



Safety and Security in Sport 2022

DEPARTMENT FOR SPORT-RELATED MATTERS



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INTRODUCTION AND RETROSPECTIVE

An eventful year of sport is coming to an end for the department responsible for sport-related matters at the Federal Ministry of the Interior. The year saw, for example, TASK FORCES set up for the Olympic and Paralympic Games in Beijing as well as for the World Games in Birmingham, security collaborations implemented with Sport Austria as part of the Sport Austria Finals in Graz, new athletes admitted to the BMI's top sports squad and participating in numerous sports events such as the Vienna City Marathon, the Wings for Life Run and the Day of Sports. New cooperation agreements were also concluded and an event platform for national and international cooperation on security issues was created, namely the Security in Sport Forum (Forum Sicherheit im Sport).

Ensuring security in sport has become one of the greatest challenges for law enforcement agencies in recent years. In addition to threats that have become familiar – ranging from violent and racist clashes between various fan groups, and the illegal use of pyrotechnics, to doping, corruption and betting fraud – the Austrian and international sports scene is increasingly seeing the emergence of new phenomena. The global outbreak of COVID-19 has reminded us of the enormous security risk pandemics present for humanity and the global economy, as well as posing a variety of challenges in sport (regulated and controlled access to event sites, implementation of safety and hygiene standards, etc.). In the age of digitalisation, cyber attacks and incidents can also have a significant impact on sporting events, which is why particular attention needs to be paid to safeguarding cybersecurity in today's digital world.

It is because of these numerous, largely security-related, challenges in sport, the Security and Sport platform for security strategies has been created – having originally been commissioned by the former Federal

Minister Johanna Mikl-Leitner in August 2013 – and in September 2016 the Department for Sports-Related Matters was established to serve as a centre of excellence and central point of contact in all sports-related matters within the Federal Ministry of the Interior. The aim of the Security and Sport platform, which has since been continuously developed and adapted as new security-related phenomena emerge, is to play a key role in comprehensively counteracting the variety of potential threats facing sport in the best possible way.

1. CURRENT TOPICS

Efforts to ensure security at sporting events, the safety of athletes and to protect the integrity of sport are confronted with particular challenges each and every day. The primary focus of the BMI in 2022 was on cybersecurity, match-fixing and sexualised violence in sport.

CYBERSECURITY

New technologies naturally come with a whole host of positive developments, and so the sporting world certainly benefits from the achievements of the digital age in numerous ways.

Yet at the same time, these new technologies also entail a number of security-related challenges for society as a whole. Rising levels of computer crime, the increasing level of integration of infrastructure and the Internet, and the ever-growing dependence of the state, the economy, and society on a fully functional information and communications infrastructure are also being felt in the world of sport and in particular in the staging of major sporting events and the condition of sports facilities. A modern stadium, for instance, is a high-tech, digitalised and fully networked facility. Electroni

cally controlled floodlighting, irrigation systems, turf heating, computerised scoreboards, physical access control systems and locking systems are now considered to be standard. All of these technological developments provide additional areas of exposure that can be the target of criminal activity.

With this in mind, a variety of potential scenarios are conceivable. These might involve comparatively harmless activities, such as the unauthorised placement of activist messages on digital advertising spaces. It wouldn't take much, however, for dimensions with significant damage potential, such as mass panic triggered by attacks on critical infrastructure, to be reached.

Added to this is the ever-increasing use of social media by event organisers, organisations and associations. What common social media channels have in common is that they are able to reach large number of people and that they are taken very seriously. If such channels are attacked, offenders have the opportunity to disseminate false information and fake news to an audience of millions.

This makes it all the more important for sports organisations, federations and event organisers to prepare and raise awareness for cyberattacks. If all stakeholders are aware of the threats in our digitalised and networked world and take appropriate action, many potential dangers can be eliminated from the outset. It should never be forgotten that even large and complex attacks very often start by carelessly opening a virus-carrying email attachment or clicking on a manipulated hyperlink.

In order to help raise awareness and ensure the best possible level of cybersecurity at sporting events, the Federal Ministry of the Interior will be offering training courses for umbrella and professional associations and clubs in the future.

MATCH-FIXING

Match-fixing in sport is not a new phenomenon, but the number of instances occurring aimed at making profit through sports betting has increased sharply in recent years. Moreover, this phenomenon is no longer limited to football events, with sports such as basketball, volleyball and tennis having also been afflicted by this in Austria over the last ten years.

Match-fixing is a major threat to the integrity of sport, which can lead to spectators losing interest in the sport in question and to advertising money no longer being made available to the sport.

Match-fixing usually sees the involvement of larger networks consisting of financiers, people on the ground and intermediaries who lure players willing to participate, as well as people at the game who give signals. Bets are placed on as many alias accounts in Europe and Asia as possible to maximise winnings. A football match that has been fixed, for example, sees the involvement of at least two or three (field) players and the goalkeeper. Players in the regional league can earn up to EUR 10,000.00 if they deliberately manipulate the course of the game

To address this problem, the Sports Integrity Unit was set up at the Criminal Intelligence Service Austria (BKA) in April 2012, which has already processed 132 relevant cases since its inception. In its investigations, the BKA works closely with SPORTRADAR, EUROPOL, INTERPOL, the Play Fair Code and the respective sports federations concerned. There is also a need to cooperate with international police agencies and betting providers as important stakeholders in the fight against betting manipulation.

SEXUALISED VIOLENCE

As is the case in many other countries, Austria is experiencing an increase in reports of sexualised violence in a wide variety of settings. The structures (age gap, power relations, gender stereotypes, performance orientation as a means of pressure), situations (overnight stays in groups, joint changing rooms and showers, touching) as well as general conditions (taboo, lack of awareness, etc.) in organised sport all play a role in opening the door to the possibility of sexualised assaults taking place.

Sexualised violence is more than just forced physical contact, as it also comprises lewd/sexual remarks or pictures, being exposed to media with sexual content, exhibitionism, etc

According to a study conducted by the University of Vienna ¹ – with the participation of Assistant Professor Rosa Diketmüller – men report having experienced sexualised violence in sport (involving physical contact) more often than women do. The majority of the perpetrators named were men, and these were mostly teammates, familiar or unfamiliar peers, or coaches or trainers. It should also be emphasised that recreational and popular sport are less affected by this form of violence than competitive sport.

Raising awareness is enormously important when it comes to preventing sexualised violence, which is why, since September 2022, the 100% Sport association has acted as the official trust and contact point against harassment and violence in sport. All consultations are free of charge and further support services are offered where necessary.

1 Hartill, M., Rulofs, B., Lang, M., Vertommen, T., Allroggen, M., Cirera, E., Diketmüller, R., Kampen, J., Kohl, A., Martin, M., Nanu, I., Neeten, M., Sage, D., & Stativa, E. (2021). CASES: Child abuse in sport: European Statistics.

As part of the Security in Sport platform and the GEMEINSAM. SICHER (SAFE.TOGETHER) initiative, the BMI has set itself the goal of working more closely with 100% Sport in the future to make sports clubs in Austria a safer place.

2. TASK FORCES

China's capital city hosted the 24th Winter Olympics from 4 to 20 February 2022. Beijing was the first city in the world to organize the Winter Olympics after having organised the 2008 Summer Olympics. The success of the TASK FORCE at events such as the UEFA EURO 2020 and the 2020 Summer Olympics in Tokyo meant that one was also set up to share information and development regarding the security situation in China. The TASK FORCE, led by group leader Günther Marek and group leader Reinhard Schnakl, consisted of representatives of the Austrian Ministry of the Interior (BMI), the Austrian Ministry for European and International Affairs (BMEIA), the Austrian Olympic Committee (ÖOC), the Austrian Paralympic Committee (ÖPC) and the sports journalists' association Sports Media Austria (SMA).

The remit and declared goal of the TASK FORCE was to ensure the safety of the entire delegation (athletes, coaches, sponsors, press and other accredited persons). The excellent level of cooperation between the stakeholders that has been going on for years meant that it was possible to take the necessary precautions to succeed in this task and to ensure the safety of the Austrian delegation.

As was the case for the 2020 Olympic Games in Tokyo, these Winter Games also took place under heightened security conditions and without spectators

from abroad due to the ongoing pandemic and zero-COVID policy being pursued by the Chinese authorities. Despite the unusual situation, which placed considerable demands on everyone involved, the events took place under very fair conditions with the safety of the athletes being guaranteed at all times.

Our red-white-red athletes demonstrated incredible sporting prowess and, coming 7th place in the medal table, recorded their second most successful performance in the history of the ÖOC. The triple medallist and police athlete Johannes Strolz (2x gold, 1x silver) was the most successful Austrian athlete at these Games.



Photo: ÖOC
Johannes Strolz

The Paralympic Winter Games were then opened on 4 March and concluded on 13 March 2022.

The Paralympic Team Austria finished the Games with 13 medals and an excellent 6th place in the medal table. Despite the challenging conditions in the run-up to these Games, they also were a success for Austria

In particular, police athlete Elisabeth Aigner became a double Olympic champion in slalom and giant slalom as a guide to her visually impaired sister Veronika Aigner.



Photo: GEPA pictures/Patrick Steiner
Elisabeth and Veronika Aigner

Following the Olympic and Paralympic Games, a TASK FORCE was established for the 2022 World Games with the ongoing goal of ensuring the safety of the Austrian delegation. The World Games is a major international sporting event that takes place every four years after the Summer Olympics. The events, held over 11 days, represented the pinnacle of competition for 3,600 of the world's best athletes in 34 non-Olympic sports.

The 11th World Games took place this year from 7 to 17 July 2022 in Birmingham, Alabama (USA), generating worldwide attention for participating sports and providing a highly visible stage where athletes from more than 105 countries competed for gold. More than 600 medals were awarded to the athletes.

Police student and top athlete Stella Hemetsberger won the gold medal in kickboxing in the weight class up to 60 kg. "Her success showed once again that the members of the BMI's top sports squad are among the best in the world."

Photo: GEPA pictures/Matic Klansek
Stella Hemetsberger



The heads of this TASK FORCE, group leader Günther Marek and Federal Police Director Michael Takacs summed up the positive performance: *“The safety of the Austrian delegation was ensured thanks to the successful precautions taken. There were no significant criminal or policing incidents during the World Games.”*

3. COLLABORATIONS

It is absolutely essential to establish collaborations with a wide range of institutions, associations, leagues and other key players to meet the many challenges facing security and sport as best as possible. They are thus another important part of an overall security strategy in sport, which is why the Federal Ministry of the Interior works tirelessly to both strengthen and cement such collaborative work.

Another example of this is the cooperation agreement concluded with the Austrian Civil Service Insurance (ÖBV) during the first ÖBV Autumn Forum on 22 September 2022 in Vienna. The cooperation was signed by group leader Günther Marek and ÖBV chairman Josef Trawöger and is aimed at promoting the professional training and further education of disabled athletes during and after their careers to a greater extent.

Photo: Daniel Prieto Taladrid
Josef Trawöger and GL Günther Marek



Federal Minister Gerhard Karner said here: *“I am particularly pleased about the new cooperation agreement with the ÖBV, especially given our intention to involve more disabled athletes in the work of the BMI. The advantages for the athletes here are plain to see,”* Gerhard Karner added. *“They have social security and can balance their working time with their sports career.”*

4. EVENTS

The BMI’s Department for Sports-Related Matters and members of the BMI’s top and competitive sports squad participated in various events in 2022. The Security in Sport FORUM was also held for the first time at the Göttweig Abbey in autumn 2022.

VIENNA CITY MARATHON

24 April 2022

The Vienna City Marathon is the largest marathon in Austria and has been held annually in Vienna since 1984. The BMI was represented at the 39th Vienna Marathon by Alpine skiing guide Elisabeth Aigner, police officer and former ski jumper Andreas Kofler, beach volleyball ace Alexander Horst, kickboxer Karim Mabrouk as well as police officer and skier Fritz Strobl and department head



Photo: BMI/Gerd Pachauer
From the left: Fritz Strobl, Andreas Kofler, SC Karl Hutter and Alexander Horst.

Karl Hutter, among others. The two relay teams demonstrated true team spirit over the marathon distance, finishing just three seconds apart.

WINGS FOR LIFE RUN

8 May 2022

The Wings for Life World Run has been an annual charity run held simultaneously around the world in May since 2014 under the motto “Running for those who can’t.” 100% of the proceeds go to spinal cord research via the Wings for Life Foundation. After a two-year COVID-19-related hiatus, the flagship run returned to Vienna in 2022. 458 members of the BMI sport team, including top athletes such as the Jiu-Jitsu sisters Mirneta and Mirnesa Bećirović, luger Reinhard Egger and judoka Bernadette Graf, ran a total of 6,454 kilometres for spinal cord research, coming in sixth place overall worldwide.



Photo: BMI/Gerd Pachauer
Team BMI at the town hall square in front of the BMI police sports tent.

DAY OF THE EMERGENCY SERVICES

21 May 2022

At the end of May, the Day of the Emergency Services was held at the Ober-saifen industrial park, where demonstrations were given by organisations such as the fire brigade, paramedics, the police and the armed forces with the involvement of around 500 emergency workers and first responders. Alpine skiing guide Elisabeth Aigner, bobsled pilot Katrin Beierl, alpine skiing athletes Ramona Siebenhofer and Tamara Tipler, and Nordic combined athlete Harald Lemmerer were also there representing top police sports.

RACE2ZERO

15 June 2022

RACE2ZERO is a global campaign for climate protection supported by the United Nations. As part of the Sport Austria Finals in Graz, police athletes Lara Hinterseer (karate), Andreas Prommegger (alpine snowboarding), Fabian Obmann (alpine snowboarding) and Franz Josef Rehrl (Nordic combined) took part in the Race2Zero to diligently collect watts on the ergometer for the good of the climate. The special event is intended to make organisers aware of the need to plan and implement sports events in a more climate-friendly way in the future.

DAY OF SPORTS

17 September 2022

The Day of Sports was once again held this year at the Ernst Happel Stadium car park in Vienna's Prater. 200,000 visitors, 122 sports associations and more than 400 successful athletes presented their disciplines at the largest open-air sports event in the country.

The BMI was represented with a police sports stand, as has become tradition. Two stations – laser biathlon and self-defence – invited visitors to stop and get involved, and there was also an opportunity to grab an autograph or two of BMI's top athletes.

The highlight of the day was the presenting of awards to the top police athletes of 2022. Olympic champion Johannes Strolz was named 2022 male police athlete of the year, while Alpine skiing guide and gold medallist at the Paralympic Games Elisabeth Aigner was named 2022 female police athlete of the year. Kickboxer and World Games winner Stella Hemetsberger was delighted to receive the 2022 Police Sport Newcomer of the Year award.



Photo: BMI/Gerd Pachauer
From the left: State Governor (ret.) Hans Niessl, Elisabeth Aigner, Veronika Aigner, Johannes Strolz, GL Günther Marek and top sport coordinator Reinfried Herbst.

FORUM SECURITY IN SPORT

27-29 September 2022

The end of September 2022 saw a première at Göttweig Abbey. The first Security in Sports FORUM was the centre of attraction for Austrian sport. Ensuring security in sport has become a major challenge, which is why the series of events established with this première is aimed at strengthening the national and international security cooperation of key stakeholders to address both current and future challenges.

Host, police officer and former ski racer Alexandra Meissnitzer guided attendees through the three-day programme. Federal Minister Gerhard Karner emphasised here: “We want to take a closer look at three areas in particular at this event: match fixing and betting fraud, cybersecurity in sport, and the issue of violence in sport.”

In addition to the topics of cybersecurity, match-fixing and sexualised violence (more under “Current topics”), matters pertaining to sports-related laws and how to act in case of a terrorist attack at sporting venues were also addressed.



Photo: BMI/Gerd Pachauer
Federal Minister Gerhard Karner

Invitees included representatives of sports associations and sports organizations, top police athletes, national and international cooperation partners, representatives of the BMI and other ministries (BMKÖS, BMLV, BMF) as well as media representatives..



Photo: BMI/Gerd Pachauer

From the left: GL Günther Marek, Matthias Bogner, Alfred Ludwig, Gerhard Milletich, Hans Niessl, Maria Rauch-Kallat, Christian Scherer, Alex Schwärzler, Michael Schuen and Josef Trawöger

“I am pleased that the discussion platform was so well received and that everyone with key involvement in Austrian sport and Austrian security came to Göttweig Abbey,” said group leader Günther Marek after the event. The Security in Sport FORUM will take place again in 2023.



Photo: BMI/Gerd Pachauer

From left to right: Alexandra Meissnitzer, Markus Schiffner, Julian Eberhard, Gerhard Karner and GL Günther Marek.

5. TOP POLICE SPORTS

The support system for top athletes implemented by the Federal Ministry of the Interior is unique, especially since it combines sound professional training – including social security – with the opportunity to practice sport professionally. In return, the top athletes effectively showcase the “police” brand internally and externally, projecting an image of a high-performance law enforcement branch in Austria. After completing their sporting career, the athletes are offered a wide range of tasks with numerous possible uses and comprehensive career opportunities in the police and administrative service of the BMI. There are currently 80 top sports posts in the Federal Ministry of the Interior, of which 76 were filled at the end of the year.

Having top athletes in the BMI is intended to showcase the Austrian police in the best possible light for the general public. This means that, when promoting top-level sport, preference should be given to sports that protect the reputation of the police in the eyes of the outside world, while providing motivation and setting an example from within. Individual and duo sports are promoted, such as in particular: Olympic sports, sports with a connection to the executive branch, or sports that are well respected by and generate interest among the general public.

The public's perception of the top sports squad increased again last year, with a media value of EUR 42,714,398 being generated between 1 September 2021 and 1 September 2022. This represents a year-on-year increase of EUR 13,895,552.

New admissions

The following top sportspersons were admitted to the BMI's top sports squad in September 2022:

- ANDEXER Anna, biathlon
- BABINSKY Stefan, alpine skiing
- ERHARTER Florian, alpine skiing para-guide
- FEUERSTEIN Patrick, alpine skiing
- HAAGEN David, ski jumping
- KREUZER Chiara, ski jumping
- LACKNER Thomas, ski jumping
- MÜLLER Yannick, artificial track luge
- PASCARIUS Paul, beach volleyball
- ROHRWECK Johannes, ski cross
- WOHLGENANNT Ulrich, ski jumping

Sporting successes

This year saw top police athletes once again able to celebrate a range of sporting successes, including:

- 8 Olympic medals, including 6x gold
- 9 World Cup victories in various disciplines
- 21 World Cup top 3 placements
- 1x gold at the World Games

At this year's Lotterien Sporthilfe Gala 2022, top police athlete Johannes Strolz was named 2022 Rising Star of the Year. In addition, Veronika Aigner (with her guide, police athlete Elisabeth Aigner) also won the Niki for the 2022 Disabled Athlete of the Year.



Photo: GEPA pictures/Michael Meindl
Sportswoman of the Year 2022 Anna Gasser and Rising Star of the Year 2022 Johannes Strolz.

CONCLUSION

The sports world will keep on turning in 2023. New security-related developments, numerous major sporting events, the fight against doping, betting fraud and corruption in sport, aggressive fan behaviour, cyber attacks and (sexualised) violence in sport will keep security agencies, sports federations and the many stakeholders in sport busy. The stated aim is to further develop the Security in Sport platform as a centre of excellence and to strive for the best possible solutions to help the development of sport in Austria together with the partners of the Federal Ministry of the Interior.

If you have any questions on the topic of security in sport, please do not hesitate to contact our colleagues in Department I/C/11, which is responsible for sports-related matters at the Federal Ministry, on +43 1 53126 5259.

