

HOME OFFICE REVIEW OF EVENTS IN ROME AND SEVILLE

Improving the safety and security arrangements at international club and country matches played in Europe.

Prior to last season's incidents involving English football supporters at matches in Rome and Seville, Home Office and the UK Football Policing Unit, had been working with their counterparts across Europe in developing a pan-European work programme of measures designed to improve safety and security at football matches with an international dimension. This process included developing a productive partnership with UEFA in respect of the safety and security arrangements at matches played under their auspices.

Events in Rome, Seville and Athens added impetus to the pan-European process and to the partnership with UEFA.

In the wake of the incidents in Rome and Seville, involving Manchester United and Tottenham Hotspur supporters respectively, Home Office Minister Vernon Coaker announced a review of events at the matches and sought eye witness reports from English police delegations, consular staff, football clubs concerned, FA security advisers and, importantly from the supporters involved.

It was made clear that all reports would be treated in confidence. The primary aim was not to apportion blame but rather to establish what took place in order to help identify the additional measures necessary to help minimise the potential for repeat incidents and to increase safety and security at club and country matches played across Europe.

In the event, a great deal of evidence was received on the incidents, some of which was contradictory and some highly subjective. However, it was immediately apparent that whilst the circumstances at each match may have been different, it was still possible to identify some underlying themes that should form the basis on which European governments and police could work together and with UEFA to develop tangible improvements to safety and security at matches played under their auspices. The measures outlined reflect the outcome of the review and associated discussions with a range of international partners.

The measures represent a pan-European approach whereby experts from UK and other European countries will work closely with UEFA to:

- ensure that all football stadia hosting Champions League UEFA and European international matches possess integrated/holistic in-stadia crowd management and other safety and security arrangements (incorporating both physical and dynamic measures);
- provide updated and comprehensive core safety and security standards for all football stadia hosting such matches;

- develop pan-European training arrangements for in-stadia safety officers and stewards;
- ensure that safety and security preparations and arrangements for UEFA tournaments and matches are subject to early and ongoing multinational expert evaluation;
- extend current arrangements for sharing governmental and police security information through National Football Information Points to incorporate generic information compiled by UEFA on stadia, security, stewarding etc.

In addition to the important work now underway with UEFA, Home Office and UK Football Policing Unit are working with their counterparts across Europe and the European Commission to develop ongoing pan-European arrangements for training and increasing awareness of police personnel undertaking key roles in policing football operations.

The above measures should help improve the experience of football supporters at matches across Europe. However, it has to be recognised that supporters have a key role to play. In the case of English supporters, the propensity of some English supporters to drink heavily and arrive late for matches, and in a small minority of cases be tempted to exploit vulnerable security measures to gain unauthorised entry can place additional pressure on safety and security arrangements.

The behaviour of English supporters has improved dramatically since the days when mass hooliganism blighted the image and reputation of English football and, in turn, adversely affected the experience of all supporters attending matches overseas. It is important that supporters continue to build upon their much improved image and take further responsibility by acting in a way that will help minimise safety and security risks at European matches.