

11 stadiums, 11 networks - Zero downtime at UEFA Euro 2020™

Client profile

The Union of European Football Associations (UEFA) is the governing body of European football and the umbrella organization for 55 national associations. Every four years they organize the UEFA European Championship, bringing together the top national teams.

The UEFA Euro 2020™ was held across the continent for the first time in the competition's 60-year history, with 11 host cities in all.

Which technologies?

- Cisco Meraki

Which services?

- Managed Services
- Consulting Services
- Technology Infrastructure Services
- Managed Network Services

Which partners?

- Cisco



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Daniel Marion, Chief of Information and Communication Technology, UEFA

Summary

The UEFA European Championship is one of the world's largest sporting events. Since UEFA Euro 2020™ marked the first time that the tournament has been staged across the continent, ensuring that each stadium stayed connected was critical to the success of the tournament.

After selecting us to provide the networking infrastructure at each of the stadiums we worked together with the UEFA team to plan, deploy, manage and eventually decommission the local networks at each of the stadiums.

The strong continent-wide coordination allowed us to deliver and ensure that UEFA personnel and key stakeholders including broadcasters, journalists and VIPs were able to stay connected during each match of this landmark tournament.

Business need

A network to support a landmark tournament

The UEFA European Championship is the third-largest sporting event in the world, watched by billions of viewers. To celebrate its 60th anniversary it was decided, instead of hosting the competition in a single country, that matches would be played in 11 different stadiums across 11 different countries – stretching from St Petersburg and Baku to London and Seville.

‘UEFA Euro 2020™ is a symbol of the power of football to unite communities.’ says Daniel Marion, Chief of Information and Communication Technology at UEFA. ‘This would be impossible without the technology underpinning the entire event.’

Connecting these locations to the rest of the world, as well as UEFA to their own infrastructure, was of critical importance to UEFA. Each location was connected back to the International Broadcast Center near Schiphol Airport in the Netherlands by a redundant pair of 100Gbps network links.

While 95% of this bandwidth was reserved for the all-important broadcast visuals, this also provided them with a connection for critical services including internet access for journalists, accreditation systems, VIP internet access and UEFA’s own internal IT systems.

However, with the quality and nature of the networks at each of the stadiums varying dramatically, they needed to ensure that the network at each stadium and the IBC would be available on matchday with zero interruption.

Following an open tender process, they appointed us to deploy and manage the critical networks at each of the 11 stadiums.

‘Finding an organization who could deliver services in each of the 11 countries was critical for us,’ says Marion. ‘The capabilities that NTT brought to the table allowed us to focus on the tournament, secure in the knowledge that, come match day, everything would be in place.’

Solution

Delivering on a continent-wide mandate

during the games required a high level of coordination between the various parts of NTT, and local partners.

Deploying networks across multiple sites required more than two years of planning, including extensive workshops with all stakeholders, building a comprehensive picture of what was required at each stadium.

We completed a high-level design of the network, which focused on standardizing as many elements of the network as possible. This was essential to ensure that the support team was able to rapidly resolve any issues.

Once the high-level design was complete, plans were created to cater to the unique environments at each location.

With initial deployment in full swing, the entire project was put on hold because of COVID-19, which saw the tournament moved out by a year.

When preparations resumed at the beginning of 2021, the plans that had been put on hold were executed to ensure that each venue and the IBC were ready for kick-off in June.

This included installing more than 245km of copper and 87km of fiber optic cables as well as almost 1,600 access points and 890 switches.

In some locations, there was existing network infrastructure that could be leveraged, but in others, we needed to build an entirely new stadium network.

While some of the infrastructures could be deployed well ahead of time, other elements were dependent on third parties, such as cabling for the on-field photographers where the LED advertising boards needed to be in place before our teams could run the network cables to the designated positions.

With six weeks to go, one of the venues was switched from Bilbao to Seville, requiring infrastructure to be shifted to the new venue. Leveraging the standardized deployment strategy, the team was able to ensure that the venue was ready when the opening game was played.

‘We needed to ensure that there was zero interruption to the network during the matches,’ says Marion. ‘NTT’s combination of remote monitoring and on-the ground technical support meant that they were able to identify and address any issues before they impacted on operations.’

Finally, once the games scheduled for each stadium were completed, the entire network had to be dismantled.

Outcomes

Delivering a world-class network

As this was the first major sporting event following the easing of COVID-19 restrictions, the UEFA Euro 2020™ was higher profile than normal. Working together with us, UEFA were able to ensure that they were able to provide broadcasters, journalists and VIPs with uninterrupted access as well as ensuring that UEFA were able to stay connected during every match.

Continent-wide support

Working together with our team UEFA were able to ensure that they could meet their requirement of delivering network access to their key stakeholders for every game. This included local support in each of the 11 countries hosting matches.

Local delivery

While our network architects ensured that, as far as possible, each location was deployed against a standard plan, every stadium and country had its own unique requirements. Leveraging our local teams, and those of our partners, we were able to ensure that all these variations were considered and that they didn't disrupt the smooth operation of the tournament.

Rapid response

Vital to ensuring that all stakeholders stayed connected was a rapid response to any issues. Combining our centralized support capabilities with on-the-ground technical support we were able to address any concerns quickly, minimizing the potential for disruption.

Strong partnership

The UEFA and NTT teams worked closely together over the more than three years that it took to plan the tournament. With their trust in our team, we were able to ensure that they met their goal of hosting one of the world's great sporting events without any interruptions.



UEFA Euro 2020™ is a symbol of the power of football to unite communities. This would be impossible without the technology underpinning the entire event.

Daniel Marion, Chief of Information and Communication Technology, UEFA