

## EX POST PAPER

# Learning from adjacent fields: the relation between extremism and hooliganism

## Study visit to Warsaw (PL)

### Summary

'If we were interested in football, we would have become footballers.' These words, displayed by a member of a Polish hooligan group under an image of hooligans showing far-right extremist symbols <sup>(1)</sup>, reflect the problem of extremism in football stadiums. Although the majority of ultra supporters and hooligans do not support extremist ideologies at all and their situations differ across EU countries, far-right extremism (**FRE**) is a **highly prominent — and increasing — phenomenon among hooligan and ultra groups**. Participants in the RAN Warsaw study visit on 25 and 26 October 2018 explored the relation between extremism and hooliganism.

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<sup>(1)</sup> This image was displayed by a participant at the Warsaw study visit, 25-26 October 2018.

Far-right extremists use the stadium to **recruit members, showcase their propaganda and coordinate (international) actions**. Hooligan groups are used as the 'soldiers' of far-right extremist ideologies in what some have termed '**the white jihad**' — and these groups should not be overlooked in the prevention and/or countering of violent extremism (P/CVE).

**Measures for the prevention of hooliganism can be of value for P/CVE, and vice versa**. However, extremists within hooligan and ultra groups constitute a specific group, calling for **a tailor-made approach**. Such made-to-measure approaches for dealing with extremism among hooligans and ultras are still novel in Europe, and should receive more attention from both policymakers and P/CVE practitioners.

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The study visit was organised in collaboration with the **Polish Police** and the **Institute of Social Safety**

## Introduction

Football hooligans and/or ultras are frequently linked to incidents of hate speech, intolerance and abusive chants<sup>(2)</sup> — but also to explicit extremism. In confrontations between far-right extremists and immigrants, left-wing organisations or the police, some extreme hooligans and ultras have been observed to support far-right extremists. In the summer of 2018, it became clear that these groups may also resort to violent extremism: German police arrested seven citizens from the 'hooligan, skinhead and neo-Nazi scenes' in eastern Germany on suspicion of setting up the far-right terrorist organisation 'Revolution Chemnitz'. The group planned violent and armed attacks against foreigners and those holding political beliefs different to their own (Eddy, 2018)<sup>(3)</sup>.

This apparent overlap between hooliganism and extremism was explored by RAN in a Warsaw study visit to explore this adjacent field. It was co-organised by the Polish police and the Institute of Social Safety, and attended by experts from the fields of police, social work and research. Participants analysed hooligan and extremist hooligan groups in Poland as well as local and national projects adopting preventive approaches. But as participants hailed from across the EU, the challenges and preventive approaches of many different EU Member States were also featured.

The first section of this paper will explore the phenomenon of hooliganism, as this topic is relatively new to RAN. This is followed by a review of hooliganism and extremist hooligan groups in Poland and other Member States and analysis of the potential nexus between hooliganism and extremism. Lastly, the paper will spotlight preventive measures and recommendations for the prevention of hooliganism that can also be applied in the field of P/CVE.

## Hooliganism: long-term trends and current status

Spaaij (2006) notes that academic literature lacks one clear definition of hooliganism, partly because there are many different types of hooligan groups and hooligan behaviour. This notwithstanding, he explains that football hooliganism 'refers to the social genesis of distinctive fan subcultures and their engagement in regular and collective violence, primarily with rival peers'<sup>(4)</sup>. Marked manifestations of football hooliganism include 'incursions onto the pitch, throwing objects onto the playing surface and at players, disturbances, vandalism, verbal as well as violent conflicts leading to aggression between hooligans and referees, hooligans and players, hooligan groups against one another' (Smolik, 2004)<sup>(5)</sup>.

In the 1960s, hooliganism and football started to be linked, appearing in various manifestations at British football stadiums; to some degree, they also became interlinked with several subcultures (mods, bootboys,

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<sup>(2)</sup> Portas, O. (2018, March 14). Kick It Out chief 'very worried' by rise in hate crime in football. Retrieved from <https://www.bbc.com/sport/football/43376281>

<sup>(3)</sup> Eddy, M. (2018, October 1). Suspected far-right terrorism ring leads to 7 arrests in Germany. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/10/01/world/europe/germany-arrests-terrorism-revolution-chemnitz.html>

<sup>(4)</sup> Spaaij, R. (2006). *Understanding football hooliganism: A comparison of six Western European football clubs*. Amsterdam University Press.

<sup>(5)</sup> Smolik, J. (2004). Football hooliganism from the standpoint of extremism. *Středoevropské politické studie (Central European Political Studies Review)*, 6(4). Retrieved from <https://journals.muni.cz/cepsr/article/view/4052/5268>

skinheads, etc.). Over the years and in various countries, hooliganism began to take different and extremer forms. It is commonly agreed that the hooligan crisis peaked in the 1980s, a period characterised by escalation of violence, aggression and disturbances at football matches, both before and after matches (Smolik, 2004) <sup>(6)</sup>. When police supervision within stadiums was drastically increased, hooliganism and hooligan violence shifted to spaces outside the stadium.

Any discussion of hooliganism and extremism must include an analysis of the rise of the ultra groups in Europe. Originating in Italy, these are 'militant fan groups but their proclivities to violence vary substantially. Many ultra groups have certain characteristics of a formal organisation, for example official membership, a board and recruitment campaigns' (De Biasi as cited in Spaaij, 2006, p. 23) <sup>(7)</sup>. Their basic function is to provide expressive and colourful support to the team, and therefore they are not necessarily concerned with defeating or humiliating their peers through intimidation or violence (Giulianotti & Mignon as cited in Spaaij, 2006, p. 23) <sup>(8)</sup>. However, in recent decades, this phenomenon of ultra groups has spread across much of Europe — and as they tend to attract the most extreme militant fans, they often appeal to hooligans, too. It is vital to remain aware of the fluid definitions, behaviour and boundaries of these groups, that can differ from country to country.

Finally, it is important to acknowledge the difference between disorganised violence and well-organised hooligan gangs that plan confrontations: the latter pose an increasingly pressing problem in multiple EU countries. The RAN study visit focused on groups with a violent and politically extremist profile.

### ***Hooliganism in Poland***

In the 1970s, support for football teams was first organised in various Polish clubs (such as ŁKS Łódź, Polonia Bytom, Lechia Gdańsk and Legia Warsaw), resulting in the formation of informal fan clubs by the end of the 1970s. A decade later, an anti-communist scene developed, and 'slogans such as "Solidarity" ("Solidarność") and "Down with the commies" ("Precz z komuną") were often to be heard in Lechia Gdańsk stadium' (Wąsowicz as cited in Kossakowski, 2015, p. 3) <sup>(9)</sup>. Since these manifestations, the clash of Polish fans with police and authorities has become a problematic issue.

In Poland, as in other European countries, certain hooligan groups have shifted their activities beyond the stadium, and operate without the need for any direct contact with football <sup>(10)</sup>. During the study visit, Polish

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<sup>(6)</sup> Smolík, J. (2004). Football hooliganism from the standpoint of extremism. *Central European Political Studies Review (Středoevropské politické studie)*, 6(4). Retrieved from <https://journals.muni.cz/cepsr/article/view/4052/5268>

<sup>(7)</sup> Spaaij, R. (2006). *Understanding football hooliganism: A comparison of six Western European football clubs*. Amsterdam University Press.

<sup>(8)</sup> Spaaij, R. (2006). *Understanding football hooliganism: A comparison of six Western European football clubs*. Amsterdam University Press.

<sup>(9)</sup> Kossakowski, R. (2015). Where are the hooligans? Dimensions of football fandom in Poland. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, 52(6). Retrieved from <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/283563797> [Where are the hooligans Dimensions of football fandom in Poland](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/283563797)

<sup>(10)</sup> Kossakowski, R. (2015). Where are the hooligans? Dimensions of football fandom in Poland. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, 52(6). Retrieved from <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/283563797> [Where are the hooligans Dimensions of football fandom in Poland](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/283563797)

police experts noted that most Polish hooligan groups are often involved in crime-related activities, as well (such as drug-dealing and prostitution). One feature absent from these Polish hooligan groups is restrictions in terms of their members' age, education or social position: members may include teenagers as well as professionals in managerial positions. Many of these hooligan and ultra groups collaborate and partner with ultra groups or clubs from other countries. Moreover, the hooligan groups are not restricted to first division clubs but also feature in lower divisions and even amateur clubs.

Most of the hooligan and ultra groups also consider specific clubs and hooligan groups to be their arch-rivals. The narrative of binary opposites (us versus them) is not used in the context of competing football clubs alone, but also reflects a conservative nationalist climate and extreme political ideas. Auschwitz chants, anti-Islamic and anti-migration banners play a key part in this narrative<sup>(11)</sup>. Owing to the historical opposition towards the communist system in Poland, the hooligan environment continues to be dominated by highly politicised anti-systemic, anti-European and far-right extremist violence. A number of related large-scale incidents linked to hate speech and far-right extremist ideology have even been covered by international media<sup>(12)</sup>.

At the Warsaw study visit, participants explained that these hooligan groups are very well organised. They recruit members through magazines such as *We the supporters*, as well as using websites, social media, graffiti art and martial arts schools. Hooligans have even approached schools in an attempt to make contact with children. This paper describes efforts by the Polish Police and the Institute of Social Safety to counter and prevent these violent, illegal and extremist activities in a later section.

### ***Hooliganism in other EU countries***

Although problems related to extremist hooliganism vary from country to country, the study visit participants underlined that extremism amongst hooligans and ultras is an EU-wide phenomenon.

#### **United Kingdom**

As explained earlier, hooliganism has its roots in the UK. The UK also suffered intense hooligan violence during the crisis in the 1980s. However, as explained during the study visit, hooliganism in the UK has moved on, and now poses new challenges: while the hooligan scene has become less violent, the far-right presence and demonstrations have increased.

Hooligans and ultras of diverse clubs also unite under one ideological banner. The most notable are the English Defence League (EDL) and the Football Lads Alliance (FLA). The number of far-right extremists in the former group has declined, but the FLA holds demonstrations with attendance numbers reaching 50 000, mostly during weeks with no scheduled football games. These groups claim to stand against ISIS and for the protection of Europe; however, since discrimination, hate speech, Nazi and other symbols of FRE are present and visible, the British police continue to investigate the level of extremism within these groups. Moreover, in 2016, Polish hooligans living in the UK attended a demonstration in Liverpool titled 'Fuck Islam and ISIS', which turned violent, and featured many incidents of hate speech and other expressions of FRE. This incident

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<sup>(11)</sup> Benedikter, R., & Wojtaszyn, D. (2018). Football politics In central eastern Europe: A symptom of growing anti-Europeanism and anti-globalization?. *Geopolitics, History & International Relations*, 10(1).

<sup>(12)</sup> Syal, R. (2011, April 1). Uefa report details hate crime in Euro 2012 hosts Poland and Ukraine. *The Guardian*. Retrieved from <https://www.theguardian.com/football/2011/apr/01/uefa-poland-ukraine-2012-hate-crime>

was linked back to Combat 18, a violent neo-Nazi group. The presence of far-right and far-right extremist ideology among English hooligans is confirmed; a British police officer at the Warsaw study visit noted that some hooligans have now become involved in other extreme practices such as satanism.

### Italy

As previously mentioned, the phenomenon of ultras originated in Italy. According to Martin (2018), the identity of Italian football fans is rooted in locality and class position, which provides them with a common political identity. On occasion, this has led to violence based on extremist political ideas in addition to football team allegiances<sup>(13)</sup>. However, this is not the case for all ultras: the Italian police estimate that 20 % of the 400 ultra groups are ideologically motivated, mostly by far-right extremism, but also by far-left extremism. The remaining 80 % are focused on supporting their football club. Testa & Armstrong's (2010) term for far-right extremist ultras is 'UltraS': 'the UltraS are perhaps hooligans in the Italian context, but of a very different ilk, because they are now inextricably linked with late 20th-century Italian neo-fascism'<sup>(14)</sup>.

A striking incident, widely covered by the media, was when Lazio fans displayed anti-Semitic stickers in the stadium. They contained an image of Anne Frank, one of the most well-known victims of the Holocaust, wearing a Roma shirt<sup>(15)</sup>. Italian history has a legacy of a divided memory of the past, disrespect for authority and a rise in violence and extremism in football stadiums — outside the sphere and laws of everyday life, where police actions are restricted to maintaining public order<sup>(16)</sup>.

### Germany

Hooliganism- and extremism-related problems in Germany have been extensively highlighted in the media. The far-right element and influence is particularly evident in the German football hooligan scene. (Neo-)Nazi symbolism is used frequently among extreme hooligan groups, igniting debate over whether this constitutes freedom of expression of political opinion, clear-cut provocation and/or extremism. Recent demonstrations in Chemnitz, where more than 4 500 far-right extremist demonstrators gathered and several far-right extremists have now been arrested suspected of plotting a terroristic attack, reflect the scope of the problem.

### Belgium

In recent years, Belgium has been confronted with several Islamist extremist attacks. In the wake of these attacks, a group of hooligans belonging to different clubs held a demonstration, united under a banner reading 'Casuals against terrorism'. However, during the demonstration organised by this group, participants started to perform Nazi salutes and the demonstration soon turned violent.

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<sup>(13)</sup> Martin, S. (2018). Football, Fascism and Fandom in Modern Italy. *Revista Crítica de Ciências Sociais*, (116), 111-134.

<sup>(14)</sup> Testa, A., & Armstrong, G. (2010). *Football, fascism and fandom: The UltraS of Italian football*. A&C Black.

<sup>(15)</sup> Lazio fans probed over anti-Semitic Anne Frank stickers. (2017, October 24). Retrieved from <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-41735534>

<sup>(16)</sup> Martin, S. (2018) Hooliganism and Fascism in Italy.



Figure 1 Protestors perform the Nazi Salute (left) and protestors hold banner reading 'Casuals against terrorism' (right) in Brussels, 27 March 2016. From 'Right wing protest against Islamic extremism in "European Capital of Jihad" banned' by D. Trayner, 2016. Retrieved from <https://www.dailystar.co.uk/news/latest-news/504637/brussels-attacks-Molenbeek-right-wing-protest-islamic-extremism-banned>. Copyright ©2018 Express Newspapers.

The most notorious hooligan groups support the Royal Antwerp Football team and KFCO Beerschot. Certain members in these groups display anti-Semitic, anti-Islamic and anti-migration symbols, and make no attempt to conceal their Nazi sympathies. A large number of individuals in these groups have shown violent behaviour and are willing to fight anybody who opposes them.

### **Other EU countries**

The situation in several other Member States was also discussed during the visit, with examples presented from Austria, Bulgaria, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Ireland, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Romania and Slovenia. While extremism in hooligan groups is more prominent and organised in some of these countries compared to others, all reported on incidents with far-right- and far-right extremist-related incidents within and outside the stadium by ultras or hooligan groups.

### ***A hooliganism-extremism nexus?***

Of course, readers must bear in mind that that not all ultras are hooligans and not all hooligans are extremists. However, an overview of ideologically motivated incidents committed by hooligans and ultras within EU Member States points to a link between hooliganism and (far-right) extremism. But how strong is this link? Are the push-pull factors that can lead an individual to join a hooligan group similar to those that can drive an individual towards an extremist group? Why is extremism manifested in these groups? Do extremists join hooligan groups or do hooligans become extremist along the way?

## ***Root causes and drivers***

The phenomenon of hooliganism was briefly discussed during a previous RAN LOCAL working group meeting on adjacent phenomena. Participants concluded that hooliganism and extremism have similar root causes and drivers<sup>(17)</sup>. In both instances, individuals join a group that has something to offer them: a sense of belonging, a collective identity, or future prospects. Other appealing aspects of violent hooliganism are consistent with those of radicalisation: solidarity, friendship, territorial identification, sovereignty and autonomy, reputation, and an inclination for violence<sup>(18)</sup>.

Experts at the RAN study visit underlined these pull factors for hooligan groups, and added several others such as passion, political viewpoints, fun, clear rules and structure. Another possible attraction is the financial aspect — these organisations are often involved in other criminal offences too and therefore may be quite well off. A former extremist hooligan at the Warsaw study visit explained which push and pull factors had affected him: 'There was frustration that we did not have the same things as the West. One of my mates provided the answer: it is the fault of the Jews and Capitalism. That was a proper answer for us. I wanted belonging and explanation, purpose. The local hooligan group provided all of this; sports had nothing to do with it'. Some members in hooligan and extremist groups can manipulate individuals' fear of terrorist attacks by Islamist extremists and fear of immigration to strengthen the narrative that the state is not protecting their interests and to justify the use of violence. With the threat of Islamist extremism in Europe, individuals may feel that they are defending their own country by joining a hooligan or extremist group. Overall, though, study visit participants confirmed that push and pull factors can differ for each individual, exactly as described in *The root causes of violent extremism*<sup>(19)</sup> (Ranstorp, 2015).

A Polish police officer added another dimension by noting that extremist hooliganism in Poland is also a generational issue: 'Children are being raised to hate others', he explained, observing that rather than being drawn into hooligan extremist groups, these children are raised to become members. Earlier in 2018 in a meeting on vulnerable children, the RAN Youth, Families and Communities (YF&C) working group discussed challenges and considered recommendations for tackling transgenerational extremism<sup>(20)</sup>. Because many of the push and pull factors for joining (extremist) hooligan groups and for joining extremist groups are the same, preventive measures can likewise be similar.

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<sup>(17)</sup> Radicalisation Awareness Network, LOCAL. (2018). *What can we learn from adjacent phenomena?*. Ex post paper, 16 May 2018. RAN YF&C. Retrieved from [https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/networks/radicalisation\\_awareness\\_network/about-ran/ran-local/docs/ran\\_local\\_what\\_can\\_we\\_learn\\_from\\_adjacent\\_phenomena\\_lisbon\\_15-16052018\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/networks/radicalisation_awareness_network/about-ran/ran-local/docs/ran_local_what_can_we_learn_from_adjacent_phenomena_lisbon_15-16052018_en.pdf)

<sup>(18)</sup> Spaaij, R. (2006). *Understanding football hooliganism: A comparison of six Western European football clubs*. Amsterdam University Press.

<sup>(19)</sup> Ranstorp, M. (2016). *The root causes of violent extremism*. RAN issue paper, 4 January 2016. Retrieved from [https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/networks/radicalisation\\_awareness\\_network/ran-papers/docs/issue\\_paper\\_root-causes\\_jan2016\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/networks/radicalisation_awareness_network/ran-papers/docs/issue_paper_root-causes_jan2016_en.pdf)

<sup>(20)</sup> Radicalisation Awareness Network, Centre of Excellence. (2018). *Vulnerable children who are brought up in an extremist environment*. Ex post paper, 21 and 22 June. RAN YF&C. Retrieved from [https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/networks/radicalisation\\_awareness\\_network/about-ran/ran-yf-and-c/docs/ran\\_yf-c\\_vulnerable\\_children\\_who\\_brought\\_up\\_extremist\\_environment\\_21-22\\_06\\_2018\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/networks/radicalisation_awareness_network/about-ran/ran-yf-and-c/docs/ran_yf-c_vulnerable_children_who_brought_up_extremist_environment_21-22_06_2018_en.pdf)



## ***The appeal of hooligan and ultra groups for extremists***

### **Recruitment**

It has already been established in this paper that hooligan groups and extremist groups share many traits: a narrative of binary opposites (us and them), justification of violence, and a well-defined group structure, amongst many other similar push and pull factors. This makes some members in hooligan and ultra groups highly susceptible to extremist recruitment. Participants in the study visit clearly stated that extremist recruiters exploit this similarity: 'Extremists are in the stadium to recruit young people. They know this is a good place to socialise and motivate people to become active outside of the stadium as well. You can see ultras that are not watching the game, but only talk to others. These people are not interested in football, and are often the most dangerous'.

Extremists also use ideology to reinforce the narrative of binary opposites (us and them) and strengthen the sense of belonging and allegiance to their collective identity and purpose. Ultra groups already provide this, which makes an extra step somewhat smaller. Furthermore, ultra groups welcome extremist hooligans to boost their own numbers. However, ultra groups are not always infiltrated, because some have been affiliated with hate speech, hate crimes and extremist ideologies since their inception.

### **Propaganda**

Testo & Armstrong (2008) state: 'The football stadium might thus be interpreted as a twenty-first century social Agora, where political opinions — otherwise ghettoized in society — can be freely expressed in pursuit of a wider consensus' <sup>(21)</sup>. The stadium is not a space for recruitment alone; it also provides a platform for expressing the group ideology to a wider audience. This is most notably evident in the use of extremist symbols which were reported by participants in Warsaw to be widely used throughout stadiums in the EU. These include Nazi-, Celtic- and crusader-related symbols.

When these incidents receive global media coverage, their audience immediately becomes far broader than just the individuals in the stadium.

### **The 'white jihad'**

On occasion, hooligan extremists are not merely recruited as members of an extremist group, but as soldiers for the 'white jihad' with far-right extremist ideals <sup>(22)</sup>. Hooligans are organised groups, willing to break the law and resort to violence. This renders them extremely suitable to carry out the 'soldiers' work' of the far-right extremist groups, as participants during the study visit have underlined. Whereas the majority of hooligans do not support far-right extremism, recruiters of far-right extremist groups can make use of the vulnerable in hooligan groups.

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<sup>(21)</sup> Testa, A. & Armstrong, G. (2008). Words and actions: Italian ultras and neo-fascism. *Social Identities*, 14(4), 473-490.

<sup>(22)</sup> Nevett, J. (2018, June 24). Far right and football ultras UNITE as Europe faces 'White Jihadi' UPRISING, expert warns. Retrieved from <https://www.dailystar.co.uk/news/latest-news/711495/football-hooligans-far-right-white-jihadi-europe-uprising>

## Preventive approaches

In Poland and other EU Member States, hooliganism and extremism present prominent challenges, and call for an appropriate response. At the study visit in Warsaw, several projects were presented on the prevention of hooliganism and/or violent extremism, that may be transferred to other situations in Europe.

### Police training (Poland)

The Polish police have two training programmes that contribute to the prevention of hooliganism and extremism.

- Spotter training: police officers are trained to spot violent individuals, extremist symbols and other suspicious behaviour in stadiums.
- Community policing: community policing can be a powerful asset in the prevention of radicalisation outside the stadium. This has been discussed in a RAN POL working group on engaging with communities<sup>(23)</sup>.

### 'I am a Supporter' programme (Polish police)

This project aims to teach children, youngsters and adolescents how to behave appropriately as football supporters. It targets school classes, which organise several events per year on the subject. This project includes instructions on safety rules, language, behaviour, clothing, etc. The children themselves develop '10 commandments of being a good supporter'. The children also receive a handbook with dos and don'ts on how to behave as a supporter.

### 'School safety', Institute of Social Safety (Poland)

The Institute of Social Safety works on the prevention of radicalisation and extremism in schools. The first part of the social safety training, targeting both students and teachers, covers emergency procedures (fire, school shootings, etc.). The second part of the training explores radicalisation and violent extremism. Teachers usually express greater interest in the first part, but as it is only provided as a package, the training also raises awareness of radicalisation and extremism amongst school children and teachers. Institute of Social Safety also provides legal support to victims of extremism.

### 'Fan' prevention programme (Polish police)

A local programme for the prevention of hate crime and hate speech was set up following several large-scale incidents in 2010 involving hate speech and hate crimes between two teams from Rzeszów. The project targets 13-year-olds and aims to raise awareness of the consequences of hate speech and hate crime. Children learn about the legal consequences of committing such crimes, and about risks in and beyond the stadium. Parents are also targeted. The project works with local sport clubs, schools, local authorities, local media and popular sports athletes. Meetings are held in sport clubs and schools, and tournaments are held with fans of opposing football teams or schools. The project aims to organise at least

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<sup>(23)</sup> Radicalisation Awareness Network, Centre of Excellence. (2016). *Successful and effective engaging with communities*. Ex post paper, 6 and 7 April 2017. RAN POL. Retrieved from [https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/networks/radicalisation\\_awareness\\_network/about-ran/ran-pol/docs/ran\\_pol\\_ex\\_post\\_paper\\_oslo\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/networks/radicalisation_awareness_network/about-ran/ran-pol/docs/ran_pol_ex_post_paper_oslo_en.pdf)

one event a year in each school in the region.

#### **Dialogue Group — Public Order Intelligence, Norway**

The Public Order Intelligence division of the Norwegian police is tasked with preventing public disorder and crime related to political and religious activism and sport events. The organisation provides intelligence and risk assessments on any public event that may pose a risk to public order. The objective is to minimise these risks while protecting civil rights like freedom of speech. The Dialogue Group aims to connect with activists and develop a relationship of mutual understanding and trust with them via dialogue. Most conflicts appear to escalate because of a misunderstanding between these two actors, and the aim is to minimise this misunderstanding. The projects targets ultras who are open to dialogue, leaving the most extreme hooligans isolated.

#### **Exit programme for extremist hooligans, Institute of Social Safety (Poland)**

Initiated by a former extremist hooligan, the Institute of Social Safety is currently developing an exit programme to assist hooligans, extremists and extremist hooligans wishing to leave these groups. This initiative is linked to the RAN EXIT working group, which can provide guidance on setting up exit interventions<sup>(24)</sup> and on the role of formers in exit work<sup>(25)</sup>. Across most of Europe, there are few — if any — other exit programmes specifically tailored to extremist hooligans.

## **Recommendations and lessons learned**

Having explored the link between extremism and hooliganism, the following conclusions can be drawn.

- Far-right ideology and far-right extremism are prominent among ultra groups and hooligans. This adjacent field cannot be ignored if we are to effectively prevent and counter violent extremism.
- In many instances, similar push and pull factors drive individuals to join both violent hooligan groups and extremist groups. Therefore, certain preventive measures might be effective in tackling both issues.
- Extremists use the stadium, ultra groups and hooligan groups as spaces for recruitment. This calls for a tailored preventive approach. Spotters must be trained to recognise extremist symbols, but also to recognise atypical behaviour (such as recruitment) amongst the crowds at the stadium. Spotters and police are more effective if they wear civilian clothes rather than uniforms.
- Extremism amongst hooligans and ultras can be a generational issue. In these cases, it should be taken into account that hooligans are not always recruited, but may have been raised in an environment conducive to extremist beliefs and attitudes.

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<sup>(24)</sup> Radicalisation Awareness Network, EXIT. (2017). *Setting up an exit intervention*. Ex post paper, 13 and 14 February 2017. RAN EXIT. Retrieved from [https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/networks/radicalisation\\_awareness\\_network/about-ran/ran-exit/docs/ran\\_exit\\_setting\\_up\\_exit\\_intervention\\_berlin\\_13-14\\_022017\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/networks/radicalisation_awareness_network/about-ran/ran-exit/docs/ran_exit_setting_up_exit_intervention_berlin_13-14_022017_en.pdf)

<sup>(25)</sup> Radicalisation Awareness Network, Centre of Excellence. (2017). *Dos and don'ts of involving formers in P/CVE work*. Ex post paper, 26 and 27 June 2017. RAN EXIT & RAN C&N. Retrieved from [https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/networks/radicalisation\\_awareness\\_network/ran-papers/docs/dos\\_and\\_donts\\_involving\\_formers\\_in\\_pve\\_cve\\_work\\_bordeaux\\_27\\_06\\_2017\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/networks/radicalisation_awareness_network/ran-papers/docs/dos_and_donts_involving_formers_in_pve_cve_work_bordeaux_27_06_2017_en.pdf)



- Because ultra groups are value based and apply gang rules, it is very difficult to infiltrate and closely monitor them. However, all ultras groups have a well-defined hierarchy and are relatively well organised, which opens a window for dialogue.
- Extremist hooligans collaborate — not only at national level, but also at international level. Policymakers and practitioners should bear this in mind and collaborate likewise at different levels, to effectively prevent and counter hooliganism and extremism.