

**COMMITTEE ON SAFETY AND SECURITY AT SPORTS  
EVENTS (T-S4)**

**COUNCIL OF EUROPE CONVENTION ON AN  
INTEGRATED SAFETY, SECURITY AND SERVICE  
APPROACH AT FOOTBALL MATCHES AND OTHER  
SPORTS EVENTS**

COUNCIL OF EUROPE



CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

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## **Saint-Denis Convention (CETS No. 218)**

### **Committee on Safety and Security at Sports Events**

#### **Advisory Group on standard-setting and legal issues (T-S4 LI)**

### **Report on the questionnaire on collective bans against away football supporters**

## **Executive summary**

## Executive summary

This report provides a snapshot of the use of collective bans against away supporters at football events during the 2022/23 or 2021/22 seasons, across Europe. The data were collected through an online questionnaire issued to the Parties and Observers (State and non-State) to the Saint-Denis Convention, with both quantitative and open-ended questions.

### Key findings

- Absence of collective stadium bans in most states: the large majority of states do not have collective stadium bans for away supporters in their legislation (22 out of 34 countries, figure 4), relying instead on individual sanctions. Some states strongly value individual liberties and express concerns about the disproportionality of collective bans (figure 24).
- Distance taken by football associations and leagues: Key stakeholders like football associations and leagues (including players associations) oppose collective bans, preferring alternative approaches (figure 25).
- States allowing collective bans have a high concern for human rights and public liberties that are at stake: among states that permit collective bans, many recognise the importance of respecting and protecting human rights and public liberties. For these states, it is less about opposing other viewpoints and more about finding the right balance between security and liberty.
- There are areas of improvement in the decision-making process regarding collective bans applied by public authorities: public authorities sometimes do not adequately consult with stakeholders, including clubs and supporters' representatives, during the decision-making process. The way decisions are communicated is sometimes unsatisfactory, relying on indirect channels like general internet postings, which are not always effectively addressed to the target public. Additionally, delays in communicating these decisions can limit or preclude the right to appeal.

### Recommendations:

- **Prioritise Individual Sanctions:** Individual bans should be prioritised over collective ones. Leveraging advanced technologies, like e-ticketing, CCTV and facial recognition<sup>1</sup> to identify individuals responsible for misconduct, could significantly reduce the need for collective bans. Justifying collective sanctions on the grounds of a tiny number of

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<sup>1</sup> As provided for by Article 6 of the modernised [Convention for the Protection of Individuals with regard to Automatic Processing of Personal Data \(Convention 108+\)](#), the processing of special categories of data, such as biometric data uniquely identifying a person, shall only be authorised where such processing relies on an appropriate legal basis, and if complementary and appropriate safeguards are enshrined in domestic law. These safeguards shall be adapted to the risks involved and to the interests, rights and freedoms to be protected. See [Guidelines on Facial Recognition](#) (2021), adopted by the Consultative Committee of the Convention for the protection of individuals with regard to automatic processing of personal data (Convention 108) of the Council of Europe. Similar safeguards will be required where CCTV and other technologies process special categories of data.

troublemakers is counterproductive, as it breeds a sense of injustice and strains relationships between supporters and public and sports authorities.

- **Restrict Collective Bans to Exceptional Cases:** Collective bans should be limited to truly exceptional circumstances and must not become an implicit rule or routine. These bans should be subject to stringent conditions and limits, justified by recent, factual and accurate evidence supporting national security and/or public order needs. Referring to outdated reputations or past incidents between rival groups of supporters does not adequately align with dynamic risk assessment principles.
- **Integrate Stakeholder Involvement:** Authorities should make stakeholder consultation a standard part of the decision-making process for high-risk matches, involving clubs, fan groups, and public authorities early on. Early involvement can lead to better planning and coordination, encouraging voluntary compliance and reducing tensions.
- **Improve Communication Timing and Enable Right to Appeal:** Decisions should be communicated to fans well in advance, ideally immediately after the draw is made, and the potential for such a ban should be communicated to the affected clubs before the draw is made to allow them to alert fans to the possibility of a ban being imposed before they book flights and accommodation.
- **Maintain Accountability and Transparency:** Decisions to impose collective bans should be guided by a commitment to fairness and transparency. Authorities should document and publicly justify these decisions to avoid the perception of arbitrary or unfair treatment, enhancing trust and fostering a positive relationship with fans.
- Establish **preventive agreements** between authorities and clubs to identify high-risk matches and adopt proportionate measures and **strengthen the exchange of information** between national and international police authorities, building on the effectiveness of the NFIP network.

## Conclusion

Based on key findings, the above recommendations aim to enhance security and fairness in managing fan behaviour, by prioritising individual responsibility, improving consultation, and adopting alternative measures over broad collective bans. They align with the principles of the Council of Europe, and with suggestions expressed by various states, sports authorities and supporter organisations, promoting a balanced approach that considers both national security and public order, on one side, and human rights and civil liberties on the other side, while ensuring the ethical integrity at football and other sports events.

These recommendations are aligned with Article 10<sup>2</sup> of the Saint-Denis Convention. They are also compliant with the framework adopted by the Saint-Denis Committee in the form of

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### <sup>2</sup> Article 10 – Prevention and sanctioning of offending behaviour

1. The Parties shall take all possible measures to reduce the risk of individuals or groups participating in or organising incidents of violence or disorder.
2. The Parties shall, in accordance with national and international law, ensure that effective exclusion arrangements, appropriate to the character and location of risk, are in place to deter and prevent incidents of violence or disorder.

Recommendation Rec(2022)1 which provides a model for national strategies to ensure safety, security, and service at sports events. Specifically, Chapter VII emphasises the importance of a comprehensive approach that includes: a) Preventive Measures: Implementing educational and awareness programs to promote positive behaviour among spectators and the broader community; b) Sanctioning Mechanisms: Establishing clear and effective legal frameworks to address misconduct, ensuring that sanctions are proportionate and serve as a deterrent; and c) Collaboration: Encouraging cooperation among public authorities, sports organisations, and other stakeholders to develop and enforce these measures effectively.

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3. The Parties shall, in accordance with national and international law, co-operate in seeking to ensure that individuals committing offences abroad receive appropriate sanctions, either in the country where the offence is committed or in their country of residence or citizenship.

4. Where appropriate, and in accordance with national and international law, the Parties shall consider empowering the judicial or administrative authorities responsible to impose sanctions on individuals who have caused or contributed to incidents of football-related violence and/or disorder, with the possibility of imposing restrictions on travel to football events held in another country.