

Euro 2000 Ticketing - A One to One Mailing?

*Alex Joos
Group Joos
Belgium*

Abstract

Group Joos was selected to do the tickets for Euro 2000. It was not just a ticketing job. It became a full color personalised digital print mailing. Secured in design and process. 1.200.000 tickets were printed and personalised on a Xeikon press. With full variable data in full color on both sides. The tickets were mailed to spectators, sponsors and federations throughout the world.

1. Management Summary

The concept for the "EURO 2000" ticket is very interesting in several aspects:

- it combined multiple processes and techniques to successfully provide the security requirements requested by the EURO 2000 Foundation - the Belgian/Dutch independent Local Organizing Committee (LOC)
- the Group JOOS /Belgium combined expertise in conventional offset printing, security printing and digital printing in their offer. They were selected out of 8 printers to produce the order of 1.2 million tickets, winning the order against the major security printing company in the Netherlands
- the mailing of the tickets to provide personal contact with the spectators finally became a key component of the project

2. Background of the Application

The Football World Championship of 1998 in France revealed the threat represented by ticket counterfeiting when several hundreds of fans (mainly Japanese) ended up stranded in Paris with forged tickets - damaging the image of the event.

UEFA (Union of the European Football Association) - the governing body of European football - was determined to prevent such a situation happening again.

In 1995, UEFA awarded the organization of "Euro 2000" to two countries for the first time (Belgium and the Netherlands). The selected countries created an independent organisation - the Euro 2000 Foundation - to organize the logistics, match ticketing, security, accommodation, and logistics - all done under supervision of the UEFA.

The organisers of EURO 2000 were determined to develop a 100 % safe ticket production and delivery. The

development of a solution - combining security printing papers, conventional, digital printing and secure data manipulation - took almost a year.

3. General Specification of the Application

EURO 2000 tickets were sold in advance - in the participating countries - through different channels.

Of the 1.2 million tickets:

- 400,000 were earmarked for sale to the general public (60 % for the Netherlands, 20 % for Belgium, 20 % for the rest of the world)
- 600,000 tickets were released to the national football associations of the participating countries, each federation remarketing the tickets in their territories
- 200,000 tickets were allocated to the sponsors and suppliers
- A number of tickets had also to be provided for access to VIP and hospitality boxes

The tickets ordered directly by the general public (by telephone, mail order or Internet) were delivered by courier service to the personal attention of the purchasers.

The ticket provided access to the stadium, seating directions - and logistic information which enabled the fans to easily find their destination - in a location unknown to most of them.

According to the Financial Times/UK, there were some good quality forged tickets sold on the black market for the final match, but altogether the EURO 2000 went well, with no major case of fraud reported.

4. Manufacturing Operations at Group Joos

The production started with the custom manufacturing of 230 mm wide rolls of multi-layer security paper, a complex sandwich with two external layers of security paper - the paper included UV fibres and "iridescent coating" together with other security features for reaction to fraud with chemical or mechanical actions - and an inner layer of blue polyester to allow tear testing. This proved to be an effective feature since the forged imitation tickets for the final match were printed on ordinary single layer security paper without plastic core and thus were detected through a simple tear test.

The Euro 2000 foundation had provided 4 different print patterns for the ticket. The pattern selected for the printing of the ticket was indicated at the last minute to Group Joos, as a security measure.

The paper rolls - front side - were printed on a 9 colour conventional offset press, with rainbow printing, UV inks, grey and process colours and letterpress numbering in the left area of the tickets and in the right margin of the paper roll (this section was trimmed off in the bindery operation) to count each individual piece of security paper. The backside was printed on a 5 colour press (colour logos of sponsors and fading security background).

Group Joos received a read-only data file from EURO 2000 through a point to point secure-ciphered telephone line. The data were grouped by customers (not by match, as one could have assumed) and consisted of a set of orders, with customers' name and address, number of tickets requested - and general data on the football matches.

Group Joos imported this file into the Digital Front End controller of a Xeikon/Belgium full colour digital printer to print several variable elements in colour on the tickets. The ticket image was composed for each ticket as follows:

- on the front side of the ticket: the name of the match, its location (address and photo of the stadium), date, time, price and location of the seat were printed together with the name of the ticket holder. The seating sector was colour coded (red for red sector, green for green sector, etc.). The "Euro 2000" logo was printed onto the iridescent security band, in a different position per match

A barcode was printed in "ladder orientation" on the right margin of the paper roll to control matching of the ticket with the personalised letter (during bindery operation).

The date of printing, envelope record number, ticket record number and position of the ticket within the individual order were printed in the left margin

- on the back side of the ticket: the general sales conditions and a small map of the stadium to help the customer to find his/her seat easily

A serial number was computed and a barcode generated with the supplied data and rotated in "ladder orientation" on the right side (this barcode was used in 3 of the 8 stadiums equipped with reading and checking with ticket database as an access control method)

The ticket was printed on Xeikon DCP32D continuous duplex digital color printer. The Xeikon printer changed the images on the fly for each ticket - on front and backside.

The printed / imaged rolls were then moved to a finishing line using pin-feed mechanism. The barcodes

on the right margin were first read and compared with the information contained in the order database. If the order was correct, an accompanying personalised letter was printed (on pre-printed letterhead), which listed the ordered tickets, the matches, the dates, and the ticket serial numbers. The personalised letter also contained a barcode showing the tracking number of the courier service company (visible through the top window of the envelope).

On the left margin of the ticket, there was variable, order related information printed, referencing the number of tickets per envelope/recipient, allowing control of mismatches.

The printed / imaged paper roll was then cut to individual tickets. The tickets were bound into covers to eliminate the risk of losing tickets out of the sets assembled per individual customer. The right corners were perforated for tear-off at access control - once at the entrance of the stadium and once again at the entrance of the sector.

The bound tickets and the letter were merged (matching barcodes) and were inserted into an envelope, and then grouped for dispatch via courier services.

At Group Joos, the entire printing process had to be realized in a contained, highly secured manufacturing area - specifically allotted for the production of the EURO 2000 ticket order.

5. Conclusion

The EURO 2000 application incorporated a "state of the art" combination of printing technologies and security features designed to prevent fraud.

The Xeikon full colour variable printing capabilities allowed the usage of different colours to print information relative to the seating position, access path to the seat, and pictures of the players - providing an additional level of security, and helped the organisers of this large event to guide spectators to the correct area(s).

The resulting product combined attractiveness (it may turn into a valuable collector's item), and provided customised information to the user.

Since the EURO 2000 event was a global success, offering similar personalisation can add value to the offer of Eforma partners competing to supply the tickets for other large-scale events.

In March 2001 Group Joos received two Awards for the Euro 2000 ticketing/ mailing project: a Print-On-Demand Award from the Belgian Magazine "Grafisch Nieuws" (Graphical News) and a special Award during the Esprix competition of the DMSA, the Association for Direct Marketing, Distance Selling and Sales Promotion in the Netherlands. Group Joos won also the second price in the category "Innovative Applications" during the XEIKON Diamond Awards competition in October 2000.

