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EURO 2008: International Experts: Austrian police prepared excellently

Platter: Expert committee confirmed outstanding result after five years

Vienna – For three weeks, all eyes will focus on Austria and Switzerland – a big challenge and responsibility for the Austrian police.

“The preparations of the Austrian police can be regarded as excellent and exemplary”, Jürgen Mathies, head of an international five-member evaluation committee (composed of members from Belgium, England, Germany, Portugal, and the Czech Republic), stated.

“Previous expertises were taken into account in our concept through contacts with previous organizers. We deliberately requested an external evaluation”, Günther Platter continued.

Platter regards the evaluation results as an indicator for the quality of the long-term and systematic preparations. “We can assure the Austrian public and the 2.5 million expected guests that the EURO 2008 will be safe and secure”, he stated.

Austria had repeatedly reported about the preparations for the EURO 2008 to the Council of Europe’s Standing Committee and the Police Cooperation Working Group. The international expert committee had already in May 2007 evaluated the Austrian EURO 2008-security concept.

The committee completed the evaluation report after having visited the four host cities (Vienna, Klagenfurt, Innsbruck, and Salzburg), heard the presentations, inspected the stadia and the fan zones, talked to security experts of the Ministry of the Interior and the police in the provinces. The report was presented today during a press conference.

Mathies: “Austria had at a very early stage begun with the preparations, and had also in certain respects been progressing faster than host countries of previous major events of that nature, which was instrumental for an efficient implementation.

Platter: “The Federal Ministry of the Interior began to draft a security concept five years ago”.

Mathies: “The Evaluation Committee has noted with great satisfaction that Austria is fully in line with organisers of the previous tournaments (EURO 2004 in Portugal and WC 2006 in Germany) to ensure that the EURO 2008 will be a safe event.

For the last five years, the Austrian Ministry of the Interior and the Swiss authorities have jointly prepared an overall security concept in cooperation with all relevant partners. Concluding, the Evaluation Committee arrived at the result that the Austrian authorities and institutions concerned are indeed well prepared for the EURO 2008.”

Platter emphasized the importance of the international cooperation, especially data exchange and the comprehensive support by officers from abroad; some of them will enjoy police powers. “International networking is a decisive factor for managing international major events”, Platter said.

„One aspect of our security concept is to prevent potentially violent fans from entering Austria. Based on the lessons learnt from comparable events and also during the WC in Germany, border controls serve as a deterrent for perpetrators. Therefore reintroduction of border controls is needed”, Platter added. All participating-, transit-, and neighbouring countries have been informed about these measures in good time, which was also appreciated by the committee.

Mathies: “Austria’s Federal Ministry of the Interior has taken all necessary procurement measures and reserves have been built up in time.

We have also noted with appreciation that overtime worked because of the EURO 2008 be will be paid in full. Adequate accommodations and meals are essential for the operational units; both get good ratings”.

The increase of the number of spotters to 170 also met with approval.

Likewise, the committee welcomed enhanced measures taken to combat street crimes, increased patrolling of "hot spots", such as shopping malls, shopping streets, Public Viewing events, etc. will contribute to making this major event a safe one.

The evaluation committee also approved of the creation the legal instruments has been created to impose mandatory reporting to a police station at a given time and preventive detention.

Apart from the “3D-philosophy” (dialogue, de-escalation and determination), which had proved successful during the FIFA-WC 2006, further measures like temporary border controls, international cooperation with respect to legislation and equipment should also ensure that potentially violent perpetrators can be kept under control. Hence, the Evaluation Committee is of the opinion that the dialogue and de-escalation-focussed activities of the police form a vital element for a peaceful and friendly atmosphere. At the same time,

offenders' awareness of firm action taken by the police should the need arise will certainly minimise their intentions of disturbance through violence.

Members of the Committee:

- Juergen Mathies (Germany), Chief Police Director of North Rhine-Westphalia, Head of Sub-Working Group 'Operations and Crime Combating' at the WC 2006;
- Radim Bures (Czech Republic), Chairman of the Standing Committee of the European Convention on Spectator Violence at Sports Events, in particular Football Matches;
- Jo Vanhecke (Belgium), Head of Prevention Dept./Football Unit - Belgian Ministry of the Interior and Head of Security during the UEFA EURO 2000 in Belgium;
- John de Quidt (Great Britain), CEO of the British Football Licensing Authority and member of the European Convention on Spectator Violence and Misbehaviour at Sports Events;
- Francisco Pedro Afonso Teles (Portugal), responsible for security of the EURO 2004 in Portugal, spokesman of the Portuguese police.

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