



THE SAINT-DENIS CONVENTION IN A NUTSHELL

The Council of Europe Convention on an Integrated Safety, Security and Service Approach at Football Matches and Other Sports Events (Saint-Denis Convention, CETS No. 218) is the only international legally binding instrument to address the organisation of sports events by establishing an integrated approach based on three interdependent pillars: safety, security and service. This convention strives to strengthen co-operation between all public and private stakeholders, pursuing a multi-agency approach, including supporters and local communities who live or work around sports venues, in order to provide a safe, secure and welcoming environment at football matches and other sports events and to keep sports events accessible to all.

Freedom and security are fundamental principles and essential goals for the Council of Europe. These values need to be promoted and respected in a balanced way, like other fundamental rights and freedoms enshrined in the European Convention on Human Rights (ETS No. 5), namely in the context of sports events.

The Saint-Denis Convention aims at promoting an integrated approach to safety, security and service at football matches and other sports events. These three independent and overlapping pillars are interrelated and need, therefore, to be balanced. They are not designed to act in isolation.

Co-operation is one of the key activities underpinning the Council of Europe's action and its capacity to address common problems and new challenges to human rights and fundamental freedoms, the rule of law and democracy. The Saint-Denis Convention aims at fostering co-operation and sharing good practices and lessons learned between all relevant stakeholders involved in the organisation of sports events, from the local to the international level.

Recommended good practices

The committee monitoring the convention, also known as the "Saint-Denis Committee", has released three recommendations to complement and expand on policies and recommended good practices. These are as follows:

- ▶ T-S4 Recommendation Rec (2021) 1, which describes the convention in detail and outlines how to implement it by presenting established and recommended good practices on safety, security and service, including a checklist that comprises all the key measures in these three areas;
- ▶ T-S4 Recommendation Rec (2022) 1, which supports states parties in complying with their obligation to develop national and local strategies on safety, security and service at sports events, by providing them with a model structure in 10 chapters;

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- T-S4 Recommendation Rec (2022) 2, which invites states parties to ensure that their legal, regulatory or administrative frameworks clarify the roles and responsibilities of the relevant public and private agencies, so that states that need it can adopt or refine their national laws and regulations on safety, security and service at sports events, according to the provisions of the Saint-Denis Convention.

An international platform to set benchmarks

As of January 2025, 31 states have ratified the convention and 8 additional states have signed it since it was opened for signature on 3 July 2016 in Saint-Denis (France). Council of Europe member states, non-European states and international organisations and associations also participate in the Saint-Denis Committee as observers. The committee is thus a unique platform for co-operation between all stakeholders involved in the organisation of safe, secure and welcoming football matches and other sports events.

Monitoring activities

Monitoring is at the core of the Council of Europe's activities and the Saint-Denis Committee. Bi-annual monitoring questionnaires, thematic questionnaires, monitoring visits and evaluations of major sporting events – such as the FIFA World Cup, the UEFA European Championships or the Olympic and Paralympic Games – are the four most relevant tools available to monitor the level of compliance, support states parties in better implementing the convention and adopt or refine standards.

A didactic toolkit

The toolkit includes 16 factsheets covering as many relevant topics and is “all you need to know” on the Saint-Denis Convention. It is accessible to both experts and the general public. It

outlines the best practices states can implement to ensure the safety, security and service of all at sports events, while also serving the public and making sport welcoming and accessible to all. This toolkit is not limited to explaining the three pillars of the Saint-Denis Convention – safety, security and service – but also focuses on how states can combat racism and discrimination at sports events, how human rights connect to the Saint-Denis Convention and even how to promote accessibility and inclusiveness at sports events.

A pedagogical online training course

The objective of the massive open online course (MOOC) is to introduce participants to the Saint-Denis Convention and the associated Council of Europe recommendations. In eight modules, the online course addresses the main challenges faced by all stakeholders of a sports event. This course is available in English, Polish and Portuguese. This e-learning tool is designed for government agencies, sports events organisers, safety and security officers and the general public.

An overview of the situation in Europe

There is an online database (“country profiles”) that provides a list of countries that have ratified the convention, along with detailed information on the institutions responsible for sport and security, major sports events, supporter organisations, the legal framework and national strategies. It also highlights the major risks involved in each country. This list is available to anyone interested in learning more about the specific actions each state is taking to implement the Saint-Denis Convention.

For more in-depth information on the Saint-Denis Convention, please see the website at www.coe.int/en/web/sport/safety-security-and-service-approach-convention



www.coe.int/sport

Contact: Sport.t-s4@coe.int