25th June 2021

The Union of European Football Associations

Route de Genève 46

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Switzerland

Dear UEFA,

The *Limiting Virus Transmission during Sporting Mega Event* (LIVE) project, funded by the Economic and Social Research Council, aims to analyse, inform, and evaluate the COVID-19 mitigation measures at EURO 2020. We wanted to bring to your attention some preliminary insights of fans’ experiences of attending the group-stage matches at Hampden Park and Wembley Stadium. These broadly align to concerns with the following themes:

**Entry/Exit to stadium**

While there is a staggered entry protocol into both stadiums, many observers, at both Hampden and Wembley, indicated that there was no procedure in place for exiting the stadium. Observer 3 (ENGCRO) said, ‘***the exit from the stadium was the standard procedure prior to any covid regulations. There were no staged exits, and all exits led to the stadium perimeter where fans were free to go wherever they wanted***’.

Another observer (5: SCOCZE) said, ‘***not crush, but certainly usual busy squeezing into gaps that happens at the end of a normal match at Hampden***’. A third observer (21: ENGSCO) said, '***I had confidence in the process from a general safety perspective, but from a covid control perspective it begs the question as to the point of a staggered entry over the course of 2.5-3 hrs to help with distancing, to then just let 25,000 people out at the same time. We were shoulder to shoulder with other fans as we left***’.

**Face coverings**

There was confusion in the guidance provided to spectators in relation to face coverings, where many observers highlighted that many people ignored requests to always wear masks, coupled with a failure of staff to enforce it in seating areas. Observer 5 (SCOCZE) mentioned how spectators had received a notification by UEFA lifting the enforcement of mask wearing when seated, but this was later re-enforced. Fewer than half of all people were wearing a mask on the concourse even though it was required. And as recalled by Observer 14 (ENGSCO), even less were in stands, '***I would guess at around 90% of those in the section did not have a mask on and did not pay attention to the multiple reminders on the screen***’.

**Social distancing**

Social distancing measures had been put in place inside the stadium to comply with public health guidance of at least 1.5 metres between every spectator. However, both inside and outside the stadium, some observers noticed that people often greeted one another through social contact (i.e., hugging, fist pumping, jumping, and cuddling), and this was heightened due to alcoholism and goal celebrations. Notably, observer 21 (ENGSCO) experienced a ‘***party***’ like ‘***carnival friendly atmosphere***’ of singing and chanting loudly, holding beer cups with shirts off. Continuing, they said that the fan who was intoxicated was ‘***embracing people who he clearly didn’t know … grabbing people, putting his arm around them, talking right into their ear ... I would have been really unhappy if he had been close enough to me to touch me***’.

**Seating arrangement**

Seating had been allocated within the stadium, with spacing of at least one space per seat for every spectator. But many people were not seated and stood during the matches often next to others, perhaps creating a ‘***greater distance between bubbles***’ (Observer 4: ENGCRO). Some observers also noticed that there very few people in some stands compared with others, and the capacity of people in some stands increased during the matches. While there were announcements reminding people to stay in their allocated seat, spectators had unrestricted access to move around the stadium. Indeed, Observer 4 (ENGCRO) moved ‘***freely***' near to the television studio and ‘***at no point were [they] challenged***’. This same observer and another (Observer 1: ENGCROA) noticed 3-4000 England fans had relocated in the stand next to the Croatian fans, which led to a ‘***wall***’ of stewards between the two sections. The section was not overcrowded but people were not keeping to 1.5m distance between their seats and '***stewards were unable to communicate this with fans due to the size of the section***’.

With upcoming matches at Hampden and Wembley, we believe these preliminary insights will be of importance to the UK Government, Scottish Government, UEFA, the Scottish Football Association, and the Football Association, especially given the ongoing threat of COVID-19 to public health across the United Kingdom.

Yours Sincerely,

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