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BalS4(2025)07



## **“Strengthening the Safety and Service pillars of the Saint-Denis Convention”**

**Time for Action!**

**4 December 2025**

Stade de La Meinau  
Strasbourg  
France

**Concept note and Programme**

## Context

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. These initiatives aimed to deepen the understanding of the spectator journey, enhance safety and service quality, and foster effective communication.

## Benchmarks

A first awareness-raising workshop on **safety and service** at sports events was held on 25 April 2024, with the specific objective of increasing the knowledge on this theme and fostering exchanges among the Parties and Observers to the Saint-Denis Committee.

An awareness-raising workshop regarding the importance of **safety** at sports events took place on 5 December 2024 at the Stade de la Meinau, home of the football team Racing Club de Strasbourg Alsace (RCSA). It provided the opportunity to visit the stadium, see the achieved and ongoing works, discuss with the architects, l’Eurometropole de Strasbourg and the beneficiary club the different safety and service topics in a practical manner, look at the challenges encountered, and witness the solutions found with the beneficiaries during renovations. Participants saw first-hand the measures of safety and service being taken into account when renovating a sports venue, discussing with the sports community the implementation of safety and service measures seeking to ensure safer, more secure, and more welcoming sports events.

The **Training of Trainers (ToT) on Safety** at sports events took place on 21 March 2025 at the Telecom Center Athens (previously named O.A.K.A. Indoor Basketball Arena) in Athens, Greece, the home basketball venue of Panathinaikos AKTOR Basketball Club. Being at the venue enabled the trainers-participants to discuss safe capacity, risk management and assessment, physical infrastructure (P factor), safety management (S factor), Zone Ex, and collaborate through sessions, practical work in groups, and venue visits. Participants were able to simulate the conditions to develop effective international, national, and local partnerships in order to prepare a balanced multi-agency integrated approach to safety at sports events in their countries, further being required to propose safety training plans specific to their national conditions.

The **Training of Trainers (ToT) on Service** at sports events took place on-line on 6 – 7 May 2025 and provided trainers - representatives of the Parties and Observers to the Saint-Denis Convention with the knowledge and tools to train and support others in their country in relation to the service pillar of the Saint-Denis Convention. The trainers who attended this ToT will conduct similar training sessions in their own countries to share the knowledge and guidance outlined in the ToT session, using the principles described in the *Balance S4 Safety and Service Essentials* document published in April 2024. Through interactive group exercises and discussions led by the Sports Grounds Safety Authority (SGSA) trainers, participants were equipped with practical resources and tools to understand the spectator journey, provide service essentials, train the event personnel, enhance communication and make sure that every spectator is able to enjoy the day without fear or worry. Nikolaos Kapnoulas, Director of Operations and Hospitality of the Telecom Center Athens (previously named O.A.K.A. Indoor Basketball Arena) and Bernhard Kiener, Safety and Security Manager of the Swiss Football Association together with Dr. Alain Brechbühl, project manager at the Research Centre for Violence at Sporting Events at the Institute for Criminal Law and Criminology of the University of Bern presented case study examples.

The **Balance S4 Conference** took place on 5 June 2025 at the Palais de l'Europe in Strasbourg, to present an overview of the Balance S4 activities, the findings and good practices revealed by Balance S4 research on safety and service arrangements across Europe with the national delegations, the fans experiences and expectations, lessons learned from the ToTs, and ways to deliver and facilitate training in home countries. Presenters draw attention to the importance of thinking about every group's specific needs when implementing safety and service measures, discussed the methodology for developing the *Balance S4 Guidelines* and the *Balance S4 Training Toolkit*, the composition of the Expert Group and planned the observation missions during two matches of the UEFA Women's EURO 2025 in Geneva and Zürich in July 2025.

**Expert Group for Drafting the Balance S4 Guidelines and Balance S4 Training Toolkit** started the work after the conference. The kick off meeting was on 4 July at UEFA headquarters in Nyon and observed two matches (with visits of the fan zones and the fan walk) during the UEFA Women's EURO 2025 in Geneva (Sweden – Denmark) and Zürich (France - England) in July 2025. Between August and October 2025, the Expert Group met online for consultations, drafting, and on 15 September discussed the final drafts for documents production. Discussions were initiated with the University of Liverpool for the creation of the Balance S4 e-learning course.

### **"Balance S4: Time for Action" event**

The event will take place in Strasbourg, France, at the Stade de la Meinau, on 4 December 2025 from 9:00 to 13:00. It will follow the 8th meeting of the Committee on Safety and Security at Sports Events (T-S4) that takes place on 2 - 3 December and will be in-person only.

The location has been chosen to benefit from the fact that the Stade de la Meinau, the home of Racing Club Strasbourg Alsace (RCSA), has been undergoing renovations. This will provide an opportunity to visit the stadium, witness the achieved works, discuss the safety topics in a practical manner, look at the challenges encountered, and solutions found with the beneficiaries. Moreover, the event will mark a year from the awareness-raising workshop that also took place at the Stade de la Meinau, enabling participants to witness the progress made during the renovations and discuss the additional challenges that have arisen during the works.

This will be the final event for the Balance S4 joint project, presenting an overview of all the activities organised during the two years, the findings and good practices revealed by the Balance S4 practical approach, the lessons learned from the two tests of the Balance S4 Training Toolkit and ways to deliver and facilitate the trainings on safety and service in home countries. The event

will invite participants to look at the next steps: using the *Balance S4 Guidelines*, *Balance S4 Training Toolkit* and the *Balance S4 e-learning course* after the project ends, the time for their actions to enhance safety and service across Europe.

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, technical assistance and international cooperation. The Saint-Denis Committee, in particular, should oversee the implementation of the guidelines through regular monitoring activities and, where applicable, technical assistance, ensuring that these best practices are incorporated into national strategies, policies and guidance.

The Balance S4 Safety and Service Essentials, Balance S4 Guidelines and Balance S4 Training Toolkit with the Balance S4 e-course are the legacy 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 and other sports venues.

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.

## **Participants**

The event is addressed to the Parties and Observers to the Saint-Denis Convention. Participants will include staff from the Ministries of Sport and Interior (and their national equivalent, depending on the country), police officers from the National Football Information Points (NFIPs), as well as representatives from international sports and supporter' organisations.

Presentations and discussions will be in English only.

## **About the renovation of the Stade de la Meinau**

The renovation of the Stade de la Meinau is a project led by the Eurométropole de Strasbourg, owner and project manager. It is financed by the Eurométropole de Strasbourg, the City of Strasbourg, the Région Grand-Est, the Collectivité européenne d'Alsace and the Racing Club de Strasbourg Alsace (RCSA).

The project management is carried out by:

Populous – commissioned architect

Rey – De Crécy / OTE / Otelio / MAFFEIS engineering / C2Bi

## Draft Programme

### 4 December 2025

Meeting point: Main entrance of the Stade de la Meinau, 12 rue de l'Extenwoerth, Strasbourg, France - near the new pavilion and press/media zone.

*Venue: Salon Rêve Bleu*

09:00 - 09:15	Participants Registration
09:15 - 09:30	Opening session. Introduction. Overview of Balance S4 Project achievements
9:30 – 10:30	Panel discussion: Balance S4 legacy – the Guidelines, the Training Toolkit and Training tests in Portugal and Poland, the e-course with the University of Liverpool. Q & A
<i>10.30 – 11.00</i>	<i>Coffee Break</i>
11.00 – 11:30	Balance S4: Time for action! Priorities for individual member states. What more to be done in the future?
11:30 – 12:30	Panel discussion: La Meinau stadium project after one year. Challenges and solutions. Visit of the Stadium. Safety and Service practical Q & A.
12.30 - 13.00	Closing Ceremony
<i>13.00 – 14:00</i>	<i>Networking Cocktail Reception</i>