

GUIDELINES

Balance S4 : Strengthening the Safety and Service pillars of the Saint-Denis Convention



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Balance S4

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GUIDELINES

Balance S4 : Strengthening the Safety and Service pillars of the Saint-Denis Convention

Guidelines on Safety and Service

31 October 2025

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Foreword

The initial years following the launch of the Committee on Safety and Security at Sports Events (T-S4) underscored the need to bolster the safety and service pillars of the Saint-Denis Convention. Recognising this, the EU - Council of Europe joint project Balance S4 was launched at a pivotal moment, offering a timely and strategic opportunity to reinforce these vital aspects through an integrated, collaborative, multi-agency approach involving representatives from the Parties and Observers to the Convention.

Through comprehensive research, extensive consultations, and active engagement with national and international stakeholders, the project has provided valuable insights into current safety and service practices across Europe. This process facilitated a detailed mapping of existing measures, identified best practices, and highlighted areas for improvement. Key activities, such as awareness-raising workshops, conferences, Training of Trainers sessions, and interactive exercises led by the Sports Grounds Safety Authority (SGSA), equipped participants with practical resources and tools. These initiatives aimed to deepen the understanding of the spectator journey, enhance service quality, and foster effective communication, ensuring that every spectator could enjoy sporting events safely, comfortably, and free from fear.

The overarching goal of Balance S4 was to develop relevant safety and service deliverables, that support member states and stakeholders in effectively strengthening and balancing the three pillars of the Saint-Denis Convention. This document offers strategic advice and proposals aimed at strengthening safety and service in and around stadiums and across all levels – local, regional, national, and international.

It is important to note that these guidelines are non-binding. Instead, they are intended to be a practical blueprint to guide enhancements within and beyond Council of Europe member states.

As a lasting legacy of the Balance S4 project, this document marks a significant early step in a long-term journey toward consolidating the safety and service pillars, from local venues to the international stage. Moving forward, the responsibility now rests with the Saint-Denis Committee and its delegations to nurture the foundations laid by Balance S4 through ongoing standard-setting, monitoring, and technical assistance. The Saint-Denis Committee, in particular, should oversee the implementation of these guidelines through regular monitoring activities and, where applicable, technical assistance, ensuring that these best practices are incorporated into national strategies and policies.

These guidelines signify the conclusion of the development phase of the Balance S4 project. Now is the time for action. Member states and stakeholders are encouraged to consider and use these to support and enhance safety and service arrangements in stadiums.

Together, these efforts will contribute to a safer, more enjoyable experience for spectators and participants alike, fostering a culture of continuous improvement and shared responsibility in securing sports events across Europe.

Stanislas Frossard
Head of the Sport Division

Introduction

Background

The Balance S4 project aims to support member states of the Council of Europe in strengthening the implementation of the safety and service pillars of the Saint-Denis Convention to achieve the right balance with the security pillar.

The project is providing an integrated multi-agency approach to ensure high levels of safety, security and service standards at sports events. The Convention and the project are set to meet the legitimate expectation of all individuals: to attend sport events safely, in a welcoming manner, in an environment where human rights and the rule of law are respected and violence and disorder tackled, inside and outside of sport venues, throughout the whole spectator journey.

As most of the knowledge and expertise until now has been concentrated on the security pillar of the Saint-Denis Convention, this joint project is answering the need to strengthen the safety and service pillars, aiming at reaching the necessary balance between them.

The project's goal is to contribute to more effective national policies and greater awareness-raising of the importance of having safer, healthier, more inclusive, accessible, diverse and equal sports venues, for the sake of the protection and respect for fundamental human rights and civil liberties of spectators and other participants at sport events in Council of Europe member states.

The project is co-funded by the European Union and the Council of Europe and implemented by the Council of Europe's Sport Division.

Project

The project consists of three overarching strands:

1. Data collection campaign and state of play on safety and service measures in Europe;
2. Awareness-raising workshops and conferences, and training of trainers/capacity-building seminars and
3. Guidance, promotion and visibility on safety and service.

As an outcome of these areas of work, the following outputs have been developed:

- Policy proposals and Guidelines to support strengthening the safety and service pillars in Council of Europe member states.
- Training materials and learning support to be used and replicated at a national level across Council of Europe member states.

Countries are invited to translate these Guidelines and training materials into their national languages, to facilitate their dissemination.

Development

These Guidelines are based on findings and discussions within a range of activities conducted over the 24-month period since January 2024, including:

- Research from across Europe on the current levels of safety and service at stadiums¹
- Training and sharing of good practice within two 'Training of Trainers' sessions;
- Discussions within three Balance S4 workshops and conferences;
- Onsite evaluation and observations at the UEFA Women's EURO 2025 (Switzerland); and
- Views and feedback from the Balance S4 Expert Group composed of representatives of countries and international organisations.

1. Throughout this document, any reference to "stadium" should be understood as any sports venue, including arenas. Likewise, any reference to "football" should be understood as any other sport.

Purpose of the Guidelines

The Guidelines presented in this document offer advice and proposals for how safety and service can be strengthened at venue, local, regional, national and international levels.

To be clear from the outset, the content provided in this document is not legally binding, but instead provides a blueprint for how safety and service can be enhanced in Council of Europe member states and beyond.

The Guidelines are a basis for the T-S4 Committee to adopt a new Recommendation or refine the existing T-S4 Recommendation Rec(2021)1, which covers Safety, Security and Service pillars:

“11. Moreover, it is neither possible nor desirable to provide definitive models of application in view of wide variations in the constitutional, judicial, policing, cultural, and historical circumstances, and the equally varied character and severity of football-related incidents, among and within each State. Instead, it is intended that the recommended good practices herein are taken into account by each State when developing, refining and delivering a customised integrated, multi-agency strategy.”

The Guidelines should be considered alongside existing national and international legislation and requirements. This is particularly critical in areas of accessibility, including the European Convention on Human Rights, the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and EU Accessibility Act 2025.

How to use the Guidelines

The Guidelines follow on from the “Balance S4 Safety and Service Essentials” published in April 2024. This document provides an overview of the key concepts in safety and service. The principles within these guidelines build on the introductory information found in the “Essentials” document.

The Guidelines have been developed under the following overarching principles:

Safety

- ▶ A commitment to considering the safe capacity of a stadium: using the structure and approach used by the UK’s Sports Grounds Safety Authority (hereafter SGSA).
- ▶ The importance of conducting risk assessments – both general and for event specific and how these support the development and maintenance of a safe environment for all.
- ▶ The critical area of Zone Ex (the area outside a stadium), how this impacts on the safe ingress and egress of spectators and the importance of working in partnership to effectively manage this area.

Service

- ▶ The expectations for all event personnel to demonstrate a positive attitude in how they engage with spectators, and how this can lead to positive behaviours.
- ▶ Understanding and addressing the needs for all – ensuring accessible facilities and preventing discriminatory and offensive behaviour.
- ▶ The importance of communication and engagement throughout the spectator journey, including getting to know spectators and how they engage with the stadium, in order to make their interaction smooth.

The document is presented in two parts:

- ▶ Part 1 considers safety and service principles in general. It picks up and provides additional guidance under six broad headings.
- ▶ Part 2 builds on the content within the previous section to consider particular topics in further detail, aimed at encouraging more inclusive sports venues and events.

In these Guidelines, the reference to “stadium”, “sports venue” or “sports ground” shall be understood as synonyms. Likewise, the content of these Guidelines applies not only to football matches and stadiums but can also be applied and adapted, where necessary or desirable, to other sports and venues.

Throughout the document, there are references to venue, local, regional and national activities. For ease of reference, these are defined as the following:

- ▶ *Guidelines*: propositions that provide advice or proposals to help organisations or individuals implement policies or procedures effectively, serving as a framework for best practices without being legally binding.

- ▶ *Venue operators and/or event organisers*: individuals or organisations responsible for managing, maintaining and operating a specific venue, ensuring it is suitable and safe for events; and/or the planning, coordination, and overseeing the execution of events.
- ▶ *Local authority*: actions, policies or activities related to authorities within a specific locality of municipality.
- ▶ *Regional level*: actions, policies or activities related to a broader geographic area that encompasses multiple local municipalities, such as a state or province.
- ▶ *National level*: actions, policies or activities related to the entire country, typically managed by central government bodies or ministries.

The content and guidance are not expected to be implemented as drafted. It is important for member states to consider these Guidelines in their specific contexts, as they provide valuable principles and best practices that can guide effective decision-making. Integrating these Guidelines into local practices does not mean adopting them wholesale, rather, they should be adapted to suit specific local realities, influenced by cultural, legal, economic, and social factors in member states. Individual member states should consider what is achievable and a reasonable time period in which to integrate Guidelines into current practice. The Guidelines are intended to have the flexibility required to be applied in the national contexts.

PART 1

Safety and service in general

This section considers the findings of the research conducted and builds on the Safety and Service Essentials document, published at the start of the project in April 2024.

It outlines guidelines and recommendations under the following points:

Safety

- ▶ A commitment to considering the safe capacity of a stadium: using the structure and approach used by the SGSA.
- ▶ The importance of conducting risk assessments – both general and for event specific and how these support the development and maintenance of a safe environment for all.
- ▶ The critical area of Zone Ex (the area outside a stadium), how this impacts on the safe ingress and egress of spectators and the importance of working in partnership to effectively manage this area.

Service

- ▶ The expectations for all event personnel to demonstrate a positive attitude in how they engage with spectators, and how this can lead to positive behaviours.
- ▶ Understanding and addressing the needs for all – ensuring accessible facilities and preventing discriminatory and offensive behaviour.
- ▶ The importance of communication and engagement throughout the spectator journey, including getting to know spectators and how they engage with the stadium, in order to make their interaction smooth.

1. The safe capacity of a stadium: structure and approach

This principle outlines the commitment to consider and calculate the safe capacity of a stadium, using the structure and approach adopted by the SGSA.

Stadiums are more than just venues: they are vibrant hubs where communities gather to celebrate, support, and unite. Ensuring safety is not optional – it is a duty. A clear understanding of a stadium's safe capacity is the cornerstone of this.

The safe capacity is the maximum number of people who can be safely accommodated within a venue whilst it is hosting an event.

The Guide to Safety at Sports Grounds (Green Guide), published by the SGSA, outlines an internationally recognised approach to calculating and evaluating the safe capacity.

The safe capacity is not the number of seats or standing spaces available. Instead, it is based on the following elements:

- ▶ Entry capacity
- ▶ Holding capacity, including (P) and (S) Factors
- ▶ Exit capacity
- ▶ Emergency exit capacity

The final capacity is then the **lowest** of these calculations.

Once the final capacity of a section, or of the whole stadium, is determined, in no circumstances should a larger number of spectators be admitted.

To uphold a firm commitment to safety, organisations must build a safety-first culture. This involves comprehensive training for staff, clear safety policies, and strong leadership that prioritises adherence to capacity

limits. Transparency and communication are essential — all stakeholders should understand that safety is non-negotiable and that exceeding capacity is unacceptable.

While internal and external pressures – such as commercial pressure to maximise revenue – can challenge a safety team’s commitment to maintaining prescribed stadium capacities, unwavering dedication to safety is essential.

Guidelines

Guidelines for venue operators and/or event organisers

- ▶ Conduct a capacity calculation on the venue to ascertain the maximum safe capacity and ensure that this is not exceeded.
- ▶ Conduct structural inspections and appraisals, particularly on aging stadiums, in order to ascertain if there are any physical impacts on the safe capacity.
- ▶ Conduct periodic reviews of capacity and crowd control plans, especially following structural changes or after significant events.
- ▶ Develop an Operations Manual to support the safety management procedures within the venue.

Guidelines for local authorities

- ▶ Conduct capacity assessments, using competent persons, to evaluate the stadium’s physical structure, seating arrangements, entry and exit points, and crowd flow in order to determine the safe capacity of the venue.
- ▶ Use local authorities to certify and conduct regular audits and inspections to ensure that stadiums maintain their designated safe capacity.
- ▶ Conduct a review on safety management processes and procedures in the stadium in order to understand if these have an impact on the safe capacity.

Guidelines for regional authorities

- ▶ Implement standards for assessing and maintaining stadium capacity based on safety regulations, building codes, and best practices, and require all venues within the region to adhere to these standards.
- ▶ Facilitate training in order to improve the awareness of safe capacity and the capabilities of people to conduct capacity calculations appropriately. This should include an understanding of how event overlay can impact on the safe capacity.

Guidelines for national authorities

- ▶ Consider the implementation of national laws and regulations governing stadium safety, outlining how capacity is to be calculated, along with associated safety standards, and crowd management.
- ▶ Mandate regular safety audits and capacity assessments for all stadiums hosting large events.
- ▶ Introduce a national authority responsible for accrediting stadiums, reviewing capacity assessments, and enforcing compliance.
- ▶ Provide financial assistance or grants to stadiums for infrastructure upgrades, safety systems, and staff training.

2. The importance of conducting risk assessments

Conducting risk assessments – both general and for event specific – is crucial. These have impact on developing and maintaining a safe environment for all. Creating a safe environment at any event, especially in large venues like stadiums, requires meticulous planning, vigilance, and proactive management. In essence, it is about the management of risk.

More specifically, managing risk is one of the fundamental means by which stadium management and/or event organisers can meet their responsibility to achieve a reasonable degree of safety for *all* people present at an event.

Central to this process is the essential practice of conducting risk assessments. These assessments serve as foundational tools that enable organisers and safety teams to identify potential hazards, evaluate their risks, and implement appropriate measures to mitigate danger.

Risk assessments generally fall into one of the following categories:

- 1. Standard, or generic risk assessments:** These are conducted to consider potential incidents, hazards or threats when the venue is in standard operational mode. This type of risk assessment is typically drawn up before the start of a season at venues which stage the same sport or type of event on a regular basis.
- 2. Event specific risk assessments:** These are conducted to consider potential incidents, hazards or threats arising from the specific event – no two events are identical. They may attract a slightly different demographic or take place at a different time of the day, or year, or in different circumstances or in different weather conditions. Therefore, an event specific risk assessment is critical.
- 3. Dynamic or ongoing risk assessments:** These consider incidents or hazards that emerge, or threats that are identified, during the event planning cycle.
- 4. Statutory risk assessments:** These are conducted as required under local or national legislation, for example in relation to health and safety or fire safety.
- 5. Risk assessments carried out by external agencies:** Events are often graded or categorised by external agencies or emergency services, such as the police, in order to ascertain their own resourcing levels. Third party contractors such as broadcasters and caterers should also provide their own risk assessments.

Owing to the diverse scale and complexity of venues, and the diverse characteristics of events, it is not possible to provide a comprehensive list of all the incidents, hazards and threats that may need to be considered when conducting risk assessments. The majority will, however, fall under the following headings:

- a. Venue:** including structures, physical environment and overlay.
- b. Event:** including its specific characteristics and hazards arising from the activity.
- c. People:** including the anticipated audience and staffing issues.
- d. Systems and services:** including power supplies, communications and digital networks.
- e. Security:** including threat levels, accreditation procedures, and crime and disorder.
- f. Fire:** including ignition sources, fuel storage, exit routes, means of escape.
- g. Weather:** including extremes of temperature, wind and the potential this has on the migration of spectators.

Guidelines

Guidelines for venue operators and/or event organisers

- ▶ Implement processes for developing general risk assessments of all elements of the stadium's safety processes and identify and implement any mitigating factors to reduce known risks.
- ▶ In implementing risk assessment processes, ensure there is involvement from a range of departments involved in the venue, including ticketing, facilities management and marketing.
- ▶ For each event, implement event specific risk assessments, which analyse factors such as expected attendance, event type, activities planned, environmental conditions, and special requirements. For example, risk assess the level of searching needed for the expected demographic for the event, and identify mitigating actions, such as the use of wands to reduce use of body search and increase speed of entry.
- ▶ Develop contingency plans for each reasonably foreseeable high-level risk that might impact on the overall delivery of a safe event. This identifies what actions need to be taken if an incident escalates to become critical, or is immediately critical.

Guidelines for local authorities

- ▶ Develop clear procedures for conducting regular reviews of risk assessments of the stadium, including structural integrity, safety systems, emergency exits, fire safety, and crowd management.
- ▶ Conduct training sessions for staff as part of emergency preparedness processes. This includes organising drills to simulate emergency scenarios in order to test the contingency plans.
- ▶ As part of general risk assessments, consider implementing requirements for venues to consider promoting a culture of environmental responsibility and sustainability as part of risk assessments, considering issues such as energy consumption, water usage, sustainable transport and eco-friendly messaging and merchandise.

Guidelines for regional authorities

- ▶ Facilitate training and capacity building through regional training events and programmes for venue managers, safety officers, and event planners on conducting comprehensive risk assessments.
- ▶ Create regional guidelines, using collaboration with local authorities and safety experts to develop standardised protocols for risk assessments, ensuring these procedures align with national safety regulations and best practices.
- ▶ Monitor and audit compliance through periodic regional audits to verify that local venues are performing regular risk assessments and implementing recommended measures.

Guidelines for national authorities

- ▶ Consider establishing a central regulatory framework via national legislation and standards mandating risk assessments for all stadiums and large venues. This could include a definition of the minimum requirements for both general and event-specific assessments.
- ▶ Consider creating an oversight institution responsible for regulating, monitoring, and enforcing compliance (where possible at national level).
- ▶ Provide funding and support initiatives, offering grants or subsidies to assist venues in conducting comprehensive risk assessments and infrastructure improvements.
- ▶ Support research initiatives to develop innovative risk mitigation strategies and assess emerging threats.
- ▶ Collate data from venues to identify common risks or emerging hazards and use this information to refine regional safety policies and share best practices.

3. Zone Ex and its impact on the safety, security and service for spectators

No venue or event exists in isolation. Zone Ex – is defined as those areas, either in the public domain or under private ownership, considered to be integral to the circulation and safe management of people both arriving at the venue and dispersing afterwards – has a critical impact on the safety, security and service for spectators. Working in partnership with others involved in the ownership and safe management of these areas is crucial to ensuring the safe ingress and egress of spectators.

This area, where spectators arrive, exit, and navigate before and after events, plays a pivotal role in shaping the safety, security, and overall experience for every attendee. It is the gateway to our venues and the first and last impression spectators have of our commitment to their safety, security and comfort. Its design, management, and coordination directly impact crowd flow, emergency response times, and the ability to deliver a seamless experience.

The importance of Zone Ex cannot be overstated. Inadequate planning can lead to congestion, delays, and even dangerous overcrowding - risks that can escalate into injuries or compromise safety during emergencies. Conversely, a well-organised Zone Ex enhances crowd management, reduces stress and frustration, and ensures quick, safe ingress and egress. It also understands any particular needs of different user groups in this space.

Creating such a secure environment requires a concerted effort - working in partnership with local authorities, law enforcement, transport providers, emergency services, and the community.

Effective partnership planning includes coordinating traffic management strategies, deploying sufficient security personnel, implementing clear signage, and establishing contingency plans for incidents or unexpected surges in crowd movement. It also involves engaging with public transport agencies to facilitate safe, efficient travel to and from the venue, avoiding congestion and delays.

Guidelines

Every venue and Zone Ex is different. However, the following recommendations and guidelines are offered to aid in the development of the understanding and management of this critical area.

Guidelines for venue operators and/or event organisers

- ▶ Each venue should conduct a Zone Ex assessment to map the immediate surroundings of the stadium, including roads, parking, public transport access points and pedestrian routes. This process can help identify potential hazards and risks, such as congestion points, bottlenecks or high-risk areas for crowding, violence or accidents.

- ▶ Develop a Zone Ex Co-ordination Plan, which outlines the safety, security and service arrangements within that zone, ensuring they are integrated, co-ordinated and agreed by all key stakeholders prior to the event.
- ▶ Implement event day plans, including communications approaches, such as signage to communicate directions and ingress/egress routes; staffing processes, deploying trained and briefed staff and volunteers at strategic points for crowd managements; co-ordinating with the police and conducting continuous monitoring to manage crowd flow and identify issues in real time. Plans should ensure that all communication approaches are accessible to the range of people travelling to the stadium.

Guidelines for local authorities

- ▶ Ensure sufficient collaboration is in place between the venue, local authorities and stakeholders. Once an assessment has been completed, use this to identify those involved in the management and ownership of areas within Zone Ex. This will include the local authority and emergency services, but also transport providers, retailers, pubs/bars and local residents.
- ▶ Develop emergency preparedness exercises to test issues and responses within the Zone Ex area, bringing together multiple stakeholders.

Guidelines for regional authorities

- ▶ Standardise Zone Ex management protocols, developing regional guidelines and identifying best practices which can be shared with venues locally.
- ▶ Develop regional partnership networks, involving local authorities, emergency services, transport agencies, and stadium management in order to facilitate Zone Ex partnership working. These can also assist in the development of joint working and information sharing.
- ▶ Collate and analyse regional data on crowd movements, traffic flow, incident reports, etc, in order to continually refine Zone Ex management strategies.
- ▶ Develop regional training to help increase the understanding of Zone Ex and its impact on the safety, security and service of spectators.

Guidelines for national authorities

- ▶ Consider establishing a national framework and standards around Zone Ex. This could include developing legislation and standards for managing Zone Ex around all large venues, ensuring consistency and accountability; or mandating risk assessments, emergency plans, and partnership working protocols.
- ▶ Promote best practices and innovation by publishing national guidelines outlining effective Zone Ex management, crowd control, and partnership coordination, or supporting research into emerging technologies such as AI-based crowd monitoring, mobile apps for real-time info, and automated traffic systems.
- ▶ Consider national policy support, such as mandatory planning, coordination, and post-event review for all large events with significant spectator flow or providing funding or grants for infrastructure upgrades and technology adoption at venues.

4. Event personnel positive engagement with spectators

There must be an expectation for all event personnel is to engage with spectators in a positive way: this approach can lead to positive behaviours and reduce tensions.

The success of any event relies heavily on the interactions between event personnel and spectators. These shape the overall experience, influence behaviour, and determine the environment's safety and enjoyment.

As the first line of contact, event personnel carry a responsibility to engage with spectators in a manner that is respectful, approachable, and positive. Setting clear expectations for how staff interact with attendees not only improves the immediate experience but also fosters a culture of positive behaviour among spectators.

Event personnel – whether it's stewards, security personnel, police, volunteers, service staff or others – serve as authority figures and role models for spectators. When they promote positive behaviours, such as encouraging respectful cheering, ensuring safety rules are followed, and maintaining a friendly atmosphere, they influence spectators to behave similarly.

Conversely, if event personnel act or respond aggressively or dismissively, it might lead to increased tension or negative behaviours among spectators.

In essence, their behaviour and communication can shape the crowd's conduct through social influence, promoting a safe, secure and welcoming environment for everyone. At the core of positive engagement is respect. All spectators, regardless of their background, age, or behaviour, deserve to be treated with dignity and courtesy.

Event staff should be trained to provide information calmly, accurately, and kindly. When spectators receive clear directions and accurate information, confusion and frustration diminish, reducing the likelihood of disruptive behaviours. Active listening is equally important: when staff genuinely hear and acknowledge spectator concerns, they demonstrate empathy and foster a sense of understanding. This two-way communication encourages cooperation and positive interactions.

Positive engagement by event personnel is vital to fostering a respectful, safe, and enjoyable environment. By consistently demonstrating respect, proactively assisting spectators, and communicating effectively, staff can influence behaviours positively, leading to better experiences for everyone involved.

Guidelines

Guidelines for venue operators and/or event organisers

- ▶ Conduct regular, mandatory training sessions focusing on customer service, effective communication, respectful communications, cultural sensitivity, and conflict resolution. These should incorporate role-playing scenarios to practice positive engagement. In addition, pre-event briefings should be used to reinforce the importance of a positive attitude and engagement with spectators.
- ▶ Consider the event personnel structure and numbers used in a venue and for a specific event, for example implementing a layered presence of different staff – volunteers, stewards, security personnel and police – to create a sense of structure, without intimidation.
- ▶ Ensure safety and security staff and volunteers are easily identifiable from other staff/the general public, to enable spectators to quickly identify those able to assist them.
- ▶ Promote specific reception measures aimed at underrepresented groups, such as women, children, the elderly, persons with visible and non-visible disabilities, migrants and refugees, ensuring that there are dedicated, clearly identified reception points offering personalised assistance upon arrival at the venue. (For example, where applicable, visits by groups from local institutions may be scheduled).

Guidelines for local authorities

- ▶ Ensure a sufficient number of volunteers/stewards are used for different roles as required for the expected demographic, and make sure they are clearly identified and easy to spot in a crowd. Utilise those who can speak the language of the teams and clearly identify this. For example, during ingress, make sure that sufficient staff are available to help with automatic scanning of digital tickets.
- ▶ Consider the role of the police and the use of 'dialogue police' that are more welcoming and not intimidating.

Guidelines for regional authorities

- ▶ Implement regional support networks, such as regional workshops for event personnel from multiple local venues to promote consistency in engagement approaches. This could help share success stories and effective strategies region-wide.
- ▶ Establish regional support teams or coordinators to assist local venues in implementing expectations. This could facilitate communication channels among venues for shared learning.
- ▶ Consider implementing financial or other incentives to reward venues that demonstrate exemplary inclusion practices, through programmes or rankings that assess the application of positive communication strategies, non-confrontational crowd management and conflict mediation techniques, tailored to different audience profiles, with a special focus on under-represented groups.

Guidelines for national authorities

- ▶ Consider implementing national standards and policies around event personnel and engagement expectations. These could be embedded into licensing, accreditation, and compliance requirements.

- ▶ Create a national training and/or certification programme for event personnel focused on positive engagement practices.
- ▶ Invest in research to identify the most effective engagement strategies and approaches and use these findings to inform policy revisions and best practice guidelines.
- ▶ Develop nationwide campaigns advocating for respectful engagement at stadiums.

5. Understanding and addressing the needs for all

Understanding and addressing the needs for all is essential for ensuring accessible facilities and for preventing discriminatory and offensive behaviour. Creating inclusive and welcoming environments at events is essential to guarantee that everyone can participate fully and enjoy their experience. This requires a comprehensive understanding of diverse needs and a proactive approach to addressing them. Ensuring accessible facilities and preventing discriminatory and offensive behaviour are fundamental components of creating an inclusive environment that respects and values all individuals.

Accessibility is not merely a legal obligation but a moral and social imperative. It ensures that people with disabilities (visible and non-visible), the elderly, families with young children, and persons with mobility or sensory challenges can access facilities comfortably and safely. Accessible facilities include ramps, elevators, designated parking spaces, accessible restrooms, clear signage, and designated seating areas. These accommodations enable individuals to participate fully without fear of exclusion or difficulty. By providing an enabling environment with accessible facilities, event organisers foster an environment where all spectators feel valued and supported, encouraging a sense of belonging and community.

To effectively address accessibility, it is essential to understand the diverse needs of attendees. This includes recognising physical, sensory, cognitive, and linguistic differences. Many disabilities are not visible, and creating an inclusive environment must understand, recognise and cater for the broad range of needs of those who may use a stadium. Conducting needs assessments, consulting with accessibility and disability organisations, and involving community members in planning are valuable strategies. Training staff to recognise and assist individuals with specific needs ensures that everyone receives appropriate support and guidance.

Furthermore, providing information in multiple formats, such as braille, large print, or audio, helps accommodate those with sensory impairments. Multilingual signage and staff capable of communicating in different languages also promote inclusivity for non-native speakers. Understanding that needs vary and contextualising solutions accordingly is key to creating an accessible environment.

Accessibility alone is not sufficient. Fostering an environment free of discrimination and offensive behaviour is equally crucial. Discriminatory acts, such as racial, gender-based, or religious discrimination, prevent individuals from feeling safe and welcomed. Offensive behaviours, including harassment, derogatory language, and microaggressions, undermine the dignity of attendees and can lead to conflicts and unsafe situations.

Preventing such behaviour requires a clear policy that explicitly condemns discrimination and offensive conduct. Staff and volunteers should be trained to recognise, address, and escalate incidents promptly and effectively. Promoting a culture of respect begins with leadership setting a positive example. Public messaging, signage, and announcements emphasising the importance of inclusivity reinforce these values.

Additionally, creating a zero-tolerance environment encourages spectators to behave responsibly. Providing accessible channels for reporting discriminatory or offensive behaviour ensures that issues are addressed swiftly, making the environment safer and more welcoming for all.

Addressing the diverse needs of all attendees through accessible facilities and the prevention of discriminatory and offensive behaviour is fundamental to creating inclusive, respectful, and safe environments at events. Accessibility ensures everyone can participate fully, while proactive measures against discrimination foster a culture where everyone feels valued and respected. By prioritising these principles, event organisers not only comply with legal and ethical standards but also build a community where diversity is celebrated, and everyone has the opportunity to enjoy their shared experiences. Ultimately, understanding and addressing diverse needs enriches the event experience for all and strengthens the social fabric of our communities.

Guidelines

Guidelines for venue operators and/or event organisers

- ▶ Implement and adopt a holistic model of accessibility, which covers physical, sensory, cognitive and communication needs to create a welcoming and accessible venue for all.
- ▶ Conduct a needs assessment to gather insights on accessibility requirements and experiences with offensive behaviours. This should include engaging with local communities, including persons with disabilities, minority groups, and other marginalised populations, to understand their specific needs.
- ▶ Create policies and procedures that emphasise the importance of accessibility, inclusivity, and zero tolerance for discrimination. These must be communicated clearly.
- ▶ Conduct an accessibility audit of existing facilities regularly to identify barriers and areas for improvement. This could include installing ramps, accessible toilets, clear signage, hearing loops, and other accommodations as needed. In addition, ensure signage uses clear symbols² and multiple languages where appropriate. As part of this, consider how different groups use facilities, for example if food trucks are used, do they have a low height service point that can be accessed by wheelchair users.
- ▶ Consider the user needs for specific groups, particularly those with accessibility requirements. This should include through ticketing arrangements, maps on tickets/apps for accessible facilities and pre-event information around accessibility. In addition, if pre-event entertainment is being offered, careful consideration should be made to ensure that specific groups are not excluded from this. For example, not adapted for users with different physical or cognitive abilities.
- ▶ Linked to the above, consider how bag searching and safety and security policies impact spectators who require medical equipment and devices to be brought with them when attending a stadium. Work with individuals and representative groups to ensure that their needs are considered, whilst at the same time not compromising safety and security. A standard list of medical equipment and devices, accompanied by a medical report, that spectators are authorised to be brought to a stadium should be agreed upon by sports authorities, if possible applicable at European and international level.
- ▶ Ensure there is sufficient toilet provision for the expected demographic. This may mean extra female toilet provision, more unisex provision or 'flipping' male toilets to be female toilets. This includes family and accessible toilet consideration and provision. This should also apply to fan zones and other areas where people will congregate in the host city and on the journey to the stadium.
- ▶ Implement internal training processes, particularly for all public facing roles, on the importance of respecting diversity, avoiding assumptions, and supporting individuals with specific needs, along with inclusivity, cultural sensitivity, and recognising unconscious biases.
- ▶ Ensure there is trained, dedicated and identifiable staff to provide real-time assistance during events.
- ▶ Create an inclusive environment such as using inclusive language in all communications, signage, and announcements, celebrating diversity through campaigns, social media, and culturally respectful programming and promoting respectful behaviour and shared community values among spectators. Enhance this further by offering accessible communication in multiple formats (such as braille, large print, sign language videos and accessible digital platforms).
- ▶ Encourage clubs to appoint a Disability Access Officer (DAO), in accordance with UEFA guidance, who is responsible for improving access for disabled people (on both matchdays and non-matchdays) and ensuring continued progress in this critical area.

Guidelines for local authorities

- ▶ Monitor the completion and implementation of accessibility audits at venues to ensure that these are being conducted.
- ▶ Provide regular staff training on disability awareness, cultural competence, diversity, and anti-discrimination practices. Use this training to enable staff to recognise and address offensive behaviour promptly and effectively.
- ▶ Ensure that accessibility audits include areas outside as well as inside the stadium perimeter.
- ▶ Set up accessible reporting channels that are easy to use - and inclusive of all users of the stadium - for people to report problematic behaviour, such as an anonymous reporting line/website/text number. Consider what language these should be in for international fixtures. As part of this, ensure there are

2. For colour blind persons or persons with vision impairment.

effective protocols in place to respond swiftly to incidents of discrimination or offensive behaviour, implementing appropriate sanctions such as ejection or bans.

Guidelines for regional authorities

- ▶ Develop regional frameworks and networks to coordinate among local authorities, sports clubs, community organisations, and private sector partners to develop region-wide standards for accessibility and behaviour. Use these to share best practices and resources across local areas.
- ▶ Establish regional training workshops and sessions for local organisations, stadiums, and event staff on inclusive practices, cultural sensitivity, and anti-discrimination measures. This should include all parties involved, namely those with lived experience of discrimination.
- ▶ Create regional forums to bring together local authorities, venues and user groups to exchange good practices.
- ▶ Consider allocating regional funding to support infrastructure upgrades and training efforts, particularly supporting smaller venues and organisations in making necessary accessibility modifications.
- ▶ Collect regional data on incidents of discrimination and barriers faced by attendees and use this to inform policy updates and targeted interventions.

Guidelines for national authorities

- ▶ Consider developing comprehensive national standards and legislation for accessibility and inclusion, aligning with international best practices. This should include how to enforce anti-discrimination laws applicable at all levels of event organisation.
- ▶ Consider the establishment of funding for infrastructure upgrades and assistive technology innovation to support the implementation of national standards and legislation.
- ▶ Consider establishing mandatory training programs for stadium management, staff, and security personnel nationwide.
- ▶ Launch nationwide campaigns highlighting the importance of inclusivity and respect, utilising media, social media, and influential figures to promote positive behaviours and attitudes.
- ▶ Establish a national oversight body to monitor compliance, investigate incidents, and enforce regulations. This could include the introduction of measurable benchmarks, such as the number of venues that offer sensory-friendly zones or events publishing accessible information materials in advance.
- ▶ Consider implementing a national programme to encourage and support projects that promote the participation of under-represented groups in sporting events, through concrete accessibility measures, specialised staff training and the implementation of anti-discrimination policies. This programme could provide specific funding, set targets and impact indicators, and promote the sharing of good practices.

6. Communication and engagement throughout the spectator journey

The communication and engagement throughout the spectator journey is essential. This includes getting to know spectators, and the way they engage with the stadium, in order to make their interaction smooth. Communication and engagement are fundamental components of creating a memorable and seamless spectator experience in stadiums and large-scale event venues. Understanding the entire spectator journey – from initial awareness and ticket purchase to in-stadium experience and post-event interactions – is essential for optimising engagement and ensuring satisfaction.

As spectators increasingly expect personalised, convenient, and immersive experiences, seamless communication and targeted engagement strategies become vital. These efforts not only influence attendance and loyalty but also foster a positive reputation that attracts new spectators.

A key initial step in enhancing the spectator journey is understanding who the spectators are. Gathering detailed insights into their preferences, demographics, interests, and behaviours enables venues to personalise communication effectively. Techniques such as surveys, social media interaction, and data analytics help create detailed spectator profiles. Organised supporter groups, Supporter Liaison Officers (SLOs) and Disability Access Officers (DAO) have valuable insights into fan groups and particular needs. By knowing their expectations, stadiums can tailor their offerings accordingly.

Clear, timely, and relevant communication is essential at every stage of the journey. Before an event, providing comprehensive information through multiple channels – email, social media, mobile apps – helps build

anticipation and reduces confusion. For example, sharing details about parking options, entry procedures, and event schedules sets the stage for a smooth experience.

During the event, real-time communication via digital signage, apps, or announcements keeps spectators informed about delays, activities, or safety instructions. Post-event communication extends the engagement by soliciting feedback and maintaining contact through loyalty programs or exclusive content, thus nurturing ongoing relationships.

The ultimate goal of communication and engagement is to make every interaction as smooth as possible. Leveraging data to anticipate needs - such as identifying peak times and deploying additional staff - can prevent bottlenecks and frustrations. A well-coordinated communication system that provides real-time alerts and updates helps spectators navigate seamlessly through the stadium environment.

Effective communication and engagement are cornerstones of the modern spectator journey. By understanding spectators' needs, delivering timely and relevant information, and creating interactive experiences, stadiums and event organisers can facilitate smoother interactions and foster loyalty.

Guidelines

Guidelines for venue operators and/or event organisers

- ▶ Conduct an audience profile review of the spectator journey and data collection by conducting surveys and gather feedback from local spectators to understand their preferences, needs, and behavioural patterns. Use ticketing data, social media, and direct interaction to get insights into audience demographics and expectations.
- ▶ Embed clear and consistent communication through the spectator journey, providing pre-event information through multiple channels: websites, social media, emails and messaging, including directions, parking, access points, and protocols.
- ▶ Use a variety of communication channels to transmit important information before, during and after the match, using both digital and traditional methods of communication. This could include interactive digital content, such as videos, tutorials, and virtual tours of the venue, explaining entry procedures, location of services, and safety rules, tailored to different audience profiles (families, people with reduced mobility, migrants, the elderly, etc.), in order to reduce questions on the day of the event and improve the fluidity of the experience. For example, having a map of the venue available on an app, as well as large area maps available for fans around the stadium, highlighting where they are.
- ▶ Ensure effective signage is in place both inside and outside the stadium. This should be clear, accessible, visible, and multilingual where necessary.
- ▶ Use public address (PA) systems and digital screens to communicate important information and updates during the event.
- ▶ Implement user-friendly apps or mobile platforms for ticketing, entry, and real-time updates, providing digital maps, live updates about queues, and other relevant information to keep spectators informed.
- ▶ Set up easy-to-access feedback mechanisms, such as feedback forms, emails, apps, or on-site stations, for spectators to share their experience. Use this feedback for continuous improvement.
- ▶ Given the changes in climate and the more extreme weather patterns being seen across Europe and globally, ensure that effective planning is in place to address the needs of spectators based on the weather conditions, and ensure where extreme weather is expected, any requirements of fans are communicated in advance – for example, whether full water bottles are to be allowed to be taken into the stadia in hot weather, or have access to free drinking water.

Guidelines for local authorities

- ▶ Monitor the implementation of communication processes and the impact this has on service levels and behaviour of spectators locally.
- ▶ Implement a system to monitor feedback from spectators and identify and review how these are addressed.

Guidelines for regional authorities

- ▶ Consider the physical spectator journey to the stadium and how this can be made as simple and smooth as possible, for example during major tournaments, offering free transportation.

- ▶ Develop regional guidelines for consistent messaging and engagement practices, sharing best practices and success stories among local venues to foster a common understanding.
- ▶ Collect and analyse data on spectator interactions region-wide, and use these insights to tailor communication approaches and improve overall event experience.
- ▶ Facilitate the deployment of advanced ticketing and communication systems, encouraging the use of regional mobile apps that provide seamless access to event information.
- ▶ Promote regional coordination between transport operators, local authorities and event organisers in order to provide fans with integrated, real-time information on mobility, access and waiting times, facilitating a seamless, uninterrupted experience from the moment they leave home until their return.

Guidelines for national authorities

- ▶ Develop overarching strategies, standards, and policies to guide communication and engagement at all venues nationwide. These should ensure alignment with legal, cultural, and technological standards.
- ▶ Collect comprehensive data on spectator behaviour, preferences, and engagement outcomes across the country. Use these research findings to refine policies and develop tailored communication strategies.
- ▶ Create and promote a unified national digital platform that centralises information on sporting events, transport, ticketing and security, ensuring consistent, real-time communication.

PART 2

Specific safety and service considerations

Overview

This section considers safety and service in the four specific areas:

1. Changing spectator demographics at stadiums, including gender-balance, diversity and non-discrimination (girls, women, children, families, elderly people, minority groups, migrants and refugees);
2. Safety and service specificities of women's sports competitions;
3. Accessibility and inclusivity at stadiums, particularly for spectators with disabilities (covering both visible and non-visible disabilities); and
4. Public health issues at sports events.

The guidelines outlined in each section are not exhaustive. However, they provide a broad overview of points to consider and could be applied based on local circumstances.

1. Safety and service considerations for changing spectator demographics at stadiums

Traditionally, stadiums – especially football stadiums – were predominantly attended by men. The experience was somewhat uniform, with less emphasis on inclusivity or accessibility. Safety measures focused mainly on crowd control and emergency response. The atmosphere reflected a culture where women, children, and minority groups were underrepresented or felt unwelcome.

In recent decades, the landscape of sports spectatorship has shifted considerably. There has been a notable increase in the participation of women, families, and young people in attending football matches. Cultural diversity has also grown, with more spectators from varied ethnic backgrounds attending games worldwide due to globalisation and increased inclusivity initiatives. Additionally, awareness around disability rights has led to better accessibility features at many venues. Technological advancements and changes in social attitudes have fostered environments where a wider spectrum of society feels comfortable and encouraged to attend.

The evolving demographics of sports spectators present both opportunities and challenges for stadium management. Increasing diversity in age, gender, cultural background, physical ability, and technological familiarity necessitates adaptive safety protocols and enhanced service provisions.

While significant progress has been made, there is still room to broaden participation further. Stadiums can play a proactive role by launching targeted outreach campaigns to underrepresented groups, such as women and minority communities, showcasing the inclusive aspects of attending matches. Hosting family-friendly events and providing affordable ticket options can encourage attendance among younger audiences and lower-income groups. Creating a safer, more welcoming environment - free from discrimination, harassment, or intimidation - is crucial. Training staff in inclusivity and zero-tolerance policies against misconduct will help make everyone feel safe and respected.

A significant change in the demographics of a sports event – by having more women, children, youngsters, elderly people, persons with disabilities, persons with lower income, migrants and refugees attending – will positively impact the behaviour of the other spectators: it contributes to decrease tensions and conflicts within and between rival violent and extremist supporter groups, and reduces their feeling of ownership/monopoly of the tribunes, thus creating a safer, more secure and more welcoming environment inside and outside of the sports venue.

To encourage a wider range of demographics to attend sport events, stadiums must continue to innovate, creating inclusive infrastructures, offering diverse services, engaging communities, and fostering a culture of respect and safety. Doing so not only enhances the experience for all spectators but also helps preserve the spirit of sport as a unifying and accessible social activity.

Guidelines

Guidelines for venue operators and/or event organisers

- ▶ Consider the use of targeted marketing and communication channels to reach diverse audiences and foster a welcoming environment, potentially through community engagement initiatives.
- ▶ Implement flexible ticketing options that reflect the demographic diversity and enhance digital access and reduce barriers for different user groups.
- ▶ Ensure there are sufficient toilet and other sanitation/hygiene facilities available, evenly distributed throughout the venue.
- ▶ Consider the development of accessible facilities such as gender-neutral restrooms, family-friendly amenities, and mobility access points that cater to local demographic profiles.
- ▶ Provide training to staff on cultural sensitivity, non-discrimination, and disability awareness.
- ▶ Regularly gather feedback from different demographic groups to identify areas for improvement. Monitor safety incidents and service satisfaction to adapt strategies dynamically.

Guidelines for local authorities

- ▶ Gather feedback from local groups and spectators from different demographics to identify what can be done to encourage wider attendance at sports events and understand the barriers to inclusion.
- ▶ Develop initiatives aimed to increase participation among a wide range of demographics and implement visible anti-harassment and anti-discrimination policies for all spectators.
- ▶ Create partnerships with local entities to promote the participation of underrepresented groups, offering special access and reception conditions tailored to their needs.

Guidelines for regional authorities

- ▶ Develop regional standards for inclusive stadiums, emphasising gender-sensitive designs, safety, and accessibility.
- ▶ Advocate for regional funding programs dedicated to improving inclusivity in sports venues.
- ▶ Organise regional training programmes and networks on cultural competence and anti-discrimination practices, allowing best practice to be shared amongst venues.

Guidelines for national authorities

- ▶ Develop national standards and guidelines for inclusive sports infrastructure, programming, and staffing.
- ▶ Develop national awareness and education campaigns promoting diversity, non-discrimination, and respect across all stadiums.
- ▶ Develop nationwide indicators and benchmarks to measure progress on inclusivity goals.
- ▶ Establish a national certification programme for inclusive sports venues, publicly recognising those that meet high standards of accessibility, diversity, and good safety practices, encouraging others to adopt similar measures.

2. Safety and service specificities for spectators of women's sports competitions

The landscape of women's sports has grown significantly in recent decades, serving as platforms for promoting gender equality, empowering female athletes, and inspiring wider participation.

While much emphasis is often placed on athletes' safety and the quality of sporting events, the safety and experience of spectators – particularly women – are equally vital in shaping a welcoming, inclusive environment. Addressing the unique safety concerns and service needs of women spectators is essential for fostering confidence, encouraging attendance, and promoting positive attitudes toward women's sports.

Many safety protocols for women's sports align with general standards. However, women's sports also pose specific challenges related to accommodation needs, cultural sensitivities, and gender-based violence and harassment. Properly addressing these factors enhances participation, performance, and long-term engagement while ensuring the dignity and rights of women are upheld in all sporting contexts.

The observation visit carried out during UEFA Women's EURO 2025 in Switzerland, supported by UEFA, provided hands-on experience of good practices and lessons learned, thus enriching the content of these Guidelines. A

central concern is around infrastructural deficits. Venues are designed traditionally for men, and with a 'one size fits all' approach. This neglects the needs of women and families, which can lead to discomfort and logistical challenges for women attending matches with young children or infants, discouraging their participation as spectators³.

Women spectators can also face specific safety challenges that require targeted strategies. One concern is harassment and gender-based violence. Large crowds, poor crowd control, and inadequate supervision can lead to incidents of verbal abuse, inappropriate contact, stalking, or even physical assault. Such experiences discourage women from attending future events and erode a culture of safety and respect.

These concerns should also be extended to all the spectator journey, namely the public transport provided to and from the sports venue. Public transport can be an area where women are consistently made to feel uncomfortable or their safety jeopardised. In order to increase women and girls' participation at sporting events, they must feel safe travelling to and from such events. Dialogue between event organisers and public service providers should be encouraged to meet the mobility needs of this specific group.

Guidelines

Guidelines for venue operators and/or event organisers

- ▶ Ensure there are sufficiently trained safety personnel, including a sufficient number of female stewards, particularly in areas such as ingress points.
- ▶ Create simple and discreet reporting channels, accessible via mobile app, SMS or physical points on the premises, so that spectators can immediately report situations of harassment or inappropriate behaviour, ensuring a rapid response from safety personnel.
- ▶ Conduct pre-event briefing for staff on gender sensitivity, harassment prevention, and incident response.
- ▶ Consider creating designated zones or entrances to manage crowds effectively and implement efficient entry and exit protocols that reduce congestion and enhance safety.
- ▶ Customise emergency plans considering the specific demographics, ensuring inclusivity and sensitivity.

Guidelines for local authorities

- ▶ Consider how infrastructure issues can be addressed to support women's sport and spectators, such as the need to modify toilet provision depending on the expected demographic to an event.
- ▶ Implement effective crowd control measures to avoid overcrowding and physical jostling.
- ▶ Implement clear and firm policies against sexism, harassment, and discrimination.
- ▶ Have clarity on bag and security policies for families and those attending with young children, which are sufficiently communicated with spectators ahead of the event, outlining what can and cannot be brought into the venue⁴.
- ▶ Collect feedback from spectators at women's sports and identify and address any concerns or suggestions raised.

Guidelines for regional authorities

- ▶ Develop regional standards aligned with national policies, focusing on gender-sensitive safety and service provisions.
- ▶ Organise region-wide training programmes focused on gender sensitivity, harassment prevention, and incident response.
- ▶ Establish systems for collating feedback and best practice on a regional level.

Guidelines for national authorities

- ▶ Develop and enforce laws and policies promoting gender equality, harassment prevention, and safe environments in all sports events.
- ▶ Allocate resources for upgrading infrastructure to meet safety standards across venues nationwide.

3. Statistically, more children attend sports events when they are accompanied by women. Emphasis needs also to be on women themselves attending as spectators.

4. With the possibility to provide bag drop facilities free of charge outside the venue.

- ▶ Use data-driven insights to update policies, allocate funds, and develop targeted interventions, along with using and supporting research on women's safety in sports environment.
- ▶ Use targeted messaging celebrating women's sports to enhance pride and engagement and promote positive representation of women athletes and inclusive narratives.
- ▶ Create a standardised national protocol for the prevention of and response to incidents of harassment and gender-based violence at sporting events, ensuring mandatory training for all personnel involved in the sports event.

3. Accessibility (persons with visible and non-visible disabilities) at sports venues

Accessibility encompasses not only physical modifications but also sensory, cognitive, and communication considerations that ensure full participation for individuals with both visible and non-visible disabilities.

Visible disabilities, such as mobility impairments requiring wheelchair access or assistive walking devices, are immediately recognisable. Addressing these needs typically involves infrastructure modifications like ramps, elevators, and accessible seating arrangements. Conversely, non-visible disabilities – such as sensory processing disorders, mental health conditions, intellectual disabilities, or chronic illnesses – are less apparent but equally impactful. Such persons can be affected by the way in which the environment is designed and perceive, process, and respond to this environment, requiring tailored accommodations that often go beyond physical infrastructure.

Fundamental to inclusive design is ensuring physical access throughout the venue. Entrances should feature ramps, automatic doors, and wide pathways to accommodate wheelchairs and mobility aids. Seating should include designated areas that offer clear sightlines and sufficient space for assistive devices. Restrooms must be accessible, equipped with handrails and appropriate fixtures, and signage should be clear, high-contrast, and tactile for easy identification. Efforts to map out unobstructed routes and provide tactile indicators benefit persons with visual impairments.

Sport venues must also cater to individuals with sensory sensitivities. Loud noises, flashing lights, or crowded environments can be overwhelming. Whilst this is to be expected, it should not be a barrier for people to attend. The creation of sensory-friendly zones with controlled lighting and sound levels offers a refuge and removes this impediment from all people attending and enjoying an event. Providing visual and tactile communication aids, such as sign language interpreters, captioning, braille signage, and visual schedules, ensures effective communication. For visitors with cognitive or learning disabilities, clear wayfinding, simple instructions, and supportive staff interactions foster a welcoming environment.

Accessible communication extends beyond physical facilities. Event information should be available in multiple formats, including large print, audio, sign language videos, and accessible websites or apps. Providing advance notice of available accommodations allows individuals to plan their visit confidently. Real-time assistance during events, through signage updates or digital notifications, helps attendees stay informed and engaged.

Creating accessible sport venues is more than fulfilling legal obligations; it is a moral imperative rooted in principles of human rights and social justice. True inclusivity involves thoughtful planning and ongoing commitment to removing barriers that hinder participation. By embracing physical modifications, sensory and cognitive accommodations, staff training, assistive technologies, and accessible communication, sport venues can become spaces where everyone, regardless of disability – visible or not – can enjoy the thrill of the game, connect with their communities, and celebrate the universal spirit of sport.

Guidelines

Guidelines for venue operators and/or event organisers

- ▶ Conduct an accessibility audit to evaluate how accessible the venue is, from a physical and sensory and cognitive accessibility point of view. Work with local accessibility groups and experts to review the audit and make adjustments to ensure the venue is fully accessible.
- ▶ Ensure all communications and information – whether pre, during or post-event – are available in accessible formats. This should include having specific accessibility information, such as maps of the venue outlining accessible routes, and areas of accessible toilets and other facilities.
- ▶ Implement inclusive facilities and services, for example creating quiet zones or sensory-friendly areas for spectators with sensory sensitivities and inclusive facilities with accessible features and privacy considerations.

- ▶ Consider how people who require medical equipment and resources to be brought with them when attending a stadium may be negatively impacted by searching safety and security arrangements, and work with them to identify how this can be properly addressed without negatively impacting the service requirements for the spectator and the safety and security arrangements for the venue. A standard list of medical equipment and devices, accompanied by a medical report, that spectators are authorised to be brought to a stadium should be agreed upon with the sports authorities and communicated to spectators prior to the event.
- ▶ Provide information about accessibility features well in advance via website, tickets, and at the venue and use multiple communication methods (visual, auditory, digital) to reach diverse needs.
- ▶ Encourage clubs to appoint a Disability Access Officer (DAO), who is responsible for improving access for persons with disabilities (both on matchdays and non-matchdays) and ensuring continued progress in this critical area.

Guidelines for local authorities

- ▶ Put in place systems to monitor accessibility audits conducted in venues and to review how recommendations found in these are implemented.
- ▶ Ensure there are identifiable staff available to support disabled supporters, who are fully trained and to assist.
- ▶ Conduct regular training with all event personnel (including stewards, security personnel, facilities staff and refreshment servers) in relation to disability sensitivity, including respectful interactions and understanding visible and non-visible disabilities.
- ▶ Regularly review accessibility processes, gathering feedback from spectators on what improvements could be made to support a safer, more secure and welcoming environment for all.

Guidelines for regional authorities

- ▶ Develop regional standards, aligned with any national disability and accessibility legislation, particularly focusing on the need to conduct accessibility audits.
- ▶ Review the findings of accessibility audits and implementation of recommendations on a regional basis, providing funding or grants to support renovations if appropriate.
- ▶ Implement regional forums for both venue operators and users in order to gather feedback and promote best practice.

Guidelines for national authorities

- ▶ Enforce laws mandating accessible facilities at all public sports venues and develop national standards for accessibility.
- ▶ Allocate funding for infrastructure upgrades and innovation in assistive technologies, along with supporting research on best practices for inclusive design.
- ▶ Promote awareness campaigns to change societal perceptions about disability.

4. Public health issues at sports events

Sports events are a vital part of cultural, social, and recreational life, attracting millions of spectators worldwide. They promote physical activity, foster community spirit, and can generate significant economic benefits. However, alongside their many positives, sports events also pose substantial public health challenges. They attract large crowds, creating complex environments that can amplify public health risks. Managing these issues effectively is crucial to ensure the safety and well-being of athletes, spectators, organisers, and the broader community.

One of the most pressing public health concerns at large sports gatherings is the risk of infectious disease transmission. Crowded environments with close contact facilitate the spread of contagious illnesses such as respiratory infections, including influenza, and/or gastroenteritis outbreaks, such as norovirus. In more extreme cases, pandemics, like that experienced during COVID-19, have a significant impact on the safe management of stadiums. During pandemics or outbreaks, failure to implement adequate infection control strategies can lead to widespread illness beyond the event itself, impacting public health at a national and even global level.

Public health considerations at stadiums go beyond infections. Medical emergencies, such as heart attacks or strokes, are not uncommon at venues. These often require urgent response from medical teams within the

stadium which, on occasion, has led to play being suspended whilst the incident is dealt with. Ensuring adequate medical support, hydration stations, and emergency response plans is essential to mitigate these risks. Failure to do so not only endanger individuals but can also strain local healthcare facilities and emergency services.

Safety and security staff and volunteers, provided that they are adequately trained and certified by professionals, can also administer first aid - namely on cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) -, clear the area and ensure coordination with the medical teams on site to provide immediate care for the affected person. Defibrillators and other critical medical emergency tools should be sufficient and available to be used on time, in and around the venue.

Environmental and climate-related hazards are additional concerns. Extreme weather conditions such as heat-waves, cold snaps, storms, or heavy rainfall can threaten health and safety. Overexposure to heat, for example, can cause heat exhaustion or heatstroke, particularly when combined with high attendance and limited shade or cooling options, and access to drinkable water is therefore essential. Effective weather monitoring and contingency planning are necessary to protect health during such adverse conditions.

Managing these numerous public health issues requires a coordinated approach involving multiple stakeholders, including health authorities, event organisers, security agencies, and the local community. Pre-event planning should incorporate risk assessments, infrastructure improvements, and staff training. During the event, surveillance, prompt medical response, and clear communication are key to addressing health emergencies. Post-event evaluations help identify lessons learned to improve future safety measures.

Guidelines

Guidelines for venue operators and/or event organisers

- ▶ Conduct a comprehensive risk assessment during the pre-event planning stage to evaluate potential health risks and assess venue infrastructure and health service capacity.
- ▶ Use the risk assessment to develop a Medical Plan, as part of the venue's Operations Manual. This should include an outline the numbers, location and duties of all members of the medical and first aid team, outline procedures for responding to and managing incidents, and procedures for transferring individuals from specific areas of the stadium, for example upper tiers of large stands. It should also establish clear communication channels and ensure the availability of medical supplies, first aid stations and medical rooms and emergency evacuation routes.
- ▶ Implement hygiene measures, infection prevention and control procedures. This includes installing adequate handwashing stations and sanitisers throughout the venue, improve ventilation systems and regularly disinfect high-touch surfaces and shared facilities. These procedures can be escalated dependent on the level of risk, for example implementing crowd flow measures to avoid congestion and promote physical distancing if appropriate.

Guidelines for local authorities

- ▶ Ensure that public health planning considers the specific needs of vulnerable or underrepresented groups, such as children, elderly people, persons with disabilities, pregnant women, and persons with chronic illnesses. This includes providing air-conditioned rest areas, accessible hydration points, specialised mobility support, and clear, multilingual communication about the location of medical services and emergency procedures.
- ▶ Implement and monitor compliance with local requirements around public health issues.
- ▶ Ensure that sufficient information is provided to venues and the public around public health matters and initiatives that are implemented.
- ▶ Provide clear, accessible information on health protocols and safety measures before and during the event.
- ▶ Coordinate with public health authorities for guidelines, updates, and support.

Guidelines for regional authorities

- ▶ Develop co-ordination processes, including region-wide protocols for dealing with public health emergencies and standardising safety measures at venues.
- ▶ Conduct training programmes with the aim of promoting best practices in infection control, injury prevention and emergency response.
- ▶ Disseminate consistent messaging on a regional basis around health awareness and infection control.

- ▶ Collate data for regional health assessments and share best practices and lessons learned to improve protocols.

Guidelines for national authorities

- ▶ Develop national policies on public health at mass gatherings, potentially supported by legal and regulatory standards.
- ▶ Create standardised protocols applicable nationwide for infection control and injury management at stadiums.
- ▶ Provide central support for public health emergencies, including co-ordination and assistance at a regional and local level.

Conclusions

Strengthening the Safety and Service pillars of the Saint-Denis Convention was essential following the first two years of the Committee on Safety and Security at Sports Events (T-S4) being launched, structured, and becoming fully operational.

The guidelines presented in this document are a culmination of the work of many over the last two years.

The research carried out under the project provided valuable insight into current safety and service arrangements across Europe. Representatives of national delegations and international organisations contributed by responding to comprehensive questionnaires. The findings and good practices were discussed and analysed in detail, helping to map the implementation of safety and service measures at sports events.

Through awareness-raising workshops, conferences, Training of Trainers sessions, and interactive group exercises led by the Sports Grounds Safety Authority (SGSA), participants were equipped with practical resources and tools to support progress in their respective countries - understanding the spectator journey, providing quality service, training event personnel, enhancing communication, and ensuring that every spectator can enjoy the event safely and without fear or worry.

The guidelines outlined provide a map for how member states can implement and enhance safety and service in stadiums, improving the well-being of all who attend.

Last but not the least, these guidelines should be the basis for the Saint-Denis Committee to adopt new or refine the existing recommendation, with the ultimate aim of reaching the desired balanced integration between the three pillars of the Convention.

The EU – CoE joint project Balance S4 “Strengthening the Safety and Service pillars of the Saint-Denis Convention” was launched in January 2024 and is running until December 2025. It is co-funded by the European Union and the Council of Europe and is implemented by the Sport Division of the Council of Europe. This joint project is constructed under the scope of the Saint-Denis Convention, which promotes since 2016 a multi-agency integrated approach to ensure high levels of safety, security and service at sports events (S4). The Convention and the Balance S4 joint project are set to meet the legitimate expectations of all individuals: to attend sports events safely, securely, in a welcoming manner, in an environment where human rights and the rule of law are respected and violence and disorder tackled, both inside and outside of sports venues.

As most of the knowledge and expertise until now has been concentrated on the security pillar of the Saint-Denis Convention, this joint project is therefore answering the need to strengthen the safety and service pillars, aiming at reaching the necessary balance between them.

Through comprehensive research, extensive consultations, and active engagement with national and international stakeholders, the project has provided valuable insights into current safety and service practices across Europe. This process facilitated a detailed mapping of existing measures, identified best practices, and highlighted areas for improvement. Key activities, such as awareness-raising workshops, conferences, video interviews with experts, Training of Trainers sessions, and interactive exercises led by the Sports Grounds Safety Authority (SGSA), equipped participants with practical resources and tools. The present document is aimed to deepen the understanding of the spectator journey, enhance safety and service quality, and foster effective communication.

The member states of the European Union have decided to link together their know-how, resources and destinies. Together, they have built a zone of stability, democracy and sustainable development whilst maintaining cultural diversity, tolerance and individual freedoms. The European Union is committed to sharing its achievements and its values with countries and peoples beyond its borders.

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The Council of Europe is the continent's leading human rights organisation. It comprises 46 member states, including all members of the European Union. All Council of Europe member states have signed up to the European Convention on Human Rights, a treaty designed to protect human rights, democracy and the rule of law. The European Court of Human Rights oversees the implementation of the Convention in the member states.

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