

Accessible stadiums for all

■ Sport is universal, everyone should have the right to enjoy a sporting experience regardless of nationality, ethnicity, religion, sex, age, gender, sexual orientation or disability.

■ The need to strive to make stadia inclusive is not just an ethical or even a business imperative. It is also a significant safety, security and service consideration. Experience evidences that diverse crowds, reflecting all communities and the population in general, can have a global positive impact on stadium dynamics, and help to provide a more tolerant and peaceful environment.

■ All parties involved in the organisation of a sports event should therefore take concrete steps to make sports venues accessible to all.

What does the Saint-Denis Convention say?

■ Article 5 of the Saint-Denis Convention states that sports venues must provide "inclusive and welcoming environment for all sections of society, including children, the elderly and those with disabilities". To this end, specific facilities, services and policies must be put in place so that all spectators can watch sports events in good conditions.

” Diverse audiences at sports venues contribute to a more tolerant and peaceful climate, which has a positive impact on safety and security

■ Furthermore, the related Recommendation Rec(2021)1 of the Saint-Denis Committee contains many provisions on the subject of accessibility, particularly in Annexes A and C on safety and service measures.

Access to the stadium for disabled spectators

■ Accessibility for disabled people is their right to participate fully in society. Ignoring this responsibility or failing to act on it is a form of discrimination. Access is a fundamental right and a basis for social justice, which includes the recognition of all persons and a true equality of opportunity to participate fully in society. A truly accessible environment is one in which all barriers to integration have been removed.

■ The social model of disability explains how a person effectively becomes disabled by the society around them. Under the social model of disability, physical, sensory, attitudinal, communication, technological and operational barriers within a person's environment 'disable' them, as opposed to any 'impairment' or condition.



Spectators should remove their attitudinal barriers and see a disabled person as their equal

Physical barriers are often the easiest to identify – for example where the entrance to a building is via a flight of stairs then this would become a barrier to a wheelchair user or person with reduced mobility. Attitudinal barriers can often be the most difficult to overcome, as this may require changing a person’s mindset to see a disabled person as their equal rather than someone who needs their help.

From a legal point of view, a person is considered to be disabled if they have a physical or mental ‘impairment’ that has a long-term and significant effect on their ability to carry out ordinary day-to-day activities falling into one or more of the following categories:

- ▶ Mobility
- ▶ Manual dexterity
- ▶ Physical co-ordination
- ▶ Continence
- ▶ Ability to lift, carry or move everyday objects
- ▶ Speech, hearing or eyesight
- ▶ Memory or the ability to concentrate, learn or understand
- ▶ Perception of the risk of physical danger.

” Europe has almost 100 million disabled persons

However, it is important to recognise that people with a progressive ‘impairment’ or one that is corrected by a prosthesis, medication or otherwise and those with a severe disfigurement may also be defined as disabled.

It is also important to recognise that many people live with non-visible disabilities which can affect their ability to fully participate in the stadium experience.

Colour-blindness (colour vision deficiency/impairment or CVD, in particular) is one such invisible disability and is estimated to affect at least 5% of those involved in stadium events, including spectators, staff, emergency services and even players.

Failing to take account of the needs of colour-blind people could even risk their lives, as the simulated colour-blind images below demonstrate.



Normal colour vision



“Colour-blind” simulation

(i) As people with colour-blindness often confuse reds and greens, emergency exit plans can be difficult to understand



Normal colour vision



“Colour-blind” simulation

(ii) Lack of contrast can result in emergency signage being difficult to see in an emergency situation

Meat Feast	Wheat						
Margherita Pizza	Wheat						
Key	Allergen Present						
	Allergen Free						

Normal colour vision

Meat Feast	Wheat						
Margherita Pizza	Wheat						
Key	Allergen Present						
	Allergen Free						

“Colour blind” simulation

(iii) Allergen information provided by colour only can be a direct risk to life as the example above, from a hospitality restaurant in a well-known European stadium, demonstrates



Normal colour vision



"Colour-blind" simulation

iv) Many different colours can be easily confused by people with colour blindness

There are almost 100 million disabled people in Europe. In order not to close the doors of a sporting event to such a large part of the population, concrete physical measures and adequate crowd safety management are needed.

Thinking about inclusive infrastructures

Accessibility must be considered and anticipated from the design phase of the sports venue. In all projects of extension, renovation and modernisation of existing stadiums, everything must be thought out to implement measures to facilitate access for disabled supporters. It is also vital that accessibility is integrated across the full matchday journey, from the point of ticketing and information to reaching the venue and leaving, and everything in between.

In order to improve existing infrastructures, there are many design and management solutions that do not require significant economic costs. The configuration of the stands is crucial for the inclusiveness of the sports venues. Every spectator should be able to enjoy the sporting experience by being integrated into their group of supporters. It is important that disabled spectators can attend events without being separated from their family or friends.

For further information, consult the UEFA and CAFE (Centre for Access to Football in Europe) Good Practice Guide to Creating an Accessible Stadium and Matchday Experience – Access for All: <https://www.cafefootball.eu/access-for-all-guide>.

A new function: the Disability Access Office

The Disability Access Officer (DAO) must ensure that disabled spectators can enjoy an inclusive and welcoming football experience. They should ensure that the stadium and club staff are trained and aware of the integration of disabled people and should work with various relevant departments, ticketing, marketing, communication and human resources to ensure inclusive and accessible services and facilities.

The DAO can provide advice and expertise to the different stakeholders of the organisation, based on the standards set by UEFA and CAFE. They should also liaise with disabled spectators and act as an intermediary with them in order to report any problems to the stadium safety officer.

Since 2015, UEFA has included in its club licensing regulations the obligation to appoint a Disability Access Officer.

For further information, consult the [UEFA's Disability Access Officer Handbook](#).

” The Disability Accessibility Officer (DAO) helps to create an inclusive and welcoming football experience for disabled spectators

European stakeholders committed to inclusiveness and accessibility

Many associations and NGOs across Europe are doing remarkable and essential work to inform sports events organisers of the actions and communication to be favoured to promote the inclusiveness of disabled persons.

Two examples are the work of the [Centre for Access to Football in Europe \(CAFE\)](#) and [Colour-Blind Awareness](#).

CAFE has worked with UEFA to create the Good Practice Guide on Stadium Accessibility and the Disability Access Officer Handbook. These are invaluable tools for any national sport federation, league or club seeking advice on making football stadia or sports arenas and their surroundings accessible to disabled people.

Colour-Blind Awareness works to raise awareness of colour blindness among sports stakeholders. This non-visible disability is characterised by an inability to distinguish certain colours, which can lead to incorrect interpretations of information, especially if signage does not respect minimum colour contrast ratios.

It is clear that in order to make sports venues accessible to all, it is essential that large sections of the population are not excluded from the sporting experience. In Europe, there are many categories of spectators who would benefit from infrastructure and service improvements to make sports venues more accessible. Indeed, it is not only disabled people who would benefit, but also the elderly and young children who are increasingly attending sporting events.

Improvements to the infrastructure of sports venues also allow for better accessibility for the elderly people and children



Il est important de rendre accessibles les enceintes sportives à tous



Disabled spectators should be able to attend sport events without being separated from their family or friends



” 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)
<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>

