

UEFA EURO 2008™

TEAM PROFILES

FINAL TOURNAMENT



Version 1.1 • Tuesday, 10 June 2008, 12:00CET

Content: UEFA Media Technologies, SA

Distribution: Euro 2008, SA

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Team profile

Austria

Austria face a steep learning curve

How are their preparations going for UEFA EURO 2008™?

- With only friendly games to prepare themselves for co-hosting the finals, Austria have endured some tough times.
- Charged with the task of building a new Austria side for 2008, coach Josef Hickersberger knew the process was likely to be a painful one, saying: "It goes without saying that this process means facing and overcoming obstacles and setbacks."
- Hickersberger lost his first three games in charge before a 2-2 draw against Costa Rica in September 2006 helped ease the pressure. He finally earned a first win at the fifth attempt, 2-1 against Liechtenstein thanks to a late Thomas Prager goal, and followed that up with a 2-1 victory against fellow hosts Switzerland.
- René Aufhauser struck a hat-trick in a 4-1 success against Trinidad & Tobago in October 2006, but it was to be another year – and another ten games – before Austria won again, beating Ivory Coast 3-2 in Innsbruck.
- Further defeats to group rivals, Germany (0-3), and also the Netherlands (3-4) followed during the main international friendly dates in 2008 prior to the finals proper.
- Hickersberger continues to blood young talent, and said: "I'm convinced we will see a very different national team at the European Championship. Both Austria and Switzerland will be excellent hosts. They will put on a sensational tournament and I am convinced that both teams will reach the quarter-finals."

How did they perform in 2006 FIFA World Cup qualifying?

- A third-placed finish in Group 6 meant Austria missed out on their second successive FIFA World Cup finals, having last appeared at the 1998 event in France.
- Hans Krankl's Austria made a bright start, holding section favourites England to a 2-2 draw in Vienna, after two goals in four minutes from Roland Kollman and Andreas Ivanschitz cancelled out efforts from Frank Lampard and Steven Gerrard.
- However, a 3-1 home defeat by Poland in their fourth game was a disappointment from which they never quite recovered.
- A second defeat against Poland ended any realistic hopes of qualification, and Krankl resigned with two qualifiers still to play, angry at the news that he was to be replaced by Hickersberger - then coach of SK Rapid Wien.
- Austria subsequently lost 1-0 in England and beat Northern Ireland 2-0 at home.

How did they perform in UEFA EURO 2004™ qualifying?

- The Czech Republic and the Netherlands proved too strong for Austria as they finished third in Group 3, well out of the qualifying picture.
- Successive 2-0 wins in their opening qualifiers against Moldova and Belarus augured well, but a 3-0 home defeat against the Dutch followed by a 4-0 mauling in the Czech Republic represented the writing on the wall.
- Both the section's big names would inflict further defeats on Krankl's side before the end of the campaign, and to add insult to injury, Austria also lost 1-0 in Moldova.

What is their best performance in the UEFA European Championship?

- Austria have never qualified for a UEFA European Championship final tournament, and so will be playing in the finals for the first time when they co-host UEFA EURO 2008™. They came within one round of the four-team final tournament of the inaugural 1960 competition, but lost 9-4 on aggregate to France in the quarter-finals.

Key facts

- Austria will be one of two first-time contenders at the UEFA European Championship finals along with Poland. However, they have played at seven FIFA World Cup final tournaments.

All-time record

- Going into the finals of UEFA EURO 2008™, their record in the tournament was 80 matches played, with 33 wins, 13 draws and 34 defeats, and 146 goals scored and 125 conceded.

Croatia

Croatia packing a mean punch

How did they perform in UEFA EURO 2008™ qualifying?

- The most consistent performers in a competitive Group E, Croatia qualified with a game to spare thanks to Russia's defeat in Israel – news of which filtered through to the team halfway through their 2-0 defeat in F.Y.R. Macedonia.
- It was the only defeat suffered by Croatia during an impressive first campaign under former international defender Slaven Bilić.
- They began with a useful 0-0 draw in Russia and took off the next month with a 7-0 win against Andorra, Mladen Petrić's four goals helping Croatia equal their previous record win, 7-0 against Australia in 1998.
- Four days later, on 11 October 2006, Croatia got an even better result, 2-0 at home against England.
- Having scored against England, Brazilian-born striker Eduardo da Silva netted a hat-trick as Croatia won 4-3 in Israel in their next game.
- With ten goals overall, Eduardo finished as the second top scorer in qualifying behind Northern Ireland's David Healy.
- Croatia saved the best for last, their 3-2 win against England at Wembley on 21 November 2007 confirming first place in the section and ending their hosts' hopes of qualifying. "We are good – very good," said Bilić.

How did they perform in the 2006 FIFA World Cup?

- Croatia topped their group with seven wins and three draws from their ten 2006 FIFA World Cup qualifiers. Although Sweden also finished with the same points total, the Croatians held the stronger record in direct matches involving the two group principals. In total, Croatia scored 21 times with five goals conceded.
- Their key victory came in their second match in the qualifying competition. Having dismissed Hungary's challenge with a 3-0 win in Zagreb in their opener after opposing defender Szabolcs Huszti was dismissed after eleven minutes, Croatia won in Sweden thanks to Darijo Srna's 64th-minute free-kick.
- Although Croatia would be held to draws at home against Bulgaria (2-2) and away against Malta (1-1), they won the return matches against those opponents as well as defeating Iceland home and away.
- This set up their crucial second meeting with Sweden in Zagreb in their penultimate fixture, a match the Croatians won thanks to Srna's 56th-minute penalty. Their final fixture ended in a scoreless draw away against Hungary, enough to confirm their first-place finish.
- Croatia lost 1-0 to Brazil before 0-0 and 2-2 draws against Japan and Australia respectively in the group stage of the finals.
- Josip Šimunić and Dario Šimić were both sent-off in Croatia's final game against Australia as they went out of the tournament at the first hurdle.

How did they perform in UEFA EURO 2004™?

- Croatia advanced to the UEFA EURO 2004™ final tournament via the play-offs after finishing second to Bulgaria in the qualification phase. With five victories and a draw from their eight matches, the Croatians trailed the group winners by a point, but finished ahead of Belgium due to their superior goal difference in the direct matches between the two teams.
- It was in their first match against Belgium, their third in the qualifying campaign, that the Croatians finally found their feet. Having opened the competition with a scoreless home draw against Estonia, the Croatians were then on the receiving end of a 2-0 defeat away against Bulgaria. Belgium then bore the full brunt of Croatian wrath in Zagreb as the home side ran out 4-0 winners thanks to goals from Srna (9), Dado Pršo (55), Tomislav Marić (70) and Jerko Leko (76).
- They would not concede a goal for 448 consecutive minutes before a brace from Wesley Sonck (35, 43) in Brussels helped Belgium to avenge their earlier defeat with Marco Rapaic (37) scoring Croatia's goal.
- The Croatians then held their nerve in their final game, defeating the already-qualified Bulgaria thanks to Ivica Olić's 48th-minute goal at Zagreb's Maksimir stadium.
- Their reward was a two-legged play-off against Slovenia, the Croatians winning 2-1 on aggregate, despite being held to a 1-1 draw at home in the opening leg. They took the lead through Pršo after five minutes only for Ermin Siljak to equalise midway through the half. But Croatia would go on to stun Slovenia in Ljubljana, Pršo scoring the only goal of the game shortly after the hour mark.
- Croatia failed to advance beyond the group stage in Portugal, recording two draws and a defeat from their three outings. Those draws came in their opening two engagements against Switzerland (0-0) and France (2-2) before they were outgunned by England (4-2) in their last match.

What is their best performance in the UEFA European Championship?

• Croatia's best performance to date came in their first involvement in the competition. Having topped their qualification round group for EURO '96™ with 23 points from ten games, the Croatians were pitched against Denmark, Portugal and Turkey in the final tournament group phase. Opening with two victories against Turkey (1-0) and Denmark (3-0), the Croatians qualification for the knockout phase was guaranteed prior to their 3-0 defeat against Portugal in their last match. Facing eventual winners, Germany, in the quarter-final phase, the Croatians exited following a 2-1 defeat.

Key facts

• Croatia have missed only one UEFA European Championship final tournament since independence, missing out on a trip to UEFA EURO 2000™.

All-time record

• Up until the end of qualifying for UEFA EURO 2008™, Croatia had appeared in the UEFA European Championship on four occasions, and had played 47 matches. In that time, they had won 28, drawn eleven and lost eight with 86 goals scored and 38 conceded.

Czech Republic

Czechs make it four in a row

How did they perform in UEFA EURO 2008™ qualifying?

- With Group D settling quickly into a two-horse race between Germany and the Czech Republic, Karel Brückner's side never looked unlikely to qualify, but finished the job in some style.
- The two frontrunners met for the first time in Prague on 24 March 2007, when two goals from Kevin Kuranyi rendered Milan Baroš's 77th-minute effort redundant and sent Joachim Löw's side three points clear at the top of the section.
- The Czechs held their nerve in subsequent games, however, and spoiled Germany's qualification celebrations by overcoming their neighbours 3-0 in Munich on 17 October 2007 to seal their place in the finals with two games to spare.
- Victory was all the sweeter for having been achieved without a number of top players. Libor Sionko, Marek Matějovský and Jaroslav Plašil scored the goals that silenced the Bavarian crowd and centre-back David Rozehnal said: "Qualifying is nice but the way we did it is even better."
- They went on to win the group with a 2-0 triumph in Cyprus in their final qualifier.

How did they perform in the 2006 FIFA World Cup?

- Finished five points behind runaway group winners the Netherlands in qualifying group action for the 2006 FIFA World Cup, but one point ahead of third-placed Romania. Advanced to one of the three play-off fixtures where they overcame Norway 2-0 on aggregate, winning both legs by the minimum margin.
- Won their opening five home matches in qualifying before losing 2-0 in Prague to the Netherlands in their penultimate fixture in the competition, a result that decided the fate of group honours.
- One of those victories included an 8-1 defeat of Andorra, to date the Czechs widest margin of victory in a competitive international.
- Got off to a fine start at the finals with a 3-0 victory against the United States in their opening group game.
- Defeats by Ghana and Italy, both 2-0, in their remaining games meant the Czechs, who suffered several injuries in Germany, were eliminated in the opening stage.

How did they perform in UEFA EURO 2004™?

- Eliminated at the semi-final stage of the competition by eventual winners, Greece. The only goal of the game after 105 minutes from Greek defender Traianos Dellas, a silver goal which gave the Czechs virtually no time to muster a response.
- Earlier in the competition, the Czechs accounted for Denmark (3-0) in the quarter-finals after earlier winning all of their three engagements in the group stage against Latvia (2-1), the Netherlands (3-2) and Germany (2-1).
- They topped their group in qualifying round action with seven wins and a draw from eight matches to finish three points clear of the Netherlands with Austria a further ten points in arrears in third position.
- All four home matches ended in victory by an aggregate margin of 14 goals scored with only one conceded. Away from home, the Czechs dropped their only points of the campaign in Rotterdam when they shared a 1-1 draw with the Netherlands.

What is their best performance in the UEFA European Championship?

- The golden goal made its debut in senior international competition at UEFA EURO '96™ and accounted for the Czech Republic in the final of the tournament when Oliver Bierhoff scored the winning goal five minutes into extra time after the sides remained deadlocked at 1-1 after 90 minutes. The Czechs had earlier defeated France and Portugal in the knockout phase of the competition after finishing second to Germany in the group stage at the expense of Italy and Russia.
- As part of the former state of Czechoslovakia, Czech players were involved in winning the 1976 UEFA European Championship against the Federal Republic of Germany. The final ended in a 2-2 stalemate in Belgrade before the Czechoslovak side won 5-3 on penalties with Antonín Panenka cheekily chipping in the final spot-kick for Václav Ježek's side.

Key facts

- Although Pauleta ended up as the highest scorer in the European zone of the 2006 FIFA World Cup qualifying round competition with eleven goals, Czech Republic striker Jan Koller was second on nine with Zlatan Ibrahimović (Sweden) and Aleksei Eremenko Jr. (Finland) a further goal behind.

All-time record

- Up until the end of UEFA EURO 2008™ qualifying, the Czech Republic had played 54 matches in the UEFA European Championship, winning 39, drawing eight and losing seven. In that time, they scored 117 goals and conceded 37.
- From independence up until the end of UEFA EURO 2008™ qualifying the Czechs' record in the qualifying round of the UEFA European Championship reads - won 25, drawn six and lost two.
- They secured their biggest victory in UEFA European Championship qualification by beating San Marino 7-0 in Liberec on 7 October 2006.
- The Czechs retain a 100 per cent qualification record for the UEFA European Championship finals with four appearances from four attempts.

France

France seek famous treble success

How did they perform in UEFA EURO 2008™ qualifying?

- France's Group B campaign proved more of an ordeal than many would have anticipated although Italy's 2-1 win in Scotland did them a big favour by making their final game in Ukraine a formality.
- A rematch with Italy, the team who had denied them the 2006 FIFA World Cup, was the big treat for the neutrals and France took first blood at the Stade de France in their second qualifier with goals from Sidney Govou (2) and Thierry Henry earning a 3-1 win.
- However, Raymond Domenech's team lost 1-0 to Scotland in Glasgow in their next game to put a surprising complexion on the section.
- France settled themselves with a run of four wins and then drew 0-0 with Italy in Milan.
- However, once more a good result against Italy was followed by a shock against the Scots as James McFadden's strike in Paris consigned the French to a second 1-0 loss against the group's surprise contenders.
- Henry subsequently broke Michel Platini's record of 41 goals for France in the 2-0 win against Lithuania and fears that France might need a result in Ukraine in their final game were to prove unfounded.
- Les Bleus finished second in the section behind Italy.

How did they perform in the 2006 FIFA World Cup?

- One of three teams in their group that remained unbeaten through the qualifying round process, France emerged in first position as their form improved during the competition following a sluggish start.
- The French split their victories and draws in the ten-match campaign to finish two points clear of Switzerland and Israel.
- Although they struggled for goals in their opening five games by only scoring four times in away defeats of the Faroe Islands and Cyprus, the French also recorded five consecutive clean sheets as 0-0 home draws against Israel, the Republic of Ireland and Switzerland testify.
- They would remain undefeated at home with subsequent victories against the Faroes and Cyprus, but their 1-0 defeat of the Republic of Ireland in Dublin ultimately put them in control of their own destiny in the group standings.
- After a slow start in the group stage at the finals against Switzerland (0-0), the Korean Republic (1-1) and Togo (2-0), France gradually improved.
- Victory against Spain in the second round (3-1) was followed by the 1-0 defeats of holders Brazil and then Portugal as they marched on to the final.
- In the showpiece match, France narrowly lost to Italy. Their opponents won 5-3 on penalties after the match, which saw captain Zinedine Zidane sent-off, had finished 1-1.

How did they perform in UEFA EURO 2004™?

- Advanced to the quarter-finals of the competition before exiting to eventual winners, Greece. The only goal of the game came after 65 minutes through Angelos Charisteas. The defeat ensured that after twelve UEFA European Championship final rounds, the Henri Delaunay trophy remains undefended by the holders.
- Prior to that, France came through the group stage unscathed with victories against England (2-1) and Switzerland (3-1), sandwiched by a 2-2 draw against Croatia.
- Eight wins from eight outings in the qualifying campaign ensured a fault-free passage for the UEFA European Championship holders to the final tournament. Slovenia finished as runners-up ten points adrift as France scored 29 goals but only conceded on two occasions. In total, 19 of those goals were scored in their four matches at home with none conceded.

What is their best performance in the UEFA European Championship?

- France are the only other country apart from three-time winners Germans to have won the competition more than once following successes in 1984 and 2000.
- The victory in 1984 came on home soil as hosts with Spain defeated 2-0 in the final at Parc des Princes in Paris.
- The French won all their matches in the competition, defeating Denmark (1-0), Belgium (5-0) and Yugoslavia (3-2) in the group phase before Portugal (3-2 after extra-time) were accounted for in the semi-finals at Marseille's Stade Vélodrome.
- France edged out Ukraine and Russia by one and two points respectively to book an automatic spot at the UEFA EURO 2000™ finals which were co-hosted by Belgium and the Netherlands.
- Roger Lemerre's side were second to the Dutch through the three-match group phase, but they overcame Spain (2-1) and Portugal (2-1 after extra-time) in the knockout phase before defeating Italy in the final.
- The endgame also went to extra-time with Marco Delvecchio putting the Italians ahead after 55 minutes only for Sylvain Wiltord to equalise in stoppage time. France went on to win the game thanks to David Trezeguet's goal after 103 minutes.

All-time record

- France have qualified for the last five UEFA European Championship final tournaments having first qualified to host the inaugural four-team final round in 1960.

Key facts

- France have been involved in all 13 UEFA European Championship competitions to date. Up until the end of UEFA EURO 2008™ qualifying, they had played 117 matches, with 67 wins, 29 draws, 21 losses, 236 goals scored and 109 conceded.
- Before defeating Azerbaijan 10-0 on 6 September 1995 in Auxerre, France's record victory came in their first-ever match in the competition at the expense of Greece.
- France were humbled 5-1 by Yugoslavia at the quarter-final stage of the 1968 UEFA European Championship. To date, that result is their record defeat in the competition.

Germany

Germany keen to remain on top

How did they perform in UEFA EURO 2008™ qualifying?

- Germany were the first side to secure qualification for the finals with a 0-0 draw in the Republic of Ireland on 13 October 2007, although a couple of aberrations took some of the gloss off a generally impressive campaign by Joachim Löw's side.
- Germany broke the record for the biggest ever UEFA European Championship win, beating San Marino 13-0 away on 6 September 2006, with Lukas Podolski scoring four goals – only the second German player after Gerd Müller put four past Albania in 1967 to manage that feat.
- They were held to a surprising 1-1 draw by Cyprus in Nicosia on 15 November, but made amends in their next game, beating Czech Republic, the eventual Group D winners, 2-1 in Prague through two Kevin Kuranyi goals.
- They met the Czechs again after they had secured qualification, but left the pitch to catcalls after losing 3-0 in Munich – a result which saw Karel Brückner's visitors through to the finals.
- They finished second in their group after a 0-0 draw against Wales in their final qualifier.

How did they perform in the 2006 FIFA World Cup?

- Germany did not feature in the 2006 FIFA World Cup qualification round as they were the hosts of the final tournament.
- Germany won all three of their games in the group stage of the finals against Costa Rica (4-2), Poland (1-0) and Ecuador (3-0).
- In the knockout phase they progressed to the semi-finals with victories against Sweden (2-0) and Argentina (4-2 on penalties after the match had ended 1-1).
- The hosts were then eliminated by Italy (2-0) but did finish third after a 3-1 win against Portugal.
- Striker Miroslav Klose ended the tournament as leading scorer, winning the Golden Shoe with five goals.

How did they perform in UEFA EURO 2004™?

- Germany were involved in the finals for the ninth successive time, qualifying for the eighth successive occasion having hosted the final tournament in 1988. In those eight qualifications, they have finished top of their qualification round group every time.
- In qualifying for UEFA EURO 2004™, Germany won five and drew their remaining three matches to finish four points clear of Scotland. Nevertheless, their only comprehensive victory came in their final match, a 3-0 defeat of Iceland in Hamburg with Michael Ballack (9), Fredi Bobic (60) and Kevin Kuranyi (79) on target.
- Two two-goal victories were recorded home and away against the Faroe Islands, with their other successes coming away against Lithuania (2-0) and at home against Scotland (2-1).
- In their three draws at home against Lithuania (1-1), away against Scotland (1-1) and away against Iceland (0-0), Germany never trailed.
- But their performance in the final tournament disappointed with only two points from three group stage outings. Draws were recorded against the Netherlands (1-1) and Latvia (0-0) before Germany exited the competition following their 2-1 defeat at the hands of the Czech Republic in a repeat of the EURO '96™ final.

What is their best performance in the UEFA European Championship?

- Germany have won the competition once since reunification (1996) but three times overall having earlier won the competition in 1972 and 1980 as West Germany. The Czech Republic were defeated in the 1996 final at Wembley, Oliver Bierhoff scoring the golden goal winner five minutes into extra-time after having earlier scored their equaliser 17 minutes from time. Patrik Berger had given the Czechs a 59th-minute lead from the penalty spot.
- Germany advanced from the group stage with defeats of the Czech Republic (2-0) and Russia (3-0) before holding Italy to a scoreless draw. Their reward was a quarter-final match against Croatia which Germany won 2-1 before they defeated England in the semis on penalties after the match ended 1-1 after extra-time.

Key facts

- Germany have not won a match in the final tournament of a UEFA European Championship since winning the competition in 1996. Since then, Germany have played six matches, drawing three and losing three with three goals scored and eight conceded.

All-time record

- Germany lead the way with three tournament victories to date. In 1972 and 1980 they won the competition as West Germany, but their 1996 success came after reunification. France are the only other country to have won the competition more than once following successes in 1984 and 2000.
- Up until the end of qualifying for UEFA EURO 2008™, Germany had appeared in the UEFA European Championship on eleven occasions, and had played 110 matches. In that time, they won 67, drawn 29 and lost 14 of those fixtures with 224 goals scored and 77 conceded.

Greece

Greece seek to retain top prize

How did they perform in UEFA EURO 2008™ qualifying?

- The European champions were winners of Group C, qualifying with two games to spare thanks to Ioannis Amanatidis's strike in a 1-0 win against Turkey in Istanbul. They finished the campaign with 31 points – more than any other team in qualifying.
- Otto Rehhagel broke new ground as Greece's longest-serving coach, overseeing his 75th match in the final qualifier in Hungary.
- Greece's great start – three wins without conceding a goal – came to a shocking end as they went down 4-1 to Turkey in Athens, despite taking a fifth-minute lead through Sotirios Kyrgiakos. "Although we got an early goal, we couldn't keep up with Turkey's tempo and they got better by the minute," said Rehhagel.
- Greek heads did not drop, however, and they duly won seven out of their next eight qualifiers, the only dropped points coming in the credit-worthy 2-2 draw in Norway, where Kyrgiakos scored twice.
- Kyrgiakos played in all 1,080 minutes of Greece's 12-game qualifying campaign.

How did they perform in the 2006 FIFA World Cup qualification round?

- Failed to follow up on their UEFA EURO 2004™ success after missing out on a place at the 2006 FIFA World Cup finals in Germany by finishing fourth in their seven-team group with six wins and three draws from their 12 qualifying matches.
- Recorded four wins and a draw from their six outings at home. Their only home defeat came against eventual group winners, Ukraine, who scored the only goal of the game via Andriy Husin eight minutes from time at the Georgios Karaiskakis stadium.

How did they perform in UEFA EURO 2004™?

- Proved to be the surprise package of the UEFA EURO 2004™ finals in Portugal by ending the competition as winners.
- Qualified for the competition for the second time in their history by winning their group with six wins and two losses from their eight outings to finish ahead of Spain and Ukraine.
- Won their last six matches in the qualifying round by a total margin of eight goals scored and none conceded – the last four games all ending 1-0.
- Finished second behind Portugal in the group stage of the final tournament despite defeating the hosts 2-1 in the opening game.
- Continued to put faith in their defence as 1-0 results proved in the remainder of the competition. Greece overcame France at the quarter-final stage with Angelos Charisteas on target after 65 minutes. Then beat the Czech Republic in the semis thanks to Trianiotis Dellas's silver goal after 105 minutes.
- Greece then defeated Portugal in the final at the Estádio da Luz with Charisteas's 57th-minute goal separating the sides.
- Ended the competition without conceding a goal in their final 358 minutes of competitive play.

What is their best performance in the UEFA European Football Championship?

- Won UEFA EURO 2004™.

Key facts

- Greece have played at two UEFA European Championship finals having featured in 1980 in Italy before triumphing at UEFA EURO 2004™.

All-time record

- Up until the end of UEFA EURO 2008™ qualifying, Greece had played 100 games in the UEFA European Championship (including the forfeit 3-0 defeat to Albania in 1963) winning 48, drawing 19 and losing 33 times with 146 goals scored and 115 conceded.
- Their greatest margin of victory came in the qualifying round for the 1980 finals when Finland were on the receiving end of a 8-1 thrashing with Thomas Mavros scoring a hat-trick.
- Their greatest margin of defeat came in their opening tie in the competition in 1958 when the Greeks were on the receiving end of a 7-1 loss against France in Paris with Just Fontaine, Jean Vincent and Thadée Cisowski scoring two goals apiece for the home side.

Italy

Italy ready for second triumph

How did they perform in UEFA EURO 2008™ qualifying?

- Replacing Marcello Lippi after Italy's success at the 2006 FIFA World Cup, coach Roberto Donadoni made a shaky start in qualifying but his team eventually did enough to qualify as Group B winners.
- A 1-1 home draw with Lithuania in their opening tie in Naples was a shock, but perhaps not as big a setback as the 3-1 defeat in France in their second qualifier, when Raymond Domenech's side avenged their defeat on penalties in the World Cup final.
- That would prove the only reverse the Azzurri suffered and Luca Toni's two goals in a 2-0 win at home against Scotland in March 2007 provided an important reminder of the world champions' credentials.
- Italy won nine of their last ten qualifiers but were denied revenge against France with a goalless draw in Milan.
- They eventually secured qualification both for themselves and France by beating Scotland 2-1 in Glasgow thanks to another goal from Toni and an added-time winner from defender Christian Panucci.
- A 3-1 win against the Faroe Islands in their final fixture earned them top spot in the section at France's expense.

How did they perform in the 2006 FIFA World Cup?

- Eventual winners Italy won their 2006 FIFA World Cup qualification round group with seven wins and two draws from their ten engagements. In that time, they scored 17 goals and conceded eight.
- Their only blip came away against Slovenia in their third match in the competition. Having narrowly won their first two games at home against Norway (2-1) and away against Moldova (1-0), Italy succumbed to Boštjan Cesar's 82nd-minute goal for Slovenia in their meeting at Celje on 9 October 2004.
- The Italians bounced back with home victories against Belarus (4-3) and Scotland (2-0) before protecting their lead in the standings with away draws in Oslo against Norway (0-0) and later in Glasgow against Scotland (1-1), although they required a Fabio Grosso goal 15 minutes from time to make their point at Hampden Park.
- Belarus were defeated 4-1 in Minsk with Luca Toni (6, 13, 55) scoring a hat-trick before the Italians rounded off their campaign with two home victories against Slovenia (1-0) and Moldova (2-1). Those two successes also provided Italy with five wins from five on home soil in the qualifying round.
- Italy claimed their fourth World Cup triumph after going undefeated in their seven games at the finals in Germany.
- After group games against Ghana (2-0), the United States (1-1) and the Czech Republic (2-0) they progressed to the last four with wins against Australia (1-0) and Ukraine (3-0).
- An extra-time victory over hosts Germany (2-0) was followed by a 5-3 penalty win in the final against France after the game in Berlin had finished 1-1.

How did they perform in UEFA EURO 2004™?

- Italy won their five-team qualification round group by four points from Wales having won five and drawn two of their eight matches in the competition. But their time at the UEFA EURO 2004™ finals lasted only three matches as they finished in third place in their group behind both Sweden and Denmark despite remaining unbeaten.
- The Italians' only defeat in the entire competition came in their third match of the qualifying round when they lost 2-1 away against Wales on 16 October 2002. Simon Davies opened the scoring for the home side after eleven minutes, and though Alessandro Del Piero equalised for the visitors shortly after the half-hour mark, Wales prevailed thanks to Craig Bellamy's 70th-minute winner.
- Italy won two of their home matches by four-goal margins, firstly avenging their loss to Wales (4-0) before defeating Azerbaijan by the same scoreline. A second half hat-trick from Filippo Inzaghi (58, 62 and 69) unhinged the Welsh, and he added two more goals after 23 and 86 minutes to help defeat the Azeris.
- But Italy's UEFA EURO 2004™ finals involvement proved unsuccessful despite draws against Denmark (0-0), Sweden (1-1) and a 2-1 victory against Bulgaria in their last match, a game in which they fought back from a one-goal interval deficit to win thanks to strikes from Simone Perrotta (48) and Antonio Cassano (90+4). However, their goal difference was weaker in comparison to their two Nordic rivals who also finished the group stage with five points while Bulgaria propped up the standings, pointless from their three games in the competition.

What is their best performance in the UEFA European Championship?

- Italy won the 1968 UEFA European Championship, defeating Yugoslavia 2-0 in a final replay after the two sides had shared a 1-1 draw at Rome's Stadio Olimpico. Italy forced a replay when Angelo Domenghini's 80th-minute goal cancelled out Dragan Dzajić's opener after 39 minutes. The tournament hosts made no mistake in the replay played two days later as first-half goals from Luigi Riva (12) and Pietro Anastasi (31) sealed a 2-0 win.

Key facts

- Italy have qualified for the last four UEFA European Championship final tournaments.

All-time record

- Up until the end of qualifying for UEFA EURO 2008™, Italy had appeared in the UEFA European Championship on twelve occasions, and had played 111 matches. In that time, they won 59, drew 35 and lost 17 of those fixtures with 175 goals scored and 77 conceded.

Netherlands

Mental strength key for the Dutch

How did they perform in UEFA EURO 2008™ qualifying?

- The Netherlands rarely looked in trouble in Group G and qualified with a game to spare.
- Romania proved to be the Netherlands' most serious rivals, holding them to a 0-0 draw in Rotterdam and then progressing to the finals with a 1-0 win against Marco van Basten's side in challenging conditions in Constanta.
- Qualification was assured with a 1-0 home win against Luxembourg. The minnows withstood a Dutch onslaught but went down to a solitary Danny Koevermans goal.
- They finished second in the section after an unexpected 2-1 defeat in Belarus in their final qualifier.
- Besides qualification for Austria and Switzerland, another major positive from the Dutch campaign was the opportunity given the stars of their 2006 and 2007 UEFA European Under-21 Championship winning squads to impress at senior level.

How did they perform in the 2006 FIFA World Cup?

- Controlled their group in the qualifying round phase of the 2006 FIFA World Cup by winning ten and drawing two of their 12 outings in the competition. Topped the group standings by five points from the Czech Republic with Romania a further two points behind in third.
- Their 32 points from 12 matches provided the highest points per match haul in the competition (2.67 points per match – England and Portugal were tied for second with 2.5 points per match).
- The Dutch progressed through a difficult group at the finals after meeting Serbia and Montenegro (1-0), Ivory Coast (2-1) and Argentina (0-0).
- Their tournament ended in the second round though after a 1-0 defeat at the hands of Portugal in a game that saw both sides finish with nine men.

How did they perform in UEFA EURO 2004™?

- Having finished as runners-up to the Czech Republic in the qualifying round, the Netherlands defeated Scotland 6-1 on aggregate to book their place in the final tournament in Portugal. In the group stage, the Dutch played second fiddle to the Czechs once more, but advanced to the knockout stages where they overcame Sweden on penalties in the quarter-finals before losing 2-1 to Portugal in the semis.

What is their best performance in the UEFA European Football Championship?

- The Netherlands won the competition in 1988, their only appearance in the final to date. They defeated the Soviet Union 2-0 at Munich's Olympiastadion on 25 June 1988 thanks to goals from Ruud Gullit (32 minutes) and current coach Marco van Basten (54).
- The Dutch have also appeared in four additional semi-finals (2004, 2000, 1992 and 1976) and one additional quarter-final (1996).

Key facts

- The Dutch have qualified for the last five UEFA European Championship final tournaments.

All-time record

- Up until the end of UEFA EURO 2008™ qualifying, the Netherlands had played 117 matches in the UEFA European Championship. Their record read: 72 wins, 22 draws and 23 losses with 241 goals scored and 91 conceded.
- The Dutch did not participate in the 1960 UEFA European Championship.

Poland

Poland ready for first finals

How did they perform in UEFA EURO 2008™ qualifying?

- Dutch coach Leo Beenhakker led Poland to their first ever UEFA European Championship finals, with nine-goal striker Euzebiusz Smolarek securing their qualification with a game to spare when he struck both goals in a 2-0 home win over Belgium.
- A 3-1 home defeat by Finland in their opening game in Group A – the only section to contain eight teams, rather than seven – was a shock and when a 1-1 draw against Serbia followed, things looked grim.
- They found the perfect response, however, by embarking on six-game winning run that included a 2-1 victory over Portugal, Smolarek registering twice.
- A 1-0 defeat in Armenia threw a spanner in the works, but Poland recovered. A late Jacek Krzynówek goal earned them a 2-2 draw in Portugal and after taking another point in Finland, they completed the job with wins against Kazakhstan and Belgium.
- The Poles secured first place in Group A by holding Serbia to a 2-2 draw in their final qualifier in Belgrade – a result that ended their hosts' hopes of qualifying.

How did they perform in the 2006 FIFA World Cup?

- Two defeats against England denied Poland top spot in their 2006 FIFA World Cup qualification round group, but they advanced as one of the strongest runners-up having won the remainder of their ten engagements.
- Poland recorded home and away victories against Austria, Azerbaijan, Northern Ireland and Wales in finishing second to England. Their most notable win was their 8-0 home defeat of the Azeris on 26 March 2005 with Tomasz Frankowski (12, 63 and 66) scoring a hat-trick.
- Their first 2-1 defeat against England came at home in their second outing on 8 September 2004 in Chorzow. By the time the two sides met in their final match, they were both guaranteed a place in the finals. A Polish draw at Old Trafford would have given them group honours after England had lost away to Northern Ireland, but the home side prevailed 2-1.
- Poland were eliminated at the first stage of the finals following 2-0 and 1-0 defeats in group games against Ecuador and Germany respectively before a 2-1 triumph against Costa Rica.
- Finishing third in their section, Poland's only goals in Germany were scored by Bartosz Bosacki in their final game.

How did they perform in UEFA EURO 2004™?

- Although they had appeared at the 2002 FIFA World Cup finals, Poland again struggled in their subsequent UEFA European Championship qualifying campaign, finishing third in their group behind Portugal-bound Sweden and Latvia. The Swedes topped the five-team group with 17 points from their eight matches, one point ahead of Latvia and four clear of Poland.
- The Poles recorded four wins and a draw from their eight matches to end two points clear of Hungary. San Marino propped up the standings with no goals scored and no points to show from their campaign.
- Their home form proved to be their undoing as they lost at home to Latvia (0-1) and Sweden (0-2) as well being held to a scoreless draw by Hungary. All of their goals on home soil came in their 5-0 defeat of San Marino in Ostrowiec Swietokrzyski with Marcin Kuzba (54, 90+3) scoring twice.
- Poland won their final two games away against Latvia (2-0) and Hungary (2-1), but by then it was too late to salvage at least a second-placed finish.

What is their best performance in the UEFA European Championship?

- Prior to securing their first qualification this time around, Poland's best campaign saw them come close to qualifying for the 1980 UEFA European Championship final round in Italy, finishing one point behind the Netherlands in their qualifying round group.

Key facts

- The number 13 proved to be a luck one for Poland as they secured their first UEFA European Championship final round appearance at the 13th attempt in qualifying for UEFA EURO 2008™.

All-time record

- Up until the end of qualifying for UEFA EURO 2008™, Poland had appeared in all 13 UEFA European Championship qualifying competitions, and had played 90 matches. In that time, they had won 38, drawn 24 and lost 28 of those fixtures with 131 goals scored and 100 conceded.

Portugal

Portugal aim to take final step

How did they perform in UEFA EURO 2008™ qualifying?

- Portugal lost only one game in Group A, the only section with eight teams, but had to endure a nervous finale before claiming their place in the finals as runners-up to Poland.
- After clinging on for a 1-1 draw with Finland with ten men in their opening game, Portugal won 3-0 against Azerbaijan but then lost 2-1 in Poland.
- Progress was to be sporadic thereafter, despite winger Cristiano Ronaldo contributing eight goals. Portugal dropped some unexpected points, drawing 1-1 home and away against Serbia, 2-2 at home against Poland and – worst of all – 1-1 away against a surprisingly troublesome Armenia.
- Incidents following the 1-1 home draw with Serbia led coach Luiz Felipe Scolari to be banned from the touchline for three games, but Portugal won all three matches with his assistant Flávio Teixeira on the bench, meaning they needed only to avoid defeat in their final game against Finland in Porto to progress.
- With Finland knowing a win would likely see them qualify in Portugal's place, it was a tense affair, but a 0-0 draw sufficed for the home side, with Scolari saying: "I know we have to improve for the finals."

How did they perform in the 2006 FIFA World Cup?

- Advanced to their second successive FIFA World Cup finals by topping the standings in their qualifying round group ahead of Slovakia and Russia. Won nine and drew three of their 12 games in the qualifiers, winning all of their six games on home soil with 24 goals scored and two conceded.
- With 30 points from 12 outings, Portugal finished joint second with England (25 points from 10 matches) in terms of their average points per match ratio – 2.5 – with the Netherlands posting the best match average (2.67).
- Portugal enjoyed a successful campaign at the finals in Germany, finishing the tournament in fourth position.
- Group victories against Angola (1-0), Iran (2-0) and Mexico (2-1) were followed by the 1-0 second-round defeat of the Netherlands.
- Portugal made it to the semi-finals after a 3-1 penalty win against England but had their path halted by a 1-0 loss to France, before losing 3-1 in the third-place play-off to Germany.

How did they perform in UEFA EURO 2004™?

- Beaten finalists, having also hosted the event. Portugal lost their opening and closing matches to Greece but won all their other matches in between.
- Bounced back from their opening match loss to Greece to defeat Russia (2-0) and Spain (1-0) to top the group standings. Overcame England in the quarter-finals on penalties after the sides shared a 2-2 draw and then beat the Netherlands 2-1 to claim their place in the final.
- Greek striker Angelos Charisteas' 57th-minute goal separated the sides at the Estádio da Luz in the final as Portugal failed to follow the example of Spain (1964), Italy (1968) and France (1984) in winning the competition on home soil.

What is their best performance in the UEFA European Championship?

- Portugal's best performance to date in the competition came in 2004 when they lost in the final to Greece. Prior to that, Portugal had appeared in two semi-finals where they lost on both occasions to France.
- The two sides met in 1984 where France won 3-2 in an extra-time thriller at the Stade Vélodrome in Marseille before defeating Spain in the final.
- Sixteen years later, on this occasion at Brussels' Roi Baudouin stadium, France prevailed 2-1 against Portugal, again after extra time, before defeating Italy in the final four days later.

Key facts

- Portugal have appeared in the last four UEFA European Championship final tournaments having first qualified in 1984.

All-time record

- Up until the end of UEFA EURO 2008™ qualifying, Portugal had played 108 matches in their 13 participations in the UEFA European Championship, winning 58, drawing 26 and losing 24 with 183 goals scored and 98 conceded.
- Portugal's record victories to date in the competition have come via two 8-0 defeats of Liechtenstein on 18 December 1994 and 9 June 1999. The latter match saw both João Pinto and Sá Pinto scoring hat-tricks.
- Their record defeats in the competition have come courtesy of 5-0 away defeats at the hands of Czechoslovakia (30 April 1975) and the Soviet Union (27 April 1983).

Romania

Romania at home on the big stage

How did they perform in UEFA EURO 2008™ qualifying?

- Romania confirmed their progress to their first finals tournament since UEFA EURO 2000™ with two games to go, with a 2-0 win in Luxembourg completing a run of ten unbeaten games in Group G.
- It was vindication for coach Victor Pițurcă, who had also led Romania through qualifying for UEFA EURO 2000™ but was no longer in the post when the finals came round.
- Romania got their campaign off to a shaky start when they conceded two late goals in a 2-2 home draw with Bulgaria but that was to be their biggest setback.
- A 0-0 draw in the Netherlands in their fourth game sparked a run of six straight wins, with Dorin Goian scoring the only goal in the return against the Dutch in Constanta to leave Romania on the threshold of the finals.
- They took the final step by winning 2-0 in Luxembourg through goals from Florentin Petre and Ciprian Marica.
- Although Pițurcă's side let their unbeaten record slip in their next game, losing 1-0 in Bulgaria, they finished the campaign with a 6-1 victory over nine-man Albania to confirm their place as group winners.

How did they perform in the 2006 FIFA World Cup qualification round?

- Excluding Germany, the hosts and automatic qualifiers for the 2006 FIFA World Cup finals, Romania were the only second seeds in the UEFA EURO 2008™ qualification round draw not to have advanced to at least the play-offs. They finished in third place behind the Netherlands and the Czech Republic in their efforts to advance to the 2006 FIFA World Cup finals.
- Romania had eight wins and a draw from their twelve-game campaign to finish seven points behind the Dutch, two points behind the Czechs and nine points clear of their closest pursuers, Finland.
- Three wins from their opening three games had Romania in pole position early in proceedings, but they finished off 2004 with a 1-0 loss away against the Czech Republic and were then held to a 1-1 draw away against Armenia despite holding an interval lead following Ciprian Marica's 29th-minute goal. Karen Dokhoyan equalised for the Armenians on the hour mark.
- They then opened 2005 with another defeat, this time a 2-0 reverse at home against the Netherlands, their only blemish on Romanian soil throughout the qualification round. Phillip Cocu scored the opening goal at the Giulesti stadium in the opening minute before Ryan Babel added a second six minutes from time.
- After defeating F.Y.R. Macedonia 2-1 in Skopje, the Romanians were defeated in Rotterdam with Arjen Robben (26) and Dirk Kuyt (47) on target for the home side.
- Nevertheless, Romania finished off their campaign in some style, winning four matches in a row and without conceding a goal in 403 minutes. Adrian Mutu scored their final five goals of the qualification round, enough to defeat Andorra (2-0) and the Czech Republic (2-0) at home before Finland (1-0) were overcome in Helsinki.

How did they perform in UEFA EURO 2004™?

- Romania finished third in their five-team group behind Denmark and Norway in the race to compete in the UEFA EURO 2004™ final round in Portugal. With four wins and two draws from their eight outings, Romania trailed group winners Denmark by a point, and although they finished level with Norway, they lost out due to an inferior head-to-head record. Bosnia-Herzegovina finished a further point behind in fourth with Luxembourg pointless in fifth.
- It was their home form that proved Romania's undoing, losing in their second outing of the competition in Bucharest to Steffen Iversen's 83rd-minute goal for Norway. Worse was to come as Denmark recorded a 5-2 victory in the Romanian capital despite the home side taking the lead on two occasions. Adrian Mutu had put Romania one-up after five minutes only for Dennis Rommedahl to equalise three minutes later. Dorinel Munteanu then restored Romania's advantage two minutes into the second half before the Danes responded with four goals of their own thanks to Thomas Gravesen (53), Jon Dahl Tomasson (71), a Cosmin Contra own goal (73) and Rommedahl (90+2).
- Victories against Luxembourg and Bosnia-Herzegovina were comfortable, the Romanians winning the four matches by a combined record of 16 goals scored and none conceded. Their greatest margin of victory came away to Luxembourg, a 7-0 win in which Contra (45+1, 47 and 86) netted a hat-trick.

What is their best performance in the UEFA European Championship?

- Romania topped their qualification round group for UEFA EURO 2000™ with 24 points from their ten matches. Their reward was to be drawn against England, Germany and Portugal in the group stage of the final tournament. Romanian hopes were receding following one point from their opening two games, but a 3-2 defeat of England, with Ioan Ganea scoring the winner in the 89th minute, provided them with a place in the knockout stage. Italy ended their involvement in the competition, running out 2-0 winners following their quarter-final meeting with goals from Francesco Totti (33) and Filippo Inzaghi (43).

Key facts

- Although Romania qualified for the 1984 and 1996 UEFA European Championship finals, they failed to win a match. Their first victory in the finals actually took place in their ninth match, defeating England 3-2 in the UEFA EURO 2000™ finals, a result that provided them with a place in the knockout stages of the competition.

All-time record

- Up until the end of qualifying for UEFA EURO 2008™, Romania had appeared in all 13 UEFA European Championship qualifying competitions, and had played 105 matches. In that time, they had won 52, drawn 27 and lost 26 with 191 goals scored and 104 conceded.

Russia

Russia to complete EURO treble

How did they perform in UEFA EURO 2008™ qualifying?

- Guus Hiddink's maiden campaign as coach could hardly have had a more dramatic ending as Russia snatched second place in Group E at the death.
- After opening with home draws against Croatia and Israel, Russia won five of their next six games. Aleksandr Kerzhakov struck a hat-trick in a 4-0 home victory against Andorra and the only game of that sequence they did not win was a goalless draw in Croatia.
- Russia played back-to-back games against England in autumn 2007, losing 3-0 at Wembley but then staging a dramatic recovery in Moscow, where substitute Roman Pavlyuchenko scored twice in five second-half minutes – the first a penalty – to cancel out Wayne Rooney's opener.
- That result left Russia second in the section, needing six points from their final games in Israel and Andorra to be sure of qualifying.
- Hiddink said it was "simply impossible" to lose in Israel, against opponents already out of the running, but lose they did, their 2-1 defeat putting England back in pole position to qualify.
- However, the drama continued on the final day, with England unexpectedly losing 3-2 at home against group winners Croatia, allowing a ten-man Russia to seal their progress with a 1-0 win in Andorra, earned by Dmitri Sychev's goal.

How did they perform in the 2006 FIFA World Cup qualification round?

- Russia finished in third place in their seven-team group behind Portugal and Slovakia following six victories, five draws and a defeat from their 12-match campaign. They ended seven points behind the first-placed Portuguese and an inferior goal difference denied them a second place finish ahead of Slovakia after both teams ended on 23 points.
- They dropped their first points of the competition in their opening match in Moscow against Slovakia after Robert Vittek's 87th-minute equaliser cancelled Dmitri Bulykin's opener on the quarter-hour.
- A subsequent 4-0 away victory against Luxembourg seemed to have steadied the ship thanks to a second-half Dmitri Sychev (56, 68 and 86) hat-trick, but only four days later, the Russians were on the receiving end of a 7-1 defeat away against Portugal with Cristiano Ronaldo and Petit both scoring twice at the José Alvalade stadium.
- It was to be Russia's only defeat of the campaign, but their away form remained inconsistent as they struggled to a 2-1 win in Liechtenstein before drawing away against Estonia (1-1) and Latvia (1-1) with Andrei Arshavin scoring in both games.
- Home victories against Estonia (4-0), Latvia (2-0) and Liechtenstein (2-0) still kept them in contention with three matches remaining, but they could not defeat Portugal (0-0) in Moscow, their plight not helped by Aleksei Smertin's dismissal on the stroke of half-time following a second bookable offence.
- Luxembourg were defeated 5-1 in Moscow in their penultimate match, but needing victory away against Slovakia in their final game, Russia were held to a scoreless stalemate and thus beaten to second spot by their opponents.

How did they perform in UEFA EURO 2004™?

- Russia finished second to Switzerland in their UEFA EURO 2004™ qualifying round campaign to ultimately book their place at the finals via the play-offs, but their involvement in Portugal would be for the minimum three games as they failed to negotiate a route beyond the group stage.
- The Russians recorded four wins and two draws from their eight matches, with all of their victories coming on home soil to the tune of 15 goals scored and five conceded. On the receiving end were group rivals the Republic of Ireland (4-2), Albania (4-1), Switzerland (4-1) and Georgia (3-1).
- Although the Russians endured some poor performances on the road, they managed to secure draws against their main rivals, Switzerland (2-2) and the Republic of Ireland.
- Russia faced Wales in a two-legged play-off for a place in the UEFA EURO 2004™ finals in Portugal, winning 1-0 on aggregate. Although they were held to a scoreless draw in Moscow's Lokomotiv stadium in the opening match, Russia scored the only goal of the return leg at Cardiff's Millennium stadium with Vadim Evseev on target after 21 minutes.
- Having lost against both Spain (1-0) and Portugal (2-0) in their opening two games at the final tournament, Russia were already eliminated from the competition prior to taking the field against Greece in their final match. Pride, however, was restored with a 2-1 victory at the Algarve stadium in Faro-Loulé thanks to goals from Dmitri Kirichenko (3) and Dmitri Bulykin (17).

What is their best performance in the UEFA European Championship?

- Russia's best performance since competing as an independent state came at UEFA EURO 2004™ although their best qualification round came in the run up to EURO '96™. From ten matches, Russia collected 26 points to claim first position from a group featuring Finland, Greece, Scotland, the Faroe Islands and San Marino. Their involvement in EURO '96™ was less memorable with one point from three games, a 3-3 draw against the Czech Republic after earlier losing their opening two games to Italy (2-1) and Germany (3-0).

Key facts

- Prior to UEFA EURO '96™, Russia participated as part of the Commonwealth of Independent States during the 1992 UEFA European Championship having previously played as a member of the Soviet Union from the competition's inception in 1958. The Soviet Union appeared in the first four final rounds of the UEFA European Championship, winning the inaugural competition in 1960. They would end up as losing finalists in 1964, 1972 and 1988.

All-time record

- Up until the end of qualifying for UEFA EURO 2008™, Russia had appeared in the UEFA European Championships on four occasions, and had played 48 matches. In that time, they had won 27, drawn ten and lost eleven of those fixtures with 100 goals scored and 48 conceded.
- Russia's first international since the dissolution of the Soviet Union came on 16 August 1992 when they defeated Mexico 2-0. Previously, Russia had played international matches as an independent state between 1912 and 1914.

Spain

Spain hark back to '64 vintage

How did they perform in UEFA EURO 2008™ qualifying?

- A bad start was put behind them as Luis Aragonés's side beat Sweden 3-0 at home in their penultimate qualifier to confirm their place in the finals.
- Spain had ended 2006 as a team in crisis, a shock 3-2 defeat against Northern Ireland in Belfast being followed by a 2-0 loss in Sweden to leave them with just three points from their first three Group F games.
- Results improved in 2007 with a 1-1 draw against Iceland in Reykjavik – earned with a late Andrés Iniesta strike – the only blip during a run of eight wins in nine.
- Aragonés's team underlined their quality by following up a 3-1 victory in Denmark with the all-important 3-0 success against Sweden.
- A 1-0 win against Northern Ireland in their last qualifier secured top spot in the section, but Aragonés said: "Spain have been qualifying for finals tournaments for many years so this isn't a success but simply doing our duty."

How did they perform in the 2006 FIFA World Cup?

- Spain had to qualify for the 2006 FIFA World Cup finals via the play-offs after finishing second to Serbia and Montenegro in the qualification round, despite posting an unbeaten record of five wins and five draws from their ten outings. But Serbia and Montenegro, also unbeaten, finished two points clear having won six of their ten matches.
- Although Spain won their first three matches at home, they failed to find the winning touch on the road, settling for draws away against Bosnia-Herzegovina (1-1), Lithuania (0-0) and Serbia and Montenegro (0-0).
- Decisively, Bosnia-Herzegovina managed to draw 1-1 in Spain on 8 June 2005, with only a late home equaliser salvaging a point.
- Spain required a victory at home against Serbia and Montenegro in their eighth outing in Madrid on 7 September 2005 if they wanted to secure pole position in the group standings, but were forced to settle for a 1-1 draw.
- Spain subsequently rediscovered the winning habit away from home with victories in Belgium (2-0) and San Marino (6-0) to round off their campaign.
- Slovakia felt Spain's wrath in the play-offs, losing 5-1 in Madrid with Luis García hitting a hat-trick (10, 18 and 75). The return leg in Bratislava ended in a 1-1 stalemate.
- In Germany, Spain impressed in the group stage with victories against Ukraine (4-0), Tunisia (3-1) and Saudi Arabia (1-0).
- Their success was shortlived in the knockout phase, however, after a 3-1 reverse at the hands of France in the second round.
- Both Fernando Torres and David Villa scored three goals in the four games Spain played at the finals.

How did they perform in UEFA EURO 2004™?

- Spain advanced to the UEFA EURO 2004™ finals via the play-offs after finishing second to Greece in their qualification round group. They would overcome Norway to book their place at the finals in Portugal, but their stay would be for the minimum three games as they failed to negotiate a route beyond the group stage.
- Although they lost only one of their eight games, Spain dropped valuable points away against Ukraine (2-2) and Northern Ireland (0-0) as well as suffering a shock 1-0 defeat at home against Greece for whom Stelios Giannakopoulos was the hero with a goal three minutes before the interval at Zaragoza's La Romareda stadium.
- But Spain proved too strong for Norway in the subsequent play-offs, winning 2-1 at home despite Steffen Iversen giving the visitors the lead after 15 minutes. Spain hit back through Raúl González (21) and Rubén Baraja (85) to take the win. The outcome of the return leg in Oslo was more clear-cut, the Spanish scoring three without reply from Raúl (34), Vicente Rodríguez (50) and Joseba Etxeberria (56).
- Spain, however, failed to build on their opening game defeat of Russia in the final tournament when Juan Carlos Valerón scored the only goal of the game after 60 minutes at Faro-Loulé's Algarve stadium. They would settle for a 1-1 draw against Greece in their subsequent match, only to lose their final game against Portugal and exit the competition. Portugal won the group with six points while Greece finished ahead of Spain in second, having scored more goals than their rivals.

What is their best performance in the UEFA European Championship?

- Spain's greatest UEFA European Championship moment came on 21 June 1964 when they won the competition in Madrid, defeating the Soviet Union 2-1. The Spaniards defeated Romania, Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland in the qualifying rounds before overcoming Hungary (2-1) in the semi-finals.

Key facts

- Up until the end of UEFA EURO 2008™ qualifying, Spain had been involved in the most fixtures by a single country in the competition with 122 matches since their 4-2 away win against Poland in the last 16 of the 1960 UEFA European Championship on 28 June 1959. Denmark were second on 120 with the Netherlands and France joint third with 117 matches played.

All-time record

- Up until the end of qualifying for UEFA EURO 2008™, Spain had appeared in all 13 UEFA European Championship qualifying competitions, and had played 122 matches. In that time, they had won 72, drawn 24 and lost 26 with 260 goals scored and 108 conceded.

Sweden

Sweden become perennial finalists

How did they perform in UEFA EURO 2008™ qualifying?

- Sweden qualified in second place in Group F behind Spain, completing the job on the last night of qualifying when they beat Latvia 2-1 and Northern Ireland lost in Spain.
- Lars Lagerbäck's side made a bright start, winning their opening four games – including a 2-0 success over section favourites Spain courtesy of goals from Johan Elmander and Marcus Allbäck.
- They then suffered a setback when beaten 2-1 by Northern Ireland in Belfast in March 2007, with two goals from David Healy cancelling out Elmander's opener.
- Sweden were awarded a 3-0 win against Denmark in their next game after the qualifier in Copenhagen was abandoned after a Danish spectator attacked the match referee, who had just awarded Sweden a late penalty with the scores level at 3-3.
- Sweden would have qualified with two games to spare only to draw 1-1 at home against Northern Ireland. The champagne remained on ice after they lost their penultimate qualifier 3-0 in Spain.
- The victory over Latvia on 21 November 2007 – Kim Källström getting the winner - ensured qualification for a fifth successive major finals tournament. "We did what we had to do and that's all that matters," said Zlatan Ibrahimović.

How did they perform in the 2006 FIFA World Cup?

- Sweden finished level on points with Croatia in the qualifying group stage, but their 24 points from ten matches proved enough to secure one of the two automatic spots on offer for the final tournament for the strongest runners-up.
- They enjoyed a perfect campaign with the exception of their two 1-0 defeats at the hands of Croatia. Their other eight matches ended in victories by a combined margin of 30 goals scored with two conceded.
- Sweden qualified for the knockout phase of the finals as runners-up in their group following games against Trinidad and Tobago (0-0), Paraguay (1-0) and England (2-2).
- Their tournament in Germany was ended in the first knockout round, however, with 2-0 defeat at the hands of the hosts.

How did they perform in UEFA EURO 2004™?

- Sweden advanced to the quarter-finals of the UEFA EURO 2004™ finals before exiting on penalties to the Netherlands after the sides remained locked in a scoreless stalemate after extra-time.
- The Swedes opened the final tournament group stage with a 5-0 thrashing of Bulgaria before securing draws against Italy (1-1) and Denmark (2-2) to book their place in the knockout stages alongside their Scandinavian neighbours.
- Qualification for the final tournament was assured before their last-game slip-up at home to Latvia who left Stockholm with a 1-0 victory. In their previous seven games, Sweden amassed five wins and two draws with 19 goals scored and only two conceded.

What is their best performance in the UEFA European Championship?

- As tournament hosts, Sweden advanced to the semi-finals of the 1992 UEFA European Championship, a competition that was the last to feature eight teams in the final round. The Swedes topped their group following victories against Denmark (1-0) and England (2-1) after opening the competition with a 1-1 draw against France at the Råsunda stadium. But Sweden found Germany too stern an opponent in the semis, making their exit following a 3-2 defeat.

Key facts

- By reaching UEFA EURO 2008™, Sweden qualified for their fifth successive major international tournament.

All-time record

- Up until the end of UEFA EURO 2008™ qualifying Sweden had played 92 matches in the UEFA European Championship with 43 wins, 24 draws and 25 losses, 137 goals scored and 91 conceded.
- They did not participate in the 1960 UEFA European Championship.
- Sweden have recorded five 5-0 victories in the competition, but their highest winning margin came on 7 June 2003 when they defeated San Marino 6-0 in Serravalle with Mattias Jonson scoring a hat-trick.

Switzerland

Swiss eager to show their worth

How are their preparations going for UEFA EURO 2008™?

- Having won their first three friendlies after the FIFA World Cup finals, a 2-1 defeat against Austria served as a wake-up call for Jakob Kuhn's side.
- Two more losses prompted Kuhn to get tough and drop captain Johann Vogel, while injuries to established stars Ricardo Cabanas and Alexander Frei in 2007 caused further disruption to his plans.
- There have been encouraging results, though, notably a 1-1 draw against Argentina in June 2007 and a 2-1 win against the Netherlands – with Tranquillo Barnetta scoring twice – two months later.
- Before the latter match, Kuhn said of Switzerland's finals ambitions: "Success would be to reach the quarter-finals. Of course it won't be easy, but that has to be our goal. Four years ago, when we really hit a low point, I developed an internal strategy with the title 'European champions 2008'. That was being very optimistic but we have to strive towards big goals and go out there with the necessary confidence to deal with these challenges."
- The intensive friendly schedule continued for the remainder of 2007 with mixed results against Japan (3-4), Austria (3-1), USA (0-1) and Nigeria (0-1). And in 2008, it was more of the same with losses to England (1-2) and Germany (0-4) on the main international matchdays. A 2-0 defeat of Slovakia in their final preparations before the start of the final tournament provided a timely boost.
- Kuhn will retire as Switzerland coach after the finals, saying: "I have promised my wife that I'll call it a day after UEFA EURO 2008™."

How did they perform at the 2006 FIFA World Cup?

- Kuhn led Switzerland to their second successive major international tournament, as they finished unbeaten - and second behind France - in Group 4 before progressing on away goals against Turkey in an incident-packed play-off.
- They topped Group G at the finals in Germany, drawing their opening game 0-0 against France, and then beating both Togo and Korea Republic 2-0 - with Alexander Frei scoring in both games.
- They drew 0-0 with Ukraine in the Round of 16 but lost 3-0 on penalties. Ricardo Cabanas and Marco Streller had their efforts saved while Barnetta's spot-kick hit the crossbar.
- They thus bowed out of the competition without conceding a goal in open play.

How did they perform at UEFA EURO 2004™?

- Switzerland defied the odds to qualify for their second UEFA European Championship finals, coming top of a five-team Group 10 which also featured Russia and the Republic of Ireland.
- Qualification went down to the wire, with a 2-0 win against the Irish on the final day ensuring that second-placed Russia could not catch them.
- Switzerland drew 0-0 with Croatia in their opening game of the finals in Portugal but then lost 3-0 to England and 3-1 to France to finish bottom of Group B
- Johan Vonlanthen scored their only goal of the finals, cancelling out Zinedine Zidane's goal for France before Thierry Henry struck twice late on to win the game. Vonlanthen's goal made him the tournament's youngest ever scorer.

What is their best performance in the UEFA European Championship?

- Switzerland have twice qualified for the finals of the UEFA European Championship, doing so for the first time at the ninth attempt at EURO '96™. They then qualified again for UEFA EURO 2004™. Both of their finals campaigns have started with draws - 1-1 against hosts England in 1996 and 0-0 with Croatia in Portugal - but ended with two subsequent defeats.

Key facts

- This is the first time the UEFA EURO 2008™ co-hosts will have played in consecutive UEFA European Championship finals and the 2008 tournament will be their third finals overall.

All-time record

- Their record prior to the finals of UEFA EURO 2008™ was 80 matches played with 29 wins, 22 draws and 29 losses, with 119 goals scored and 108 conceded.

Turkey

Turkey making up for lost time

How did they perform in UEFA EURO 2008™ qualifying?

- Turkey finished second in Group C behind European champions Greece, but made heavy work of qualifying after a stirring start.
- Fatih Terim's team won their first three games without conceding a single goal, Hakan Şükür celebrating his 50th international goal when he struck four in the third of those wins, 5-0 win against Moldova.
- Things got even better when an under-strength Turkey side came from behind to beat Greece 4-1 in Athens in their first qualifier of 2007.
- They then lost their way, however, with a run of one win in six that included a 3-2 defeat in Bosnia-Herzegovina and then a humiliating 2-2 draw in Malta, where Turkey came from behind twice.
- Crisis talk intensified in October 2007 when a 1-1 draw in Moldova was followed by a 1-0 home defeat against Greece, which saw the European champions celebrate qualification in Istanbul.
- Having slipped to third in the section, Turkey reclaimed the initiative with a 2-1 win in Oslo in their penultimate qualifier. A 1-0 home victory over Bosnia-Herzegovina in their final qualifier kept them a point above Norway in second place.

How did they perform in the 2006 FIFA World Cup qualification round?

- Turkey finished second, two points behind Ukraine, in their 2006 FIFA World Cup qualification round group having won six and drawn five of their twelve matches in the competition. It proved sufficient to provide Turkey with a place in the play-offs, but they lost out on away goals to Switzerland after the sides shared eight goals in their two meetings.
- In a group that featured UEFA EURO 2004™ winners, Greece, as well as Denmark, who also competed in the group stage in Portugal, Turkey's campaign got off to a sluggish start as they were held to a 1-1 draw by Georgia in Trabzon.
- They responded with disciplined away draws in Greece (0-0) and Denmark (1-1) and defeated Kazakhstan (4-0) only to then suffer a 3-0 defeat at home against the Ukrainians with Andriy Shevchenko (17, 88) scoring twice. • It was to be Turkey's only defeat in the qualifying round, and though they would avenge their loss to the Ukrainians with a 1-0 victory in Kiev thanks to Tümer Metin's 55th-minute goal, home draws against both Greece and Denmark ultimately ruined their chance of taking top spot in the group.
- Other victories were recorded against Albania (home and away) and Georgia (away), with their biggest win coming in a 6-0 away defeat of Kazakhstan on 8 June 2005 with Fatih Tekke (13, 85) and Tuncay Şanlı (41, 90) helping themselves to two goals apiece.

How did they perform in UEFA EURO 2004™?

- Turkey's UEFA EURO 2004™ adventure fell at the final hurdle as they lost out in the play-offs to Latvia after having finished second in their qualification round group to England. With six wins, a draw and one defeat, Turkey ended one point behind the undefeated English with Slovakia a further nine points in arrears.
- England proved to be Turkey's nemesis in the qualifying round. Having defeated Slovakia, F.Y.R. Macedonia and Liechtenstein home and away, the Turkish lost away against England in their fourth match of the campaign despite holding their hosts goalless for 75 minutes. Darius Vassell finally broke the deadlock at Sunderland's Stadium of Light before David Beckham added a second from the penalty spot two minutes into stoppage time. The two sides met again in the final match of the qualification round in Istanbul, but Turkey could not penetrate the English defence and were forced to settle for second place as the game ended goalless.
- But a further unpleasant surprise lay in wait for Turkey as Latvia won the two-legged play-off. The Latvians took a one-goal lead into their second leg meeting following Maris Verpakovskis' 12th-minute goal in Riga, and though goals from İlhan Mansız (20) and Hakan Şükür (64) put Turkey in the driving seat at Istanbul's İnönü stadium, the visitors hit back through Jurijs Laizans (65) and Verpakovskis (76) to book their ticket to Portugal.

What is their best performance in the UEFA European Championship?

- Turkey first participated in a UEFA European Championship final round at EURO '96™, losing all three of their group matches, but they returned four years later and advanced as far as the quarter-finals, their best effort to date in the competition.
- Finishing second in their qualifying group, Turkey defeated the Republic of Ireland on away goals in their subsequent play-off to book their place at UEFA EURO 2000™. Drawn in a group featuring Belgium, Italy and Sweden, Turkey took four points from their three games, defeating the tournament hosts 2-0 in their final game with two goals from Hakan Şükür (45, 70). Their reward was a quarter-final berth, but Turkey were defeated 2-0 by Portugal.

Key facts

- Despite playing in all 13 UEFA European Championship qualifying rounds, Turkey's first participation in a final tournament took place at UEFA EURO '96™.

All-time record

- Turkey have appeared in all 13 UEFA European Championship qualifying competitions. Prior to the finals of UEFA EURO 2008™, they have played 95 matches. In that time, they had won 35, drawn 22 and lost 38 of those fixtures with 110 goals scored and 135 conceded.