

THE

David Manica of
MANICA Architecture
outlines Italy's UEFA
European Football
Championship 2016
Bid.



ITALIAN JOB

Italy is recognised around the world as the country that lays proud claim to the invention of the modern stadium nearly 2,000 years ago. The Coliseum's incredible design, even by today's standards, included organised and segregated seating for 50,000 spectators, ticketed entry points, underground event support areas, elaborate spectator circulation and amenity provisions, and even a retractable roof for protection from the hot Mediterranean sun. But even with that famous first stadium as part of its cultural history, Italy itself admits that its current stadium facilities have fallen far behind other major European footballing nations such as England, Germany and Spain since it last staged a major football tournament — the FIFA World Cup in 1990. And so, with the intention of using UEFA's EURO 2016 bid as a catalyst for securing major investment to construct new and upgrade existing stadia around the country, the Italian Football Federation — known as FIGC (Federazione Italiana Giuoco Calcio) — launched its official bid to host the 2016 UEFA European Football Championship on March 2, 2009. After a surprising and disappointing loss to Poland and Ukraine's joint bid for the 2012 Championship, and with significant competition from the remaining two 2016 bidding countries, France and Turkey, FIGC is approaching this bid process with renewed vigour, and is investing more resources than ever before to assure Italy presents the best possible bid and maximises its chance of winning the coveted EURO 2016 Championship.

Italy is utilising world-class expertise to compile its Bid to host UEFA's EURO 2016 Championship — pictured, the new San Paolo Stadium in Naples.

At the heart of FIGC's bid proposal is the concept of sustainable investment, whereby the Euros earmarked for constructing new and upgrading existing stadia can be recaptured through a sophisticated business plan. To make this possible, FIGC has been collaborating with Senator Butti and Congressman Lolli to champion a new, bipartisan law, which would simultaneously accelerate the bureaucratic permitting process (six month maximum duration) and permit the municipalities to sell their stadia assets without a public tender. Thirdly, and perhaps most importantly, the new law anticipates and permits the use of real estate investments as collateral to finance new stadia and stadia refurbishments.

FIGC's EURO 2016 Project Manager, Michele Uva, explained: "The new law will serve as a catalyst for Italy's stadium campaign. It is imperative that Italy's investment in its stadia is based on sound economics, whereby a reasonable rate of return can be attained. A responsible investment is a sustainable investment."

As such, FIGC and the Italian government are taking the opportunity of UEFA's EURO 2016 to concretise solutions that go beyond the Championship and leave a positive legacy for Italy and its citizens.

The Race is On

Making the race for the Championship even more challenging are UEFA's upgraded requirements for host countries to meet for the 2016 event, which are even more intense than any of the previous submission requirements to date. With an expanded format to twenty-four teams and fifty-one matches (prior Championship's hosted sixteen teams over thirty-one matches) UEFA will require nine compliant stadia of varying sizes to host the tournament. Additionally, and in light of the schedule and financing challenges associated with the stadia of EURO 2012 to be hosted jointly by Poland and Ukraine, the financial and completion





Above and opposite page: Stadio San Paolo's renovation concept removes the existing running track, prioritises the fans by creating a more intimate football pitch environment, upgrades the safety and comfort of the seating tier with improved legroom and roof protection, and meets 100% of the technical seating requirements of UEFA for stadium compliance.

schedule guarantees required by the submitting countries for the 2016 Tournament are considerably more stringent, and comprehensive, to assure a more successful lead up to the event.

With these important factors at play, FIGC hired the world-renowned sports and entertainment venue project management company, ICON Venue Group, to spearhead the completion of Sector 8 of the Bid Dossier, devoted to the documentation of the nine stadia required by UEFA to host the tournament. ICON, working closely with FIGC and each proposed host city and their technical consultants, is leveraging its experience in the industry to coordinate and document the new stadium proposals and renovation strategies necessary for Italy's compliant Bid with UEFA's requirements.

ICON's Vice President, Bill Mannarelli, explained: "Our main focus is to lend our international experience and ensure that the Euros allocated result in compliant stadia and a responsible business plan that ensures project success leading up to the Championship and beyond."

Operation Transformation

ICON's primary goal is to build upon Italy's rich footballing history, and comprehensively solidify the strength of Italy's bid squarely upon the nine primary stadia and up to three reserve stadia they intend to submit in their Bid Dossier. With the first new stadium in Italy to be completed by Juventus FC in Torino, new stadia are also on the drawing boards in Palermo and Cagliari. Torino's new stadium will have a net compliant capacity of 40,000+ seats, while Palermo's and Cagliari's new stadia will have a net compliant capacity of 30,000+ seats. All three will meet UEFA's strict stadia design criteria, and are economically sustainable and financed by the municipalities without hindrance. The

balance of stadia in Italy's bid will include some of the most recognised and famous stadia in all of Europe, including Rome's Stadio Olimpico, Milan's San Siro and Naples' Stadio San Paolo. These three iconic stadia, along with all other existing stadia in the Bid submittal, will undergo significant renovations to their seating tiers, spectator amenities, VIP provisions, back-of-house areas, media, parking and external works.

FIGC's President, Giancarlo Abete, described the basis for his country's Bid: "EURO 2016 represents an historic opportunity to transform the quality, security and ambience of Italian stadia."

It will be a transformation that is long overdue, monumental in its significance, and will indeed be exciting to witness.

The stadia most recently completed for the 1990 FIFA World Cup are now significantly outdated when compared with the UEFA requirements and other modern stadia around the world. Indeed, anybody that has attended a Series A match in even the best of Italy's current stadia has witnessed the tired concourses, which noticeably lack the amenities and comforts of even the most basic international venues. But the significance of the upgrades being considered goes well beyond toilet and concession upgrades in the concourse areas. For example, most of the most modern stadia in Italy include a 400m athletic running track. The result is a long and elliptical stadium geometry, which pulls fans away from the football pitch that sits inside the barren running track. As it relates to the fan experience, and the technical seating requirements of UEFA, pulling the seats closer to the pitch to create a "football first" atmosphere is the greatest and most challenging goal of Italy's 2016 Bid.

Stadio San Paolo's Renovation Plans

No other venue in Italy's stadium portfolio personifies the needed upgrades more than Naples' Stadio San Paolo. Through the design concepts identified to date, it has become the perfect test case as Italy moves to maintain and modernise its iconic venues through a

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celebrated campaign to renovate rather than replace. Made famous by Diego Maradona in the mid 1980s, the stadium in Naples is the most famous and beloved in all of Italy, and is currently slated to host several matches along with a potential semi-final. Recognising the significance of San Paolo to Italy's successful Bid strategy, ICON enlisted the assistance of international sports architect MANICA Architecture to lead the renovation concepts of the stadium in partnership with the local architect and engineers of Naples. The result is a renovation concept that removes the existing running track, prioritises the fans by creating a more intimate football pitch environment, upgrades the safety and comfort of the seating tier with improved legroom and roof protection, and meets 100% of the technical seating requirements of UEFA for stadium compliance.

In Stadio San Paolo, the existing athletics track and unusually small lower tier combined to create a less than optimal football atmosphere where the spectators are farther away from the game than preferred. MANICA's first goal in the redesign was to eliminate the athletics track and re-centre the pitch on the stadium's centreline. Once that realignment had been made, the existing lower tier could be demolished and a new lower tier could be constructed around the pitch, such that the first row of seats would begin down closer to the touchline, and then extend up accordingly to meet the existing upper tier seats. Using the existing elliptical plan geometry for these new lower rows means that the end seats would still be farther away from the goal line than optimal, so MANICA elevated the first row of seats in this new tier somewhat above pitch level. By utilising sophisticated 3D modelling software to analyze the sightlines, the height of the first row was carefully determined to allow for additional rows to be added to the ends of the bowl, down behind the goal lines, further enhancing the feeling of intimacy in the bowl. The net result is a fully transformed seating bowl environment, which eliminates the athletics track, and feels as though it was custom designed for premiere football matches from the onset.

For the 1990 FIFA World Cup, San Paolo's capacity was hastily increased by means of a system of steel support rakers and treads attached to the back of the original concrete structure. These steel extensions have recently been rendered inaccessible due to vibration and safety concerns. The proposed renovation to the stadium will remove all the unusable sections of the upper tier, along with the entire existing roof structure, to make way for 82 new skyboxes and a new lightweight, membrane roof structure, which covers the full extent of the renovated seating bowl below. By removing these unusable seating extensions and creating new skyboxes at the sidelines only, 100% of the seats in the renovated stadium will be located within the required 190m maximum viewing distance from the field of play.

World-Class Stadium

The concourses and amenities of San Paolo will also be dramatically upgraded to meet the expectations of a modern stadium, and UEFA's requirements for the Championship. New toilets, concessions, and VIP provisions, such as VIP drop-offs, lounges and skyboxes, will be completed throughout the facility. Bespoke lounges with private entrances will create a variety of new revenue streams for the venue, with an enhanced business plan analogous to the most modern stadia throughout the world.

The supporting structure of the new membrane roof will also provide a structural framework for a new 'floating' exterior skin. Wrapping the existing building with a new lightweight scrim of high strength mesh membrane, the addition of programmable colour-changing LED lights will visually bring the building to life — and even provide sponsorship opportunities that will further drive long term revenue for the building. When brilliantly lit during an event, the vibrant colours and vivid graphics that dance along the exterior skin and roof will mirror the colourful and dynamic street life of the city of Naples. Indeed, it will be a special building that is unique to Naples and its wonderful locale in the south of Italy.



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And finally, ICON and MANICA's dedication to supporting Italy's long term goal of environmental responsibility and sustainability is at the centre of the stadium's unique renovation. By recycling the unused steel of the dismantled seating sections, and utilising on-site crushed concrete for aggregate in the parking areas, the amount of construction waste will be dramatically reduced. In addition, the new roof's rain water collection will support the renewed landscape and grey-water needs of the facility, thereby greatly reducing the stadium's demand for potable city water. The additional incorporation of modern water saving fixtures, low demand electrical systems, and interior finishes that utilise renewable resources, will establish the Stadio San Paolo renovation as a world-class renovation project.

The full combination of work being considered for Naples Stadio San Paolo will not only create an entirely new image for the stadium, but it will create a fan experience as yet unmatched in Italy. And while the design meets the 2016 Bid requirements for UEFA, it much more importantly generates a long term solution to the viability and sustainability of an otherwise obso-

lete stadium. Indeed, Italy's goal of using the Bid to rebuild its stadium portfolio is based on a vision of the importance of football in Italy. It is a clear vision that extends well beyond any single tournament — no matter how significant.

Forza Italia!

The path to Naples' renovation is not unlike the story of many of the other stadia eagerly awaiting extensive renovation in Italy. Stadia such as Bari, Udine, and even Rome's Stadio Olimpico have the same challenges, and are considering similar solutions to facilitate the Bid's successful application. ICON's goal is to finalise the detailed Bid Dossier for Italy's successful stadium campaign so that UEFA can clearly see and understand the country's dedication to hosting the 2016 EURO Championship, and more importantly, improving the game of football throughout the country.

With the support of the Italian government and experienced sports architects and professionals from around the world, Italy's chances for success are better than ever before. But regardless of UEFA's decision on where the 2016 EURO event will be held, Italy will have just completed a detailed set of plans to renovate and rebuild its entire stadium portfolio to once again compete with other modern facilities around the world. The plan is based on a concept that the Italians established for the world long ago in their ancient cities: humanity's enduring desire to watch and participate in sport. Thanks to Italy, the stadium has become one of the most lasting and transcendent building types of all time. Forza Italia! 🌟

Author's Credits: David Manica, Owner and Director of MANICA Architecture.

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