

STANDING COMMITTEE (T-RV)

EUROPEAN CONVENTION ON SPECTATOR VIOLENCE
AND MISBEHAVIOUR AT SPORT EVENTS AND
IN PARTICULAR AT FOOTBALL MATCHES



Strasbourg, 2 May 2008

Rec (2008) 2

Recommendation Rec (2008) 2 of the Standing Committee on the use of visiting stewards

adopted by the Standing Committee on 30 April 2008

The Standing Committee of the European Convention on Spectator Violence and Misbehaviour at Sports Events and in particular at Football Matches (T-RV);

Having regard to the need to ensure the safety of spectators and the creation of an environment which discourages violence and misbehaviour;

Stressing a need for enhancing hospitality and a festive nature of sport events, where spectators can attend events together with their families;

Recognising that the most violent incidents nowadays are taking place outside stadia and on the way to or from matches;

Having regard to the increase in number of matches at European level, the greater ease of travel including from and to countries with shorter history of supporters travelling and the importance of treating all spectators in a friendly, suitable and consistent manner;

Recognising that stewards can already help to create a friendly and festive atmosphere and avoid frustration and irritation, through speaking the same language as the visiting fans, and through their knowledge of the behaviour of their own supporters and the knowledge by the supporters of their own stewards;

Seeing a need for stewards to welcome and care for spectators and ensure spectators safety and well-being as foreseen in Article 3.2 of the convention;

Having regard to the years of successful deployment of stewards in a number of countries both within stadia and as an escort for travelling supporters;

Recognising the value of stewards within stadia and on the way to matches in providing a low profile and non-confrontational management of supporters;

Drawing upon the Recommendation of the Standing Committee (1999) 1 on stewarding recommending the use of visiting stewards;

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Considering the notion of accompanying persons as contained in the Handbook of the prevention in sport attached to Recommendation Rec (2003) 1 of the Standing Committee on the role of social and educational measures in the prevention of violence in sport;

Taking into account the conclusions of the Colosseum Seminar on stewarding held in Rome in October 2007;

Recognising the safety benefits of collaboration between stewards from different parties to the Convention;

Considering that this could best be achieved by introducing common minimum standards of deployment of visiting stewards;

Having identified certain principles which are valid in all states party to the Convention, notwithstanding their different background, history, culture and legal systems;

*Recommends to governments of parties to the European Convention on Spectator Violence and Misbehaviour at Sports Events and in particular at Football Matches that they encourage clubs, stadium owners and/or other appropriate bodies in football and other sports to use a system of **visiting stewards** at sporting events, based upon the following principles:*

1. use of visiting stewards should be a complementary measure to increase supporters' safety, security and comfort at away matches and to assist and support the home safety and security system;
2. use of visiting stewards is desirable mainly as a means of assisting with the smooth travel of supporters and as a low profile and non-provocative way of ensuring the incident-free travel of supporters;
3. in general visiting stewards should not undertake tasks other than customer care unless they are trained to a standard recognised at the stadium and have the necessary legal powers and insurance cover;
4. visiting stewards should be used only after prior consensus and agreement between the home and visiting clubs and relevant police authorities (even when performing their role only during travel) and in accordance with national legislation;
5. the role of visiting stewards should supplement that of the home stewards who should retain the primary responsibility; visiting stewards having duties at the away stadium should be under the command of home stewards' supervisors with profound knowledge of the home stadium regulations and emergency procedures and the home safety officer;
6. duties, powers, communication channels and responsibilities of visiting stewards within away stadia and on travel routes should be specified in advance within agreement of both clubs and/or the home police authorities;

7. roles of visiting stewards in emergency situations connected to evacuation or other situations requiring profound knowledge of the stadium should be very carefully specified;
8. visiting stewards' supervisors should be involved in the overall security management, including necessary briefings, if they are to play a role at the stadium; the arrival of the visiting stewards should be made known to all home safety/security/management personnel;
9. visiting stewards should be provided with special training on risks that might arise while travelling and on the means of co-operation with the local police or other relevant bodies;
10. risks that might occur while travelling should be thoroughly assessed and emergency plans should be elaborated with special emphasis on emergency contact with the security forces;
11. visiting stewards should be protected at all times, certainly when accompanying visiting fans on their travel to the stadium, and need to have an efficient and complete insurance cover.

Explanatory memorandum

The notion of visiting stewards

The notion of visiting stewards is used in several countries like Belgium, Germany, UK, Denmark, Finland and Austria. Using visiting stewards is also recommended by UEFA. Visiting stewards are regular stewards of a club or a national team who accompany their own supporters on away matches.

The notion of visiting stewards is used in two different ways.

1. Visiting stewards accompany supporters on the way to the away matches. They provide for care and assistance mainly during the transportation and while staying away. They do not perform, however, standard stewarding duties at the away stadium. In this role they perform a role similar to accompanying persons as described in the Handbook attached to the Recommendation Rec (2003) 1 of the Standing Committee on the role of social and educational measures in the prevention of violence in sport. Deployment of visiting stewards is often done in accordance with the UEFA recommendation that such deployment is desirable when more than 500 supporters travel to an away match (UEFA Safety and Security Regulation, Edition 2006, Article 24).
2. Visiting stewards perform their duties not only during the journey and while supporters stay away but also perform their full range of duties at the away stadium. At this away stadium they take the same or very similar duties to home stewards for example welcoming, directing and caring for all spectators, performing entry checks and ticket control, enforcing stadium regulations and assisting in emergency situations, in accordance with an agreement adopted by home and visiting clubs. Visiting stewards are used in this manner in, for example, Belgium, France, and Hungary.

Reasons and benefits of using visiting stewards

Visiting stewards can play an important role:

- In assisting in the smooth transportation of supporters.

There are more and more international matches (cups, qualifications) with a rapidly growing number of supporters travelling internationally. The number of travelling supporters for matches with an international dimension also increased as a result of political changes in the late eighties and the early nineties which enable number of supporters from former communist countries to travel abroad to away matches across the whole of Europe. To secure the incident-free and safe travel of supporters is thus a growing task for the safety and security management.

The importance of safe and secure transportation without incidents became of even greater importance together with improving safety and security conditions at stadia. Experience from a number of countries shows that better safety and security regulations and a good hospitality notion decrease the chance of incidents within these stadia.

The use of visiting stewards during travel can, through efficient communication in their own language, resolve possible tension among supporters arising from technical problems or organisational frustration (such as delays or police controls that they consider excessive). Providing care to non-risk supporters can also help to isolate risk supporters.

Visiting stewards can also provide an early warning when some incidents are planned or going to happen. Co-operation with the police should be careful and exceptional since stewards are not just "another police force" and should not be perceived as such. It is important these stewards are protected at all times against possible violent behaviour by a minority of supporters.

- In assisting home stewards and security officials to handle the situation at the away stadium.

This is especially important if the away stadium management does not have enough of its own trained stewards. In addition, the participation of visiting stewards at away stadia can considerably help the home security management even if it has a sufficient number of its own stewards. Visiting stewards can provide a liaison between visiting supporters and the local safety and security system. They also can assist in problem solving on a number of practical issues and thus help to avoid frustration and irritation and ill-considered reactions. They may help in entry controls/checks and in guiding visiting supporters to their seats.

In performing these tasks and duties they can build on their knowledge of the supporters of their club and they may possess an informal authority over them. This can be a significant advantage when home stewards are poorly trained or not experienced.

The significant use of visiting stewards at home stadiums where the home stewards are insufficient in number or training should be exceptional and should not be taken as the norm. Among the exceptional situations where it may be regarded as necessary are where a large club is visiting a much smaller club from a lower division in a cup match. Inappropriate reliance on visiting stewards to make up for the inadequacies of the home stewards should be avoided.

Risks and limits of deployment of visiting stewards

- When used on the travel only

As mentioned above, visiting stewards used during the travel and stay of supporters can help considerably when assisting non-violent supporters. Their performance can avoid tensions, frustration or spontaneous outbreaks of violence.

However, while travelling with violent supporters they can encounter risky situations. Some situations cannot be handled by stewards alone and they are not police officers/spotters. They also may travel alone so they may be placed in the situation where it is difficult to obtain immediate help. This situation is in contrast with the situation inside stadia where police forces or other stewards are always close by.

Such risks can be avoided. First, the majority of travelling supporters are peaceful and non-violent and they appreciate stewards' assistance.

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Also a risk analysis should be undertaken before any decision to use stewards during travel. Risk analysis should also consider contact or co-ordination with police spotters who usually monitor or travel along risk supporters.

- When used at the away stadium

The status of the visiting stewards very much depends on the national legislation at the visited stadium but often visiting stewards possess no formal authority inside such stadia.

Nevertheless, in some countries, visiting stewards can perform the same duties in away stadia. While the advantages have been discussed above, some serious limitations should be mentioned here. Visiting stewards do not and cannot be familiar with the infrastructure and construction of the stadium that they are visiting. This applies particularly to emergencies and evacuation. Their role during any evacuation therefore should be carefully considered.

Similar problems arise as regards communication. Understanding the chain of the command and the ability to use it efficiently are an important part of stewards' training.

The problem of communication can be solved by thorough preparations. In the main the visiting stewards' supervisors should participate in the preparatory security meetings and they should always meet the home stewards' supervisors to discuss the transfer of information and command.

Another problem may arise from the potential bias of visiting stewards towards their own supporters. This may happen mainly during entry search and tickets control if visiting stewards are given this duty. Similar bias can occur in reacting to incidents or to actions taken by domestic stewards or security personnel.

All these risks and constraints should be considered before deciding to deploy visiting stewards in a certain way. Club security managers and local police officers will usually possess the knowledge necessary for the right decisions.

Conclusions

Visiting stewards can play an important role in enhancing safety and security of their own club supporters at away matches and to ensure a friendly welcome to supporters. The role of visiting stewards can be particularly valuable when they are travelling with official supporters' groups.

A number of advantages but also constraints and risks were described above. The conclusion is that the deployment of visiting stewards needs additional carefully planning over and above that required for the deployment of the stewards at the home stadium. Planning should concern both the away match and the security management.

The use of visiting stewards should be determined after taking into account both these recommendations and the particular circumstances of the individual clubs, their stewards and the supporters involved.

Commentary on individual recommendations

- 1. Use of visiting stewards should be a complementary measure to increase supporters' safety, security and comfort on away matches and to assist and support the home safety and security system:**

The recommendation suggests that the deployment of visiting stewards as a preventive method has proved to be successful. The deployment of visiting stewards does not stand but is one of a series of complex preventive measures used to ensure incidents-free and enjoyable matches. This recommendation stresses the need for comprehensive planning and the use of different measures for enjoyable, safe and secure sport events. It also recommends keeping in mind the links between different measures and using them as complementary one to another. The use of visiting stewards should be synchronized with police measures, police spotting etc.

- 2. Use of visiting stewards is desirable mainly as a mean of assisting with the smooth travel of supporters and as a low profile and non-provocative way of ensuring the incident-free travel of supporters:**

Keeping in mind two different methods of using visiting stewards, this recommendation refers to the first one, namely the use of visiting stewards only while travelling. This method is more commonly used in Europe, the benefits are higher and the risks and constraints lower. Using visiting stewards in this way thus can be fully recommended having in mind some conditions described below.

- 3. In general visiting stewards should not undertake tasks other than customer care unless they are trained to a standard recognised at the stadium and have the necessary legal powers and insurance cover:**

The using of visiting stewards as statutory safety or security agents at the away stadium is not recommended unless some conditions are met.

Before any visiting stewards undertake any functions beyond customer care at an away stadium in another country, they should be trained to a standard recognised by the authorities in that country, they should be familiar with that stadium and its safety procedures and they should be provided with the necessary legal powers and insurance cover.

- 4. Visiting stewards should be used only after prior consensus and agreement between the home and visiting clubs and relevant police authorities (even when performing their role only during travel) and in accordance with national legislation:**

This recommendation stresses the requirement for close co-operation between away and home club/organiser representatives. Whether visiting stewards play a role only during travel or also at the away stadium, a home club and match commander should be always aware that visiting stewards accompany visiting supporters. "Surprises" should be avoided.

In this recommendation “domestic legislation” refers to different legal systems enabling or limiting the use of visiting stewards at the home stadium. For instance, strict legislation defining the duties of home stewards and their training requirements may exclude the use of visiting stewards at the away stadium.

- 5. The role of visiting stewards should supplement that of the home stewards who should retain the primary responsibility; visiting stewards having duties at the away stadium should be under the command of home stewards’ supervisors with profound knowledge of the home stadium regulations and emergency procedures and the home safety officer:**

Smooth safety and security operations depend also on a clear division of responsibility and a clear chain of command. Because of their knowledge of the stadium, its regulations, technical situation and evacuation plans, home stewards can never completely give up their responsibility. Thus their supervisors and other security personnel should also remain in overall command of the visiting supporters’ stands.

It goes without saying that visiting stewards should follow instruction or orders of the home safety officer and of the local police officers where these have a supervisory role.

- 6. Duties, powers, communication channels and responsibilities of visiting stewards within away stadia and on travel routes should be specified in advance within agreement of both clubs and/or the home police authorities:**

This recommendation refers to the risks of bad co-ordination, communication and co-operation of visiting stewards with home security and safety management. When using visiting stewards only during transportation, prior information and the consent of both clubs or the police may be enough. Using visiting stewards in the away stadium, however, always requires more detailed co-operation and a detailed description of the visiting stewards’ duties and their co-operation and communication with the home stewards. This is valid even when the role of the visiting stewards in the away stadium is limited only to some duties. Clear arrangements about the communication channels to be used by visiting stewards should be made in advance.

- 7. Roles of visiting stewards in emergency situations connected to evacuation or other situations requiring profound knowledge of stadium should be very carefully specified:**

This recommendation develops the previous one putting a higher stress on emergency and evacuation. Mutual agreement, as described in the previous recommendation, may touch a number of different issues like entry checks, tickets checks and the location of spectators in the stadium. This recommendation stresses that the role of visiting stewards in an emergency or evacuation must be always specified and that visiting stewards can only play this role if they have been trained specifically on this issue in this stadium.

8. Visiting stewards' supervisors should be involved in the overall security management, including necessary briefings, if they are to play a role at the stadium; the arrival of the visiting stewards should be made known to all home safety/security/management personnel:

This recommendation refers to the operational situation during the match day. Visiting stewards' supervisors should be informed about the actual situation, possible risks and the current safety and security measures. This may be best achieved through the participation of the visiting stewards' supervisor at the security briefings.

The participation of the visiting stewards can influence the whole safety and security situation at the away stadium. Their presence should thus be made known to all personnel at the away stadium. This knowledge is important not only for the police commanders, security managers and chiefs of home stewards but also to the emergency personnel and perhaps even to referees and sporting staff.

9. Visiting stewards should be provided with special training on risks that might arise while travelling and on the means of co-operation with the local police or other relevant bodies:

Special attention should be given to the recruitment, training and assessment of visiting stewards as their role may be more demanding and require additional skills and present more extensive risks than are normally encountered by home stewards. These demands and risks should be addressed by extra training. This is in addition to the basic training which should be the same as for any other steward of the club.

There are two areas which require additional training. First are the skills required to manage supporters, particularly those who are agitated, frustrated or aggressive while travelling, when the stewards cannot depend on backing from the police. Visiting stewards should know when they should not intervene because of the risk of their security. Their training should also include how to respond and to communicate in an emergency.

Secondly training should address methods of co-operation and communication with home stewards. A highly emotional atmosphere, poor communication and mistakes or insensitivity by home stewards can cause over-reaction not only by supporters but also by visiting stewards. Training should cover these issues and suggest ways of co-operation and conflict resolution with home staff.

10. Risks that might occur while travelling should be thoroughly assessed and emergency plans should be elaborated with special emphasis on emergency contact with the security forces:

Training is important for ensuring the effective and safe deployment of visiting stewards. A risk assessment should be undertaken in order to identify if it is safe to send visiting stewards with the supporters and the likelihood that a particular risk may occur and if so its possible consequences. Knowledge of behaviour of supporters in the past as well as operational information should inform this assessment.

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It should be repeated that the majority of travelling supporters just want to enjoy the match and present no risk to accompanying visiting stewards. Experience shows, however, that there are groups of supporters who start incidents and disturbances, who drink excessively and who act aggressively during travel. Risk planning should identify these groups and suggest whether it is safe to send visiting stewards along with these groups or if it is not preferable to send police forces along with these aggressive supporters. Measures should be also adopted to ensure that support and help for visiting stewards arrives on time should any incidents occur.

11. Visiting stewards should be protected at all times, certainly when accompanying visiting fans on their travel to the stadium, and need to have an efficient and complete insurance cover:

This recommendation stresses the need for the protection of visiting stewards. This principle should be recognised by all personnel involved in security operation. Any situations appearing to be risky for visiting stewards or any cases of violence towards them should be dealt by police forces as a matter of priority.

As visiting stewards perform their duties on behalf of the visiting club, this organisation is responsible for providing them with maximum protection. A comprehensive insurance policy is essential in these circumstances and should cover all the risks which might arise.

N.B. Terminological note:

The club playing at its own stadium is referred as the home club and the staff of this stadium (stewards, police and managers) is always referred as the home staff.

Supporters coming to the match from elsewhere are referred to as visiting supporters. Stewards accompanying visiting supporters are referred as visiting stewards.

When speaking from the perspective of visiting supporters (stewards) they travel to the away match and away stadium.