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**Good practices in dealing with new developments
in supporters' behaviour**

**Overview of the Ultra culture phenomenon in the
Council of Europe member states in 2009**

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The opinions expressed in this work are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the official policy of the Council of Europe.

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I Foreword

This study was commissioned by the Council of Europe in connection with the planned International Conference on Ultras in Vienna on 17 and 18 February 2010.

Owing to the short amount of time at the authors' disposal for producing this report (just under six weeks were available for its completion from the signing of the contract in November 2009 and the initial comments on the table of contents in December 2009 to the submission of the text in January 2010), the study can provide only a preliminary overview of the Ultra culture phenomenon in Europe. In order to produce the study, information on the Ultra culture from a total of 35 Council of Europe countries was considered – with the help of bibliographical research and a search of Internet sources in 12 European countries, the results of a survey of Ultras that was conducted by the Council of Europe in 2008 and which produced responses from approximately 25 European countries, and by means of telephone interviews of experts and e-mail contacts with Ultras, fan initiatives, academics and social workers from 11 different countries, all of whom we would like to thank at this point.

In the case of a number of countries (such as the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Sweden and Norway) we were only able to base our findings on qualitative statements by individual experts in addition to the evaluation of the questionnaire, but the study does provide a fairly comprehensive impression of what the term “Ultra” means in Europe. It shows both the many, mainly positive aspects of this new Europe-wide football-based youth culture and a number of problematic trends.

It is hoped that this study will help to improve our understanding of the “Ultra” phenomenon and to ensure that the positive aspects of the Ultras can develop further and contribute to the preservation of this fascinating football fan culture.

Hanover, 17 January 2010

Professor Gunter A. Pilz and Franciska Wölki-Schumacher, M.A.

1 Definition of Ultra culture in Europe (“points of similarity and differences”)

There is no one European Ultra scene. Even though the Ultra phenomenon is now to be found, to varying degrees, in the football fan scenes throughout Europe (with the exception of such states as Liechtenstein, Georgia, Latvia and Ireland¹), not all Ultras are the same. Rather, there are groups, movements and scenes that differ both from one country to another and within the *curva* (terrace) with regard to structures, rules, main points of emphasis and even ideas as to what the term “Ultras” means for them. There may even be different views and attitudes within individual groups, for example concerning political matters², setting off pyrotechnics, etc.

In an attempt to find a common denominator for the term “Ultra” in Europe, these individuals can be described as particularly passionate, emotional, committed and – above all – very active fans who are fascinated by a south European culture of spurring on their team and have made it their job to organise a better, traditional atmosphere in the football stadiums in order to be able to support “their” team creatively and to the best of their ability³. This Southern European culture includes not only visual support by means of choreographed displays in the *curva*, two-pole banners, hand-held flags, and the use of pyrotechnics but also acoustic support by means of drums or songs and chants led by megaphone/microphone.

What all European Ultras seem to have in common is simply their desire to support their club or team while enjoying the experience, the extreme pleasure they gain in providing that support creatively for a full 90 minutes – both acoustically and visually – in spaces that are as wide as possible and to prepare these activities in the week before the game, while at the same time always adopting a critical attitude to “modern” football. Accordingly, what counts for most Ultras is not only the match result or the league in which their club or team plays but, rather, their committed support and the activities before, during and after the match.

Many sympathisers of the Ultra scene, for example in France, are therefore interested not only in football as such but also in their own culture and in the actions and displays of both their own and other groups.⁴

In some European countries, the Ultras support other sections of the club in addition to the football team. The Ultra phenomenon can thus be found in individual instances in the case of basketball (such as in Lithuania, Israel and Greece⁵), ice hockey (Switzerland, Austria, Sweden and Finland)⁶ or handball (Croatia)⁷.

The important thing for these active and Ultra-oriented fans seems to be not only supporting the club at home games but – in addition to the preparations for the game and meetings with other Ultra scene adherents – especially travelling together to away games and promoting the group’s image. Accordingly, in many European countries (eg, in Poland) the greatest respect and recognition within

¹ Council of Europe (2009-2), 28, 30.

² With the result that groups may divide and split off within the *curva* – as has happened for example in Germany and Italy.

³ See, for example, <http://www.Ultrasuk.co.uk/about>. Accessed on 1 December 2009.

⁴ cf. Hourcade 2002, 2.

⁵ Council of Europe (2009), 1ff.; *Blickfang Ultra*, April 2009 issue, 24.

⁶ Zimmerman/Häfeli, e-mail of 23 December 2009; Council of Europe (2009-2), 27.

⁷ <http://www.Ultras-avanti.com/interviews/armada-rijeka/sterben-aber-niemals-aufgeben/>, Accessed on 1 December 2009.

the scene is enjoyed by those Ultras who are involved the most and are often present at away games⁸).

Although Ultras are fans who are organised to varying degrees, they do not see themselves as “members” of a new fan club. For them, “being an Ultra” means having a new attitude to life (their Ultra identity), being “extreme”, having fun and being part of a separate new football fan and youth culture.⁹ Unlike other fan club activities, a person is an Ultra not only at a weekend game but also during the entire week. Everything is subordinated to football and/or the fan movement, as the following statements by a number of German Ultras show (cf. Wölki 2003):

“As a football fan, football is your life. It’s quite different from having a girlfriend; after all, your life suffers when you’re a hardcore supporter. We want to be a refuge for young people and everyone who thinks the Ultra idea is good. People come to us because they want to have fun. They see people having a great time and enjoying themselves.” (Ultra)

“People should simply understand that of all the things said about the Ultras it’s only friendship and love that really count in a good group. These two factors are essential if an Ultra group is to function properly. Friendship towards one another, love of the Ultra scene and of this attitude, this feeling of being alive and, of course, love of one’s club. This feeling of being alive and this lifestyle cannot really be put into words; it simply has to be felt. When grown-ups fall into one another’s arms, cry, laugh and understand one another without a lot of words there must be more behind it than mere love of the club. Some people might dismiss this as unnecessary sentimentality but for us this way of behaving towards one another is very important, because if this isn’t right this automatically rubs off on the group as a whole. A group should give a person a sense of security and, ideally, act as a surrogate family. It is important for these interpersonal relationships to be heeded and respected because it is only the members’ respect for one another that will bring about the group’s cohesiveness and unity.” (part of the self-perception of a group of Ultras¹⁰,¹¹)

1.1 Who belongs to the Ultra scenes?

1.1.1 Age, education, gender

Even though in the south European countries in which the Ultra culture has its origins (it began in Italy in the 1960s) several generations have been involved and the Ultra scene supporters may indeed be older in those countries, Ultras in Europe as a whole have an average age of about 20 and tend to fall into approximately the 16/17–25 years old age bracket.

⁸ Cf. Lapinski 2007, 4

⁹ Pilz/Behn/Klose/Schwenzer/Steffan/Wölki 2006, 10

¹⁰ The website is known to the authors.

¹¹ *“I’m an XY fan. The group has been created to support the club, so the XY Ultras are the most important thing in my life. There’s therefore a clear order of priorities in my everyday life and my function means there’s almost no time left for any activities outside the group. I’ve naturally broken off all contacts with everyone who doesn’t go to football matches. All my friends are members of the XY Ultras. I live ‘Ultra’; all day long, I only think about the Ultras, the club and the terraces.” (An Ultra)*

“If I have a girlfriend from another town, she’ll have to come here; if I’m offered a job somewhere else, that just bad luck for the job. Some people are even so extreme that they break off their training because they haven’t been given time off for a particular away game.” (An Ultra)

European Ultra groups are mainly made up of male “members” without an immigrant background, but in France, for example, there are also African immigrants in a small number of groups in Marseille and Paris.¹²

The proportion of women within the movement varies from one country and one group to another. While some scenes, such as in Sweden, say they have no women in their Ultra groups¹³, other experts speak of a “sizeable” proportion of female fans, such as in Switzerland,¹⁴ or of approximately 20% women in a number of French Ultra scenes¹⁵.

Although more young women and girls are now apparently interested in the Ultra culture, they are still underrepresented compared with their male Ultra friends. We are not aware of any woman at the head of a large Ultra scene. Women and girls often have to prove themselves over a long period in order to be admitted into groups. Despite the considerable work they put into the preparation of choreographed routines, affixing stickers or transporting the support material, they are often only allowed to remain “associate members” instead of being accepted as full “members”. Some girls go on to establish their own section so that they can have their own fence banner, but this is not exclusively viewed by the rest of the movement as positive.

Moreover, the Ultras in Europe are mainly recruited from all social strata and many different occupations. In many countries, the Ultras are said to include large numbers of pupils and students, at least in the “hard core”, as in the case of Germany for example.

1.1.2 The physical appearance of Ultras

Despite a number of differences, it is generally easy to recognise Ultras in Europe. Although most European Ultras do not wear the traditional fan clothing and accessories because they reject the excessive marketing of football and its commercialisation, they do have a certain dress code that displays their group identity and clearly distinguishes them from outsiders. Most groups even possess their own range of clothing, with polo shirts, rugby shirts, sweatshirts, T-shirts, caps and scarves bearing the group’s logo or design.¹⁶

Overall, the style of the clothing is dark and sport-oriented (as in Germany and Spain¹⁷). Hoodies, caps, bomber jackets and trainers are very reminiscent of the outfit worn by hooligans. Only a bar scarf (in summer more a thin silk scarf and in winter the woollen version) or a badge attract attention in terms of colour and indicate the club to which the wearer belongs.¹⁸

There are, however, scenes where people dress more colourfully in the “skater look” and others where the clothing is more casual.

The colours of the individual groups, whether they be the colours of their fence banner, the support material or the scene outfit, often serve the purpose of demonstrating pride in their home area, club, territory or place or residence.

Ultras seem to pay attention to their appearance, are casually and “better” dressed and, similar to the hooligans, are in complete contrast to the somewhat “grubby prole culture” of the so-called

¹² Hourcade 2002, 1.

¹³ Jansson, e-mail of 6 January 2010.

¹⁴ Zimmerman/Häfeli, e-mail of 23 December 2009.

¹⁵ Hourcade 2002, 1.

¹⁶ Pilz/Behn/Klose/Schwenzer/Steffan/Wölki 2006, 105.

¹⁷ Herzog-E-mail/Report, 27 November 2009, 6.

¹⁸ Pilz/Behn/Klose/Schwenzer/Steffan/Wölki 2006, 105.

“Kuttenfans” in Germany (fans dressed inter alia in cut-off denim jackets or waistcoats with the club logo sewn on them). It is also the case that although most Ultras take a stand against the commercialisation of football they do sometimes (and not only in the case of choreographed routines) wear branded articles, such as Burberry caps, etc.¹⁹

Brands known to be used in the European Ultra culture scene include Umbro sweaters, New Balance trainers and Lonsdale Harrington or Stone Island jackets. Army trousers, parkas and camouflage jackets are also often worn. Individual Ultras are also seen wearing face masks or Zippo jackets with a zip that reaches above the nose so that only the eyes can be seen and the wearer is disguised.^{20/21}

1.2 Ultra attitudes and values

As already briefly mentioned, Ultras love “their” town or “their” club, irrespective of their officials. However, they do not need the club alone for their identity. Rather, the Ultra groups basically establish their fan identities themselves. For them, being an Ultra means more than just being part of a fan culture. They say it is all about a specific attitude to life.²²

The growing professionalisation of sports and the more and more evident separation of the players and spectators, as well as the increasing gap between the two sides, have resulted in the spectators developing an ever-growing awareness of their own presence. As the players have become too remote and unapproachable, the Ultras are increasingly turning to their own resources.²³ Moreover, a detailed report in the magazine *11 Freunde* at the end of 2008 criticised the fact that the singing and chanting is often started up with no reference to what is actually happening on the pitch, which has little relevance to the actual aim of supporting the team.²⁴

A German group of Ultras has said about itself: “*We thoroughly object to being a disliked part of that big event called football ... We’re what it’s all about! WE are the game and the club (or what’s left of it) ...*”²⁵

The majority of European Ultras (examples are those in France and Spain) accordingly also perceive themselves as the only “true”, the “most loyal”, the “most active” and the “best” football fans.²⁶ This tendency to see themselves as the avant-garde²⁷, as “being something better” is shared by many German and other European Ultras, although this attitude may earn them criticism from other active fan scenes that may exist alongside the Ultras (such as in Germany).

Most Ultras in Europe want and demand to be able to exert influence on football, the association, the clubs, society and even the policymakers, whether it be to obtain cheaper tickets for home and away games, to be given more scope for their activities or, for example, to be able to put forward their own ideas on the development of so-called anti-hooligan laws.²⁸

For the Ultras, characteristics such as strength, power, assertiveness and masculinity are what counts. Baring their bottoms in the direction of the opposing fans and celebrating in the stadium

¹⁹ cf. Rosenberg/Egere/Gregorits, “Bewusst unbewusste Avantgarde”, 8 July 2009, in: *Ballesterer* No. 43.

²⁰ cf. Inter alia Pilz/Behn/Klose/Schwenzer/Steffan/Wölki 2006, 105.

²¹ Some right-wing Ultras now also wear the Thor Steinar brand, which has right-wing connotations, in German football stadiums.

²² cf. inter alia *Blickfang Ultra*, November 2009, 47.

²³ cf. Pilz/Behn/Klose/Schwenzer/Steffan/Wölki 2006, 80, 84.

²⁴ *11 Freunde*, issue no. 85, December 2008.

²⁵ cf. Pilz/Behn/Klose/Schwenzer/Steffan/Wölki 2006, 12.

²⁶ cf. inter alia Hourcade. 2002, 2; Herzog, e-mail/report 2009, 7.

²⁷ cf. inter alia Goll, telephone interview of 17 December 2009.

²⁸ cf. inter alia Council of Europe (2009), 4

stripped to the waist, especially in winter, are just two examples of ways of demonstrating their ideal of “being hard”. Sexist and homophobic songs and chants, such as “*Wer nicht hüpf, der ist ein Schwuler*” (“*Anyone who doesn’t jump is gay*”) form part of the standard repertoire of some fans and emphasise the *Ultras*’ “macho culture”.²⁹

The sense of community within the group is very important for the members of the scene. For them, what counts is solidarity (in the sense of unity on the terraces, especially in the group, mutual support and loyalty to the club), masculinity (in the sense of courage, strength, endurance, fearlessness, chivalry and “being a power”), triumphant success (choreographed displays on the terraces, fan singing, chanting, banners, clothing, etc) and territorial sovereignty (as a claim by fan groups to hold power in every part of a stadium or town that they have symbolically taken over).³⁰

For some *Ultras* the group is partly also a kind of surrogate family³¹, which mainly consists of “brothers”.

Most European *Ultras* also feel a need to create and organise something themselves, exert influence, question things and make changes. They show their affection for the club, the town or the team but they also protest and express criticism.³²

Most *Ultras* in Europe combat “modern football”, commercialisation and the sellout of the game. This criticism transcends national borders and may sometimes unite the various scenes in protest. For example, when the Salzburg football club was taken over by the drinks manufacturer Red Bull, many German, Dutch, Romanian, Croatian, Scandinavian, Swiss, Belgian and even American *Ultra* groups took part in demonstrations of solidarity for the “violet fans and *Ultras*” by unfurling banners in their own stadiums.³³

As many *Ultras* like to define themselves as a group and set themselves apart from other groups in different ways, they also react with different intensity to provocations and rivalries, whether it be with regard to the competition to have the best choreography in the stadium, their own stickers, group graffiti or “tags” in the town, or even in a few cases stealing the opponents’ support material, clothing or other things.³⁴

1.3 Structure and organisation of the *Ultra* movement

The *Ultra* movement in Europe began life in Italy in the 1960s and slowly spread to western, south-eastern and northern Europe.³⁵ The *Ultra* culture phenomenon began in the vicinity of large towns and cities (and clubs) in particular and then spread across the country (as in the case of France, Denmark, Poland, Portugal and Spain).³⁶

Each time a major football tournament has taken place, for example the 1982 World Cup in Spain, Euro 1984 in France, the 1990 World Cup in Italy or the 1998 World Cup in France, the *Ultra* culture has been spread amongst other ways by the media across national borders and further developed.

²⁹ Pilz/Behn/Klose/Schwenzer/Steffan/Wölki 2006, 103.

³⁰ cf. inter alia. Utz/Benke 1997, 103 f.

³¹ cf. Hourcade. 2002, 2.

³² cf. Pilz/Behn/Klose/Schwenzer/Steffan/Wölki 2006, 106 ff.

³³ cf. <http://www.violett-weiss.at/solidaritaet-bilder.php/>. Accessed on 6 January 2010.

³⁴ cf. Pilz/Behn/Klose/Schwenzer/Steffan/Wölki 2006, 122 ff.

³⁵ The development began in Italy in the 1960s, in Spain and France in the early 1980s and in Austria in the late 1980s, reaching the UK and Sweden at the beginning of the year 2000.

³⁶ cf. Council of Europe (2009), 2.

While some groups can therefore look back on a history spanning over forty years and their structures within the terraces have evolved and become firmly established, in other countries, such as the United Kingdom, individual Ultra groups only started to become active in the year 2000.³⁷

The structures of the groups and their degree of organisation sometimes even differ significantly within individual European countries. For example, some have more formal structures with fixed rules, membership fees and a more rigid hierarchy while others prefer informal, fairly loose structures with unwritten laws or codes of behaviour and refer to “Ultra-oriented fans” rather than “Ultra members”. Some stand by the Italian “Ultra manifesto”³⁸ while others are developing their own objectives. While some groups, for example in Portugal, democratically elect the *capo* of a group at certain intervals³⁹, in the case of other groups a leader, group of leaders or “management board” (sometimes also called “Direttivo”) emerges over time as a result of an established fan hierarchy.⁴⁰

Decisions are often taken by a kind of “executive committee” made up of three or four people, each of them with a specific responsibility, such as leading the singing on the terraces with a megaphone, handling the group’s finances, organising the trips to away games, handling the internal organisation or producing photographs, films or texts. They at least take preliminary decisions on all important Ultra matters and then have them voted on in the group, sometimes by democratic means. The person who starts the singing off or gets the mood going does not have to be the scene *capo* or the one who has the most power and takes the decisions.⁴¹

³⁷ cf. <http://www.Ultrasuk.co.uk/about>, accessed on 1 December 2009

³⁸ The following Ultra manifesto was originally translated from Italian into German by the website of the AS Roma Ultras and adopted by the websites of many German Ultras.

Visions for the future:

It is time all football fans understood what UEFA, FIFA and the TV stations are all doing with our sport with the active support of the national associations. They want a Europa league, which would ensure that clubs have a huge income through the marketing of the TV rights, but the smaller clubs would be excluded and financially ruined in the long term. The number of TV viewers would no doubt go up but stadium football in its original form would gradually disappear. In a few years, even the pitches in the stadiums would be spoiled with the sponsors’ advertising and choreographed displays would be prohibited because they draw the viewers’ attention away from the advertising boards. There would be hundreds of stewards in the stands and the fans would be videoed throughout the stadium to prevent big flags, banners or fireworks getting inside. And in a few years’ time, even the clothing on our players’ bodies would look like the suits of Formula 1 drivers, with every spot covered by advertising. The future is already taking shape in the minds of the football bosses. They want tamed fans who spread an atmosphere that is moderately exuberant but whose enthusiasm only goes so far as is necessary as a background to the television broadcast, and they want them to applaud obediently when asked to do so but otherwise sit still in their seats. There will not be any room for Ultras any more. There is a UEFA directive that says fans have to be seated. They do not want any fans who become actively involved in the game; they want the kind of spectators who meet in a cinema or theatre. These people do not understand that football is our life, that we live for our club and that we wear scarves and clothing that represent our town or region. All the terraces in the world should stand together and form a powerful majority against the football factory.

ULTRA MANIFESTO

Genuine fans want the following football rules:

1. Player transfers should take place in the inter-season break, not during the season.
2. Players should have the freedom to express their delight after a goal is scored. The time this takes can be added on.
3. There should be club rules for the promotion of young local players.
4. Players who have not fulfilled their contract because another club has offered more money should be suspended for one year.
5. In order to prevent “farm teams”, officials of one club should not be allowed to work for a second club.
6. The old European Cup should be brought back, with one automatically qualified champion from each association instead of a league in which a country’s fourth-placed side can win the Champions League.
7. There should be a ban on clubs or associations being able to pass on tickets for away games to tour operators on an exclusive basis.

Ultras should:

1. Refuse any unnecessary contact or help from clubs or the police.
2. Work better with one another.
3. Organise their own travel to away games.
4. Work with the Ultras of other clubs and make the “TV football commodity” less attractive.
5. Not let themselves be restrained by the authorities and always make their presence felt at matches.

Support the Ultra movement.

Ultras per sempre (Ultras for ever)

³⁹ <http://www.Ultras-avanti.com/2009/02/09/mit-uns-wer-will-gegen-uns-wer-kann/>. Accessed on 1 December 2009.

⁴⁰ cf. Herzog, e-mail of 2 December 2009, Čarnogurský, e-mail of 4 December 2009.

⁴¹ Pilz/Behn/Klose/Schwenzer/Steffan/Wölki 2006, 94.

In contrast to some of the hooligan firms of the 1980s, the way the Ultras support their club is, despite the different group structures, definitely more organised. For example, many Ultras meet during the week in their own fan rooms or local pubs to plan choreographed displays, prepare giant banners or just enjoy friendship.

Many Ultra groups find their place in the stadium directly behind the goal in the standing areas (if they still exist) or in the stands. In clubs where some Ultra groups do not get along, there may be various places in the stadium – sometimes even opposing terraces.

It is important to stress here that the Ultras are not a homogeneous group who all obey one person. Access to the Ultra environment is fairly easy and sometimes involves just being on the terraces and participating in specific activities in the stadium, but the ease of admission to the “hard core” of a scene varies as this must be earned by gaining recognition and respect.⁴²

Accordingly, almost throughout Europe the Ultra movements each have a “hard core” of a few individuals (in our opinion, perhaps 20-50) plus a large group of Ultra-oriented fans.⁴³

The group leaders together with their associates range for example from 10-50 people per scene in Denmark⁴⁴ to more than 1,000 “members” per group in France.⁴⁵

The figures for the total number of Ultras in individual countries also vary, ranging from a few hundred in Monaco to over 50,000 in Italy.⁴⁶

On the other hand, countries have one similarity in common: most Ultras (apart from those in Poland perhaps⁴⁷) see themselves as the “voice” of the terraces and as the heart that keeps football alive but they often make up no more than 1–5% of all spectators in a stadium.⁴⁸

However, the situation is different with away games, where the concentration of Ultras and Ultra-oriented and active fans is larger almost everywhere in Europe than in the case of home matches.

1.3.1 (International) Co-operation

Co-operation and contacts that may develop into friendships vary from one European country to another. According to the 2008 Council of Europe questionnaire survey, there are for example international contacts between Bulgarian and British Ultras; Danish, Swedish and Dutch Ultras; Czech, Slovakian and Polish Ultras; and Ultras from Portugal, Italy, Serbia, Croatia and Spain.⁴⁹

However, most of these contacts are not experienced by the Ultra group as a whole (or if they are, then only in isolated cases, such as in Italy⁵⁰) but, rather, by individuals (such as in Greece⁵¹ or Denmark⁵²), who – depending on the language area – visit one another at the time of a match or, in some cases, on festive occasions (as in the case of some Swiss Ultras in Austria, Germany, France or Italy)⁵³ or exchange items (as used to happen in the case of individual groups in Sweden⁵⁴).

⁴² cf. Brenner 2009, 139; Riekansky, e-mail of 2 December 2009.

⁴³ cf. *Blickfang Ultra*, April 2009 issue, 23; or as for example in Slovakia (Riekansky, e-mail of 2 December 2009) and the Czech Republic (Čarnogurský, e-mail of 4 December 2009).

⁴⁴ Jansen, e-mail of 21 December 2009.

⁴⁵ cf. Council of Europe (2009), 2.

⁴⁶ cf. Council of Europe (2009), 2; Council of Europe (2009-2), 28.

⁴⁷ According to experts, about 40% of stadium visitors are said to be Ultras. Lapinski 2007, 3.

⁴⁸ Eg. in Switzerland: (Zimmerman/Häfeli, e-mail of 23 December 2009) and the Czech Republic (Čarnogurský, e-mail of 4 December 2009).

⁴⁹ Council of Europe (2009), 3; Council of Europe (2009-2), 26.

⁵⁰ Green, e-mail of 22 December 2009.

⁵¹ cf. *Blickfang Ultra*, April 2009 issue, 26.

⁵² Bauer, e-mail of 5 December 2009.

⁵³ Zimmerman/Häfeli, e-mail of 23 December 2009.

However, some Ultras also mix with the spectators “anonymously” in away stadiums so that they can take a look at the Ultra scenes (as occurs for example in eastern Europe⁵⁵), or else they openly contact other scenes in Europe directly by e-mail (as now happens in Sweden, for example⁵⁶). The latest terrace displays are thus quickly relayed across Europe via the Internet, e-mail, YouTube, fanzines and, in some cases, radio programmes. So-called “ground-hoppers”, who attend as many games as possible in different countries, also supply up-to-date reports on their experiences.

In some countries, these real and virtual networks can act as a driving force and foster the development of the Ultra scene.

There is currently no official Europe-wide network in which all the dominant Ultra scenes from all over the continent can participate and exchange views and information. However, there are individual networks whose reach varies from one case to another, such as ALERTA!, which was set up in 2007 in Italy, Germany and Spain as an alliance of anti-racist Ultra groups and actively works with scenes in Belgium, Scotland, Greece, etc.⁵⁷ In addition, various Ultra groups from a number of different countries are involved either as members or informally via Football Supporters Europe.⁵⁸

Although many Ultra scenes in Europe are developing their own style and only marginally differ from one another, when the pressure from outside becomes too strong (for example, owing to regulatory measures, the commercialisation of the club or media reports), many Ultras close ranks – despite their rivalries. For example, when 5,000 Ultras protested on the streets of Rome at the end of last year against stricter checks in the stadiums and personalised fan cards⁵⁹, Swiss fans, for whom the introduction of such a card is planned for 2011/2012⁶⁰, wrote on the Internet that they should also organise the same types of protest. A fan from Croatia even said he would like to see a joint Europe-wide co-ordinated campaign under the motto “Standing together against repression”.⁶¹

1.3.2 Support for national teams

Most European Ultra groups have no interest (at least not as a group) in providing organised support for their own country's national team or their games.⁶²

Some groups which used to do this, such as in Slovakia, now boycott the national team's matches because they want to protest against their own football association.⁶³

When Ultras attend the national team's matches, they usually do so as individuals from a particular scene who are simply interested in football. If entire groups support their country, especially at away games, they are seldom from left-wing scenes. In Spain, for example, the politically more left-wing Ultras are said to be strictly against supporting the national team, while the right wingers now and again try to organise joint support for it.⁶⁴

⁵⁴ Jansson, e-mail of 6 January 2010.

⁵⁵ Goll, telephone interview on 17 December 2009.

⁵⁶ Jansson, e-mail of 6 January 2010.

⁵⁷ Herzog, e-mail/report of 27 November 2009, 9; Wurbs, telephone interview on 18 December 2009.

⁵⁸ Wurbs, telephone interview on 18 December 2009.

⁵⁹ <http://news.gepflegt-arrogant.org/2009/11/16/fancard-Ultras-demonstrieren-in-rom/comment-page-1/>. Accessed on 6 January 2010.

⁶⁰ cf. <http://www.sportalplus.com/sportch/generated/article/fussball/2009/11/21/1027320000.html>. Accessed on 17 January 2010.

⁶¹ <http://news.gepflegt-arrogant.org/2009/11/16/fancard-Ultras-demonstrieren-in-rom/comment-page-1/>. Accessed on 6 January 2010

⁶² Such as in Denmark (Bauer, e-mail of 5 December 2009), Slovakia (Riekansky, e-mail of 2 December 2009), Spain (Herzog, e-mail of 27 November 2009, 7) and the Czech Republic (Čarnogurský, e-mail of 4 December 2009).

⁶³ Riekansky, e-mail of 2 December 2009.

⁶⁴ Herzog, e-mail/report of 27 November 2009, 7.

1.4 Ultra activities

Most European Ultras primarily want to support their team creatively as best as possible throughout a game both visually and acoustically. What is important for them is often not only the activities on the day of the match itself but the preparations and post-match work in a particular week, for which purpose they meet in special fan rooms, clubhouses or their local pubs.

“The Ultras usually work for several weeks on preparing an intro choreography, for example, which may be seen for no more than 20 seconds during a game. They spend around 4,500 euros and might employ 200 litres of paint, 7,000 sheets of cardboard, 500 small flags or two-pole banners, 90 metres of cash register roll and a 30 by 50 metre section banner.”⁶⁵

This might seem over-the-top to an outsider but for the Ultras it is a manifestation of their deep love and affection for their club. Moreover, what is important for them is not only the few seconds of their choreographed display but also the time they spend together on creative design.”⁶⁶

These choreographed displays put on by the Ultras are financed in different ways: some collect donations on the terraces and others pay for them via membership fees or sell their own merchandising items, fanzines or videos.⁶⁷

Many activities and the behaviour of the Ultras in a stadium *“are ritual-like. Situations in the game are commented on and symbolically imitated, such as waving the arms and shouting ‘Ah’ on a rising note when a corner is taken, stripping to the waist and pointing the bare buttocks in the direction of the opposition, especially in winter, or boisterously pushing one another around after a goal has been scored.”⁶⁸*

Some ritual postures and gestures can be compared to religious rituals, which is why the Ultra culture is also often referred to as a kind of “surrogate religion”.

The Ultras are not just interested in supporting the club but also in their own self-presentation: almost every group that takes pride in itself operates its own website for this purpose, *“publishes its own Ultra magazine, puts video films of the group on the web and develops its own range of polo shirts, sweatshirts, caps and scarves with its own name, logo or symbol.”⁶⁹*

Almost like designers, they use logos and symbols to try to give their group a kind of corporate identity and project a collective image to the outside world that will bring about an internal identity.

The fact that the Ultras have an elitist attitude is sometimes reflected in, for example, the banners or choreographed displays in the stadium that only insiders understand, because they use internal scene codes that are incomprehensible to an outsider without specific background knowledge.⁷⁰

Critics therefore accuse some Ultras of behaving as if they belonged to a secret society, especially when the planning of the choreographies remains the responsibility of a small group because they are afraid of “moles” who might give their ideas away to rival groups.⁷¹

Ultras not only separate themselves off from the rest of the fan scene by such actions but also by the name they give their group. A German Ultra describes the naming of a group as follows: *“Names may*

⁶⁵ Pilz/Behn/Klose/Schwenzer/Steffan/Wölki 2006, 84.

⁶⁶ Pilz/Behn/Klose/Schwenzer/Steffan/Wölki 2006, 84f.

⁶⁷ *ibid.*, 85.

⁶⁸ *ibid.*

⁶⁹ *ibid.*, 10.

⁷⁰ Rosenberg/Egere/Gregorits, “Bewusst unbewusste Avantgarde” *Ballesterer* No. 43, 8 July 2009.

⁷¹ Sonnenberger/ Rosenberg/ Van Den Nest, “Gemeinsam statt einsam”, *Ballesterer*, 3 February 2009.

*have different origins. The most important reason for the extreme names to be found in some cases is provocation or the need to stand out from the crowd, ie to be conspicuous. Names like Ultras, Inferno, Kommando, Brigade, Attacke, Meute (pack of hounds), Chaoten (anarchists) or Psychopathen (psychopaths) immediately attract attention, and the first time they hear them neutral observers will, ideally, think of a wild and crazy crowd of people – which fulfils the intention of the name adopted.*⁷²

With the so-called “mob march” (walking behind their own fence banner in another town at an away game), the Ultras also try to stand out as a group against the opposition.

European Ultras often use similar names for their groups. For example, the name “Ultra Boys” or “Boys” (including in the spelling “Boyz”) is to be found in Belgium, France, Denmark, Germany, Italy, Holland and Switzerland. The situation is similar in the case of such names as “Fanatics”, “Brigade”, “Commando XY”, “Tifosi/Tifo”, “Supras”, “Horda XY” or “Diablos”.⁷³

Many political or ideological references in group names do not, however, necessarily indicate the group’s political views but are often only in opposition to rival scenes (“bricolage effect”)⁷⁴, for the rivalry experience appears very important to the Ultras.

*“The Ultras have transferred the sports contest between the football teams to the terraces or the internet and continue it as a choreography and support contest with the rival Ultras.”*⁷⁵

The groups concerned want to be the best in the country.

*“They are not only original, amusing, creative and committed in the way they support their own team and critically examine problems in the club but also try to provoke club officials, sponsors or rival fans. However, the provocation is often in bad taste, especially when they demonstrate their hatred of their rivals.”*⁷⁶

Often, the biggest opponents, rivals or enemies are groups that support other clubs’ teams in their own town or region.

However, as Ultras see themselves as a critical counterweight in this age of the “eventisation” of football and react as a kind of “seismograph” to things that are wrong in the everyday world of the sport, they also occasionally hold boycotts or silent protests (hanging their fence banners upside down in the stadium terraces, refusing to support the team or turning their backs to the pitch for the duration of a match). Or else they demonstrate, for example against stadium bans, the apparently poor performance of the players and coaches or regulatory measures.

The Ultra culture can thus be understood as a culture of affection, protest, demonstration and provocation.⁷⁷

1.4.1 Influence on clubs and associations

Many Ultras in Europe are quite critical of their club or association⁷⁸ because they think it is “hostile to fans” or “corrupt”, for example in Poland⁷⁹ and otherwise generally have the feeling of being perceived

⁷² <http://www.cb-sektion-nrw.de/SektionNRW.htm>. Accessed on 25 November 2002.

⁷³ <http://www.Ultrasspirit.com/links>. Accessed on 4 December 2009

⁷⁴ cf. Dal Lago 1990, 1994; Pilz/Behn/Klose/Schwenzer/Steffan/Wölki 2006, 163: “*Symbols and names often contribute to a group’s identity but are mostly employed as a contrast with other groups and do not necessarily refer to the actual policies of and loyalty to the political namesake.*”

⁷⁵ Pilz/Behn/Klose/Schwenzer/Steffan/Wölki 2006, 13.

⁷⁶ *ibid.*

⁷⁷ *ibid.*

⁷⁸ cf. Zimmerman/Häfeli E-mail of 23 December 2009; Riekansky, e-mail of 2 December 2009.

⁷⁹ cf. Lapinski 2007, 4; Lapinski e-mail of 2 December 2009; Čarnogurský, e-mail of 4 December 2009.

by it only as “problem fans”.⁸⁰ Nonetheless, many European Ultras (for example, in Italy, France, Spain, Portugal, Cyprus, Norway, Sweden, Serbia, Slovenia, Ukraine and Poland) would like to be able to exert influence on their club or association.⁸¹ However, actual contacts between the parties vary considerably. For example, while some reach “deals” or conclude oral agreements with the clubs, such as an agreement not to set off pyrotechnics at home games in exchange for permission to put on choreographed displays (as in Switzerland, for example)⁸², others reject all contacts and communication in order to remain independent.⁸³

Other Ultras also demonstrate a new self-understanding and self-awareness by consciously indicating their willingness to speak to football's policy-makers.⁸⁴ For example, when some stadiums have been rebuilt in Germany, the design has specifically included a platform for Ultras or their song leader as well as a microphone system.⁸⁵

Partly as a result of the large membership of some groups, for example in Italy, Ultras have certainly been able to exert influence on club policies, such as player selection.⁸⁶ On the other hand, most Ultras, such as Ultras Rapid in Austria, consciously refuse any financial support from their club.⁸⁷

On the other hand, some club boards of directors occasionally seek contacts with Ultras and “normal” fans, for example by writing open letters to them and asking for their impartial support.⁸⁸

However, some experts point out that there is problematic “favouritism” in some countries with a strong Ultra movement, for example in Spain, where some Ultras are protected by their clubs or tolerate them despite their racist activities.⁸⁹

1.4.2 Influence on society

What many outsiders are not aware of is that many Ultras are not only involved with football and are present on the terraces but are also active to varying degrees in the community. However cool and arrogant they may sometimes seem on the outside, they show compassion in their home towns, for example when they run fund-raising campaigns for children or sick or homeless people.

Ultras are increasingly engaged in charitable work. For example, some sell biscuits at the Christmas market, collect money or returnable plastic beakers (on which a deposit has been paid in the stadium) for children with leukaemia and organise concerts for an association set up to support a youth centre. Others assist their younger friends with their homework or job application documents or help them in their search for suitable occupational training jobs.⁹⁰

The number of such activities by Ultras has increased in Germany since 2005.⁹¹

Ultras not only become involved in specific one-off situations but also in some cases on a continuous basis as voluntary workers: in an effort to fight against discrimination in football and bring about more

⁸⁰ cf. Zimmerman/Häfeli, e-mail of 23 December 2009.

⁸¹ cf. Council of Europe (2009), 3f.; Hourcade. 2002, 4; Green, e-mail of 22 December 2009.

⁸² Zimmerman/Häfeli, e-mail of 23 December 2009.

⁸³ Goll, telephone interview on 17 December 2009; cf. inter alia. Hourcade. 2002, 4; Herzog, e-mail/report of 27 November 2009.

⁸⁴ Brenner 2009, 139.

⁸⁵ Brenner 2009, 139.

⁸⁶ Green, e-mail of 22 December 2009.

⁸⁷ <http://www.Ultrasrapid.at>. Accessed on 4 December 2009.

⁸⁸ *Bild-Zeitung*, 9 December 2009.

⁸⁹ cf. Herzog, e-mail/report of 27 November 2009; Herzog, e-mail of 2 December 2009.

⁹⁰ E-mail from a German Ultra of 17 January 2010.

⁹¹ cf. *Blickfang Ultra* magazine, November 2009, 46.

integration, some Ultra groups, for example in Italy, Israel and Germany, have launched their own community projects. In this way, they support football projects with young immigrants from the town or neighbourhood or projects to help refugees and asylum-seekers, for example by organising personal counselling, taking them with them into the stadium free of charge either as a group or as individuals or collecting clothing donations.⁹²

1.5 The role of pyrotechnics within the Ultra culture

All European Ultras seem to love setting off pyrotechnics as an emotional way of supporting the club and as a manifestation of their own group culture. They see a difference between Bengal flares, coloured smoke and “bangers”, which only make a loud noise and scare many outsiders. Many Ultras (such as the Ultras Rapid in Austria⁹³) are critical of “bangers” but not of flares.

It is important to realise when assessing the Ultra movement that all European Ultras do not view setting off pyrotechnics as a kind of manifestation of violence or a danger to third parties. For them, pyrotechnics is a stylistic element of the Ultra culture comparable to a choreographed display or their creative singing – only more emotional and more eye-catching. It is therefore not surprising that many Ultra groups stated in their responses to the Council of Europe’s 2008 questionnaire that they threw smoke bombs or set off flares⁹⁴ – even though setting off fireworks is now prohibited in most countries (such as Germany, Austria, etc.⁹⁵) and also incurs sanctions from UEFA and FIFA.

On the other hand, however, some but not all Ultras (such as a few groups in Germany or Austria) are in favour of the legal and controlled use of pyrotechnics instead of a complete ban:

*“Ultras Rapid think it’s all about the right way of handling pyrotechnical material. For example, buckets filled with sand and water ensure the necessary safety. Even the weather report is studied to establish the likely limits to the use of the flares: ‘If you light two flares in low pressure weather, it takes a huge amount of time until the smoke has dispersed’”.*⁹⁶

They therefore keep on looking for various solutions that will enable them to use pyrotechnics after all. In a stadium in France, for example, the Ultras are said to have reached a kind of agreement with the operator allowing them to fire off pyrotechnics three times during the season in spite of the official ban.⁹⁷ There is also reported to be a similar example of best practice in Norway, where there is a scheme allowing the use of pyrotechnical items under certain circumstances.⁹⁸

At the Lower Saxony future-oriented workshop “Football fans and the police – eliminating enemy stereotypes” held in Hanover in early January 2010, Ultras, fan project staff and the police developed joint ideas on how the controlled ignition of flares might be permitted at Bundesliga games. One idea, for example, would be to allow only flares that are licensed for use in Germany – and therefore do not pose any serious danger to health. Representatives of clubs, the police, the town and the fans would have to work together on this and, for example, officially name two Ultra representatives who are trained in handling pyrotechnics and have the sole right to set them off in a protected area.

⁹² Wurbs, telephone interview of 18 December 2009.

⁹³ <http://www.Ultrasrapid.at>. Accessed on 4 December 2009.

⁹⁴ cf. Council of Europe (2009), 4.

⁹⁵ cf. tightening of the law in Austria from 4 January 2010; Rosenberg/Schotola: “Es wird immer weiter brennen”, *Ballesterer* No. 48, 3 December 2009.

⁹⁶ Rosenberg/Schotola: “Es wird immer weiter brennen”, *Ballesterer* No. 48, 3 December 2009.

⁹⁷ Kost 2009, 23.

⁹⁸ Schotola, „Europas Fanvertreter2, *Ballesterer*, No. 44, 6 August 2009.

Another possibility would be the introduction of a system for rewarding fans, who might be allowed to use pyrotechnics if they keep to the rules previously agreed with the police and clubs.

1.6 Problem areas of the Ultra movement

Even though the majority of Ultra groups have positive approaches and attitudes, there are isolated instances of discriminatory singing, chanting and patterns of behaviour, violent clashes, stealing of scarves and support material, attacks on trains or political actions that are in some cases carried out under the “Ultra” umbrella.

1.6.1 Violence

No European Ultra movement deliberately sets out to engage in violence and many groups, for example in Denmark⁹⁹, describe themselves as non-violent. However, in the various countries the fan culture is nonetheless to a greater or lesser extent predisposed to violence. Moreover, there are countries where no official distinction is drawn between hooligans and Ultras, such as Italy (or Spain)¹⁰⁰, which can result in some European media only reporting on violent Ultras and the Ultra culture concept quickly being equated across national borders to patterns of behaviour typical of hooligans.

However, it would not be right either to claim that the Ultra movement is entirely free of violence. Rather, there are in every European country, and even in virtually each individual group, not only people who focus solely on enjoying the choreography support and on the official fan policy but also individuals who have a tendency to perpetrate vandalism in the group by throwing bottles or kicking over litter bins when there is too much counter-pressure on them, for example owing to the restriction on their own freedom of movement, too much alcohol or group-dynamic processes.

Even though most Ultras are not out to perpetrate violence for its own sake, one Ultra group says about this issue in a statement at its website on how Ultras see themselves:¹⁰¹

“In any discussion about the defence and preservation of our freedom to do what we want, something has to be said about the issue of violence. Other groups are often being hypocritical when they dissociate themselves categorically from violence in texts on the subject but then ultimately do the opposite. On the other hand, it’s just not on when some people throw their weight around in the stadium and then wash their hands of all the aggro in the street afterwards. For us, Ultra also means not limiting ourselves to the hate-filled singing in the 90 minutes spent in the stadium but living the Ultra life 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and this has definitely not just been the case since this Poland/Eastern Bloc hype started. [...] We don’t categorically dissociate ourselves from violence To be sure, violence as a way of solving problems may be the wrong path for some people to take. We only wish to point out here that there are different factions in our group and there are motivated people in all areas of activity, whether it be creative visual displays or “sporting activities” in the streets.

⁹⁹ cf Bauer, e-mail of 5 December 2009.

¹⁰⁰ cf. Herzog, e-mail/report of 27 November 2009.

¹⁰¹ cf. Pilz/Behn/Klose/Schwenzer/Steffan/Wölki 2006, 129.

*That's actually all there is to say. Just form your own picture. However, what should be clear is we won't let everyone verbally abuse and criticise us.*¹⁰²

Another Ultra said in an interview: *"It's a fact that the Ultra scene was never free of violence, and it would be lying to say it was. [...] However, the Ultras are not so violent that the same repressive measures need to be applied to them as to hooligans."*¹⁰³

In contrast to the hooligans, whose use of violence is an emotional form of expression with the emphasis on the enjoyment experienced by the perpetrators, the violence of the Ultras can be understood to be more emotional-reactive and instrumental. It is reactive in the sense that the Ultras react to state violence and instrumental because they also use it as a "means to an end" (for example, in order to "mark out their territory").¹⁰⁴

Although violence has declined compared with the 1980s and 1990s in many European countries, experts are currently observing a slight increase in the extent of violent disputes within the Ultra movement in some European countries, such as Germany, in the case of individual clubs, and Switzerland. These disputes are often caused by their perceived dissatisfaction and impotence vis-à-vis outsiders.¹⁰⁵

Owing to the increased employment of regulatory measures and a country-wide perception within the movement that the police are its enemies, some parts of the scene¹⁰⁶ seem to be developing away from displays of aggression on the day of a game towards "disputes that are typical of gangs or even planned attacks on trains or at parties, etc"¹⁰⁷, and away from the fan culture towards a culture of participating in events involving violence.¹⁰⁸ However, this has also led to many Ultras abandoning their tendency to show solidarity and, in some cases, adopting a clear position against this development and indicating a willingness to hold discussions with the police.

Some experts (in Switzerland, for example) are already speaking of a self-fulfilling prophecy, by which they mean a development in which a number of scene members are actually turned violent as a result of the pressure caused by their public image as "violent fans".¹⁰⁹

The Ultras who are now banned from a stadium, for example, and have up to now not been conspicuously violent but now watch away games in pubs and bars together with other fans banned from the stadium are also in danger of perhaps becoming violent through these contacts with, and this proximity to, fans who really do have violent tendencies.

Sometimes, people banned from a stadium go up in the group's estimation and travel to away games despite the ban.

It is here that the entire problem of the way in which stadium bans are imposed becomes clear. The evaluation report by the German football association DFB on the changes to the stadium ban guidelines (February 2009) states for example:

"The vast majority of security-related incidents take place outside the stadiums, that is to say in places where the stadium bans do not apply. Accordingly, it can be established that the

¹⁰² cf. Pilz/Behn/Klose/Schwenzer/Steffan/Wölki 2006, 129.

¹⁰³ *ibid.*

¹⁰⁴ cf. Pilz/Behn/Klose/Schwenzer/Steffan/Wölki 2006, 14, 216.

¹⁰⁵ cf. Council of Europe (2009), 4; Zimmerman/Häfeli, e-mail of 23 December 2009

¹⁰⁶ cf. Council of Europe (2009), 4

¹⁰⁷ cf. Pilz, G. A. (2009), 187; Leistner 2008, 129.

¹⁰⁸ cf. Pilz, G. A. (2009), 187; Leistner 2008, 129.

¹⁰⁹ cf. Zimmerman/Häfeli, e-mail of 23 December 2009.

stadium ban as a regulatory instrument becomes particularly effective as a preventive measure inside a stadium.”

“A large number of people banned from stadiums regard trips to away games as ‘events’. On the journey to the away game or prior to/after the game, these people often draw attention to themselves from a security perspective without actually having been present in the stadium.”

“Here, it becomes clear that the stadium ban as a preventive measure cannot solve the basic problem of violent scenes outside the stadiums.”¹¹⁰

It is consequently necessary to consider whether – and if so, for whom – stadium bans are and can be a suitable instrument for preventing violence.

Some sections of the Ultra scenes are now becoming separate factions with elitist pretensions within the movement by engaging in violent activities. Especially outside the stadiums, these “danger seekers” are testing the limits to which they can go before breaking the law.¹¹¹

Experts are also observing the emergence of more and more “violence tourists”. For example, individuals who have never been seen at home games by people who know the scene well, who travel with the Ultras to German away games.¹¹²

While some Ultras, for example in Germany, turn into hooligans over time because they are looking for new experiences, there are other Ultra groups, such as in the Czech Republic, that have developed from hooligan circles.¹¹³

Violence in connection with the Ultras plays a bigger role in the countries of eastern Europe, where there are groups in which the hooligan scenes blend with the Ultras. Especially at away games, hooligans there act like a kind of “protection force” for the Ultras, for example in Poland and the Czech Republic.¹¹⁴

The size of an Ultra group gives no indication of its violent nature, that is to say the largest group is not always the most violent. In Italy, for example, the groups from Milan and Rome are the largest but the medium-sized groups from Livorno and Catania are among the most violent.¹¹⁵

It should be noted that in countries with a fairly young Ultra movement and a history of hooligan fans, Ultras, such as the Toon Ultras in Newcastle, adopt a clear stance against violence.¹¹⁶

1.6.2 Political sympathies

As with the subject of violence, it needs to be emphasised at the beginning of this section that the term “Ultra” does not in itself indicate the political stance of Ultra sympathisers. *“The Ultras have no clear political orientation.”¹¹⁷*

Many movements, such as in Germany, Sweden, Norway, etc, describe themselves, at least in public, as apolitical or rather politically “neutral” and hold the view that “politics should be kept out of the stadium”.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁰ cf. Spahn, H. (2009)

¹¹¹ cf. Pilz, G. A. (2009), 188f.

¹¹² *ibid.*

¹¹³ cf. Čarnogurský, e-mail of 4 December 2009

¹¹⁴ cf. Čarnogurský, e-mail of 4 December 2009; Lapinski 2007, 5.

¹¹⁵ *inter alia*, Privat de Fortune, e-mail of 21 October 2009, 5.

¹¹⁶ cf. <http://www.toonUltras.tk>, accessed on 1 December 2009, Pringle, e-mail/report of 1 December 2009

¹¹⁷ Selmer, “Ultrà hat keine klare politische Richtung”, *Ballesterer* No. 42, 6 May 2009.

¹¹⁸ cf. *Inter alia* Pilz/Behn/Klose/Schwenzer/Steffan/Wölki 2006, 113ff.; Bauer, e-mail of 5 December 2009; *Blickfang Ultra*, April 2009 issue, 26; Jansson, e-mail of 6 January 2010.

When it comes to political tendencies within an Ultra movement, it is more individuals or small sections of a group than an entire scene who make political statements and define themselves in political terms. Throughout Europe, Ultras are neither only left-wing or only right-wing, Rather the political orientation of the movement differs from one group and one country to another

Nonetheless, there are countries, such as Italy, Poland, Ukraine and Slovakia, where Ultras have a clearer feeling of (mainly right-wing to extreme right-wing) political allegiance.¹¹⁹

What is new is that some groups in Spain with a left-wing and antifascist ideology now also describe themselves as “anti-Ultras” in order to dissociate themselves conceptually from the right-wing Ultras in the country.¹²⁰

However, within the personally experienced “predominantly apolitical” Ultra culture there are also both right-wing points of reference (for example, the defamation culture that involves insulting and provoking rivals in songs against supposed weaknesses, such as “being gay” or “being feminine” or the use of concepts with fascist connotations like “Capo” as the leader of a group, etc) and left-wing (for example, the fight against the police or commercialisation, the love of chaos alongside order, Che Guevara as a symbol of the “freedom fight”, etc).¹²¹ Care accordingly has to be taken to ensure that outside political parties do not try to misuse members of the Ultra groups for their own purposes.

However, although the European Ultras can be distinguished from one another according to their political views, most have in common the fact that they are involved in fan politics, because “*Ultras can no longer afford to be apolitical because that would mean shirking their responsibility.*”¹²²

*“Many Ultra groups have realised that a “no politics” dogma does not fit in with their own standpoint and their criticism (which is itself political) of commercialisation and repression.”*¹²³

1.6.3 The police as enemies

A striking fact given the many different Ultra movements in Europe is that an image of the police as enemies has emerged almost everywhere – at least in Poland, the Czech Republic, Italy, Spain, Greece, Germany, France, Switzerland and Austria – with the exception of Norway.¹²⁴

Many Ultra terraces in stadiums are regarded as no-go areas for the police (especially in Italy).¹²⁵ The consequence is that if the police have to intervene (although that is primarily the responsibility of the club, the stadium operator or stewarding service) this may lead to massive demonstrations of solidarity against the police by the fans on the terraces and therefore result in rioting.

The murder of a 15-year-old fan called Alex in Athens in 2008 stirred up more hatred of the police in Greece and led to serious rioting, with rival groups protesting against the police, who they regarded as the “enemy”.¹²⁶ In France too, a Paris fan was shot dead by a police officer in self-defence in November 2006.¹²⁷ There is little or no communication between Ultras and the police in the city.¹²⁸

¹¹⁹ cf. Riekansky, e-mail of 2 December 2009.

¹²⁰ cf. Herzog, e-mail/report of 27 November 2009, 3.

¹²¹ cf. Gabler in an interview with *Ballesterer*, in Selmer “Ultra hat keine klare politische Richtung”, *Ballesterer* No. 42. 6 May 2009.

¹²² cf. *Blickfang Ultra*, November 2009, 47.

¹²³ Gabler in an interview with *Ballesterer*, in Selmer “Ultra hat keine klare politische Richtung”, *Ballesterer* No. 42. 6 May 2009.

¹²⁴ cf. Herzog, e-mail/report of 27 November 2009, 9; Pilz/Behn/Klose/Schwenzer/Steffan/Wölki 2006,14, 137ff.; <http://www.kos-fanprojekte.info/news/200702/20070209-italien.html>, accessed on 18 November 09; Jansen, e-mail of 21 December 2009; Kraft, “Maskenball”, *Ballesterer* No. 25, 5 June 2008; Lapinski, e-mail of 2 December 2009; Čarnogurský, e-mail of 4 December 2009.

¹²⁵ Privat de Fortune, e-mail of 21 October 2009, 3.

¹²⁶ cf. inter alia. *Blickfang Ultra*, April 2009 issue, 25; <http://www.n-tv.de/panorama/Verletzte-bei-Krawallen-article40106.html>, accessed on 6 October 2010.

¹²⁷ cf. Hourcade. 2008,1.

There is also considerable hatred of the police in Italy. The police officer Filippo Raciti died during clashes between fans and the police in Catania in February 2007 and the Lazio fan Gabriele Sandri was shot dead by the police in November 2007.¹²⁹

For many European Ultras, police behaviour is disproportionate and arbitrary. Their main criticism of the police is that they treat football fans/Ultras like second-class citizens or people with no basic rights, are often inflexible and arrogant and act condescendingly without showing any willingness to talk to the fans. They are also anonymous (have no name tags) and cannot therefore be identified, and they are said to have no background knowledge of the Ultra culture and its positive aspects. Furthermore, they lack self-reflection and self-criticism and expect too much of the Ultras, who cannot exert direct influence on every fan/Ultra, and their scene structure.¹³⁰

In Germany, for instance in Hanover, attempts are being made to find a way between the so-called “zero tolerance” policy of the police in some countries in dealing with football fans and the ever more extensive police operations by employing police “conflict managers” to mediate between the two sides when problems arise on match days. This is seen as a positive step within the fan and Ultra scenes.¹³¹

The idea of discussions between fans, Ultras, fan project staff, fan representatives and the police, such as the exchange of views begun at the Franco-German future-oriented workshop of the Daniel Nivel Foundation in Karlsruhe in June 2009 and continued at regional level in Lower Saxony in January 2010, has proved itself in helping to eliminate enemy stereotypes.¹³²

1.7 Problem awareness within the Ultra movement

The scenes not only differ in individual countries as far as their attitudes are concerned but also with regard to their problem awareness, which may even differ within the groups in a specific country. While some critically examine their attitude, others simply play it down and do not discuss it. However, experts have also noticed a tendency among many Ultras to realise that, on the one hand, they ought at least to start talking to the police again and, on the other, that they have to regulate their scenes before there is further escalation.

1.7.1 Self-reflection and self-regulation

While Ultras in some European countries are taking a critical look at their scene, some sections of this movement are also trying by different means to take self-regulatory action on the terraces.

Here, it is important to realise, however, that Ultras have no professional structures that would enable individuals simply to be “dismissed” for misconduct. The Ultras’ regulatory measures are thus more likely to extend over a long period through warnings issued by “scene leaders”, as in Switzerland¹³³, and may go as far as exclusion from the group or even physical altercations, as in Italy¹³⁴. However, this does not yet necessarily mean that these individuals are no longer present on the terraces.

¹²⁸ cf. Kost 2009, 21.

¹²⁹ cf. <http://www.sueddeutsche.de/sport/33/419796/text/>, accessed on 13 January 2010; <http://www.spiegel.de/sport/fussball/0,1518,517401,00.html>, accessed on 13 January 2010; <http://www.kos-fanprojekte.info/news/200702/20070209-italien.html>, accessed on 18 November 2009.

¹³⁰ cf. Daniel Nivel Foundation 2009, 28 f. Interestingly, work involving fans, Ultras and the police has shown that police officers almost always criticise the same aspects of the fans’/Ultras’ behaviour.

¹³¹ cf. Daniel Nivel Foundation 2009, 9

¹³² See pages 17 and 25.

¹³³ cf. Zimmerman/Häfeli, e-mail of 23 December 2009.

¹³⁴ cf. Privat de Fortune, e-mail of 21 October 2009, 4.

Ultras may therefore reach the limits of self-regulation, for example when they are supposed to convey to older, physically stronger hooligans that they do not wish to see any violence in the stadium.

Self-regulation within the Ultra scenes works best where the groups assume responsibility for certain areas of activity, terraces, localities, etc and have established their own rules for this. In Switzerland (Basel), for example, fans are reported to have imposed rules on themselves with regard to property damage.¹³⁵

Other Ultras stress that they are very annoyed when they have fought for such freedoms as being allowed to set off controlled flares in a section of the stadium when songs are being sung and subject to the right weather conditions and safety precautions and someone then ignites black and white smoke bombs on the terraces or throws “bangers” onto the pitch. They then take firm action against these individuals.¹³⁶

2 Summary

As pointed out at the beginning of this study, there is no single definition of the term “Ultra”. It is not the case that all European scenes are linked together and agree on their Ultras’ aims and codes of behaviour, nor can one refer to “the” Ultra group in individual countries, such as Germany, Italy or Poland. However, inside a scene, movements are sometimes described with reference to certain “styles”. For example, the “south European style” refers more to the use of pyrotechnics, the east European style” more to the stealing of banners and scarves and the “German style” perhaps more to organisation and the operation of a fan policy.

All European Ultras have in common the fact that for them the emphasis is not only on football and the games, players or result but more on all the associated trappings. For its adherents, “Ultra” does not mean a new football fan club but an attitude to life. Although most Ultras want to provide the best and most creative acoustic and visual support for their club, they also attach importance to their self-presentation and to the group experience provided by the scene during the week.

Similarly, the Ultra movement’s positive efforts in the field of youth culture are a dominant feature. Another common aspect is that the various scenes to a greater or lesser extent face challenges posed by problem areas, such as violence, as well as, in some cases, right-wing (and left-wing) politics, with outsiders often automatically equating Ultras with problem fans, perpetrators of violence or right-wing extremists – which is the impression conveyed by the media.

Nonetheless, or actually because of this false perception by outsiders and the increasing problems with the police, it is necessary not only for the Ultra movement to assume more responsibility and reflect on and regulate its own culture but also for the associations, clubs, police and society to begin a rethink.

3 Conclusions for club, police and social work and working with fans

The important thing when dealing with the Ultras in Europe is for there to be a more differentiated outside view of the movement instead of continuing to condemn them all as perpetrators of violence by enacting new so-called “anti-hooligan laws” and compiling files on hooligans, or further restricting

¹³⁵ cf. Gander: <http://bazonline.ch/schweiz/standard/Gewalt-in-Sportstadien-Repression-verstaerkt-das-Problem/story/27305699>, accessed on 6 January 2010.

¹³⁶ Information from informal discussions with German Ultras on 10 January 2010.

their movements by issuing personalised fan cards and allowing few or no tickets for away games to be purchased (as in Greece for example)¹³⁷, or only in conjunction with a group return trip.

However, it is also important to take a critical look at the Ultras themselves and draw their attention to their individual problem areas. The Ultras' perception of the police also needs improving. Not all police officers act arbitrarily and disproportionately.

“The Ultras are critical of their clubs, the media and the police, but they should also be critical of themselves and do some self-reflection. When for example they write in their fan magazines how fascinated they are by the Polish situation as regards violence in the fan culture or how much they enjoyed going on a rampage in a train compartment on their journey to or from a game, smashed the windows of the fan bus with a stone, set fire to a litter bin or knocked another Ultra flying, they should not be surprised when the police presence is stepped up – especially when Ultras are not interested in holding any discussions, for example with the police.”¹³⁸

Ultras must not play down their problematic patterns of behaviour as a way of trivialising possible acts of violence.¹³⁹ They must be given more responsibility and more freedoms for specific aspects of the Ultra culture.

At the same time, the Ultras' positive efforts need to be acknowledged and recognised.

New bans or stricter stadium bans will hardly solve the problem of violence. Although these bans might result in there being fewer violent clashes involving fans in the stadium itself, the problem is shifted outside – to the area around the stadium, the roads to and from the ground – or to the lower leagues, because most people with a stadium ban have not been removed from the football environment by these measures. They still belong to their groups or travel with them to away games. On the contrary, these so-called “problem fans” who are banned from stadiums are bunched together as small groups and brought closer to one another than might perhaps have ever been the case in a large group in the stadium.

“The investigations have shown that the problems experienced with football have many different causes and therefore cannot only be solved in a one-dimensional way by, for example, only giving the Ultras the responsibility for resolving a conflict. Problems always involve several individuals, institutions, situations, etc, so it is also particularly important to deal with them at all levels – individual, group-specific and structural – that are either directly or indirectly connected with football.”¹⁴⁰

“To sum up, this means that where future (violence) prevention work in the football world is concerned there must be three complementary cornerstones for avoiding escalation:

- *self-regulation – with the help of the fans and Ultras. This must be demanded, strengthened and promoted. The mechanisms that trigger demonstrations of solidarity, for example against the police, must be rendered inoperative and further limits need to be laid down.*
- *prevention – with the help of fan projects and fan ombudsmen. Social work must be strengthened and extended. If self-regulation measures are not effective on their own, then*

¹³⁷ Wurbs, telephone interview of 18 December 2009

¹³⁸ Pilz/Behn/Klose/Schwenzer/Steffan/Wölki 2006, 226.

¹³⁹ *ibid.*

¹⁴⁰ Pilz/Behn/Klose/Schwenzer/Steffan/Wölki 2006, 227.

the fan project staff and fan ombudsmen will have to give the fans and Ultras a helping hand. At the same time, measures must be taken to steer solidarity processes in another direction.

- *clampdowns – with the help of the police and stewarding services. Only when the fans' self-regulation measures and social work have no effect and dangerous tipping points have been exceeded should the police be used as a last resort to bring about de-escalation.*¹⁴¹

Efforts to bring fans and the police together have proved to be an important step and the right one to take to bring about this de-escalation and eliminate enemy stereotypes, The instrument of the future-oriented workshop¹⁴² makes it possible for the inability of fans and the police to speak to one another to be overcome and enables everyone to narrow the gap between them without blinkered perceptions and prejudices. The idea of eliminating enemy stereotypes thrives on mutual respect, discussion, getting to know one another and the recognition of rules. But it also requires time. Our experience with two future-oriented workshops on the subject of "Football fans and the police – eliminating enemy stereotypes" has clearly shown that we need neither more stringent laws nor more police but greater transparency and, above all, communication between the conflicting parties.

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¹⁴¹ *ibid.*

¹⁴² The aim of this type of seminar in our case is, firstly, to organise discussions and exchanges of views between football fans, fan project staff, fan ombudsmen and the police and, secondly, to consider the development of new ways and project ideas for the gradual elimination of enemy stereotypes between fans and the police. In an initial phase in which criticism can be expressed, both fans and police officers can say what they find most annoying about one another and what behaviour they find problematic, but without the other side being allowed to comment on these criticisms. After both sides have then worked together in a brainstorming phase on developing ideas they would like to be implemented, such as the optimum way of dealing with one another or what the "perfect everyday football world" could look like, these wishes are then converted in a realisation phase into concrete examples for practical implementation.

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