



Video material is from Polish TV CANAL + programme "SPORT EURO ZONE"

Introductory video clip before conversation

Joyce Cook - I am a massive football fan, I have always been. I became disabled 12 years ago and I thought that will be it that I will never watch a game again. It was a big relief and surprise that as a disabled person I could still go for a football match and enjoy it. I am sure that EURO 2012 will be a wonderful experience for so many disabled supporters in Poland, everyone loves football –whether disabled and non-disabled. The most important thing for those disabled supporters is the fact that EURO 2012 will be just the beginning of regular attendance at football matches in those new stadiums. The main concept of CAFE is to promote different solutions and equipment that would enable disabled supporters to participate in live football matches. Our main ambition is to enable all disabled supporters across all 53 UEFA member states to participate in live football matches. I think one of the most exciting things is the news that all of the stadiums for EURO 2012 are built from new. The fact that we met two years ago with architects from PL.2012 and Integracja, it seems that thanks to this meeting disabled supporters will be able to participate in comfort with their families, friends and other fans at EURO 2012, therefore be a part of a whole tournament. Often people perceive that including equipment and infrastructure for disabled supporters in a football stadium is a massive cost and is uneconomical. However we need to remember that if we get the opportunity to build a new stadium the scale of cost to make sure that the stadium will be accessible is minimal compared to the cost of the whole stadium. Moreover this cost is comparatively lower than adapting an already built stadium to the needs of disabled supporters. From a strictly economic point of view making facilities accessible that are going to be used for many big events such as football, music concerts etc it is always a good investment, disabled supporters are always coming to the matches, concerts etc with their whole families or large groups of friends. Such people possibly never before attended a match only because the stadiums were not accessible. We hope that EURO 2012 will be a tournament with the largest number of disabled supporters that ever attended EURO tournament.

Presenter - My guest today is Mr Jaroslaw Palka, Dr of History and the author of historic books but most importantly a football fan. Mr Palka, before we will talk about the optimistic aspects raised in the introductory video could you tell us something about your experiences from different European and World tournaments that you have attended as a football supporter. As far as I know you have attended the World Cup in Germany and Euro tournament in Switzerland and Austria and of course you are a local football fan and you are regularly attending matches of Legia Warszawa FC and Polonia Warszawa FC, but which one do you prefer?

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Jaroslav – I think I should not discuss here which club I support the most. However most definitely I can say that I am a massive football fan and support our Polish team and I hope that EURO 2012 will be a big event for every disabled supporter. I have always been a football fan, since I was a little boy I was following football together with my father, we were going to matches in my home city which is Zamosc. Unfortunately my home football club got major financial problems and nowadays has fallen into third division, but I am still supporting them and I hope that one day they will be back on track. But now as I live in Warsaw, its natural that I am attending the matches of both Warsaw clubs at both stadiums, I am also often attending on the matches of Widzew Lodz at their home stadium.

Presenter – So you are watching and following our football regardless rather poor performances in different leagues?

Jaroslav – Yes I do watch it and if I cannot attend the match I am at least following it on TV. I am a supporter and I do enjoy watching games regardless of performance. I love the emotions connected with watching the game and during those 90 min there is never anything more important in the whole world.

Presenter – that is fantastic and I need to say that we got the same experience regarding emotions attached to the games. I think every true football fan will experience emotions during watching the game even if it's a very poor match. Before we will talk about future and EURO 2012, I would like you to tell us about your experiences from those international tournaments that you have attended in the past.

Jaroslav – First of it is important to points out that those tournaments were a big events and they were a fiesta for the society of an organizing country as much as for other participants. I have attended those tournaments not only for football matches but also because I wanted to experience a nice and unique atmosphere in which you can enjoy football. Of course those two last tournaments in Germany and Austria were very well adopted for the needs of disabled supporters. Nearly everything was accessible, I am talking about such things as transportation, hotels, pavements and of course football stadia. In the stadiums there are no stairs which usually are an obstruction for disabled people. In regards for the design of disabled seating I found a lot of differences between different stadiums. Personally I have much preferred the stadium in Gelsenkirchen to the stadium in Klagenfurt. In Gelsenkirchen disabled seating has been situated more or less in the middle of third level, therefore myself and other disabled supporters have been situated among other Polish fans, as the result I felt very included as a part of football supporters family. In comparison most of old Polish stadia are not accessible at all and those that are the disabled seating is poorly design and the platform were they are situated is too low and as a consequence when something exciting happens during the game and all of the supporters in front of me stand up then I am much more likely to watch somebody's back for the rest of the game. However on the new European stadia that issue seems to be solved, in Gelsenkirchen I had very good view for a whole game. In Klagenfurt the situation was a bit different because disabled seating was on a pitch level which is not a good placing and gives rather poor and limited view.

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Moreover the entrance for disabled supporters to the stadium has been a separate one and as a consequence disabled supporters were separated from the rest of fans. On top of that Polish and Croatian disabled supporters were mixed up together. I had been situated in place where above me there was a whole sector of Croatian fans, of course the atmosphere on a stadium was great and very peaceful, all supporters were smiling and we were even making photographs with each other and there was no signs of aggression at all, however I still would prefer to seat among my own fans. However other facilities on the stadium were well adopted.

Presenter – The issue of stadia accessibility is one thing but please could you tell me what were your experiences of your trips to the stadium? How does it look during such tournaments?

Jaroslav – yes that's true those are two separate issues. I was not worried about any difficulties with getting to the stadium even when I was getting there by train, bus or a car. I did not face the problem of not being able to go somewhere because a train, bus or a tram was not accessible for me. I did not have to study the schedule of those transports worrying that I could not access them. In those countries it is a standard that all of the transport is accessible for disabled people. Those courtyards are well adapted for the needs of disabled people and that is also reflected in football stadia. During each game there will be always more than 100 disabled supporters attending it. Moreover those disabled supporters always coming with a significant number of family members or friends. Such an approach made me feel very included as a football supporter.

Presenter – is it a true that in those countries beside facilities which are accessible also services are well adapted and it's a normal thing and nothing unusual to assist disabled person? It does not happen that suddenly you need to ask four people to get you up to third floor in the building, but beside facilities there are people trained to help you in accessing all facilities and services?

Jaroslav – yes indeed. Talking about four people, in Polish trains it is a case of asking four people to get you into train as they are completely inaccessible at the moment. But in Germany it was not necessary; I could access all of the trains and go everywhere with my other friends that were traveling with me during the time of tournament. In 2006 we still did not know that Poland will be holding a EURO 2012 so we gone to Germany in order to experience such an event, to feel included and see how world is organizing it and how is it adapted for the needs of disabled supporters.

Presenter – your stories are very interesting and full of experience. I can see from what you are saying that the most important aspect for you of a football tournament are accessible facilities, that will allow you to experience the tournament like all other supporters, disabled or non-disabled. For sure experiencing such an event is very exciting for all of the football fans. I am highlighting that as Polish supporters felt very included in the whole event and that it was a big experience and satisfaction to feel being treated like the rest of the world regardless a bad performance of Polish team.

Jaroslav – yes, those are very memorable moments and experiences.

Presenter – please see another video coverage and then we will continue our conversation

2nd VIDEO CLIP

Speaker 1 – yes I am a sports fan and in particular football fan, but I am also an athlete participating in wheelchair rugby and fencing.

Speaker 2 – I am afraid that most of Polish sport facilities are not accessible for disabled people, there is a lot of stairs, steps sometimes even one but it will stop a person like me from going through.

Speaker 1 – In my mind the biggest problem are other supporters, for example when crowd is rushing towards entrance it could happen that I would be crashed by them.

Speaker 2 – another problem are toilets, there is general lack of accessible toilets on most of sport facilities

Speaker 3 – In my mind all of the football stadia should be adapted for the needs of disabled people, there should be ramps, lifts, railings and buttons should be on a good level to be accessible for e.g for a wheelchair user.

Speaker 2 – u cannot access some of the stadium sectors because they are placed on the stairs and there are no ramps for disabled people.

Speaker 1 – sometime I wish I could go to a football match on a day, however I need to report my presence and wish for participation before the league starts.

Speaker 2 – here you can see the entrance to the building with many stairs, there is no lift or a ramp and such stairs are barring me from going and visits friends or family. However such stairs are very often also in public offices. ... here you can see a step that is impossible for me to get through. Such places stopping people on a wheelchairs to go any further.

Speaker 3 – in regards to sport whole my family, in particular my father, we are massive football fans and we are following it in front of TV watching it with many emotions.

Speaker 2 – With a great pleasure I would like to participate in the opening ceremony of EURO 2012, I am not sure how it will be with the transportation as I already heard that our subway might not be extended by then. We will see, as far as I know there will be some disabled seating prepared on the stadium.

Speaker 1 – every time before I will get out I need to detailed plan my day.

Speaker 2 – on the bus schedules you have marked which bus lines are accessible and what time they are coming, luckily this is improving and more and more buses are accessible now.

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Presenter – from the first video clip that has been presented now we have returned to more grey reality presented in the second video clip. However I need to say that with great pleasure I am talking about those parts of EURO 2012 that changes Poland not only for three weeks of the tournament but will leave permanent legacy. And as we saw in a first video the issues and problems of disabled people are being included in the agenda and preparation of EURO 2012. I would like to ask if you feel the same?

Jaroslav – I am convinced about that and I cannot imagine this being different that the new stadia would not be accessible. I am sure that they will be accessible, that they will be disabled friendly and that disabled person will feel included and will be able to enjoy football match or any other event like any other fan. It is also important that non-disabled people will see disabled people being present on all of those events which is very important for changing social inclusion and social awareness. However the biggest question is how everything else will be solved and planned, I am talking about transportation and the logistics of getting to the stadium. Unfortunately I think that still the biggest issue are trains and train station. Because we need to remember that there will be a lot of visiting disabled fans, so there also is the issue of hotels, restaurants etc. I wish that all owners of such services would be aware that there might be a lot of disabled people coming and wanting to use their services so they should be prepared for it and be socially aware and not feel surprised. Myself when I gone to Germany I wanted to go and visit the city and do other activities with my friends. In Warsaw for example there is another problem beside transportation, it is an old town, and historic city center, which got very few accessible restaurants and museums, which sometimes got only few steps, but those few steps can make them inaccessible for disabled person. Somebody need to think about it and should be aware of those problems.

Presenter – do you think that social awareness is changing? 10 years ago it was still a taboo topic.

Jaroslav – yes this is changing and those changes are rapid. For example my presence here, the new stadia being accessible etc. And EURO 2012 will be an exam for us, how close did we get to the rest of Europe and how our social awareness changed.

Presenter – thank you very much for your presence here. We will also try to talk to Football Supporters to rise their awareness as well as explain to them what are needs of disabled supporters and that every disabled football supporter should be included like anybody else.

Jaroslav – I know there is a lot of disabled football supporters in Poland and know they would like to be more and more included.

Presenter – Thank you very much

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