



# Euro 2008 and the ticket rush

by Simon Watkinson

First Swiss **Serial Rights** offered

With just weeks remaining until the opening game of the 2008 UEFA European Football Championships (Euro 2008) on 07 June in Basel, most avid European soccer fans will probably know exactly where, and with whom, they will be cheering on their national teams. Given this competition's history of surprises – it was won by rank outsiders in 1992 and again in 2004 – the atmosphere generated at each gripping game should be electric.

For those not wishing to travel to stadia in Switzerland or Austria to wit-

ness the unfolding of the world's third largest sporting event, watching a game with friends gathered around a TV at home, in a local village bar, or at a big-screen venue is probably the next best option. But for the die-hard football supporter who loyally turns out each weekend in all weathers to support his/her team, there is only one place to watch a game. Members of this rare breed just have to "be there" at any cost: to savour the pitch-side atmosphere and soak up the unique, once-in-a-lifetime sense of occasion; if only so that they can tell their grandchildren!

## Ticket travesty

Unfortunately, due to an overwhelming demand, the process of obtaining valid tickets for Euro 2008 has not been easy – one third of available tickets were already sold in March 2007 via the Euro 2008 website. Furthermore, these precious pieces of paper, which are literally worth their weight in gold, were more than eight times oversubscribed: there were 8.7 million requests for Euro 2008 match tickets, when only 1.05 million were available.

Strangely enough, and in spite of UEFA stating last February that 75% of

## Security Euro 2008

During the EURO 2008, members of the cantonal police units, Border Guard Corps, medical and rescue corps, army, private security services and officials of the Federal Office of Police will be on 24-hour duty for the better part of 4 weeks and will work in close cooperation.

The host cities and the cantons are primarily responsible for the implementation of security measures in public areas. They will be assisted in this task by the federal authorities – including the Federal Office of Police – as part of the Confederation's usual duties.

All the relevant security forces of the host cities, the cantons and the Confederation are joined in the sub-project known as "Security UEFA EURO 2008". This project aims to ensure that the correct security measures are implemented.

Upon the request of the cantons and the host cities, the confederation has assumed responsibility for the coordination of projects falling under the scope of the public authorities.

The "UEFA EURO 2008 Public Authorities Project Organisation" coordinates all the operational tasks for which the public authorities are responsible, implementing these tasks in conjunction with all the tournament partners at the levels of the confederation, cantons and municipalities.

Throughout EURO 2008, the Police Information and Coordination Centre (PICC), as a component of NACOS.ch, will draw up a comprehensive status profile of the current situation on an ongoing basis. The planning and deployment of the intercantonal police forces will be applied in accordance with the responsibilities and processes defined in the ICAPOL agreement.

## 3-D philosophy

(dialogue, de-escalation, drastic action). This policy - which has been adopted in Switzerland for many years - will be implemented by the security police in during EURO 2008.

Among the soccer hooligan scenes in Europe, those in the



UEFA, EURO Experience Tour



Keystone/Euro 2008 SA

Euro 2008 tickets were destined for supporters, the football associations of the 16 participating nations have only received an average of 19% of the ticket allocation for each game. In Switzerland 278,000 individuals ordered 765,000 tickets, but only 16,800 will be available for Switzerland's three group matches.

**Insatiable demand**

Although a woefully inadequate system of random checking at games, plus a

€5,000 fine imposed on anyone caught trading in unofficial tickets may not hinder a buoyant black market, organizers will only distribute tickets in mid-May, and will ban ticket scalping near stadia so as to counter any illicit activities. Martin Kallen, Euro 2008's chief operating officer, expressed his dilemma at a news conference last February: "We cannot avoid a black market. The demand is so huge that we could have double- or triple-sized stadia, and we would still not have enough tickets."

Kallen also warned about suppliers of counterfeit Euro 2008 tickets:

"We are against all those agencies on the market that are cheating supporters. I would never buy their tickets – because I would never be sure to receive them."

**A Working man's game?**

The scarcity of match tickets has been somewhat exacerbated by UEFA's Euro 2008 Corporate Hospitality programme. This offers company representatives and their guests a memorable, lavish experience – first-class seats, top-quality cuisine and special entertainment – at prices way beyond the reach of most ordinary working people. Some 80,000 of these bespoke packages (which start at €1,250) were snapped up by businesses last year shortly after their release.

**Football Fever**

Preparations for Geneva's hosting of three group matches on 07, 11 and 15 June are now almost complete. Last March, Geneva state councillor Mark Muller expressed his pride and joy that Geneva had been chosen as one of the locations for Euro 2008, and his impatience for the beginning of the tournament. In extending a personal welcome to visitors, he said:

"Geneva is a location where sport in all its forms is met with great enthusiasm and passion, which convinces us



Euro 2008 SA

Stadium Geneva

United Kingdom (England), Germany, the Netherlands, Italy and Poland tend to be the most virulent.

In their efforts to police hooliganism, most European states – including Switzerland and Austria– have established a national police football information point (NFIP) to exchange information on "sports hooligans". The Swiss and Austrian NFIPs, which are to be integrated into the respective PICCs in the course of EURO 2008, will jointly draw up a status profile of the "European sports hooligan".



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that the fire that burns within us will quickly be conveyed to visitors during the competition ... Geneva is a sport-loving, enthusiastic and multicultural city. For that reason we are especially delighted about receiving the scores of football fans from across Europe – to whom we want to offer a fantastic festival of football."

## Tented invasion

After the success of public broadcasts of games during the 2006 World Cup, Muller revealed that there would be live broadcasting of the games on big screens in Geneva. He also said that two massive "fan zones" were being planned – one in the city centre and the other within easy walking distance just outside – where fans can pitch their tents and really enjoy their time in Geneva.

## Extended opening

To enhance this "Geneva experience", from 07 to 15 June the opening hours of the shops in the city centre and Carouge will be extended to 20.00 in the week and 19.00 on Saturdays 07 and 14 June. Sunday opening hours from 11.00 to 17.00 have also been authorised for Sunday, 15 June, which is the day of the last match in Geneva. On match evenings cafés and restaurants will be allowed to stay open for an extra 30 minutes after the final whistle. While smokers will feel at home in the cafés – where the imminent smoking ban will not yet have been enforced – they will probably not appreciate drinking from the compulsory plastic cups.

Only time will tell whether Geneva will recall its role in Euro 2008 with as much enthusiasm as Mr Muller is expecting. So much will depend on whether the minority football hooligan element is effectively suppressed and thus not given a chance to wreck the party.

## Post-match relief?

For those Geneva residents who loathe the beautiful game and will be utterly depressed during the three-week occupation of their city by a football tournament, the evening concerts and cultural events ([www.ge.ch/euro2008](http://www.ge.ch/euro2008)) being held at Plainpalais, Bout-du-Monde and Vernets (where festivities will continue until 5 am) from 6 to 28 June may offer some respite. In particular, music lovers should note the Verdi Gala at Plainpalais on 28 June, the eve of the Euro 2008 Final in Vienna, a spectacular which will feature some 150 musicians.

At least by then there will be a mere 24 hours of football hysteria to endure. ●