

## UPDATE - RESULTS FROM THE LARGEST FOOTBALL MATCH-FIXING INVESTIGATION IN EUROPE

The Hague, the Netherlands  
6 February 2013

A major investigation involving Europol and police teams from 13 European countries has uncovered an extensive criminal network involved in widespread football match-fixing. A total of 425 match officials, club officials, players, and serious criminals, from more than 15 countries, are suspected of being involved in attempts to fix more than 380 professional football matches. The activities formed part of a sophisticated organised crime operation, which generated over €8 million in betting profits and involved over €2 million in corrupt payments to those involved in the matches.

The Joint Investigation Team (JIT), codenamed Operation VETO, ran between July 2011 and January 2013. Led by Europol, Germany, Finland, Hungary, Austria and Slovenia, it was also



supported by Eurojust, Interpol and investigators from eight other European countries. The investigation coordinated multiple police enquiries across Europe and was facilitated by intelligence reports from Europol, based on the analysis of 13,000 emails and other material, which identified links between matches and suspects and uncovered the nature of the organised crime network behind the illegal activities. The investigation has since led to several prosecutions in the countries involved, including Germany where 14 persons have already been convicted and sentenced to a total of 39 years in prison.

“This is a sad day for European football and more evidence of the corrupting influence in society of organised crime. But this investigation also proves the value of international police cooperation in fighting back against the criminals involved. Europol and its law enforcement partners are committed to pursuing serious criminals wherever they operate. Unfortunately this also now includes the world of football, where illegal profits are made on a scale and in a way that threatens the very fabric of the game. All those responsible for running football should heed the warnings found in this case,” says Rob Wainwright, Director of Europol. He also confirmed that he will be sharing the results of the investigation with UEFA President, Michel Platini.

Among the 380 or more suspicious matches identified by this case are World Cup and European Championship qualification matches, two UEFA Champions League matches and several top-flight matches in European national leagues. In addition another 300 suspicious matches were identified outside Europe, mainly in Africa, Asia, South and Central America.

“We have evidence for 150 of these cases and the operations were run out of Singapore with bribes of up to 100 000 euros paid per match. Even two World Championship Qualification matches in Africa, and one in Central America, are under suspicion,” says Fridhelm Althans from Bochum Police, Germany, and a spokesman for JIT Veto. This information will be shared with Interpol for further action in the context of its long-term efforts to work with a broad community around the world to crack down on this problem.

“Match fixing is a global issue requiring strong partnerships at the national, regional and international levels not only to target and dismantle the criminal networks making millions in illicit profits, but also to implement training programmes to better protect all those involved in football,” said Mr Gianni Baldi, Head of Interpol’s Drugs and Organized Crime Unit.

The organised criminal group behind most of these activities has been betting primarily on the Asian market. The ringleaders are of Asian origin, working closely together with European facilitators. During the investigation, links

were also found to Russian-speaking and other criminal syndicates.

The international nature of match-fixing, exposed in this case, presents a major challenge to investigators and prosecutors. One fixed match can involve up to 50 suspects in 10 countries, spanning different legal frameworks and definitions of match-fixing and betting fraud.

Ms Michèle Coninx, President of Eurojust, commented: “International cooperation was the key to the success of this challenging cross-border case, involving more than 30 countries. Coordination meetings at Eurojust, including video conferences with Asian counterparts, facilitated the opening of new investigations and the resolution of complex judicial issues. Eurojust provided access to funding for JIT Veto, one of the largest JITs in history.” The successful outcome of JIT Veto proves both the added value of Eurojust and the JIT Funding Project, which in 2012 financed 62 different JITs involving 22 Member States.

JIT Veto investigations are still ongoing.

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## **Enquiries about the Europol match-fixing investigation**

On Monday, 4 February 2013 Europol hosted an international press conference and issued a press release on match-fixing in football. The interest was huge and interviews were given to worldwide media all day.

Since then, there has been speculation in the media about which football matches were fixed, with Europol quoted as a source of some of this information. Please be aware that Europol has not revealed details of any specific fixed matches. The decision to make public such information is entirely in the hands of the prosecution services in the individual countries concerned and beyond Europol's responsibility.

For now, Europol can make no further comments on the investigation or speculation about the games, players and officials involved.

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