Safety: certification, maximum safety capacity and European standards

Introduction

Article 5 of the Saint-Denis Convention provides that the signatory parties undertake to provide a safe and secure environment for all participants and spectators. To this end, it is necessary for the competent public authorities to take charge of stadium approval and inspection procedures,[1] as well as certification arrangements.

Safety must be an absolute priority at every stage of the organisation, from the design phase of the infrastructures, through the running of the sports event, to the post-event evaluation. This is why all safety measures must comply with national and international standards and best practices.

Certification and inspection

▬▬ In most European countries, football stadia must obtain a licence from an independent and competent authority. This authority verifies that the stadium is suitable for hosting sports events. This requires that the stadium complies with national standards, as well as all applicable legal and regulatory provisions.

▬▬ When certifying a stadium, it is important to ensure transparency and credibility. The safety of stadia is of paramount importance, which is why the certification procedure must be carried out regularly and must also be accompanied by various inspections of the infrastructure and overlaid with high levels of safety management.

▬▬ Inspections aim to limit potential risks to spectators and staff by identifying any technical or material deficiencies. The inspection procedures make it possible to check that the safety management policies and procedures are suitable and sufficient, and that all installations, equipment and all physical and technical infrastructures are safe, functional and fit for purpose.

> Stadium licensing, certification and inspection arrangements are essential for the delivery of safe and secure sporting events

Big screens located outside stadia are important tools to keep spectators informed and manage their waiting times

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1. The text of this factsheet refers specifically to football stadiums but may, where appropriate, also be applied in relation to other sports venues, such as sports arenas, where the national authorities consider it necessary or appropriate.

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Any system of certification or licencing should reasonably contain the following;

- ► Identification of the issuing authority for the certificate;
- ► Identification of the responsible person who holds the certificate;
- ► Arrangements for consultation and involvement of other bodies with responsibility for spectator safety;
- ► Minimum standards of construction and management for stadiums;
- ► Arrangements for calculating a safe capacity;
- ► Arrangements for dealing with unexpected incidents or emergencies;
- ► Monitoring and inspection regime;
- ► Sanctions and penalties for non-compliance.

Monitoring and inspection

Once a certificate has been issued or self-declared, it is imperative that compliance with any conditions, especially those related to a safe capacity and safety checks, is maintained through all events. An organisation should be identified who will have responsibility for carrying out regular monitoring and inspection to an agreed framework, and a process should be put in place to ensure that any deficiencies are rectified as soon as possible, or where they are safety essential, immediately.

Those issuing the certificate may reasonably consider the frequency of inspections and reissue of certificates and make such time periods a condition of the certificate.

The calculation of the safe capacity of a venue should be an integral component of the safety certificate or licence. Compliance with the safe capacity should be a major part of any inspection regime.

Maximum safety capacity

A stadium should never admit more spectators than its maximum safety capacity allows.

The calculation of the maximum safety capacity is imperative and is a fundamental safety requirement in all football stadiums. It is essential that a competent person be called in to carry out such a calculation. The maximum safe capacity can be determined on the basis of various factors, including:

- ► Spectator flow in and out, that is the calculated entry and exit capacities;
- ► The number of usable seats, that is the seated holding accommodation;
- ► Standing areas capacity, that is the standing holding accommodation; and

Well trained and equipped stewards are essential to anticipate and manage safety risks

- ► The number of spectators that can reach a safe area in case of evacuation, that is the calculated emergency capacity.

Consideration should also be given to the condition of the infrastructure and quality of safety management arrangements and deployment.

> " The maximum safety capacity of a stadium is imperative and is a fundamental safety requirement

The maximum safe capacity must be verified by an independent body during a safety inspection and by the competent authority in charge of the certification procedure.

Stadia vary greatly in terms of date of construction, design, and infrastructure. For this reason, the maximum safe capacity varies from stadium to stadium. In spite of these differences, safety arrangements should never be compromised, regardless of the characteristics of the stadiums.

Once complete, the calculation is adjusted to take account of the efficacy of the stadium safety management arrangements. This evidences the importance of achieving the right balance between a stadium's physical infrastructure and its safety management arrangements. These two crucial elements should therefore be complementary and customised with the safety management arrangements designed to exploit the strengths of the physical infrastructure and to compensate for any weaknesses. Achieving this objective can have a positive impact on the maximum safe capacity calculation.
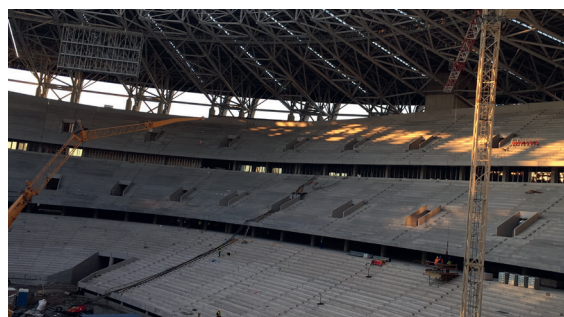
The quality of sports infrastructures is a key element of the safety, security and service of the events, together with the safety management and operation

Balance between physical infrastructure and safety management

In order to ensure that spectators and staff are safe, secure and well looked after, it is imperative to achieve the right balance between the physical infrastructure of the stadium and its safety management systems. A stadium with infrastructure that complies with national safety standards is not enough to protect spectators from potential risks. Safety management systems must be in place in parallel.

It is crucial that safety management systems are designed to take advantage of the strengths of the stadium's physical infrastructure and compensate for its weaknesses. The challenge is to balance and harmonise these two elements. They cannot be considered or treated in isolation. Complementarity and customisation are therefore the key words for ensuring spectator safety.

> The safety of a stadium results from a balance between physical infrastructure and safety management

Effective entry, circulation and exit arrangements are critical to prevent and mitigate crowd management associated risks

When the physical infrastructure is of good quality, spectators feel reassured about their safety and are more inclined to be respectful. On the other hand, if a stadium looks damaged and poorly maintained, spectators may feel devalued and may be less willing to moderate their behaviour. This is why it is important to work on improving stadia and making logistical facilities more attractive, as having comfortable stadia has a positive effect on spectator behaviour and encourages more diverse attendance at sports events.

European standards to be respected in terms of infrastructure

A stadium is made up of a multitude of physical infrastructures and technical elements that must comply with certain European standards established by the European Committee for Standardisation (CEN).

CEN provides the main European references for the design and construction of stadia. Many technical installations and physical infrastructures have to meet specific criteria in terms of size and design.

One example is the importance of standards for seating and standing areas in stadia. The comfort and safety of these facilities can have a positive impact on spectator dynamics.

Reference documents:

PD CEN/TR 15913:2009	Spectator facilities. Layout criteria for viewing area for spectators with special needs
BS EN 13200-8:2017	Spectator facilities. Safety Management
BS EN 13200-7:2014	Spectator facilities. Entry and exit elements and routes
BS EN 13200-6:2018	Spectator facilities. Demountable (temporary) stands
BS EN 13200-5:2006	Spectator facilities. Telescopic stands
BS EN 13200-4:2006	Spectator facilities. Seats. Product characteristics
BS EN 13200-3:2018	Spectator facilities. Separating elements. Requirements
BS EN 13200-1:2012	Spectator facilities. General characteristics for spectator viewing area

Importance of communication facilities

▬ Effective communications within the stadium complex is a pre-requisite of effective safety management arrangements. It is a crucial factor for ensuring that: service provisions are being delivered appropriately; crowd behaviour is monitored in order to detect and respond appropriately in quick time to any emerging threats or tensions; and safety and security incidents, small or large, are dealt with effectively and proportionately and in accordance with the arrangements set out in stadium contingency plans.

▬ The safety management arrangements, including stewarding activities, should be co-ordinated from the stadium control room, which should maintain an efficient means of communication with senior stewards and, where appropriate, stewards.

Radio communications

▬ Depending upon the scale of the stadium safety management arrangements, radio usually forms the main means of communication between the control room and stewards (or stewards' supervisors). If telephone links are not provided, radio might also be used for communication with other personnel such as the designated stadium medical team, turnstile controllers, members of the emergency services and car park or traffic controllers.

Sound and display systems

▬ Public address is an essential component of an integrated approach to safety, security and service in a stadium. It serves these three functions by informing, reassuring and alerting on key aspects of safety in case of overflow.

▬ The public address and display systems also make it possible to explain certain operations that spectators sometimes witness but do not understand. This helps to limit the risks associated with crowd movements, which could be caused by a generalised feeling of panic in the face of a misunderstood situation.

Signage

▬ All stadia should use clearly visible signs to communicate important information to spectators, such as stadium rules, general information and emergency information. Signage should also be accessible to people who are colour-blind and should meet minimum colour contrast ratios.[2]

❞ Signage and public address systems are an essential component of the safety system

Telephone communications – external

▬ In addition to, and independent of, the internal system, telephone lines should also be available for direct and immediate telephone communication between the control room and the fire service and/or other emergency services.

▬ External telephone lines designated for emergency use should not be used for any other purposes.

Intranet and internet communications

▬ Expert advice should be obtained regarding the use of any stadium intranet or internet communication arrangements. Such systems should always be complementary and not a substitute for effective radio and telephone systems.

Checks and inspections

▬ It is crucial for all communication systems and equipment to be checked and thoroughly inspected on a regular basis by a competent person and tested to the full in exercises.

Clear signage and adequate facilities transmit a message that spectators are welcome, and they behave accordingly

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2. For more information on this subject, please refer to Factsheet 14: *Accessibility and Inclusiveness of Sports Events.*

> 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