

JORAM VERHOEVEN

# Football-related anti-Semitism compared

*Report on the international  
conference on anti-Semitism  
in professional football*

**anne frank house**





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# Introduction

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Ronald Leopold, executive director of the Anne Frank House

For decades now, we have been witness to the phenomenon of football-related anti-Semitism in football stadiums all over Europe. The problem crosses national boundaries, but its historical origins and manifestations differ from one country to the next, and a uniform solution for dealing with the problem has yet to be found. Until now, football-related anti-Semitism has usually been studied within a national framework, without involving other countries. This incited the Anne Frank House to organise an international conference in 2015 in order to compare the situations in the various countries and to exchange experiences. The conference took place on 11 and 12 June 2015 in the Amsterdam Arena; it was funded by the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport, and facilitated by the Amsterdam Arena.

The goal was to invite relevant representatives from four different countries all facing the same problem. The selection of these countries was based on the specific context and their approach to football-related anti-Semitism. We looked for variation in origin, scope and manifestations, and in the way these countries have been addressing the issue. The Anne Frank House intended to bring together an international group of participants with varied experiences and insights.

A group of representatives from the Netherlands, Germany, England and Poland provided the desired diversity. In each of these countries, football-related anti-Semitism is a well-known phenomenon, yet the incidents vary with regard to background, context and scope. The Netherlands, Germany, England and Poland each take a different angle when confronted with anti-Semitic manifestations. The parties involved (government authorities, football associations, football clubs, anti-discrimination organisations and supporters) deemed this exchange a highly valuable contribution to the process of improving their fight against football-related anti-Semitic incidents. The variation in their approaches helped achieve the primary objective of the conference: the mutual cross-fertilisation of know-how and experiences with regard to football-related anti-Semitism.

During the two-day conference, plenary expert lectures were alternated with additional seminars to work out what had been presented in the

lectures. The lectures were held by experts from the countries mentioned above, who introduced the setting and approach in their own countries and then elaborated on this approach. The seminars zoomed in on a number of relevant sub-topics: football legislation and policies, anti-discrimination initiatives proposed by the supporters, and educational solutions to the problem. The seminars were illustrated with real-life examples and experiences to kick off the discussion among the participants.

This report is based on the two-day conference, and discusses the most significant and illuminating aspects of the lectures and seminars. Its three chapters cover the topics of the three seminars. Chapter 1 introduces the diversity in football-related anti-Semitism. It is quite succinct, as the report is not intended to serve as a detailed description of the situation in the various countries. The focus of paragraph 1.1 is on the manifestations of football-related anti-Semitism in the Netherlands, Germany, England and Poland. Paragraph 1.2 discusses the ways in which the authorities involved (such as the government, national football associations and the clubs) try to fight anti-Semitic manifestations. Parties that have taken the initiative in this respect are highlighted. Paragraph 1.3 deals with a number of sub-topics that came up during the seminars: general comments or issues regarding the context of football-related anti-Semitism and the way it is handled.

Chapter 2 discusses the initiatives taken against discrimination.

Since the focus of the seminars was mainly on the initiatives taken by the supporters, the role of the football supporters is at the centre of this chapter. Paragraph 2.1 describes how the participants view the various suggestions for involving the football audience in the fight against football-related anti-Semitism. Special attention was paid to the role of the fan coaches, employees of the football clubs who are actively concerned with the clubs' supporter base. In paragraph 2.2 we set out the conditions that have to be met in order for supporters to become involved in the fight against anti-Semitic manifestations. The conditions for their involvement require every attention. Further notes are added in paragraph 2.3 about the role of the football supporters, highlighting



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the challenges in involving part of the fan base in the fight against anti-Semitic manifestations.

Chapter 3 zooms in on the value of education in the fight against football-related anti-Semitism. The two target groups that were the focus of the seminars are discussed in paragraph 3.1. Paragraph 3.1.1 deals with the supporters, while paragraph 3.1.2 examines the stewards. Paragraphs 3.2.1 and 3.2.2 discuss the context of possible educational tools for the target groups mentioned. Finally, the partial conclusions of chapters one to three (paragraphs 1.4, 2.4 and 3.3) will be summarised in the conclusion. The most significant and insightful results from the two-day conference in Amsterdam will form a starting point for future developments.

# Chapter 1

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Participants discussing football legislation and policies

## Diversity in context, policies and approach

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*In this chapter, the outlines of the problems in the Netherlands, England, Germany and Poland is discussed and the way they have been trying to deal with these problems. Football-related anti-Semitism has a different background, origin and manifestations in each of these countries, and as a result, the anti-Semitic incidents that take place in the vicinity of the Dutch, German, English and Polish football stadiums vary widely. The governments, football authorities and supporter groups each have their own, varying experiences.*

### 1.1. Four Countries

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In England, football-related anti-Semitism is concentrated around Tottenham Hotspur FC, a club based in London. The club has a Jewish image which its supporter base uses as an honorary title: Tottenham Hotspur supporters have been calling themselves ‘Yids’ for decades. The fans use the word in their own football songs, which are sung before, during and after the match. However, the image and the fact that the supporters wear the title with pride, has its flipside. It is customary for football supporters not only to glorify and cheer on their own team, but also to verbally attack the fan base or players of rival clubs. This is viewed as their contribution to the battle that is taking place down below on the field.

Particularly in the 1970s and 1980s, the number of football-related incidents increased tremendously, with football hooligans misbehaving both verbally and physically. A supporters’ culture ensued in which offensive and discriminatory utterances were viewed as relatively normal means for insulting the opponents. Racist behaviour against football players of colour became rife, for instance by making jungle noises or throwing bananas onto the pitch. The Jewish image of Tottenham Hotspur – and the fact that its supporters were proud to call themselves ‘Yids’ – caused rival supporters to use the word in their songs and chants, in a negative manner. The verbal

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attack on the fan base and players of the London club consisted mainly of utterances along anti-Semitic lines. In the 1980s and 1990s in particular, many anti-Semitic manifestations could be heard and sometimes seen at the matches. In those years, matches against Tottenham Hotspur were often marred by chants insulting Jews and mocking Jewish habits and customs. The supporters of other London football clubs were prone to chant en masse, using the word 'Yid' in a negative manner, for instance in the following chant: *'The Yids from White Hart Lane/ Spurs are on their way to Auschwitz/ Sieg Heil/ Hitler's gonna gas them again'*.

Since the late 1990s, the number of anti-Semitic incidents in and around the stadiums has gradually decreased. Chants and songs in this setting have become rare. However, the issue seems to have crossed over to a different domain. Anti-Semitic verbal abuse on social media has increased exponentially. According to the conference participants, supporters from other football clubs are using anti-Semitic texts and slurs more and more often on football-related online platforms, particularly relating to Tottenham Hotspur supporters. The connection between this anti-Semitic verbal abuse on online platforms and football is evident. As a result, it can be qualified as a football problem that requires the English Football Association and the clubs to take action.

The situation in the Netherlands is quite similar to the one in England. The Amsterdam football club Ajax has a Jewish image. Just like the Tottenham Hotspur supporters, the Ajax fan base wears the image as a badge of honour. The words *Joden* ('Jews') or *Superjoden* ('Super Jews') are used in self-reference and in many of their songs. In the Netherlands, too, supporters from rivaling teams started using these words in a negative manner in order to insult the Ajax supporters. From the 1980s onwards, other supporters started chanting anti-Semitic texts, predominantly at matches against Ajax. Common chants were *'Hamas, Hamas, Joden aan het gas'* ('Hamas, Hamas, all Jews should be gassed'), *'Wij gaan op Jodenjacht'* ('We are going Jew-hunting') and *'Mijn vader zat bij commando's, mijn moeder zat bij de SS en samen verbrandden zij Joden, want Joden die branden het best'* ('My father was in

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the commandos, my mother was in the SS, together they burned Jews, as Jews burn the best').

Just like in England, the scope of the problem seems to be on the decrease. Over the last few years, the number of anti-Semitic chants in professional football, as registered by the national football association, has gradually decreased. Nevertheless, every year there are still a number of small or not so small incidents inspired by anti-Semitism in the Dutch football stadiums. The main conclusion is that the continued occurrence of anti-Semitic chants and songs has contributed to a negative connotation to the word 'Jew'. Within the context of Dutch football, the word all but equals Ajax, its supporters and the city of Amsterdam. Because of the rivalry with Ajax and its supporters, the word has become charged with negative and offensive connotations, which have carried over to the world outside of the football stadiums. The word 'Jew' is more and more often used as a term of abuse, within the context of football and beyond, especially in regions with football clubs whose fan bases are at odds with Ajax.

Based on the contributions from the German participants, it can be concluded that the setting of football-related anti-Semitism in Germany is completely different. Germany does not have any one major and well-known football club with a Jewish image, such as Tottenham Hotspur or Ajax. The anti-Semitic utterances in the context of German football can therefore not be considered to be a response by rivalling fans from specific clubs, yet anti-Semitic chants and symbols are still used in football. Among the manifestations are banners with prohibition signs, stating that Jews are not welcome, and graffiti with anti-Semitic connotations such as swastikas and references to gas chambers around football stadiums.

According to the participants, the causes are twofold. First of all, these manifestations are used to emphasise the differences between their own clubs and their rivals. Just like in England and the Netherlands, they intend to insult the opponents by means of anti-Semitic signs. Secondly, right-wing extremist groups seem to consider football as the ideal context for these manifestations.

Particularly because of this second development, the gradual decrease in football-related anti-Semitism observed in England and the Netherlands is not found in Germany.

In Germany, small right-wing extremist groups seem to have started to use football as a breeding ground for new members and as a platform for controversial anti-Semitic opinions. Right-wing extremist groups have found that it is relatively easy to recruit new members from among specific groups of fanatical football supporters. According to the German participants, these right-wing extremist groups have found that they are able to voice their anti-Semitic opinions within the context of football much more easily than in any other social domain. These groups will always deny any anti-Semitic basis for their chants, slogans and graffiti, and proclaim them to be purely football-related. Even though these manifestations may sound anti-Semitic, they are explained away as a commonly used provocative means to rile rival fans, without any discriminatory intentions. As many German conference participants have observed, this is the way in which right-wing extremist groups disguise their own anti-Semitic ideas as the anti-Semitic manifestations of football supporters that are not necessarily inspired by any anti-Semitic ideology.

In Poland, football-related anti-Semitism seems to be a more common occurrence than in the other countries. Just like in Germany, there is no Polish football club with a Jewish profile. Nonetheless, anti-Semitic songs and symbols can be seen and heard in and around football stadiums, particularly when it concerns the derby between the rival Cracow football clubs of Cracovia Krakow and Wisla Krakow. Although the supporters of neither club sport a Jewish image, the fans of Wisla Krakow frequently use anti-Semitic expressions to insult the Cracovia fans. According to the participants, these and other anti-Semitic manifestations result from the current social situation in Poland. Anti-Semitic opinions are still quite common among a large part of the Polish population. Apparently, these views are deeply rooted in the social structure and still part of everyday language and familiar expressions. Within the context of Polish football, supporters air their anti-Semitic opinions by

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using banners – for example showing the face of a Jew with a big nose and a prohibition sign – and by directing Nazi salutes at the rival supporters.

This persistent social pattern is reflected in Polish football.

Even though a relatively small group is taking part in the anti-Semitic manifestations, the majority of the Polish football audience seems to accept them tacitly. Participants at the conference explained that Polish football is a setting where socially unacceptable songs and symbols are more easily accepted. For this reason, Polish football is still a welcoming platform for anti-Semitic ideas and opinions.

## 1.2 Different approaches

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We may conclude that the scope, background and manifestations of football-related anti-Semitism are different, and that the four countries mentioned above also differ as to their approach to the problem. Based on the statements from the conference participants, the various stakeholders show different levels of responsibility and commitment. In England, the government seems to have taken the lead in the fight against football-related anti-Semitism. This may be because in England, anti-Semitic incidents are part of a larger problem. ‘The English Disease’, symptoms of which also include racism and hooliganism, all in the context of football, led to great social unrest in the 1980s and 1990s. Football became a problem that urgently needed – and eventually got – political attention. Subsequently, specific, strict football legislation (enforced in cooperation with the English Football Association) was introduced, designed to curb these incidents. As a result, the Football Association has extensive powers to impose long-term stadium bans and other punitive measures to take action against, among other things, anti-Semitic manifestations.

These days, their biggest job seems to be monitoring football-related online platforms where anti-Semitic verbal abuse has become more and more common. The anonymity of the internet makes it harder to find the instigators

and to impose sanctions, which is part of the reason why a growing number of supporters is using the internet to post offensive comments directed at others. The fact that the problem is shifting to the area of the social media calls for new powers for the English football authorities to take measures against anti-Semitic incidents that take place far from the football stadiums. With the support of Kick It Out, the largest independent anti-discrimination organisation in English football, and various social media such as Twitter, attempts are made to monitor these platforms and to turn the spotlight on the instigators.

In this respect, one of the most significant measures taken by the FA, was the ban on the use of word 'Yids' by Tottenham Hotspur supporters, as it would provoke anti-Semitic manifestations. However, the measure could not be legally enforced, for a lack of grounds to penalise the positive use of the word. As a result, the English FA is not able to prohibit the use of the word by Tottenham Hotspur supporters - as opposed to the negative use of the word by supporters from rival clubs. Nonetheless, the FA continues to support its own views and intends to fight any use of the word 'Yid' within the context

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## **Kick It Out**

**Kick It Out is an independent anti-discrimination organisation, active in English football. The origins of the organisation go back to the 'Let's Kick Racism Out of Football' campaign from the early 1990s, which drew attention to racism in football. Kick it Out was founded in 1997, and its aim was to fight racism and any other forms of discrimination and exclusion in the world of football. Kick it Out is financed mainly by the FA and the Premier League, but operates independently from other authorities. The organisation has various tasks: it functions as a hotline for reporting discrimination on or around the pitch, and promotes measures intended to ban discriminatory behaviour and to stimulate diversity.**



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of football, either positive or negative. According to the English participants at the conference, the government and the English FA are the driving forces in fighting anti-Semitic misconduct by football supporters.

Based on the information shared at the conference, the governments of the other three countries seem to be less actively involved in managing the fight against football-related anti-Semitism. While the English government has adopted an active role in handling the problems, such political intervention is mostly (or completely) lacking in the Netherlands, Germany and Poland. This may be caused by the fact that while these football-related problems, mainly involving racism and hooliganism, do play a role in these countries, they were never manifest on the scale of the problems in England in the eighties and nineties.

According to the participants, the other countries differ from England in another respect as well: the extent to which the national football associations have shouldered the responsibility to fight anti-Semitism and the related problems of racism and discrimination. Although the Dutch football association has made efforts in this respect, the organisation seems less keen to take a high profile role than the English FA. The larger share of the burden of preventing or fighting these problems is passed down to the organisations of professional football themselves. Keeping order in and around the stadiums is primarily the task of the Dutch football clubs themselves, and the home clubs are responsible for what happens in the stands during the match.

The clubs are obligated to warn the public to stop anti-Semitic or other discriminatory manifestations as soon as these are heard, and to stop the match if they persist. Furthermore, clubs are asked to identify supporters who misbehave, to allow for appropriate sanctions. ADO, a football club from The Hague, for instance, uses highly advanced technology to detect anti-Semitic, racist or discriminatory manifestations. By installing high-quality cameras and sound sensors in the stadium, the football club is able to identify the instigators of the unacceptable manifestations – both during and after the game. In addition, the club's access system uses face recognition and identity checks. This way, ADO knows exactly who are present in the stadium, which makes it

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easier to identify the potential instigators of anti-Semitic chanting. Only after anti-Semitic manifestations have been visible or audible during the match does the football association become involved. They assess whether the club has taken the appropriate measures to prevent and to end the incidents that were registered. In addition, they help the club to find and punish the offenders. And so, according to the participants at the conference, the Dutch football association does not play a leading role as much as a monitoring role, and possibly, if the club has been negligent, a sanctioning role.

German participants at the conference declared that the German football association neither plays a leading nor a monitoring role.<sup>1</sup> Some participants suggested that the focus of the football association is not on



Eveliëns Gans, professor Modern Jewish History at the University of Amsterdam and senior researcher at the Netherlands Institute for War-, Holocaust- and Genocide Studies (NIOD)

fighting football-related anti-Semitism. The conference spoke of a lack of initiative in dealing with the problems, and a tendency to trivialise or play down the scope and the seriousness of the incidents. The German participants have noted this pattern primarily within the football association, but also in some of the football clubs. Their wait-and-see attitude has inspired some supporter groups to take matters into their own hands. These groups call attention to football-related anti-Semitism and try to prevent anti-Semitic scenes in and around the stadiums. Their initiatives are discussed in the next chapter.

According to the Polish participants, neither the Polish football association, nor the football clubs have shown any (or hardly any) initiative in handling the football-related anti-Semitism in Poland. Measures taken to prevent the manifestations are rare. Moreover, incidents that do take place are hardly ever investigated properly. As a result, hardly any sanctions have been issued to the instigators of the misconduct. Nonetheless, the Polish representatives reported that some meaningful first steps have recently been taken in order to improve the situation. Some supporters responsible for anti-Semitic manifestations in the stands have been punished. According to the Polish participants at the conference, there is a growing awareness that measures and appropriate sanctions are called for.

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## 1.3 Further Notes

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The lectures and seminars highlighted different and divergent situations. In the in-depth seminars in particular, these situations have been discussed extensively. The discussions yielded additional comments and notes, which are summarised below.

The participants at the conference seemed to feel that football is too often granted a status aparte, almost as though it is a world apart, where different rules apply and deviant behaviour is tolerated. The majority of the participants at the conference feel that this should not be the case. As the most popular sport, football should not be separate from society, but very much a part of it. The behaviour demonstrated in the stands should be judged by the same standards as in any other part of the social domain. The intense experience, the heightened tension and a sense of companionship with fellow supporters may make fans more prone to show undesirable behaviour. Because of the supporters' passion for the game, the tolerance level for misconduct is slightly higher in football than in other social domains. This stems from the conviction that not everything that happens in the stands should be taken seriously. Although this deep-rooted belief is understandable to some degree, the conference participants feel that this does not mean that we should turn a blind eye when laws are violated, yet this is what happens all too often.

The broad consensus that professional football is not a sub-domain, but rather an integral part of society, led to a lively discussion. Almost all of the conference participants felt that intensive cooperation between local authorities, police, the football authorities involved and the supporters is of the essence in the continued fight against anti-Semitic incidents. Working together results in a more effective approach and reinforces the message. The participants also felt that this type of cooperation would prevent playing the blame game, with individual bodies being blamed for any incidents.

By operating as a single unit in fighting anti-Semitism (and other forms of football-related discrimination), local authorities, law-enforcing authorities, sports associations, clubs and supporters will gradually start to share the burden of responsibility.

Another sub-topic dealt with the sanctions that could possibly be issued by the football associations and clubs, either individually or collectively. By punishing only those individuals who break the rules, you make sure that the audience does not suffer from the actions of (a small group of) misbehaving fellow supporters. There is an upside as well as a downside to this approach. The downside of individual sanctions is the missed opportunity to introduce an important incentive to rid football of this type of misconduct: promoting self-policing by the audience. By issuing individual sanctions, the group as a whole is not encouraged to exert social control over fellow supporters and to actively show that they are opposed to anti-Semitic and other types of discriminatory behaviour.

A group is more likely to self-regulate once collective sanctions are in place for audible or visible anti-Semitic manifestations. Football supporters may be more likely to check on their fellow supporters once they realise that their club or they themselves will suffer the consequences from such misconduct, such as, for instance, high fines or matches played without an audience. The participants at the conference are convinced that this type of social control is highly likely to help prevent or stop anti-Semitic chanting and songs. The English and German participants indicated that this type of control would be preferable to high-tech solutions. Several participants voiced concerns about the use of highly developed video and audio equipment, as this might signal to supporters that they are kept under watch wherever they go.

Strong sanctions against individuals are and will remain essential, but the general feeling was that collective sanctions definitely have their place. The introduction of some type of 'strict liability rule', as used by the UEFA, could be a step in this direction. According to this new rule, which applies in the Champions League and the Euro League, football clubs are sanctioned for their own supporters' misconduct, regardless of whether measures have

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been taken to prevent it. Previously, football clubs were not, or hardly at all, sanctioned if they could show proof that they had followed the rules in the run-up to the European match.

## 1.4 Partial conclusion

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As anticipated by the Anne Frank House, the problem's diversity was confirmed by the conference participants. The origins, scope and manifestations are quite different from one country to the next. As a result, the representatives from the Netherlands, Germany, England and Poland each have different stories to tell about football-related anti-Semitism.

The English participants reported that anti-Semitic chanting was more of a problem in the 1980s and 1990s, and that, for the most part, the incidents seem to have transitioned to the internet. Football-related social media show an exponential increase of anti-Semitic verbal abuse. In the Netherlands, another type of shift seems to have taken place, not so much to the social media, but rather to everyday language: the word *Jood* ('Jew') has become a common term of abuse. In Germany, football-related anti-Semitism seems to be a permanent issue, albeit on a small scale. The recent infiltration of right-wing extremist groups into fanatical supporter groups seems to have resulted in an increase in anti-Semitic slogans, chants that refer to the Holocaust, and the use of Nazi symbols around football stadiums. Similar scenes are apparently quite common in Poland, where football seems to be a platform where anti-Semitic opinions can be expressed almost unchallenged.

Not only do the situations in these four countries differ, the authorities involved have taken on different roles as well. In England, for instance, the government has become actively involved in the fight against anti-Semitic and other types of discriminatory incidents in professional football. With political support, the English FA was able to take the initiative in ridding the matches from the offensive chants and slogans. Although the football clubs are

ultimately responsible for their own supporters, they are explicitly supported by the government and the FA. In none of the other countries have the government and the football association taken on such an active role. In the Netherlands, the role of the football association is primarily a monitoring one, leaving much of the responsibility with the clubs. In Germany, the government and the football association are under scrutiny for neglecting the fight against football-related anti-Semitism, and their lack of concern regarding incidents that do occur. This has caused football fans to unite in order to draw attention to the issue. Until recently, Polish football authorities did not seem to prioritise football-related anti-Semitism at all, in spite of the scale of the problem. The situation is improving, but there is still a long way to go.

One of the causes of the persistence of football-related anti-Semitism is the tendency to place football outside of the 'normal' social domain. Football is viewed as a world in itself, where different sets of behaviour, and other values and standards apply. As a result, the tolerance for anti-Semitic manifestations is higher in football than in any other social domain. The recognition that professional football is an important part of society, calls for closer cooperation – and even more shared responsibilities – between the government, the police, the football authorities involved, the clubs and the supporters. In practice, the first four parties often cooperate to some extent, but the last group, the supporters, are usually left out. The next chapter will zoom in on this group, as the participants at the conference feel that their support and cooperation could well be essential in achieving the ultimate goal.

## Chapter 2

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Participants sharing their own experience with anti-discrimination initiatives proposed by supporters



## The power of the fans

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*In the context of football-related anti-Semitism, supporters are often viewed with suspicion: the supporters, or at least part of them, are considered to be at the core of the problem. After all, they are the ones chanting when Ajax or Tottenham Hotspur come onto the pitch. At the conference it became clear that the football audience does not deserve such a one-sided reputation: in fighting the problem, we should appeal more often to the positive strength lying dormant in part of the group.*

*We should not forget, as was frequently stressed during the conference, that the football audience consists for the larger part of fans who will have nothing to do with anti-Semitic slogans or songs. The incidents usually involve a small group that engages in these anti-Semitic manifestations or other types of discriminatory behaviour. This means that at every match, there are thousands, or even tens of thousands of other stadium visitors in the stands who do not participate - but who do not take action against the chanting either. They are hardly ever the topic of discussion. Chances are that a part of this majority would be happy to distance themselves from any type of discriminatory behaviour from fellow supporters. We do not know yet how this information could be used, as supporters have hardly been encouraged so far to actively show that they reject anti-Semitic manifestations.*

*The potential participation from these supporters could be put to better use, according to many participants. There are those stadium visitors who do not only condemn the anti-Semitic manifestations, but who might also be willing to participate in fighting this type of behaviour in some way. The next logical question, therefore, concerns the size of the group of supporters who do not participate in the anti-Semitic manifestations, and the size of the group that might be willing to have their voices heard in fighting them.*

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## 2.1 Approach

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How could supporters and organisations of supporters – the ones that are around – contribute to the fight against football-related anti-Semitism and other types of discrimination? The answer is twofold. First of all, they could keep others in check during the matches, and secondly, they could help prevent those manifestations outside of the matches. According to many participants at the conference, the first approach (having supporters monitoring fellow supporters during the game) is probably the more effective.

The active and committed fan scene in Germany provides several examples of this approach. Members of the fan initiative of the Werder Bremen football club, for instance, mingle with the audience at every match to prevent any anti-Semitic or other discriminatory chanting. If something untoward happens nonetheless, they address the troublemakers or report the incident to the stewards. Stewards are hired by the club to monitor the audience before, during and after the match. They are expected to notice disorder in and around the stadium and to intervene if necessary. This means they play a decisive role in recognising and countering manifestations of an anti-Semitic nature. The members of the fan initiative have not been trained as stewards, and their organisation is not managed by the club. The fan initiative was their own, born from the conviction that anti-Semitic or other offensive manifestations have no place in football. They know that the club respects their work and that their fellow supporters take it seriously and accept it.

In addition to such fan initiatives, the so-called Football Liaison Officers or fan coaches play an important role in the curative approach, too. Fan coaches are often high-profile, well-known supporters, sometimes even from the hard core, who are hired and paid by their own football club. These fan coaches are well-respected by the supporters' base and play a model role. They serve as contact points both for the club and the supporters, and connect the two. According to the conference, these fan coaches are pre-eminently qualified to

develop initiatives with their own fan base, and to encourage the supporters to enjoy football without anti-Semitism, racism or discrimination.

In Germany, there are several examples of clubs who encourage their own fan coaches to fight football-related anti-Semitism. The five Football Liaison Officers employed by Borussia Dortmund, for instance, offer the fans a programme with information about offensive manifestations. According to the fan coaches, they aim to heighten awareness among their own fan base and to encourage them to take a stand against manifestations that are not allowed. It is too early to tell whether they are actually succeeding; this would require a study into the way the fan coaches function.

The social control in the stands, in scientific literature often referred to as self-policing, is described as a very valuable tool and seems to be a useful way to fight undesirable manifestations. The benefits are obvious. The potential troublemakers will realise at some point that they are monitored from within their own group, as is the case in Bremen. The atmosphere changes, as supporters are called to account when they engage in anti-Semitic or other types of reprehensible manifestations. Their chances of getting away with these manifestations decrease, simply because the number of people brave enough and willing to act is increasing. Moreover, football supporters are expected to be more sensitive to the opinion of their fellow supporters than to that of the enforcement officers. They may well be more inclined to listen to their fellow supporters, sporting the same football shirt. Their shared love for the club is expected to break down the usual we/they boundaries that are usually in place between fans and enforcement officers. After all, the social control is exerted by fellow supporters, members of the 'we' group.

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### **Kick It Out app**

**The English anti-discrimination organisation Kick It Out launched an application for mobile phones to facilitate self-policing. Fans may register**

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**an incident during the game by shooting a video, taking a photo or recording sound with the app, and submit it anonymously. This helps football clubs and the FA to gather more information about football-related incidents, and provides them with evidence to help them track and sanction the offenders.**

Other participants are of the opinion that the second type - the preventative, supporter-managed initiatives that are set up outside of the context of the matches - is at least as important in fighting discrimination in football. These initiatives come in various forms. This could include setting up anti-discrimination campaigns, organising information evenings with lectures and workshops, or organising visits to former concentration camps and memorials, like the Borussia Dortmund fan coaches do. Another tip that was frequently mentioned at the conference was to become active on social media. The English and German conference participants in particular noted that Facebook, Twitter and blogs are used more and more often by supporters and supporter organisations to fight discrimination. The fan initiative from



Reception at the Amsterdam Arena

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Bremen, for instance, has its own website and Facebook page where they post relevant information, articles and events. These initiatives have a preventative effect, as they aim to realise a change in the fan culture, both in behaviour and in ideology. They hope, of course, that supporters from the target group will in turn be prepared to commit to ban those hateful chants from the stadium.

If the professional football organisations want supporters to self-police and to contribute to a more tolerant atmosphere, the well-intentioned supporters have to feel supported by the club. The Bremen example illustrates that supporters need to feel that the stewards handling their alerts (both during and after the match) take them seriously. If well-intentioned supporters and groups of supporters feel validated, they will – according to the conference – be more willing and likely to report any anti-Semitic incidents. In addition to the extra ‘eyes and ears’ in the stands, this also helps to create an atmosphere in which neutral supporters are less likely to join in with the controversial chanting.

Based on our findings from the conference, the professional football organisations have significant contributions to make, in many ways. They could publicly support the fan initiatives that are launched, or publicise them through the official channels. Almost every initiative will have more impact on supporters if their own club is behind it, as the Bremen supporter organisation emphasised. Another way is by making funds or accommodations available for activities. These set-ups often lack the means to get something done. The football clubs could contribute in this respect. The football clubs could even instigate supporters’ initiatives themselves, for instance by facilitating the initiatives from the fans or by helping them to come with new plans.

## 2.2 Conditions

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Could football organisations or football associations stimulate a breeding ground for more supporter-driven initiatives, or does it all depends on the

goodwill of the fans? The answer is probably somewhere in the middle. As indicated before: the supporters have to participate as well. If they are unwilling to do so, it is hard to get initiatives going from the bottom up.

During the conference, it became clear that a number of conditions have to be met if supporters are to be encouraged to take an active stand against football-related anti-Semitism. It was stressed that goodwill from the football crowd and opportunities for them to get organised are required, for a bottom-up approach to be feasible. After all, supporters have to be willing to commit time and effort to fighting offensive manifestations. From the exchanges at the conference the participants have learned that this is not always the case, and that there are considerable differences between the countries when it comes to the participation of football fans.

Germany in particular has a very active and motivated fan scene, including the Werder Bremen supporters' initiative discussed above. These initiatives are usually taken through the channels of the local, club-bound supporters' organisations. However, there are also a number of overall and national organisation without ties to any one football club. The Bündnis Aktiver Fußball Fans (BAFF) is the largest overall supporters' initiative in Germany that has shown lasting commitment to the fight against discrimination and for tolerance among football fans. BAFF is a cooperation between several dozens of supporters' organisations and supporter-driven projects, and serves as a platform for local initiatives fighting discrimination. Addressing anti-Semitic manifestations within and in the context of football is one of the organisation's priorities.

All of these fan initiatives have been set up in search for ways to rid the stands of discriminatory behaviour. It seems safe to conclude that the members of these German initiatives are of the opinion that the usual top-down approach, with the government, football clubs and national football association taking the lead, does not work in their country. In their view, these bodies do not put enough effort into fighting anti-Semitism and other forms of discrimination; perhaps because the issue is simply not all that high up on the agenda. For this reason, fans have started to unite in both local and national

supporters' organisations that pay attention to the issue, and are willing to fight for a football competition without discrimination.

In England, too, a number of supporters' initiatives have taken off in this field, particularly in the eighties and nineties, when the focus was on the fight against racism. During this period, the number of coloured players in the English football competition rose rapidly, which resulted in an exponential increase in the number of racist incidents in and around the stadiums. The club-bound initiatives were usually taken in response to these incidents. However, the fight against anti-Semitism has never been a focal point of these British initiatives, as the focus was always on addressing racist behaviour from supporters against coloured players.

## 2.3 Further notes

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Should we expect the supporters themselves to solve the problem of discrimination in football? It is not that simple. A bottom-up approach has its own drawbacks. The most important factor is the motivation of the football audience, as they would have to do the work. Although it is true that a large part of the football supporters does not participate in the chanting or other misconduct, this is not to say that they are prepared or able to take an active part in the fight against anti-Semitism in the stadiums.

The English and Dutch participants painted a different picture of the commitment and the degree of organisation than the German participants did. Supporters' initiatives on the scale of the German initiatives are not present in the Netherlands. Although English fans have shown the willingness and capacity to organise themselves, they have so far focused mainly on racism against coloured players. It raises the question of whether these countries have the potential for such a broad-based fight against anti-Semitism among fans as Germany clearly has. It could be argued that Dutch and English supporters do not feel the need to get organised or lack the opportunities to launch such

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initiatives. Even so, this might change over the next few years. The picture emerging from Poland is quite a different one yet again. The Polish participants stated that the Polish football crowds do not seem to feel the need to fight anti-Semitism in the stadiums. The Never Again Association, an anti-discrimination organisation from Poland, has concluded that the majority of Polish fans does not actively support the anti-Semitic manifestations carried out by a small group, but does not judge them or resist them either. The Never Again Association has noticed a fairly high level of tolerance among the football crowds. From what was stated at the conference, this level of tolerance is much higher in Poland than in the Netherlands,



Participants listening to the opening statements and plenary expert lectures



England or Germany, also because the government and the football authorities do little to fight the anti-Semitic scenes in the stands. Based on results from the conference, it does not seem likely that Polish supporters will be moved to take part in the fight against anti-Semitic manifestations any time soon. Of course, there is always the possibility that the Polish participants have adopted a more critical attitude towards the football crowds in their country than the representatives from the other countries.

## 2.4 Partial conclusion

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We may conclude that in some countries, the potential of the football audience could be put to better use than is yet the case. Supporters can be very valuable when it comes to fighting discrimination in professional football. The strength of the public lies in the fact that they, as members of the in-group, have a better chance to nip anti-Semitic and other discriminatory manifestations in the bud. In order to mobilise more football supporters who want to take a stand against football-related anti-Semitism, clubs need a fertile breeding ground among the fan base. The fans must be willing and be provided with the means to get involved in the fight against anti-Semitic incidents.

It is difficult to assess whether such breeding grounds and means are present in various countries to the same degree. Based on the football conference, this may not be the case. At any rate, football clubs and national football associations will do well to support and encourage the bottom-up approach. According to the participants, it seems highly likely that supporters could contribute to the fight against football-related anti-Semitism through such initiatives.

## Chapter 3

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Participants discussing different educational solutions to the problem

## An educational answer

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*In this chapter, we discuss a specific tool to counter anti-Semitism and other types of discrimination in football: education. During the conference, much attention was paid to the use, the benefits and the potential of this tool in fighting anti-Semitic and other types of discriminatory manifestations. There is a prevailing conviction that discrimination in society should be fought by providing information, presenting the social-historical background and sharing stories from the past, creating awareness of thought processes and thereby fighting their consequences. The following burning question was discussed extensively during the conference: does the educational method work when it comes to fighting anti-Semitic manifestations and creating awareness in professional football?*

*The issue is discussed in two parts in this chapter, based on the two major target groups that could benefit from education and that were discussed repeatedly during the conference: the football supporters (1) and the stewards keeping the order in the stands (2). Education geared to other target groups, such as the referees, has been suggested, but was discussed much less - and much less thorough - than the other two options. For this reason, the present chapter focuses on education geared to the two target groups mentioned above.*

### 3.1 Approach

#### 3.1.1 The football supporters

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The supporters were the first group to be discussed extensively during the conference. What is the current status of supporter education and why does it matter? During the conference, it became clear that supporter education is not a common tool in the world of football. This is not to say that it is never used, as various countries do have some type of programme at different levels. The UEFA, the European Football Association, for instance, has

started its own campaign, 'Say No to Racism', to draw attention to the fight against discrimination in football. There are also initiatives at lower levels, taken by the national football associations. The English FA, for instance, has produced short information clips, in which famous players from the English premier league explain to the supporters why anti-Semitic manifestations are not allowed. In other cases, football clubs have taken the lead. The German club Borussia Dortmund, for instance, has developed a number of projects to inform their fans about topics such as racism, anti-Semitism and homophobia. Among other things, they organise trips to memorials and former concentration camps for their own fans. Finally, in some cases the supporters themselves have taken on the educating role. A large and well-organised group of Werder Bremen fans jumps at every opportunity to convince their fellow supporters that anti-Semitic and other offensive manifestations have no place in the stands. They use any means available to them, such as social media, merchandise and organising events. In short: there are a few examples of educational initiatives geared to the supporters, but nothing like a large-scale, coordinated and coherent educational approach on all levels.

Moreover, the point of educating football supporters is frequently doubted. Explaining to this group why certain behaviour is not permitted can seem a daunting - and perhaps even impossible - task. The general assumption is that the information does not stick: supposedly, the supporters absorb the information, but forget it as soon as they enter the stadium, where the atmosphere, the emotions and the tension override other considerations. This leads organisations to question the value of educating football fans, and whether the desired results will ever be reached in this way. This uncertainty, in turn, may be the reason that education is still not used on a large scale.

Even so, educational means are generally highly valued. At the conference, participants emphasised more than once that these are the preferred, and perhaps even essential means to rid football in general of anti-Semitic, racist and other discriminatory manifestations. After all, awareness and changes in conduct are brought about by education, and in the end, the

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purpose is to prevent such incidents. Some of the participants stressed that the current policies in most countries focus on repression rather than prevention. They feel that this focus on a repressive approach - with strong sanctions when incidents do occur - only moves the problem about. Preventative actions against anti-Semitic incidents should therefore be favoured over repressive actions, as preventing problems is to be preferred to solving them. However, not everyone was convinced of this approach, and some participants questioned the call for more education, and indicated their doubts about whether education would bring about the desired change in conduct. According to this group, a change of conduct in the fan base could only be achieved by structurally applying repressive measures, such as strong sanctions.

### 3.1.2 The stewards

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The second group which was discussed in work groups and lectures was that of the stewards. The stewards and the other security personnel have become ever more important in keeping order in the football stadiums. Now that the police are generally on the outside of the stadiums in small numbers, and the call to reduce the number of police officers present at football matches even further is heard in some countries, it only makes sense to spend more and more attention to the training these staff members receive. After all, they are primarily responsible for keeping order and they are jointly responsible for preventing irregularities. The stewards play an important role in recognising and handling manifestations that are inspired by racism, anti-Semitism or other discriminatory ideas.

Every national football association has laid down guidelines for their stewards. These guidelines list the requirements that the men and women working as stewards during the matches have to meet. For instance, every steward has to attend a number of training sessions and obtain certificates

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before he or she can be put to work. In this way, the clubs aim to prepare the stewards for handling stressful situations and disorder in the stands. The fact that this group may also be confronted with situations involving racist, anti-Semitic or other types of discriminatory manifestations, means that they need sufficient knowledge about these phenomena within the context of football. Being educated about these phenomena is therefore not a luxury, but rather a necessity, and usually part of the training programme of the stewards. This training should cover the manifestations discussed: what is and what is not allowed, and how the stewards are expected to respond in case anti-Semitic incidents occur during the match.

## 3.2 Further Notes

### 3.2.1 The football supporters

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During the conference, some important remarks were made regarding the benefits of educating supporters and stewards. The interesting question was raised whether education is a useful tool when it comes to football fans: is this group at all susceptible to the education offered? After all, there have to be reasons why educating these groups about anti-Semitism, racism and discrimination has so far proven to be very difficult, and why education as a tool is not used all that often. The issue raised numerous questions and comments, in particular about the possible reasons for the limited use of educational tools.

According to the participants, there are several reasons for the sparse use of such educational tools. The first reason lies in the attitude of the football clubs and authorities involved. Many participants voiced the opinion that the football supporters are often considered dead weight by these authorities, and as such, are hardly ever involved in solving the problems. They do not believe that supporters could contribute to the solution, and

are therefore hardly every willing to invest in or pay attention to educating football supporters.

Another doubt that was often raised was whether education has any effect. This doubt results from the expectations generally held of football supporters. The attitude of the group as a whole entails that a number of clubs and football associations have little faith that education will yield positive results. Supporters engaging in anti-Semitic or other types of discriminatory behaviour are not always aware that they are doing something wrong, although this does not apply to Germany and Poland as much as it applies to the Netherlands and England. In their eyes, their actions do not constitute racism or discrimination, but rather the 'regular hostilities' towards the opponent. Many of them feel that it is part of the experience of modern football. They feel that there are usually no deep convictions underlying these manifestations, and therefore should not be considered racist, anti-Semitic or discriminatory behaviour. According to the participants, some of the football supporters have a hard time understanding that these manifestations are considered or experienced as such by others.

This obstacle mainly applies to football-related anti-Semitism, as this type of discrimination has an unusual history, especially in the Netherlands and in England. In these countries, the gravity of football-related anti-Semitism is frequently questioned, because the chants and other manifestations are usually not directed against Jews. All education about anti-Semitism is therefore received with scepticism and countered by saying that it clearly is not meant in that vein. This scepticism is reinforced by pointing out that the supporters of the so-called Jewish clubs, like Ajax and Tottenham Hotspur, use the words as honorary titles, and are in a way responsible for starting this verbal battle. By downplaying their own chanting and other manifestations, some of these supporters show that they are unable to look at the issue from another stance.

In short: not all supporters accept that their behaviour could be considered anti-Semitic by others. This awareness, however, is important – and perhaps necessary – if education is to stick. It is expected that changes in

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behaviour and thinking are unlikely without this awareness. These changes cannot be brought about in people if the conviction that they are doing nothing wrong is maintained. The limited application of educational tools led to another discussion. The participants spoke extensively about the educational content and the designated target groups. With regard to the content, the question was whether anti-Semitism should be treated as a separate category alongside other types of discrimination. And is education truly the best way to create awareness and bring about a change of conduct, knowing as we do that there is scepticism about football-related anti-Semitism?

The proponents, who feel that anti-Semitism should be viewed and treated as a separate problem, pointed out that football-related anti-Semitism differs considerably from other types of football-related discrimination. The background, form and intentions of the anti-Semitic manifestations within the context of football are unique. Anti-Semitic chants are usually not specifically





directed against individual players who are known to be Jewish. They are usually directed against an audience of supporters that is, for the larger part, not Jewish either. In addition, the Holocaust – and to a lesser extent the conflict in the Middle East – is used to shape these manifestations.

In this respect, anti-Semitic manifestations are very different from other discriminatory manifestations such as the jungle sounds that can be heard during football matches from time to time. This type of discrimination is usually directed against individual players of colour. In these cases, there is a direct and unmistakable link between the jungle sounds and the targets. Moreover, in these cases the supporters use other associations than the Holocaust or the conflict in the Middle East to verbally attack their opponents. Anti-Semitic manifestations are considered to be less direct, particularly in the Netherlands and in England, as the offensive chants and songs are not directly related to the recipient or recipients. And so, in the eyes of the proponents, these are two very different types of football-related discriminatory behaviour. For this reason, teaching supporters why anti-Semitic manifestations are not allowed is altogether different from using educational tools to explain why jungle noises are strictly prohibited. In short: they feel that the distinction should be made.

According to the second group, the focus should not be on anti-Semitism in football as a unique phenomenon. It should therefore not be treated as a separate category within any educational programme. They feel that the phenomenon should be discussed within the wider context of discriminatory behaviour in football. They believe that by emphasising the similarities with other types of discrimination in modern football, they will appeal to more people. The idea behind their thinking is that a larger audience is able to identify with such incidents, increasing the chance that these people will start to take football-related anti-Semitism seriously in the process. This would possibly also prevent responses along the lines of ‘that is not how it was intended’, which are frequently given where football-related anti-Semitism is concerned.

Another topic of discussion was the particular target group of the educational programmes. Should the programme address the culprits, the ones who take part or have taken part in offensive manifestations? Or should the

programme be geared to the sympathetic supporters, the ones who have had nothing to do with the anti-Semitic manifestations? At first view, the offenders seem to be the more likely candidates, but convincing cases were made at the conference for either standpoint.

At first sight, it seems to make sense to focus on the group that has misbehaved, in order to convince them not to stray in the future. After all, this group consists of people who have engaged in anti-Semitic or other types of discriminatory manifestations. Nonetheless, there are only a handful of initiatives or projects that are geared towards supporters who have been arrested for inadmissible behaviour. The reasoning is not unequivocal, but people seem to wonder what the point would be. The general idea seems to be that it would be difficult to bring about a change of conduct in these supporters. The assumption is that any changes in thinking and behaviour in this group are more likely to be brought about by punishment than through education. It is hard to say conclusively whether this opinion is well-founded or not.

Educational examples from Germany, for instance at Borussia Dortmund, focus on the opposite group. Their educational anti-discrimination projects focus on the group that is not involved in the impermissible manifestations, in order to develop a positive force in the stands that will continue to commit to a positive and safe atmosphere in the stadiums. These projects look for the solution within the vast majority of the football supporters: those supporters who are not attracted by or who condemn the manifestations, should receive more education. The underlying rationale is that these fans are open (or more open) to this type of information and may use it to the benefit of the club, while educating fans who have erred before would do little good. By focusing on the positive forces rather than the wrongdoers, Borussia Dortmund hopes to train peer educators: supporters who want to keep and protect order in the stadiums of their own accord. The larger the group, the smaller the chance that dissident supporters would dare to engage in unacceptable manifestations.

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## 3.2.2 The stewards

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During the conference, critical remarks were made about the education of the other target group, that of the stewards. This group has already been receiving (some) education about discriminatory behaviour from supporters. Nonetheless, many participants at the conference do not seem convinced of the way the training is currently handled. In view of the topic of the conference, their criticism only touched on the training in handling discriminatory behaviour from supporters - the training programme as a whole was not under discussion.

One of the comments worth mentioning was that even after completing the existing training courses, the stewards do not always seem to have the necessary know-how and skills to adequately counter discriminatory behaviour from football supporters. Representatives from the Netherlands, England, Germany and Poland all indicated that this situation occurred in their countries, and so it seems to be a general trend. As a result, many participants doubt whether the current training courses offer sufficient tools for the stewards to learn to adequately respond to racist, anti-Semitic or discriminatory manifestations. After all, the training programme is intended to teach the stewards to recognise these situations and nip them in the bud.

The fact that this doubt was raised by a large number of participants at the conference is alarming, yet hardly surprising. It has to do with the difficulties in recognising and taking action against racist, anti-Semitic and other discriminatory manifestations. The gravity and the seriousness of certain discriminatory manifestations - particularly anti-Semitic chanting or banners - are sometimes hard to assess because of their socio-historical complexity. Therefore, it takes specific know-how and experience to determine when action against visible or audible anti-Semitic manifestations is called for. Stewards need to have basic knowledge about prejudice against Jews, the Holocaust and the language that is used in anti-Jewish slogans. This last factor in particular is important, as there is a grey area between slogans that are, and slogans that are not allowed. It is therefore important for the stewards to know the distinction.

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Many participants have stated that this is not the only problem. According to them, stewards do not always respond properly to clear cases of football-related anti-Semitism either. This may mean that the stewards are not sufficiently knowledgeable as to what is expected of them in such situations or that they are afraid to act. And so, it is not just about the extent of their know-how, but also about the capability of the stewards. It takes skills and courage to respond adequately. It is important for the stewards to be able to assess properly and quickly whether they have to intervene when chanting is heard. In addition, it takes confidence to report incidents or to call on the supporters on account of their verbal misconduct. Particularly in a football stadium where thousands or tens of thousands of football fans are packed together, self-confidence and guts are required for stewards to take action against the verbal misconduct of supporters. To a large extent, these skills and courage come with experience. According to some of the participants, this is where training could play a role in increasing the stewards' capability to deal with anti-Semitic or other discriminatory chanting. Others added that there are situations in which chants can get so hectic or heated, that proper preparation may not always be enough to stop the manifestations or to identify the offenders.

### **3.3 Partial conclusion**

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According to the participants, the educational tools developed to fight anti-Semitic and other discriminatory manifestations are currently not used often enough. It was made clear that the belief in education is strong, and that the use of these tools should be emphasised in order to counter undesirable scenes. The football supporters and the stewards are the appropriate target groups for the training programmes, according to the participants.

It turns out that educational tools are hardly ever used to help supporters realise the impact of anti-Semitic behaviour in the context of football. This results from an overly negative view of football supporters and

doubts about the effect of the use of educational tools with this group. The fan base is generally viewed as dead weight, and in most cases not considered part of a potential solution. By clinging to this perspective, the option to call in the help of part of the supporters is hardly considered, if at all. However, one of the most significant conclusions drawn by the conference was that the help of well-intentioned supporters can be very valuable in countering undesirable incidents. They can become a positive force in the stands. Creating and supporting this positive force should therefore be emphasised; education could play an important role in this respect, according to the participants. The participants were divided about the question how this positive force should be brought about: by educating the well-intentioned supporters or the wrongdoers?

The discussion of the second target group, the stewards, called for some brainwork. The fact that the representatives from all four countries felt that the stewards more often than not lack the necessary know-how and skills was significant, all the more so because their role in keeping order and preventing disorder before, during and after the matches is becoming ever more important. Suggestions were made to assess the current training programme with a view to these problems, and perhaps to pay more attention to the subject of discrimination in their training. It is important for the stewards to come away from the programme with sufficient knowledge about racist, anti-Semitic and discriminatory manifestations, and the skills to respond adequately.

It is yet to be seen whether a large-scale and coherent educational programme will contribute to the fight against football-related anti-Semitism and other types of discriminatory behaviour in football. At this stage, it is hard to determine which effects are realised, although some parties (such as Borussia Dortmund) have obtained positive results. Overall, the participants showed confidence in the potential and positive effects of educational tools. For this reason, they concluded that by focusing on educational tools – combined with and in addition to other steps – we stand a better chance to prevent anti-Semitic or discriminatory manifestations in the future.

## Summary and conclusion

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On 11 and 12 June 2015, the Anne Frank House organised an international conference on anti-Semitism in professional football in the Amsterdam ArenA. Because there was an intention to bring together a diverse group of participants from varied backgrounds, the Anne Frank House invited representatives from governments, football authorities, anti-discrimination organisations and supporter groups from the Netherlands, Germany, England and Poland. The conference programme featured a number of plenary lectures by experts from these four countries, and additional seminars on three different sub-topics: football legislation and policies, anti-discrimination initiatives taken by supporters, and educational solutions to the problem. The present report is based on the lectures and seminars. The shared knowledge and experience of the participants at the conference has been summarised for every sub-topic. The visions, opinions and conclusions laid down in this report reflect the main findings of the conference.

It could be concluded that football-related anti-Semitism is not restricted to a single club, a specific football league or one country. The chanting, slogans and symbols affect everyone who loves this popular sport, in which passion, rivalry and excitement co-exist with people's individual social values. Over the last decades, it has become clear that the problem occurs in various football-related settings, yet seems to manifest in different ways. As a result, the majority of the football clubs, leagues and countries are in some way affected by manifestations that are – knowingly or unknowingly – insulting to Jews.

In the Netherlands, these anti-Semitic manifestations can mainly be heard – and sometimes seen – in the context of matches played against Ajax, the Amsterdam football club. The Ajax supporters wear their Jewish image as a badge of honour, which frequently triggers their opponents to sing songs insulting Jews. These manifestations may be considered anti-Semitic by neutral and Jewish observers, even though they are not directed specifically against Jews. In addition, the anti-Semitic incidents in the stadium have turned the word 'Jew' into a term of abuse that is frequently used in other contexts. The same development has taken place in England. The fan base of

the London football club Tottenham Hotspur also wear their Jewish image as a badge of honour, which triggers rival supporters to sing anti-Semitic songs. Worth noting is the fact that the majority of the anti-Semitic manifestations have moved from the stadiums to football-related social media over the last few years.

Germany does not have any major football clubs with a Jewish image, but anti-Semitic texts or symbols are used nonetheless to insult the fans or the players of rival clubs. This is primarily caused by the ascent of right-wing extremist groups infiltrating football. These groups are trying to recruit new members from groups of supporters, and use the matches to express their own anti-Semitic ideas. In Poland, anti-Semitism in football is a regular phenomenon, even more common than in the three other countries. Most of the incidents take place in the context of the city derby between Wisła Krakow and Cracovia Krakow, with supporters from the first club insulting their Cracovia rivals by shouting anti-Semitic texts and sporting anti-Semitic symbols.

Many football clubs, leagues and countries have tried in their own ways to counter anti-Semitic manifestations, as well as other discriminatory manifestations, and to encourage respect, diversity and tolerance in football. In England, the government and the football association have taken the lead in fighting anti-Semitic incidents by introducing strict legislation, making the offensive songs punishable by law. In the Netherlands, the responsibility is left primarily with the clubs; the Dutch football association and the government do not seem to have adopted the same guiding role as their English counterparts.

In Germany, it is mainly the fanatical and active supporters who are trying to fight the anti-Semitic incidents in and around the football stadiums, in part because they feel that the football association and the government are negligent in this respect. By taking matters into their own hands, the supporters' initiatives attempt to ban the unwelcome manifestations from their stadiums. In Poland, neither the government, nor the football association or the supporters have been very active in fighting football-related anti-Semitism.

Until recently, nothing much had been done to tackle the problem. Even so, the Polish football authorities in charge have recently taken an important first step by punishing supporters who had engaged in anti-Semitic chanting.

The participants stressed once more that is important to acknowledge that professional football is a popular sport, and as such forms an integral part of our society. The anti-Semitic manifestations in and around the stadiums should therefore be held to the same standards as they would be in any other social domain. In view of the social relevance of football, the participants advocated dividing tasks and responsibilities more fairly. Local governments, national football associations and supporters should all be accountable for whatever happens in and around the stadiums. No one club, football association or police corps should have to bear the burden alone. All parties – and this includes the football crowds – are in this together and have a role to play in preventing or stopping these incidents. It is time more people realised that we all stand to benefit from this common goal.

The supporters seem to be the forgotten group whenever the problem is discussed. All too often, football fans are considered nothing but dead weight, because the positive scenes are rarely emphasised and soon forgotten, while the negative stories tend to stick. The image of football supporters is outdated, and this means that football is robbed of the opportunity to involve those visitors to the stadium who could play an important role in the fight against offensive conduct in and around the stadiums. There are fans who are willing and able to contribute to preventing or ending anti-Semitic manifestations and other offensive behaviour within the context of football, even though the size of this group and the degree to which they will be able to get organised, will differ from one country to the next. One way or another, the existing supporters' initiatives show that it is possible to create a positive force in the stands, by giving these fans the freedom, the opportunities and the support they need to take action. Not every initiative will contribute to the fight against offensive behaviour, nor will every initiative have the desired results. Nonetheless, much may be achieved if the positive forces that lie dormant among the public are encouraged by the clubs and the national associations.



One way to boost these positive forces is by investing in education. Generally speaking, football supporters are not sufficiently aware of the impact of anti-Semitic behaviour. This is caused in part by the conviction that knowledge about the subject would be wasted on the target group. It would not stick with the fans, soon be forgotten, and therefore not bring lasting results. This idea was disputed by a large part of the participants. They feel that much could be achieved by raising awareness about the way Jews experience anti-Semitic incidents. Part of the visitors to the stadiums might even be persuaded to monitor their fellow supporters, join positive supporters' initiatives and speak up against the offensive misconduct that is sometimes visible and audible from the stands. Whether this effect will always be achieved by introducing more and better educational tools, is still unclear. Although such tools may not completely solve the problem, however, they are likely to help prevent incidents.

The stewards are often lacking in knowledge about football-related anti-Semitism and its impact as well, even though they play an important role in the stadiums in recognising and ending offensive and insulting manifestations. Particularly in countries where the police are no longer active inside of the stadiums, the stewards should be well aware of what is allowed and what is not, and should be able to assess when they should intervene. Sufficient knowledge and proper training are essential, and there is much to be desired in this respect. By increasing the supporters' and stewards' knowledge of anti-Semitism, supporters may grow to be less likely to start or participate in the well-known offensive chanting.

The fact that there are many differences and many similarities between the Netherlands, Germany, England and Poland when it comes to football-related anti-Semitism, has confirmed that we are dealing with an often deep-rooted, international phenomenon, which is very complex and not easy to solve. Nonetheless, the mutual exchange of experience and know-how may result in new ideas and realisations, for instance with regard to the introduction of fan coaches against anti-Semitism, the experiences with harsh repressive sanctions, and the support from the well-intentioned stadium

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visitors in keeping order in the stands. Football-related anti-Semitism is a phenomenon from the past, the present and probably the near future as well, and it seems to keep changing form. In some countries, the situation is looking up, as the number of incidents has dropped, but this does not mean that there is no more work to be done. On the contrary, according to the participants at the conference, the government, football associations, clubs, supporters and anti-discrimination organisations still have their work cut out for them.

# Colophon

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## Lecturers at the conference

### **Prof. Dr. Evelien Gans**

Professor Modern Jewish History,  
University of Amsterdam. Senior  
researcher at the Netherlands  
Institute for War-, Holocaust- and  
Genocide Studies (NIOD)

### **Dr. Emma Poulton**

Senior Lecturer in the School of  
Applied Social Sciences, Durham  
University

### **John Mann**

Member of Parliament UK. Former  
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Semitism and Islamophobia

### **Dr. Rafal Pankowski**

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