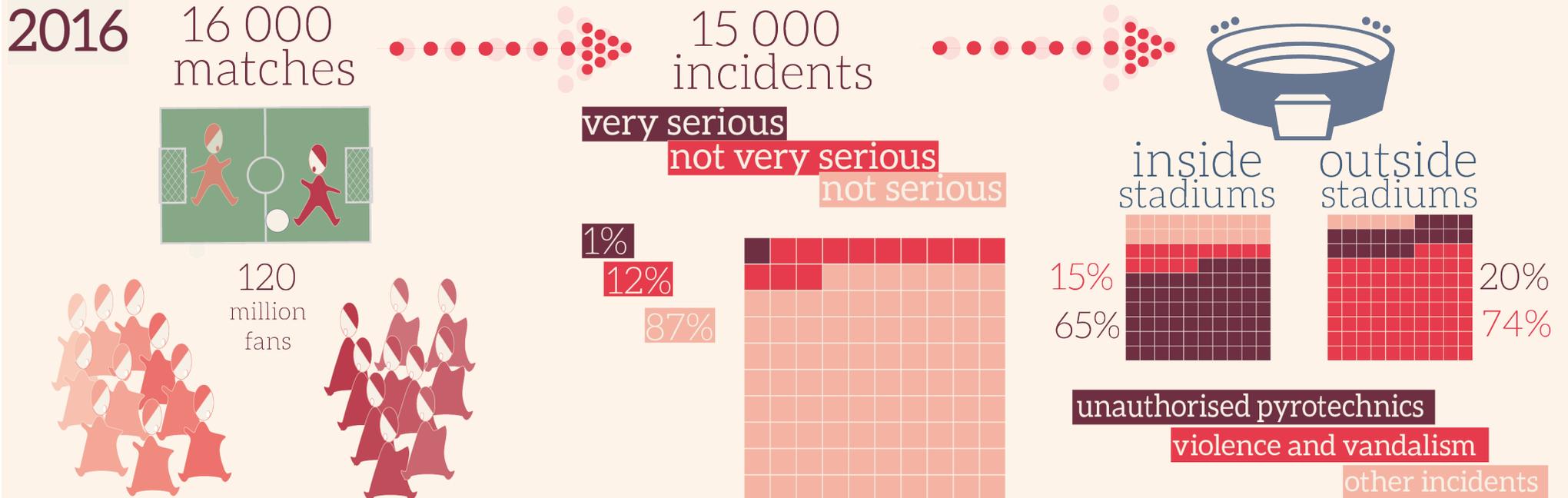


PREVENTING VIOLENCE AT FOOTBALL MATCHES

BACKGROUND In 2016, over 120 million people attended more than 16 000 football matches across Europe. This placed a substantial burden on the police and security forces. The movement of millions of fans is a serious challenge to those tasked with securing a safe and friendly environment on the ground. Indeed, research co-funded by the European Commission and the Council of Europe shows that nearly 2 million police officers, stewards, and private security personnel were employed to secure the football

matches throughout that year. Some 15 000 incidents were registered in connection with professional football matches, which had taken place at almost every match played (93 %) although only 1 % of those incidents were very serious. The unauthorised use of pyrotechnics was the most common incident inside stadiums (65 %), followed by various types of violent behaviour (16 %), such as threatening behaviour, violence against the police, throwing of objects, and vandalism. Similarly, incidents outside stadiums were

marked by the violent behaviour of fans (74 %) – including mainly threatening behaviour and violence against rival fans – and use of pyrotechnics (20 %). The police arrested over 6 700 people, mostly outside stadiums (64 %). The arrests resulted in more than 5 700 criminal or administrative convictions issued by national courts, and over 9 200 banning orders, 13 % of which included geographical or other constraints.



CONVENTION ON SAFETY AND SECURITY AT SPORTS EVENTS

On 29 May 1985, 39 people were killed and some 400 were injured during violent clashes between Liverpool and Juventus football fans at the Heysel stadium in Brussels (Belgium). In the wake of that tragic event, the Council of Europe drew up the European Convention on spectator violence and misbehaviour at sports events and in particular at football matches. It focused on preventing, deterring and responding to incidents of violence and misbehaviour inside or near stadiums. Concluding that the existing document had become outdated, the Council of Europe decided to draw up a new one in 2013. This resulted in the adoption in 2016 of the Convention on an integrated safety, security and service approach at football matches and other

sports events, aimed at securing a safe and welcoming environment for fans both inside and outside stadiums. To achieve this, the Convention places the responsibility of ensuring that stadium infrastructure complies with national and international standards and regulations on the participating countries. National authorities should also have effective crowd management and safety schemes and emergency and contingency plans, tested and refined in the course of regular exercises. The document further requires the parties to ensure that spectators feel welcome and well treated throughout events, including by making the stadiums more accessible to children, the elderly and people with disabilities, and by improving sanitary and refreshment facilities. With respect to prevention and sanctions, the convention provides that all necessary measures should be taken to reduce the risk of incidents of violence and

disorder and that, in respect of national and international law, adequate effective exclusion arrangements should be put in place to deter and prevent such incidents. Finally, it is envisaged that individuals committing offences abroad should receive appropriate sanctions. Those who have caused or contributed to incidents of football-related violence and/or disorder should also be subject to travel restrictions to football events held in another country. In March 2019, the European Parliament adopted a decision authorising the Member States to sign and ratify the convention, since the latter refers exclusively to 'States' and 'State parties', which prevents the EU from becoming a party to it. So far, 18 EU countries have signed the convention. France, Poland and Portugal have already ratified and started enforcing it.



Source: ProS4+ project, A. Dinca, Annual report 2016 on violence, disorder and other prohibited activities, 2018.