

The use of collective bans against visiting football supporters

What does the Convention of Saint-Denis say?

■ The Saint-Denis Convention, in its Article 8, paragraph 1, specifies that "the Parties shall encourage all agencies to develop and pursue a policy of proactive and regular communication with key stakeholders, including supporters' representatives (...), based on the principles of dialogue and with the aim of generating a partnership ethos and positive co-operation as well as identifying solutions to potential problems."

■ The organisation of the travel of visiting supporters is one of the points that must be part of this vast cooperation between the different stakeholders, so that the journeys go as smoothly as possible. Some countries sometimes experience difficulties and, instead of strengthening the integrated approach promoted by the Saint-Denis Convention, decide to

apply collective bans against visiting football supporters. That is why the Committee of the Convention has taken an interest in this subject, launched a wide-ranging European consultation and prepared a report to take stock of this issue across Europe. The Committee then decided, in 2025, to adopt a recommendation to support States Parties to the Convention on the reasonable use of collective bans against visiting football supporters.

What does the Recommendation propose to support States Parties?

■ This Recommendation (2025) 1 of the Saint-Denis Committee asks governments "to adopt or review their laws and policies on collective bans for visiting supporters based on the following five main topics":



1. Legal framework

■ National legislation on the exclusion from sports events should prioritise individual responsibility: only those individuals who cause disturbances should be punished, not the entire groups of supporters. Collective bans – such as preventing all the members of a supporters' group from attending an away match – should only be applied in exceptional cases, with strong evidence that this measure is really necessary to ensure public order and safety, a kind of "last resort" option.

■ In order to avoid the need for collective bans, the use of modern technologies (e.g., electronic ticketing, CCTV and facial recognition) could be used to better identify problematic individuals. However, these tools must always respect human rights and include appropriate safeguards enacted in national law.

■ Any restrictions on supporters' rights must be in line with international standards, including the European Convention on Human Rights, and respect the national law. Such restrictions must pursue a legitimate objective and be applied in a fair, necessary and proportionate manner, without discrimination, and must be open to be challenged in court.

■ States must establish clear rules on how to impose collective bans, explaining the criteria and procedures, while ensuring the possibility to appeal before a court.

■ Finally, punishing an entire group because of a minority of troublemakers is disproportionate and risks to be counterproductive and aggravate relations between supporters and public and sports' authorities.

2. Stakeholder consultation and engagement

■ Governments should set up permanent structures bringing together all parties involved in football and other sports: national and local authorities, police, federations, leagues, clubs and supporters' associations. Good communication in place from the start will help make decisions that are fairer and accepted by all.

■ It is important to regularly consult with supporters or their representatives on stadium safety and security, crowd management and in particular on the issue of travel restrictions. Countries that impose collective bans without discussion should involve supporters and other stakeholders more in the decision-making process, so that the measures are more legitimate and consented.

■ For high-risk matches, the authorities should consult clubs, supporters' organisations and public authorities from the beginning of the decision-making process. This should be the rule and would make it possible to better organise the event, anticipate problems and encourage everyone to respect the rules, while limiting tensions.

3. The exception: high-risk situations

■ Collective bans should only be used in cases of serious risk to public order and security, where the information and dynamic risk assessment prove that there are no alternatives.

■ However, decisions must be taken in a transparent manner to ensure that they are proportionate and justified, based on evidence and clearly and timely informing the supporters concerned.





4. Communication and transparency

■ The authorities must promptly and clearly inform supporters of collective bans when they are issued, preferably immediately after the announcement of matches, to allow them to make arrangements, including for travel, and to be able to challenge this decision if they so wish.

■ The information must be disseminated directly to the clubs, the supporter liaison officers (SLOs) and the supporters' groups themselves, in order to effectively reach the people directly concerned. Decisions must be transparent and well explained to preserve trust and avoid being perceived as arbitrary.

5. Implementation and evaluation

■ National strategies on safety, security and services at sports events (S4) should include guidelines on collective bans against supporters, the effectiveness of which should be regularly evaluated.

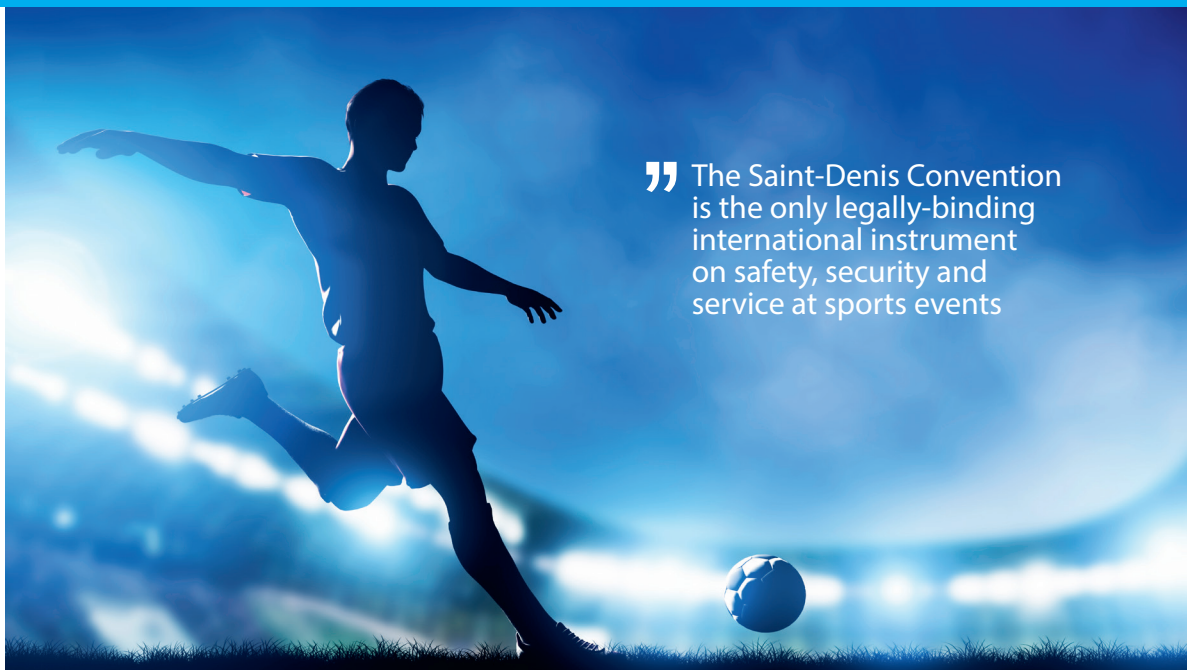
■ National authorities – law enforcement and other competent authorities – should be trained on alternatives to collective bans, favouring appeasement strategies and more targeted measures against risk supporters.

■ Finally, the monitoring mechanism of the Saint-Denis Convention should assess its impact and effectiveness and verify that these bans are not applied excessively or unfairly. The Saint-Denis Committee can also help countries improve their policies in line with international best practices.

Six key points to remember

- ▶ Prioritise individual sanctions
- ▶ Restrict collective bans to exceptional cases
- ▶ Integrate stakeholder involvement in the decision-making process
- ▶ Improve communication timing and enable the right to appeal
- ▶ Ensure accountability and reinforce transparency
- ▶ Establish preventive agreements between stakeholders and strengthen the exchange of information





” 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 1 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 cooperation between all relevant stakeholders to make football matches and other sporting 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. **Add in T-S4 Recommendations:**
 - ▶ Recommendation T-S4 Rec (2025)1 on the use of collective bans against visiting football supporters;
 - ▶ Recommendation T-S4 Rec (2025)2 on the possession and use of pyrotechnic devices at sporting events;
 - ▶ Recommendation T-S4 Rec(2026)1 on combating CBRN-E risks at football matches and other events; and
 - ▶ Recommendation T-S4 Rec(2026)2 on fundamental principles and guidelines on safety and services
<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 Safety, Security and Service at Sports Events** (available in English, Polish, Portuguese and Greek)
<https://help.elearning.ext.coe.int/course/section.php?id=27427>
 - ii. **MOOC on Human Rights in Sport** (available in English, French, German, Arabic, Russian, Slovak and Spanish)
<https://help.elearning.ext.coe.int/course/index.php?categoryid=847>