

Europol Investigating 'Russian Mafia' Football Match Fixing

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European law enforcement agency Europol will conduct an investigation into alleged football match fixing by Russian organized crime groups, the organization said Monday.

After uncovering an organized Asian crime syndicate in early February, Europol investigators are looking into 680 football games around the world, 380 of them in Europe, including World Cup and European Cup games.

"This problem isn't one just linked to Asian organized crime. We also have our suspicions about Russian mafia groups involved in match fixing. We are looking at that for the moment. Also, we are looking at some organized crime groups originating from the western Balkans," Rob Wainwright, the chief of the EU police intelligence agency, told The Sunday Times.

President Vladimir Putin signed into law July 24 a bill toughening the maximum penalty for match-fixing to seven years in prison. The law, proposed by Putin in January, makes it an offense for athletes, coaches and sports officials to bet on their own sports. Offenders will face possible prison time and a maximum 1 million ruble (\$30,000) fine if convicted.

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