the internal security of sports facilities, especially in controlling the entry of fans; maintaining order in the auditorium; highlighting disruptive fans; operating security equipment; accompanying fan. (8/2010 (OT 5) ORFK Instruction on the Classification and Police Security of Sports Events 33.)

The Stv. therefore clearly separates the responsibilities of each organisation. In accordance with the law, a sports facility is an open private area that participants can visit under certain conditions, therefore the safety of the sporting

event is primarily the responsibility of the organizer. In the cases specified in the Stv, the Police may be present within the facility on the basis of a contract or as a public task, and may only enter upon request or by their own decision – pursuant to Section 1 (2) of Act XXXIV of 1994 on the Police (Rtv.) – in order to prevent violations and restore public order.

In order to carry out the duties of organisers of sporting events, a security plan, an insurance plan, an evacuation and evacuation plan should be drawn up, in which information relating to personal and property safety and the tasks to be performed should be provided. The plans shall describe in text and graphic form the tasks to be performed and how they are to be carried out.

Hungary now has considerable experience in providing major international sporting events – UEFA EURO 2020, the 19th FINA World Championship and the EHF 2022 European Handball Championship. At events of this type held in Hungary, no act disturbing public tranquility or negatively affecting the participants' sense of security has taken place so far.

Of course, planning must be based on a thorough risk assessment. The complexity of insurance and security tasks in each organizational phase requires that processes are dynamically evaluated and analysed.

## **Match Classification System**

Based on the decisions of the Classification Committee, some important findings can be made as to what might justify the determination of normal, enhanced and advanced security classifications.

An increased security risk may be justified by:

- based on the available data, there is an indirect threat of harm to the life, physical integrity or property of the participants in the match;
- Based on well-founded information, disorder and unauthorized group access to the playing field are expected on the part of the fans of the domestic sports organization, therefore the cooperation of the Police is necessary in maintaining order within the facility.
- the protection of life and property and the effective enforcement of the security measures introduced by the organizer require the assistance of the Police in maintaining order within the facility.
- There is a realistic chance that the away fans will provoke the home fans and seek the possibility of confrontation, therefore the enforcement of the security measures introduced by the organiser, the prevention of disturbances and the prevention of an active conflict can only be achieved with a continuous police presence supporting the activities of the organizers.

Justified for a particular security risk may be:

- The relationship between fans of sports organisations is particularly hostile, experience shows that both hardcores are characterized by violent and disruptive behaviour;
- based on the available data, there is an imminent threat of harm to the life, physical integrity or property of the participants in the match;
- Based on well-founded information, in case of poor performance of their team, disorderly conduct can be expected on the part of the fans of the domestic sports organization, as well as unauthorized group entry to the playing field;
- due to the senior nature of the match, a prominent fan presence is likely to be expected;
- Based on previous experience, fans are looking for the possibility of confrontation and physical conflict, therefore the prevention of disorder both within the facility and in public places, the maintenance of public order and public security can only be achieved with a continuous police presence;
- The relationship between fans of sports organisations is neutral, experience shows that both the home and away hardcore are characterized by violent and disruptive behaviour;
- rivalry between home fan groups is in itself a security risk without away fans present;
- relations between fan groups are not hostile, but regardless of the opponent, the outcome of matches, especially the decisive match, is itself a security risk, which can greatly influence mood;
- sporting events are expected to be held with special spectator interest, the separation of fan groups, the protection of life, physical integrity and property, and the prevention of possible conflicts between fan groups can only be achieved with a continuous police presence;
- The relationship between fans of the national teams is not hostile, but the high attendance due to the nature of the event itself poses a security risk;

Of course, due to continuous risk assessment, the security rating of a match may change. However, the risk factors involved in the security risk classification of individual matches do not affect either the system of control or the police presence. The main tasks related to security will continue to be carried out primarily by organisers and organisers, but the form of police use will be determined on the basis of real risks. If necessary, colleagues will gradually switch from low-profile police presence to high-profile police presence, and vice versa. Ticket sales will also not be significantly affected if each match is rated differently. According to the relevant legislation, if the given match is reclassified to

a higher security risk during the period of non-nominal ticket sales, ticket sales may continue in accordance with the previous classification grade.

With regard to attendance at sporting events, the system and conditions of ticket sales and ticket control play a key role. In the case of a match with a normal security risk, the organizer decides on the form of ticket sales. You have the option to sell name-specific and non-name-specific tickets. In the event of a match with an increased security risk, the Qualification Committee determines how tickets are sold. In the case of matches with a high security risk, name-specific ticket sales are mandatory. According to the Stv., the organizer is entitled to verify the identity of the participant at the entrance and to compare the data on the ticket with the personal data contained in the identity card. If the data do not match, entry shall be refused. This not only prevents the mixing of fan bases, but also contributes to reducing the risks of black trade and ticket racketeering, and supports the detection of unwanted persons (banned, banned) and their entry to the match. Ticket counterfeiting is not typical in Hungary and abusive illegal ticket sales are not widespread. In recent years, hundreds of thousands of event-free ticket entries have been issued at sporting events held in Hungary.

It is also important to highlight the institution of keeping away from attending sporting events, the framework of which is regulated by the Stv., Government Decree 54/2004 (III.31.) on the security of sporting events, the Criminal Code, the Szabs. Act, and the Rtv.

A spectator may be admitted to a sporting event if:

- hold a valid ticket, season ticket or other certificate entitling them to enter;
- is not obviously under the influence of alcohol, drugs or other intoxicating substances;
- does not carry alcoholic beverages, drugs or any object that endangers the holding of the sporting event or the personal and property safety of others, or the entry into the sporting event has been prohibited by the organizer prior to the purchase of the ticket and the purchaser of the ticket has been duly informed thereof;
- not carry any inscription, flag or other authoritarian symbol prohibited by law;
- is not subject to exclusion, a ban from attending sporting events, a ban for misdemeanors, or a decision of a foreign sports organization, authority or court to similar effect;
- undertakes to prove your identity at the request of the director;
- acknowledges that video and audio recordings will be made of him or her during the sporting event;
- does not engage in conduct that endangers the holding of a sporting event or the personal and property safety of others, or is racist, incitement to hatred, intimidates or offends others, or is not related to fair cheering.

An employee of the police and organizing body or organizer responsible for securing the event is entitled to inspect the clothing and luggage of the participant of the sporting event.

The data of persons subject to restraining orders are recorded by the National Police Headquarters in the sports police register specified in the Stv., as well as the surnames, first names, places and dates of birth, mother's surname and first name at birth, the name and classification of the crime or offence committed, the ban from attending sporting events, the ban or the the duration of exclusion from participation in a sports event, as well as the name of the sports facilities and the range of sporting events covered by the ban, ban or exclusion from attending sports events. From the data file, the police for the purposes of public order and security, the prevention of violence and disorder, the fulfilment of international police cooperation obligations and the protection of the rights of others to the foreign police force, as well as for the purpose of protecting the security of events, the refusal to attend a sporting event and the sale of tickets to the organizer or, if an organizer is employed, ticket sales on behalf of the organizer transfer data to the person performing the data.

The system of each of your restraining institutions is shown in the table below (Source: My editing):

**Table 1**  
*The system of specific restraining-order legal instruments*

|                  | law              | Target  | organ   | Nature of the penalty   | Duration                              |
|------------------|------------------|---|---|---|---------------------------------------|
| Exclusion        | Sports Act       | primarily property protection, as well as the protection of the physical integrity of persons and ensuring the conditions for cultured cheering | organizer (with the participation of the director) – duties and jurisdiction may be detailed in the Federal Regulations | private, valid only for competitions, matches and facilities organized by the organizer   | It can range from 6 months to 4 years |
| Ban              | Misdemeanour Act | preventing and suppressing offences related to attending, travelling to or leaving a sporting event   | Police  | Penalty or infringement   | It can range from 6 months to 2 years |
| Disqualification | Penal code       | preventing or suppressing criminal offences committed at (or on the way to or from the sporting event) or in connection with the sporting event | Ordered by a court, enforced by the police  | The range of sports events and sports facilities affected by the ban may be imposed both as a criminal penalty and as an independent punishment and in addition to other punishments shall be determined by the trial court | 1-5 years                             |

*Note.* Edited by the authors.

In 2011, the Hungarian Parliament adopted Act CIV of 2011 amending certain laws necessary to combat the phenomenon of sports hooliganism. The aim of the legislation was to move towards stricter regulation and eliminate the shortcomings of the legislation previously in force. One of the novelties of the penalty system of the new Criminal Code, the ban on attending sporting events, can be regarded as the last element of the reregulation that began in 2011.

The number of offences committed at and in connection with sporting events has increased significantly. The justification of the law states that banning people from attending sporting events can become a means of effective action against sports hooliganism, which serves both individual and general prevention. A ban on attending sporting events can be imposed both independently and in addition to other punishments. The condition for its application is that the offender commits the crime in connection with the sporting event while attending, going there or leaving the sporting event. In its judgment, the court determines by which sports federation, within the framework of which sport or in which sports facility the offender is prohibited from attending a sporting event.

From the point of view of public safety, it is not only the act committed at the venue of the sporting event or on the territory of the sports facility that poses a danger, but also the act committed during the journey there and departure. Such offenders are also treated as sports hooligans by law. Could it be a particular problem for law enforcement to assess what, or more precisely, what offence can be regarded as an 'offence committed on the way to or leaving a sporting event in connection with a sporting event'? It is only up to the enforcer to correctly apply the normative text in practice. It can be assumed, and given the intention of the legislature, it can be taken for granted that the legislature only intended to give the court an opportunity in this regard for offences related to sporting events and of a vandalistic nature. Examples include the crime of disorderly conduct or vandalism.

This punishment is not depriving of liberty, but depriving and restricting rights. Prevention is the most important, it is important to continue moving towards restraining orders, this restraining system must be treated as a strategic issue, and those involved in securing sporting events have declared zero tolerance for disruptors. A ban on attending sporting events can also be understood as a specific form of criminal ban, with the new sanction being linked not to an administrative unit but to the venue of sporting events (Tóth, 2024.).

## Data from the Sports Policing Register

The sports police register has been working perfectly for more than ten years now, and based on this I tried to take stock of the data available in the system. (Tóth, 2019.) During the development of the sports police register, it is necessary to constantly take into account all new technological and digital developments, which will make the management of existing databases easier, more structured, more transparent and allow specific conclusions to be drawn.

The most frequently occurring violations in the sports police register are:

Crimes:

- Assault
- Violence against a member of the community
- Defamation
- Libel
- Use of an authoritarian symbol
- Public danger
- Rowdyism
- Disorder
- Dilapidation

Violations:

- Disturbance
- Rowdyism
- Property offense
- Offences relating to explosives and pyrotechnic articles for civil uses
- Infringement relating to a device which is particularly dangerous to public security
- Violation of banning or disqualification rules
- Breach of identity verification obligations

An interesting data on the topic is as follows: the Metropolitan Prosecutor's Office issued a statement regarding the ZTE-Budafok MOL Hungarian Cup final in May 2023, after which two men rushed onto the lawn of Puskás Arena. (URL9) According to the prosecution, the defendants were in the lower rows of one of the fan sectors when one of them climbed over the cordon separating the grandstand from the pitch in the seconds before the match was called off, then jumped into the spectator-restricted area of the pitch - tearing off the stretched banner - because he wanted to kick the ball away. Shortly thereafter, when the match was called off, the other defendant also climbed over the

cordon and jumped into an area closed to spectators. Stadium security officials immediately led both defendants off the pitch and handed them over to police.

The Budapest XIV and XVI District Prosecutor's Office tried the two men in an expedited procedure, the court found them guilty of the offence of disorderly conduct, as charged, and sentenced one of the defendants to a fine of HUF 250,000 and a ban from sporting events for 1 year, and his partner to a fine of HUF 150,000 and also a ban from sporting events for 1 year. The judgment shall be final. Footage related to the case shows the two rioters jumping over the cordon one after the other, who were then immediately led out by security guards.

Below I have listed the qualified matches based on the data of the sports police registration system from the beginning to the present day:

In the 2012/13 season, the Committee for the Safety Certification of Sports Events classified 96 of the 1290 matches covered by the Regulation as high-risk, 31 as enhanced and 1163 as normal.

In football, of the 368 qualified matches, 38 were high-risk, 20 were enhanced and 318 were normal security risks.

In handball, 26 seeded, 1 enhanced and 277 regular matches were held, in basketball there were 12 seeded, 5 enhanced and 190 normal matches, in ice hockey 18 seeded, 5 enhanced and 182 normal risk matches. In water polo, there were 2 seeded and 173 regular matches.

This season, the 16 featured matches of the sport of ice hockey were qualified due to the Division I/A World Championship matches held in Budapest.

- Of the 1307 matches played in the 2013/14 season, 80 were seeded, 15 enhanced and 1212 normal.

In football, there were 35 high-risk, 10 enhanced and 195 normal security risk matches, a total of 240 matches, basketball 5 high-risk, 2 enhanced and 212 normal security risk games, and 104 normal security risk games in hockey. In handball, there were 17 high-risk, 1 enhanced and 429 normal matches, while in water polo there were 23 high-risk, 2 enhanced and 272 normal safety risk matches.

- Of the 1412 matches played in the 2014/15 season, 71 were rated as high-risk, 13 as high risk and 1328 as normal security risk.

In football, there were 29 seeded, 7 enhanced and 204 normal matches for a total of 240 matches, in basketball there were 3 seeded and 211 normal (214 total), in ice hockey there were 1 enhanced and 191 normal (192 in total), in handball there were 16 seeded, 1 enhanced and 439 normal, and in water polo there were 23 priority and 280 normal safety risk matches.

During the season, the 23 top ratings of the water polo sport apply to the European Water Polo Championship matches held in Budapest.

- Of the 1508 matches played in the 2015/16 season, 48 were rated high-risk, 4 heightened and 1456 normal safety risk.  
In football, there were 23 seeded, 4 enhanced 159 normal matches (186 in total) covered by the Regulation, 9 seeded and 307 regular matches (316 in total) in basketball, 249 regular matches in ice hockey, 16 seeded and 395 normal matches in handball, and 337 normal safety matches in water polo. From this season onwards, football's NB I championship was changed from 16 to 12 teams, resulting in fewer matches held.
- In the 2016/17 season, of the 1496 matches covered by the regulation, 96 were seeded, 11 enhanced and 1389 normal.  
There were 22 seeded, 8 enhanced and 168 regular matches (198 in total) in football, 5 seeded and 251 regular matches in basketball, 219 regular matches in ice hockey, 14 seeded 3 enhanced and 422 normal matches in handball, and 55 seeded and 329 regular matches in water polo.  
The 55 special qualifications of the water polo sport took place within the framework of the World Aquatics Championships matches held in Budapest.
- In the 2017/18 season, of the 1531 matches covered by the regulation, 32 were classified as seeded, 3 as enhanced and 1497 as normal.  
There were 22 seeded and 176 regular matches (198 in total) in football, 5 seeded and 290 regular matches in basketball, 288 regular matches in ice hockey, 5 seeded 3 enhanced and 422 normal matches in handball, and 320 regular matches in water polo.
- In the 2018/19 season, of the 1708 matches covered by the regulation, 38 were seeded, 1 enhanced and 1667 normal.  
There were 22 seeded, 1 enhanced and 345 regular matches (368 total) matches in football, 11 seeded and 301 normal matches in basketball, 301 regular matches in ice hockey, 5 seeded 2 enhanced and 451 normal matches in handball, and 269 normal matches in water polo.
- In the 2019/20 season, of the 1368 matches covered by the regulation, 23 were seeded, 5 enhanced and 1337 normal.  
There were 21 seeded, 4 enhanced and 368 regular matches (393 in total) in football, 3 seeded and 231 regular matches in basketball, 239 regular matches in ice hockey, 2 seeded 1 enhanced and 323 normal matches in handball, and 176 regular matches in water polo.
- In the 2021/22 season, of the 1775 matches covered by the regulation, 167 were seeded and 1608 were classified as normal. No decision has been made on an enhanced rating level.  
There were 20 seeded and 353 regular (373 total) matches in football, 12 seeded and 374 regular (386 total) matches in basketball, 124 regular matches in

ice hockey, 36 seeded and 413 regular (449 total) matches in handball, and 99 seeded and 254 regular (353 total) matches in water polo.

In handball, EHF 2022 was held in Hungary. Men's European Handball Championship, in which 35 matches were qualified.

In water polo, the FINA World Aquatics Championships were also held in Hungary, where 99 matches were classified as high security risks.

In the 2021/22 season, 56 people were banned, 31 people were expelled and 3 people were banned.

It can be stated that during the periods indicated above, the Qualification Committee decided on the security risk of 11601 matches.

In November 2018, 63 persons were registered in the Sports Police Register, of which 15 were affected by exclusion sanctions, 3 by banning sanctions, and 45 by disqualification sanctions.

In handball, 1 person was excluded and 3 people were banned, a total of 4 people were excluded. The excluded person was excluded by Veszprémi Handball Team Kft.

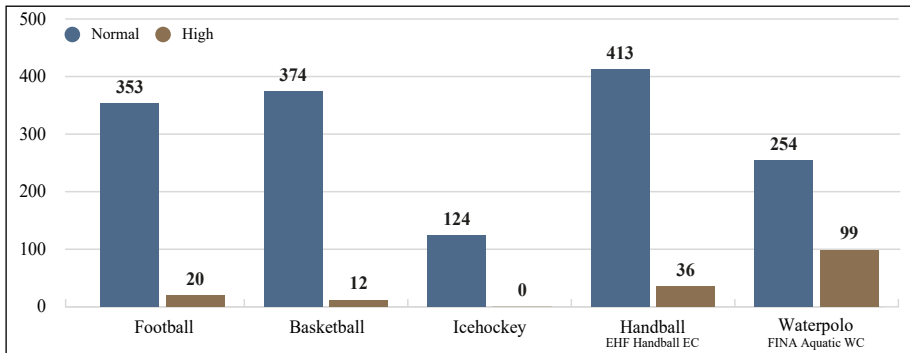
In water polo, 1 person was banned and 2 people were excluded, a total of 3 people were excluded. The 2 excluded persons were excluded by Eger Water Polo Club Kft.

In football, 12 people were excluded, 41 people were disqualified and 3 people were banned, for a total of 56 people:

- Exclusion was applied by the Hungarian Football Association against 4 people, Újpest 1885 Football Kft. against 6 people and FTC Football Zrt. against 2 people.
- Disqualification was imposed by the Miskolc General Court against 3 persons, the Central District Court of Pest against 24 persons, the Budapest Regional Court against 7 persons, the Debrecen District Court against 2 persons, and other courts against 5 persons.
- The institution of ban was applied by the Sárospatak Police Station, the Kecskemét Police Station against 1 person, and the Edelany Police Station against 2 people.

**Figure 1**

*Classification matches by sport, 2021-2022*



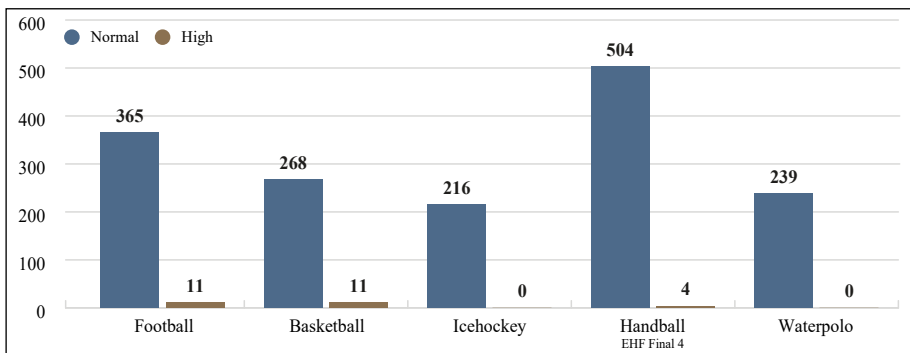
*Note.* Edited by the authors.

- In connection with violations at a sporting event in the 2022/23 season, the authorities ordered the exclusion of 20 in the sport of football, of which
  - FTC Football Plc. against 10 people,
  - MLSZ (Hungarian Football Federation) against 8 people,
  - Honvéd Football Ltd. against 1 person,
  - Újpest Football Kft. is employed against 1 person.

In basketball, 2 people were banned.

**Figure 2**

*Classification matches by sport, 2022-2023*



*Note.* Edited by the authors.

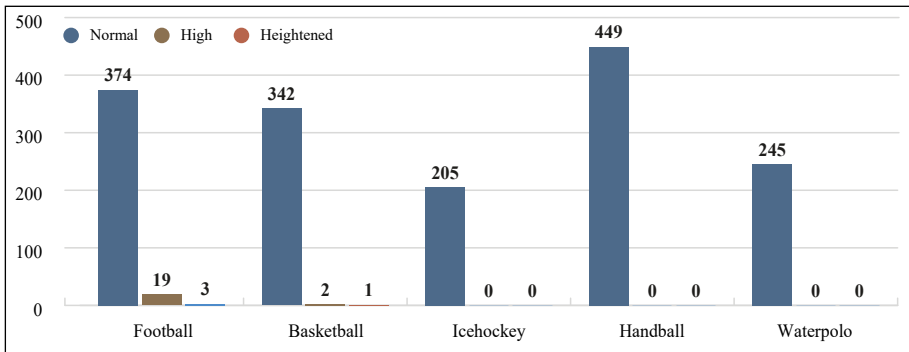
- In the 2023/24 season, 2 exclusions, 11 disqualifications and 1 major ban were imposed on the sport of football.
  - MLSZ applied against 9 persons, Diósgyőr Football Kft. against 1 person, and FTC Football Zrt. against 1 person.

In basketball, 1 person was banned.

- As of February 29, 2024, the register includes 5 disqualified, 1 person banned and 31 people excluded, a total of 37 people.

**Figure 3**

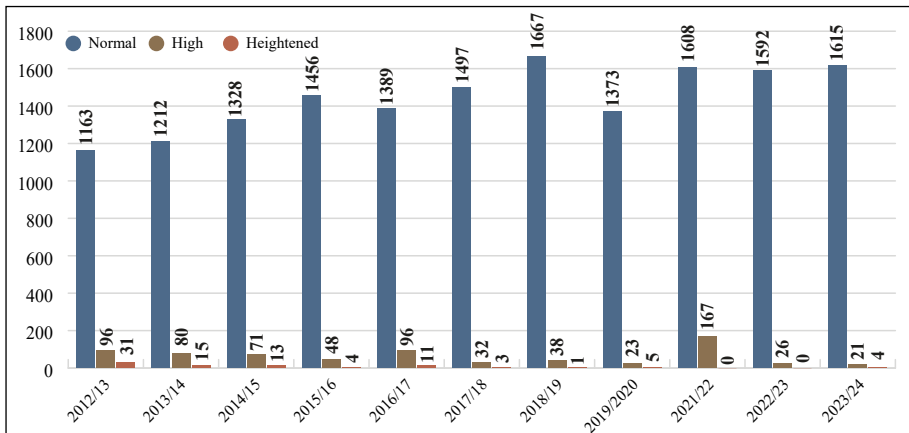
*Classification matches by sport, 2023-2024*



Note. Edited by the authors.

**Figure 4**

*Security classification of sports event, 2012-2024*



Note. Edited by the authors.

## Summation

Many conclusions can be drawn from the statistics of the last 10 years, but the most important of them is that there is a clear improvement in the safety of sporting events.

Sports organisations are increasingly using the institution of disqualification, and courts are using more and more disqualifications. The writing of this article was prompted by the fact that sports police records have a decade-long history, which is a decisive tool for the security of sports events. Today, safety is one of the most important factors that can make our everyday life and leisure time meaningful and of appropriate quality. Ensuring security is already an important factor in organising international events today, but will become even more important in the future. The establishment of sports police records can clearly be regarded as a legal and law enforcement innovation, evolving with the development of digitalization and technology, as well as with the analysis and use of the ever-increasing amount of available data, it is constantly evolving and renewing, thus ensuring security on an ever wider scale.

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