

Introduction

■ The concept of “service” includes all measures designed to make football¹ enjoyable and welcoming for all, in sports venues but also in public places where spectators and supporters gather before, during and after the matches. This comprises good catering, toilet facilities, adequate signage, etc., but is above all focused on the manner in which people are greeted and treated throughout the event.

Definition from the Convention

■ The definition of the term “service” is given by Article 3 of the Convention: “The term ‘service measures’ shall mean ‘any measure designed and implemented with the primary aim of making individuals and groups feel comfortable, appreciated and welcome when attending a football match or other sports event, inside or outside of a stadium’.”

Service is key to enhance Safety and Security

■ Service-orientation has a positive impact on various aspects of the event:

- ▶ Helping fans for their journey to and from the sports venue makes them feel respected and appreciated;
- ▶ Offering appropriate facilities and good stewarding in sports venues makes supporters feel welcome;
- ▶ Promoting fan event experience creates good atmosphere among spectators; and
- ▶ Developing dialogue between the police and supporters may isolate potential troublemakers.

■ A weak or bad service has a negative impact on safety and security:

- ▶ Poor viewing can cause crowd movement and/or standing in seated areas;
- ▶ Poor or dirty facilities for catering, toilets, etc., may encourage non-compliant behaviour;
- ▶ Long queues at entrance may cause irritation and impatience and pushing against the gates;
- ▶ Poor confiscation and deposit policies show disrespect and may provoke irritation and non-compliance; and
- ▶ Fences make fans feel like prisoners.

” Well-treated and well-cared spectators are less likely to cause trouble

■ In short, supporters treated with respect are far more likely to respond in kind. This is especially the case when crowd management operations (inside and outside of venues) are perceived to be appropriate and proportionate, rather than indiscriminate or abusive, in character.



Fan zones, public viewing areas and organised gatherings of supporters in city centres contribute for welcoming and enjoyable sporting events for all

1. The text of this factsheet refers specifically to football matches but can, where appropriate, also be applied in connection with other sports events, where considered necessary or appropriate by the national authorities.

■ However, service is neither a soft option nor an alternative to tackling misbehaviour or excluding troublemakers. It is complementary to effective crowd management (inside and outside of sports venues) and to the implementation of an effective exclusion strategy. Service-related good practices cannot be considered in isolation from the safety and security good practices necessary to develop and implement an integrated, multi-agency approach to safety, security and service.

■ Service is integral to in-venue safety and security operations. This means that a customer-oriented approach should be considered as transversal, i.e. underpinning all stages from planning to delivery.

Service entails dialogue and communication with supporters

■ Effective communication lies at the heart of the service concept. Developing and implementing an effective supporter dialogue strategy is key to develop a service approach by:

- ▶ ensuring an open and transparent dialogue between supporters, clubs, police and authorities on a short-term (match preparation) and long-term basis (problem-solving); and
- ▶ setting-up a thorough engagement with representatives of supporter groups, supporter-focused initiatives and experts in supporter dynamics.



Open and transparent dialogue between supporters and police is key to develop a service approach

” Supporters should be seen by other stakeholders as part of the solution and not only as part of the problem



Sports venues should be welcoming to all communities, including minorities, families, children and elderly people

Service promotes inclusiveness

■ The need for football events to be inclusive and attractive to all parts of the society is a key component of the service-oriented approach. The football experience (inside the sports venue but also outside: in the fan zones, public viewing areas, city centres, etc.) should be welcoming and enjoyable for everyone, irrespective of their ethnic/national origin, colour, citizenship, disability, age, religion, language, sexual orientation and gender identity, or based on any other grounds.

■ A service-oriented approach should aim at ensuring an inclusive environment that reflects wider society, namely by bringing children, the elderly and persons with disabilities to sports events. This diversity positively shapes the behaviour of spectators and may significantly reduce the level of tension between them and the safety and security personnel.

Service cares about combatting racism and any other form of discrimination

■ By promoting inclusiveness, an effective service-oriented approach also uses sports events as a means to prevent and tackle racism, hate speech and any kind of discrimination.

■ The national law should prohibit, in and around sports venues, racist insults and chanting, racist or political extremist banners and symbols, and the wearing, distribution or selling of racist and other discriminatory banners, flags, leaflets or images.

■ Sanctions and penalties imposed as a result of racist and other discriminatory behaviour should be proportionate but sufficiently robust to prevent incidents and deter potential offenders. When possible, they should include an educational dimension.

Service is both a short and long-term goal and investment

Alongside the weekly work of public and football authorities to enhance dialogue and communication with supporters, the concept of service also entails a wider and longer-term perspective, incorporating a range of preventative, social and educational initiatives designed to influence behaviour and enhance links between football or other sports and the wider community, including supporters.

How can service be embraced and promoted?

A number of European good practices illustrate how States and sports organisations are investing in strengthening the service dimension of sports events.

Increasing the number of Supporter Liaison Officers (SLOs) and Disability Access Officers (DAOs)

Supporter Liaison Officers (SLOs) act as a bridge between football clubs and supporters by providing a two-way flow of information around key topical issues.

Their role is to guarantee that fans' voices are heard within every club's internal structures while working to ensure an enjoyable match day experience for everyone in the sports venue.

SLOs work with many different departments within a football or other sports club but their expertise is focused on supporters. They must have a deep insight into their club's fan culture as well as the capacity to establish and maintain trusting relationships with different stakeholders, including a variety of supporter groups, club staff, police representatives, social workers and their counterparts at other clubs.

SLOs help to improve communication between the various parties involved in football and provide a link with supporters. They contribute to empowerment of and encourage self-regulation by supporters, as well as promote respect and tolerance for other supporters and for minorities who attend football matches.

” Dialogue and communication with supporters facilitate crowd management and a welcoming environment and defuse tensions and potential conflict



Clubs should encourage supporters' activities to create a positive atmosphere in the sports venue

SLOs also work with the club's disability access officer (DAO) to help improve access to stadiums for supporters with disabilities and should ensure that their sports venue is welcoming to all communities (including ethnic minorities, LGBTI+ supporters, families, children, elderly people, refugees, etc.) and that all forms of discriminatory behaviour are prohibited and prosecuted.²

The DAOs are responsible for supporting the provision of inclusive and accessible facilities and services, on both matchdays and non-matchdays, and fostering progress in this field. Their responsibilities are twofold: they advise the club/sports venue on access and inclusion issues, and they act as the dedicated point of contact for disabled fans' queries.³

Football clubs competing in European club competitions are required to appoint a supporter liaison officer (SLO) under UEFA Club Licensing and Financial Fair Play Regulations (Article 35) since 2010. It is important to mention the fact that many football associations and leagues have since made the appointment of an SLO a requirement of their own domestic licensing process. Likewise, Article 35 bis of the same UEFA Regulations, in their 2015 edition, requires clubs to appoint a dedicated DAO.

2. For more information on Hate speech, racism and other discriminatory behaviour in sport, see Factsheet 11.
3. For more information on Accessibility and Inclusiveness at sports events, see Factsheet 14.

Promoting the signing of Supporters' Charters

■ Supporters' charters are agreements between football clubs and their supporters outlining what each party can expect from the other. The supporters' charters not only impose obligations on supporters, but also set out clubs' obligations towards supporters, with the aim of achieving a balance between the interests of the two parties involved.

■ These charters can cover a wide range of issues that impact on the supporters' match-day experience, including merchandising, fair and socially inclusive ticketing system, supporters' activities to create a positive atmosphere in the sports venue; combating racism, intolerance and violence; supporters with disabilities; consumption of drinks and snacks in and around the stadium, etc.

■ They increase the recognition of the need for the interests of supporters to be taken into consideration in the overall policy of football clubs and they generally improve communication and the relationship between the different sections of the club and the supporters.

■ Supporters' charters are even more effective when the club representatives involved in producing a supporters' charter have enough influence and decision-making power within their club and the supporters' delegation broadly represents and is accepted by all supporters.



Appropriate areas for use and refreshment for supporters are an important part of the "service" pillar

Recognising the importance of Service principles at major football events

■ All parties involved in managing a football event, including event organisers, municipalities and the police, should collectively recognise the importance of a customer-oriented approach, that well-informed, well-cared-for supporters feel comfortable and that people who feel comfortable remain relaxed. They should arrange for a high level of spectator welcoming both during matches and during free time before or after matches and ensure that visiting supporters are treated in the same way as home supporters.

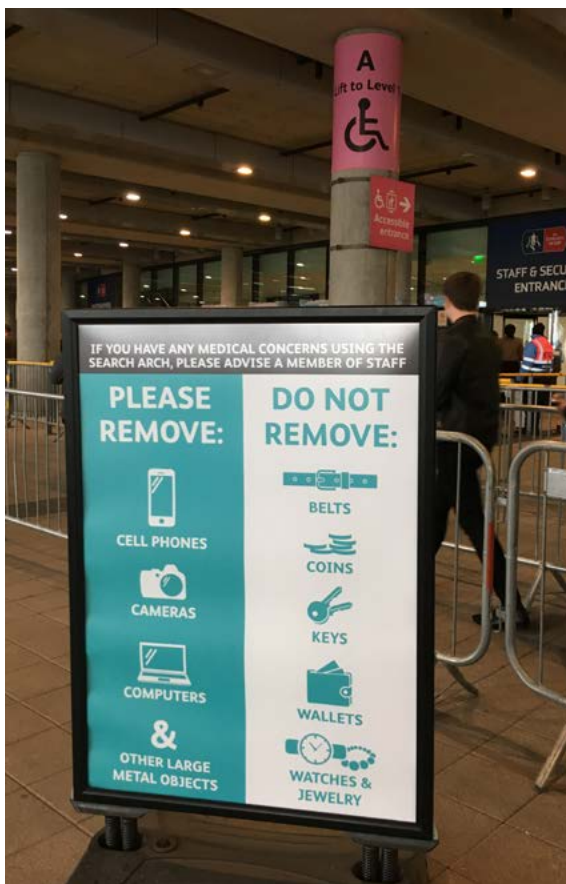
” The vast majority of spectators want to enjoy the football event freely in a good-natured and peaceful manner

■ Football associations, football clubs and other relevant bodies, public or private, should be encouraged, when organising major football events, to recognise the social and festive nature of football events. They should acknowledge that supporters expect not only an interesting event but also adequate services, namely decent sanitary facilities, hygienic catering, and clear information and arrangements for a sufficient quantity and quality of food and non-alcoholic drinks. They should recognise that the distribution and pricing of match tickets is a sensitive issue and that it is necessary to distribute tickets in as fair, equitable and transparent manner as possible, within the constraints of the security and safety requirements.



Effective information to supporters, namely through the venue's public address system, contributes to decrease risks and potential conflicts

■ Municipalities should be encouraged to participate actively in the preparation and management of major football events, in particular to ensure the co-ordinated planning and collaboration between the different agencies responsible for different aspects of the organisation of major sports events. They should organise side events for supporters between matches or for those who could not attend the event, and also ensure that local communities and businesses are involved in the event. They should make proper arrangements, in close co-ordination with the organising committee and police, for local transport to facilitate the influx of supporters, ensure the smooth circulation of supporters, by whatever means of transportation is chosen, and provide for adequate accommodation and sufficient catering to meet the needs of all income groups. Sufficient information for visitors should also be provided.



Adequate signage and information for supporters, both inside and outside sports venues, are key to ensure a safe, secure and welcoming environment

Supporting Fan embassies

Fan embassies are managed and operated by supporter organisations and intended to offer a means for meeting the specific needs of visiting supporters in connection with a football event. They are usually associated with football tournaments but can also be deployed for international and domestic matches where a significant number of visiting supporters are involved.

Fan embassies provide visiting supporters with a focal point in the host city or town centre for obtaining a wide range of information and assistance, including the location of areas designated for use and refreshment for visiting supporters, local travel and transport arrangements, ticket availability, accommodation, local leisure activities, any planned screenings of matches, theft or loss of documents, health care and, importantly, policing strategies and tolerance levels, etc.

Fan embassies also provide a channel of communication between supporters and the local police and other authorities, and are a potentially effective means for rapidly and efficiently relaying up-to-date information on any emerging or changing situations.

Fan embassies can also represent the views of the supporters to the authorities if problems arise and take proactive initiatives to build goodwill between different supporter groups and with local minority ethnic communities.



” The Saint-Denis Convention is the only legally-binding international instrument on safety, security and service at sports events

The Saint-Denis Convention

The Council of Europe Convention on an integrated approach to safety, security and service at football matches and other sports events was opened for signature on 3 July 2016 in Saint-Denis (France), on the occasion of the UEFA EURO 2016 championship. It entered into force on 1st November 2017 after 3 ratifications – France, Monaco and Poland – and now has a large number of [States Parties](#).

It promotes an integrated multi-agency approach, covering three complementary and interdependent pillars: safety, security and service. It is the only legally-binding international instrument establishing institutional co-operation between all relevant stakeholders to make football matches and other sports events safer, more secure and more welcoming.

Useful links

1. **Saint-Denis Convention**
<https://www.coe.int/en/web/sport/safety-security-and-service-approach-convention>
2. **Recommendations T-S4:**
 - i. Rec(2021)1: Recommended good practices on safety, security and service
 - ii. Rec(2022)1: Model structure of a national strategy on safety, security and service
 - iii. Rec(2022)2: Model national legislative and regulatory framework on safety, security and service<https://www.coe.int/en/web/sport/t-s4-recommendations>
3. To learn more about the Convention and Recommendation Rec(2021)1, you can register for the following open online courses:
 - i. MOOC on Human Rights in Sport (available in English, Russian, Slovak and Spanish)
<http://help.elearning.ext.coe.int/course/index.php?categoryid=590>
 - ii. MOOC on Safety, Security and Service at Sports Events (available in English, Polish and Portuguese)
<https://pjp-eu.coe.int/en/web/security-safety-sport/pros4-e-learning-enrolment-form>