

## **Russia 2018 gears up for decision over host cities**

*Matt Cutler*

Russia 2018 is gearing up for Saturday's announcement of the host cities for the country's staging of the FIFA World Cup after handing over the technical report on the 13 candidate cities to world football's governing body.

The report is a result of an inspection tour which took place from April 12 to June 22. During these visits, the technical experts analysed the proposed stadiums and venue construction sites, examined airports and other infrastructure together with city and regional authorities vying for the right to host Russia 2018 matches. The report evaluates the candidate host cities according to five criteria: current infrastructure, level of socio-economic development, investment programmes and plans for the 2018 World Cup, as well as the effective use of the tournament's legacy. It will be used as the general basis for approval of the host cities at the FIFA Executive Committee meeting in Zurich on Thursday and Friday.

Vitaly Mutko, Russian Minister of Sport and chairman of Russia 2018, in October revealed that the country would stage the World Cup in 12 stadiums across 11 cities. At present, 13 cities and 15 stadiums are included in the hosting concept. They are divided into the four geographical clusters of Central (Moscow), North (St. Petersburg and Kaliningrad), Volga (Yaroslavl, Kazan, Nizhniy Novgorod, Samara, Volgograd and Saransk), South (Sochi, Rostov-on-Don and Krasnodar) and Yekaterinburg in the Urals. Speaking earlier this month, Mutko said the potential host cities had been narrowed down into three categories according to their likelihood of surviving the final cut.

The Sports Minister said that Moscow, which will have two venues for the World Cup, is "best suited" to host the tournament along with St Petersburg, Kazan, Sochi and Yekaterinburg. Krasnodar and Samara appear likely to join them after Mutko said Russia 2018 has "little doubt" they will be fully prepared. However, he isolated Kaliningrad, along with Saransk, Volgograd, Yaroslavl and Rostov as having "problems", adding that two of these cities are likely to be left disappointed.

Speaking on Wednesday, Mutko said: "The 2018 FIFA World Cup host cities announcement will kick-start the major preparations for the tournament in our country. Since December 2, 2010, when FIFA made an historic decision to award the right to host the 2018 World Cup to Russia, we began to work with all the regions and cities competing to host the tournament. Our goal remains the same: to hold the best World Cup in FIFA's history." Russia 2018 CEO Alexey Sorokin added: "We have no doubt that the decision on the host cities will above all reflect the interests of football fans. We have done our best to ensure fair conditions for all 13 candidate cities competing for the right to hold World Cup matches throughout the selection process."

**Fonte: SportBusiness International. Disponível em:**

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