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## Mass events security – theory and practice

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## **MASS EVENTS SECURITY – THEORY AND PRACTICE**

***Abstract:***

*The amended Act of 20 March 2009 on mass events security and the executive legislation very clearly specified State Organizations responsible for security<sup>1</sup> at such events, pointing in particular to the organizers and the council of the local authorities issuing the permit.*

*It all resulted in a general, favorable for the Police change in the approach to the obligation of securing an event. The view, functioning before the adoption of these laws, only held the Police responsible for making events in stadiums and other venues secure. Therefore, after implementation of the mentioned Act, this duty was assigned to the organizer instead of the Police<sup>2</sup>.*

*However, the law, even in the amended form of 2009, did not meet all expectations of the legislature.*

***Key words:*** *Law, act, mass event, security, legislation.*

The amended Act of 20 March 2009 on mass events security and the executive legislation very clearly specified State Organizations responsible for security<sup>3</sup> at such events, pointing in particular to the organizers and the council of the local authorities issuing the permit.

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<sup>1</sup> The amended Act of 20 March 2009 on mass events security.

<sup>2</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>3</sup> The amended Act of 20 March 2009 on mass events security.

diums and other venues secure. Therefore, after implementation of the mentioned Act, this duty was assigned to the organizer instead of the Police<sup>4</sup>.

However, the law, even in the amended form of 2009, did not meet all expectations of the legislature.

According to the evaluation of the Police Headquarters and police field units it needs further development. Practically saying, the only initiator of the amendments to this legislation were the Police. Other entities have not shown much interest in this area. Thus the legislative process in this case is still maintained and is under consideration in the Parliament.

The current situation requires that the law should become even more restrictive for both law-breaking participants of such events, as well as the organizers and the local authorities who do not fulfill their obligations.

The rights and obligations of the organizer, who is responsible for the organization and the course of public events, were thoroughly articulated in the articles from 5 to 12, Section 2 of the cited Act<sup>5</sup>.

In accordance with this provision, the organization of events such as football matches, which are not mass events, the full responsibility for the security of participants is put on the board of a club organizing the match or other event<sup>6</sup>.

However, practice proves that still in many cases the ones securing such events are the Police, instead of organizers, who are commonly obliged to do so. Deficiencies in the process of organizing and preparing the events and venues are always shown in times when police forces need to intervene<sup>7</sup>.

Recently, thereafter the Act was implemented, the number of cases of mass disturbances and hooligan excesses, primarily in stadiums (decreasing after it reached the peak in the years 1997–2001), established on a relatively steady level, but still unsatisfactory.

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<sup>4</sup> *Ibidem.*

<sup>5</sup> *Ibidem.*

<sup>6</sup> Polish Football Association – Department of security on football stadiums, „Security vademecum on football stadium in Poland (by legal status in 30.06.2010)”, p. 59-61.

<sup>7</sup> Directive nr 3/00 KGP on 16th June 2000 how police should act in case of natural disaster and technical problems.

The report “Security of mass events”, prepared each year by the Police Headquarters, confirms this thesis<sup>8</sup>.

The threats present on international events were almost overcome and controlled. Without a doubt, this is a result of permanently improving infrastructure of sport venues and a better preparation on the part of event organizers. This came mostly as a result of Poland and Ukraine being the organizers of the UEFA Football Championship – “EURO 2012”.

However, the level of risk, the number of hooliganism excesses and the mass violations of the law, due to the activities of Polish hooligans, is still too high.

The amount of the so-called ‘rows’ is still increasing during Ekstraklass matches, as well as the games of the first, the second, and even the third League. Currently, the arguing groups of hooligans mainly fight with each other in the lower league matches. Such events require special care of the Police. They are usually held on extremely low-prepared sports facilities, which often do not even meet the basic security requirements.

Despite running by their own, seemingly right and good legislation, sport associations, including PZPN (which guidelines of 1995 on technical and organizational requirements for improving the safety of football facilities were to meet a deadline for the stadiums in this area by the year 1998<sup>9</sup>), out of different reasons, do not respect their laws. An example of such a failure to respect the existing rules and guidelines is the issue of the so-called licensing of the stadiums of the 1st, 2nd and 3rd League<sup>10</sup>.

Nowadays, it is the representatives of the PZPN and voivodeship associations which issue the temporary licenses for stadium facilities.

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<sup>8</sup> Police Headquarters (2009) Report. Mass events security in 2008, Warsaw, KGP.

<sup>9</sup> Directives of Polish Football Association on technical and organization requirements which will improve safety on football stadiums – Warsaw, February, 1995.

<sup>10</sup> Resolution:

no. II/16 on 9th February 2008 of Polish Football Association about giving a license to 3rd division football clubs.

no. V/80 on 12 and 13th April 2008 of Polish Football Association about giving a license to 2nd division football clubs.

no. VI/87 on 24th April 2008 of Polish Football Association about giving a license to 1st division football clubs.

What, then, is the temporary license?

It is a temporal permit which is used against the binding guidelines; an admission, which allows organizers to hold the football matches in the sport objects which are not sufficiently prepared, and which are attended by an unspecified group of football fans, including a large number of hooligans.

What, therefore, is an unprepared football stadium, where the PZPN or other voivodeship representative found lots of irregularities during a so-called 'lustration'?

Who will be to blame if something really tragic happens in such temporarily permitted for games stadiums?

By asking these questions, one should realize the fact that every time the order and security is violated and the law is broken, the vast majority of people's claims will be taken to the public services and the justice administration, namely to the Police, the Public Prosecutor's office and the Court, at the same time forgetting that the negligence is on the part of the organizer.

Local authorities, which issue the temporal permits allowing the mass events to happen (mostly regular league games), are also to be held responsible. Negative reviews, issued before the beginning of the season by the Police after inspection of an object (annexed to the application for a permit to host events), are often not taken seriously into account<sup>11</sup>.

Local authorities acting with prestige which is assigned to them by possessing a sport club, let the meetings take place on such venues, accepting the organizers' assurance that the necessary renovations or appropriate organizational measures will be implemented as early as during the competition. It also happens that the clubs are seeking a decision declaring that the matches can only happen with the participation of the local audience (without guest supporters). In practice, however, following a favorable opinion, clubs do not take any further actions, or keep leading them as a cover.

With the indulgence of decision-making entities, which in many cases allow the omission and bending of the rules by the event organizers, it is the police which must take heavy action to prevent hooligan excesses and restore

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<sup>11</sup> The amended Act of 20 March 2009 on mass events security.

the violated order<sup>12</sup>. For this very reason the presence of large police forces on sports facilities, or in its immediate neighborhood, has become a common habit. In 2008, there were 228 hooligan excesses which were related to sport events, mainly football matches.

While intervening in the course of its implementation, 58 police officers and 49 football fans were injured. To secure these sports events more than 260,000 police officers were sent, with 185,000 of them guarding the order in connection with football matches.

The costs borne by the Police to carry out these tasks amounted to more than 31 million PLN<sup>13</sup>.

While the organizers of international events and the Ekstraklasa usually do well with the organization of mass events, it is much worse in cases of the 1st, 2nd, 3rd and other lower Leagues. The organizers of such events are mainly random people who, except for their passion for football, does not have any substantive preparation in terms of the current abiding law.

Very often it is the organizers who do not guarantee the lawful preparation and implementation of events, mostly in kinds of small, mass and finally, those qualified as high-risk mass events by Commanders of Police in accordance with Article 28, point 2 of the Act for the Safety of Mass Events<sup>14</sup>. Attempts to discipline the organizers of these events by the negative reviews issued by the Police and attached to applications for permits *are often seen by some as an act to the detriment of the sport*.

In such cases, the organizers put the blame on the police, unfortunately forgetting that it is not the Police's but their own obligation to conduct secure and proper organization and course of events, including football matches. It should be remembered that when a match is considered as a high-risk event, the organizer should take into account the fact that the number of seats assigned to football fans stand at 200, resulting in the tour operator to submit an

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<sup>12</sup> Police procedures for the protection of mass events, meetings and demonstrations.

Cz. Podhorodecki (2001) *Security and audience behavior on football stadiums*, Warsaw 2001, „Police in securing sport events.”, p. 43-45.

<sup>13</sup> Police Headquarters (2009) Report. Mass events security in 2008, Warsaw, KGP.

<sup>14</sup> The amended Act of 20 March 2009 on mass events security.

application to the competent authority of the government to issue a decision on the organization of the mass event (in accordance with the requirements of the Act for the Safety of Mass Events passed on March 20th, 2009). Unfortunately, this is not happening.

It seems that it would be helpful to clarify the provisions of the Act concerning the organization of games that are not mass events, especially in terms of the obligations of the organizers or clubs.

The police is not responsible for the organization of small events, but its organizer – a sport club. Today, for all it is obvious that aggression and violence of hooligans moved outside stadiums.

On the Internet, but not only, there are films showing aggressive behaviors of fighting feuding groups. Increasingly, you can see the tables and charts which relate to the records of individual hooligan “teams”, where these groups, by appointment, conduct regular fights, often in public places. Among the groups of hooligans there are the ones which have not signed ‘the pact of not using dangerous tools’ in such fights.

Just in Krakow, there are feuding hooligan teams, who fight each other with using different types of dangerous objects<sup>15</sup>.

In such situations, police forces must ensure the public peace and safety wherever the drunk and violent hooligans appear. Police are prepared for such situations, but sometimes are taken by surprise, what can cause a delayed intervention.

The most effective methods of combating hooliganism in stadiums are still in the process of mastering. One of the tools is a punishment system for crimes and misdemeanors, which, however, is not perfect.

In 2002 the policy of securing the train journeys was changed by the Police. Police patrols no longer escort the groups of football fans on long journeys to the game and back. Time of patrol of the duty called “swing” rarely fit in 12 hours, and often covered the entire day.

The information held by the Police reveals that the change in the policy of escorting the football fans did not bring any negative effects to the order and security of passengers in trains.

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<sup>15</sup> P. Piotrowski (2009), *Police Quarterly* „Mass events security”, nr 3-4, p. 19-21.

But the fact is that, during the journeys of the football fans there are situations that result in the destruction of the fleet carrier, rail infrastructure, including buildings, railway stations, as well as those that threaten the lives and health of the travelers. It is important to remember that the changes have brought new challenges for the Police, consisting of enhanced police teams patrolling routes and train stations where trains stop to the football fans.

Still, the main burden of responsibility for the safety of travelers on trains and railway property is borne by the police. It makes sense to take over, or at least to support police activities by the carrier services such as SOK, as indeed with statutory obligations. In this regard, the carriers show a high resistance, as well as organizers of events with the implementation of the laws on mass events security.

Police forces remaining in constant readiness for securing mass sport events should be a measure of last resort, but should not be the sole guardian of order, especially where the responsibility for the order is placed on somebody else obliged by law to do so.

Organized groups of football fans keep getting better at avoiding the police escort on the way to and back from the stadium. Football fan clubs are reluctant to share information of their intentions with the Police, despite the clear and transparent laws supplementing the Act for the Safety of Mass Events. Sport clubs authorities, as well as associations, do not pay much attention to pre-informing the police about the plans of football fans. It can be assumed that they do not even have such information. The most often practice is to pretend that they do not identify with these groups.

Police would like to create a situation in which not a single football fan is anonymous, both on the stadiums and on the way to and back. This project, however, is no longer solely the responsibility of the Police. The success of the solution to this problem depends on the goodwill and close cooperation with the police authorities of the Polish Football Association (PZPN), the Polish Confederation of Sport, sports clubs and associations, the government entities and local authorities.

Despite the provision imposing on the entities a clear obligation of



cooperation in this field, it is not still implemented at the expected level. Police initiative in this regard is sometimes interpreted as conducting surveillance and restricting freedom. Perhaps those responsible for informing the police about the intentions of football fans are not familiar with the regulations concerning them<sup>16</sup>.

In order to secure stadiums and football fans pathways, a common goal must become the monitoring of hooligans intentions leading to neutralization of the sources of hooliganism.

Sport clubs must identify with their fans in every situation. On their team's days of victory, but also after losing matches when visiting hooligans demolish the buildings of the hosts. The sport clubs' boards should not argue that the stadium hooligans are not football fans. Unfortunately, they are, but their behavior cannot be accepted, and they should not even be in the stadiums. The legislature passed the law to monitor the course of events for the venues specified by voivodeship governors. This obligation limits only to the stadium itself. Based on the recognition of this problem by the police, it should be noted that the footage materials of many objects present so poor quality, that when it is necessary to the use of them in courts, they show no value to the process.

Preserved images often make it impossible to identify the perpetrators of disturbances in the stands, or do not even record the places where the incidents took place. This is the effect of not being specific enough in articulating which parts and areas of the object are the most vulnerable and how they should be recorded, which often results in spreading fights. This issue has already been addressed and is included in the police proposals to the mentioned act regarding such meetings.

The great difficulty in planning the security of sports events is the calendar of seasonal football matches, which is filled without special provision for the police forces. Repeated accumulation of several meetings every year in one voivodeship at the same time, significantly reduces the possibility of proper securing of all these matches.

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<sup>16</sup> The amended Act of 20 March 2009 on mass events security.

Unfortunately in this case the most important thing for the media is their time on the air, but not the comments and proposals made by the Police.

It seems that the most urgent common aim should be to create and implement a package of effective laws, precisely defining the powers and responsibilities of all entities and institutions involved in public mass events and a system of enforcement of these obligations. These legislation plans have already started. This time the intention of the Police is to make the changes go even deeper and much further than previously, and to make them function and not just be passed or ratified.

Changes in the Act should result in a number of new developments in the area of security of events, which have long been a common European standard. In fact, only the joint efforts of all who are passionate about the idea of sport education can make the sports venues become a place of safety and noble competition.

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