



D8.1: Country Reports - Arts & Sports as Resolution Media

Activities report on how arts and sports related activities assist social inclusion across Poland

Poland/D8.1

May / 2023

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Reference: D.RAD [D 8.1]

ISBN:

This research was conducted under the Horizon 2020 project 'De-Radicalisation in Europe and Beyond: Detect, Resolve, Re-integrate' (959198).

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This document is available for download at

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Acknowledgements

This research would not be possible without the help of Grzegorz Chraszcz - a member of 'Wieczny Rakow' who integrated the researchers with the football fan milieu, helped with organizing the interviews, and provided information about 'Wieczny Rakow' that were used in this report. The researchers would like to thank all fans who agreed to be interviewed regardless of their fears and presumptions about the intents for conducting this study.

About the Project

D.Rad is a comparative study of radicalisation and polarisation in Europe and beyond. It aims to identify the actors, networks, and wider social contexts driving radicalisation, particularly among young people in urban and peri-urban areas. D.Rad conceptualises this through the I-GAP spectrum (injustice-grievance-alienation-polarisation) with the goal of moving towards measurable evaluations of de-radicalisation programmes. Our intention is to identify the building blocks of radicalisation, which include a sense of being victimised; a sense of being thwarted or lacking agency in established legal and political structures; and coming under the influence of “us vs them” identity formulations.

D.Rad benefits from an exceptional breadth of backgrounds. The project spans national contexts including the UK, France, Italy, Germany, Poland, Hungary, Finland, Slovenia, Bosnia, Serbia, Kosovo, Israel, Iraq, Jordan, Turkey, Georgia, Austria, and several minority nationalisms. It bridges academic disciplines ranging from political science and cultural studies to social psychology and artificial intelligence. Dissemination methods include D.Rad labs, D.Rad hubs, policy papers, academic workshops, visual outputs and digital galleries. As such, D.Rad establishes a rigorous foundation to test practical interventions geared to prevention, inclusion and de-radicalisation.

With the possibility of capturing the trajectories of seventeen nations and several minority nations, the project will provide a unique evidence base for the comparative analysis of law and policy as nation states adapt to new security challenges. The process of mapping these varieties and their link to national contexts will be crucial in uncovering strengths and weaknesses in existing interventions. Furthermore, D.Rad accounts for the problem that processes of radicalisation often occur in circumstances that escape the control and scrutiny of traditional national frameworks of justice. The participation of AI professionals in modelling, analysing and devising solutions to online radicalisation will be central to the project’s aims.

Abstract

This report focuses on developing resilience to radicalization through arts and sports. The idea behind his notion is that arts and sports can become avenues to challenge othering and differences in communities. In order to uncover how can sport alleviate social exclusion in Poland, we looked into social agency of members of 'Wieczny Rakow' - football fans association of club Rakow Czestochowa. The question this report aims to answer is what the perceived connection between lack of recognition and the expression of social agency among members of 'Wieczny Rakow.' The study is grounded theoretically in Honneth's theory of recognition and argues that identity politics besides normative and an ethical, has also a psychological dimension.

Using in-depth qualitative interviews and two focus groups this report uncovers how everyday practices of 'Wieczny Rakow' create a framework around reconciling the grievances that can lead to radicalisation. In order to explore how creative arts and sports can contribute to dialogue and collaboration, an art project was carried out together with the fans that consisted of preparing together a game setting. During this 'intervention' discussions around grievances, community and trust building took place. The setting expressed a local sentiment of the fans – a display 'Czestochowa belongs to Rakow'. The project showed that grievances, rather than being displayed for public in the form of obscenities, can also be transformed through art aspiration into having a purpose of consolidating the local community. The art project was also an opportunity for a dialogue about alienation and challenging otherness through sports. It demonstrated that there is a potential for a positive social engagement through sports, even for those who feel shunned and dismissed in the society, in a way that alleviates social exclusion and integrates them in the community.

Art & Sports as a means of alleviating social exclusion

Introduction

D.Rad Work Package 8 encompasses creative approaches that ‘capture how knowledge is generated through collaborations, networks, relationships, dialogue, and ‘making’, and that allow researchers and participants to ‘act on’ (Back 2012)’. One of the main purposes of this Work Package was to organise by each national group an art intervention with a group of young people prone to radicalization from a sports programme. In Poland the project was carried out with football fans of Rakow Czestochowa and it included working together on a game setting.

Game settings gained importance for political communication during football games. Messages are chanted and displayed on banners, but besides chants and banners, the performance includes the use of pyrotechnics. All this creates a setting to communicate political stance. It is well-documented in the literature that football stadiums are important ‘message boards’ (Jasny, 2022) as well as are used to express identity and social resistance (Knijnik, 2018). The art project was carried out by the football fans in cooperation with the D.Rad project on April 16, 2023 during a football match between RKS Raków Częstochowa and Widzew Łódź.

This report aims to respond to the question what the perceived connection is between lack of recognition and the expression of social agency among members of ‘Wieczny Rakow.’ First, a literature review was conducted that led to establishing the mentioned above research question. Next, the report reviewed activities of ‘Wieczny Rakow’ in the light of the research questions and aspects of social isolation, unsociable behaviour, resilience, and community cohesion. Then, the report discussed social agency of ‘Wieczny Rakow’ in relation to the I.GAP spectrum. Finally, it identified in the Appendix sports programmes in Poland that are specifically designed to developing resilience or challenge radicalization.

Literature Review: Art & Sports as a means of alleviating social exclusion

The influence of sports and arts on dialogue and collaboration among individuals has been studied by academics over the last couple of decades. D.Rad project is interested in the transformative power of arts and sports in deradicalization contexts. In this regard, for the D.Rad project, sports and arts activities generate convivial experiences for those who take part in it. By saying conviviality, this project understands conviviality as “the capacity to live together” (Wise & Noble, 2016). Therefore, convivial culture is characterised and enabled by intermixture through everyday encounters—it is unpredictable and arises “spontaneously and organically” (Gilroy 2005, p. 124). Convivial culture encourages us to imagine ways of being or living together. In this sense, we claim that both sports and arts related activity contribute to the processes of living together by facilitating convivial experiences for people who have shared interests embodied in sports and arts.

It is also been well-established in literature that sports and art play an important role in preventing social exclusion (Collins, Collins, Kay, 2014; Collins, 2004). Physical activities and art are widely used to promote social policy objectives, especially among young people (Ekholm, Lindström Sol, 2020). These objectives may be realised not only through involving young people by establishing centres for sport and culture for them, but also through developing participation, empowerment and good citizenship (Ekholm, Lindström Sol, 2020). In this sense, physical spaces where sports and art related activities occur, become also spaces for creating new connections, possibilities, and even joining in democratic processes. They become spaces for democratic inclusion.

However, young people might organise themselves around values that are not approved by the majority of the society. Although being typically non-political, these places can easily turn into hotspots of political radicalisation where extremist, misogynistic, homophobic or even racist opinions are exchanged and instilled. Ultimately, this means they are prone to becoming utilised for social exclusion. Football fan clubs are no exception, and they are vulnerable to be used to attract people from unprivileged backgrounds to join antisocial activities, such as taking part in organised group fights or even recruitment for criminal gangs. While the prevention of extremism and antisocial behaviour is necessary also in the field of sports and art, this, however, should not vilify those organisations or limit possibilities for young people coming from impoverished backgrounds to organise themselves and realise their potential around what matters to them.

It is important to emphasise that doing sports or sport related activities in a group has a lot of benefits, one of which is the ability to develop resilience. It has been established that sports activities

should be provided to young people to protect them from risky behaviour even regardless of their sport performance levels (Lipowski, Lipowska, Jochimek, Krokosz, 2016). Resilience is also important to alleviate the negative opinions other people may form because of certain characteristic of an excluded individual. Hence, this study reaches to the theory of recognition, as a theoretical grounding.

2 (a) Theoretical grounding

This study is theoretically grounded in the theory of recognition which stipulates that those who are portrayed by the society and their surroundings in a one-sided or negative way ('misrecognised'), may be struggling with accepting their self-worth and importance of their achievements (Taylor 1992; Fanon 1952).

In particular, this report derives from Axel Honneth's theory (1992) who argues that 'the struggle for recognition' is, and should be, at the center of social conflicts. According to Honneth besides normative and an ethical dimension, identity politics has also a psychological one (McNay 2008, 127). For Honneth (2003) the purpose of social equality is the personal identity-formation of individuals who form the society. Economic distress is perceived not as a resource deprivation, but as a loss of identity (Fukuyama 2018). With egalitarian ethical life every member of the society has the same right to realise their personality (Honneth 2003, 177). In order to realise individual autonomy, the society must create socially influenced preconditions based on a conception of personal well-being.

2 (b) Research question

What is the perceived connection between lack of recognition and the expression of social agency among Polish football fans?¹

2 (c) Methodological approach

This study used qualitative research methods to look into recognition, aspects of the role of arts and sports and social agency among Polish football fans. Qualitative research can be defined as 'the study of the *nature* of phenomena and is especially appropriate for answering questions of *why* something

¹ This question was developed collaboratively with the group of participants following initially meeting with them to discuss the project.

is (not) observed, assessing complex multi-component interventions, and focussing on intervention improvement' (Busetto, Wick, Gumbinger, 2020). This study uses the most common methods of data collection utilised by qualitative research: participant observation, interviews and focus groups.

This research consisted of in-depth qualitative interviews with 55 subjects. These consisted of intensive individual interviews to explore subjects' perspectives on (mis)recognition, social agency and inclusion. Moreover, the participants were observed during a football game, which allowed for a close contact and immersion in the activities of the fans, which was necessary for understanding the meaning of their actions, defining what football means for them and the process how they constructed their participation in the activities of the association. Because of the close contact and interactions with the interviewers a gradual relationship of trust was built that allowed for the respondents to openly discuss their perspectives.

Besides in-depth qualitative interviews, two focus groups were carried out where interviews took place with small groups of participants (first one encompassed 9 and the second one 12 fans) to answer questions in a moderated setting. The groups were chosen due to their affiliation to Rakow Czestochowa football fandom, and the questions were designed to shed light on the role of sports, social inclusion, misrecognition, social agency and radicalization.

For both focus groups and in-depth interviews, we used snowball sampling because the respondents are a difficult to access group, and we experienced instances when invitations for interviews were rejected due to fear of researcher bias or gathering intelligence for the police. Moreover, the participants were reluctant to be interviewed due to stigmatization embedded in the word 'radicalization'. In particular, the respondents questioned whether nationalism ('patriotism' in their terminology) could be considered radical. Special difficulties the interviewers found in accessing younger generation and women (notwithstanding the ratio). The interviews and focus group were audio-recorded, transcribed and translated to English. The coding and analysis is done elsewhere and is not a part of this report.

Challenging otherness through arts & sports

3 (a) Challenging otherness and social agency

The members of 'Wieczny Rakow' from the beginning had a similar idea of mobilization, which was grounded in their involvement in sports. Association of Rakow Fans was set up in 2009 in a pub in Częstochowa. Initially, it was supposed to be a casual talk about matters related to supporting Raków, but the idea of organizing a football tournament for fans also came up. Finally, it was decided to legalize the activities by registering in a court as an association and the first initiative, i.e. the tournament of Raków fans under the banner of Racovia Cup 2010 took place. In 2010 the Association received a court's decision to legalize it. Since then the Association is the official voice of the fan community representing them with the board of RKS Raków. The group has its own board headed by the president, while the fan environment as such functions without leaders considering that 'Wieczny Rakow' is the "face" of fans created to be publicly representing fans' interests.

From the beginning the Association had good relations with the club's authorities, engaging in the promotion of meetings and organizing trips to matches played outside Częstochowa. The Association has its own logo as well as a legally protected sign used by the fans as the club crest. Interestingly, the club even has its own brand of beer ('Racovia') created by fans and for fans, which has survived in various forms for over a decade.

The choice of this group for this report was also justified with the social agency the group collectively displayed. Our informant has not only confirmed numerous campaigns aimed at consolidating the community of Rakow fans, such as involvement and organization of the celebration of the 100th anniversary of RKS Raków during the period of pandemic restrictions or cyclical organization of indoor football tournaments for Raków fans during the winter breaks under the name Racovia Cup. The tournaments strongly integrate the fans' milieu, which in turn leads to the involvement of more people in other campaigns, including those that are aimed at promoting social inclusion.

What's more the group is particularly interesting to study social agency, as they are engaged not only in campaigns aimed at consolidating the fan community of Rakow, but also in an impressive number of campaigns to support initiatives not typically related to fan life. Some of these initiatives involved collection of clothing for the Homeless Families' Shelter run by Caritas of the Archdiocese of Częstochowa; involvement in the nationwide campaign of Odra - Niemen Association – preparing packages for Polish veterans in Kresy. This is a cyclical action organized twice a year on Easter and Christmas, during which Christmas packages are prepared for Polish veterans living in the current territories of Lithuania, Belarus and Ukraine. The fans were also involved in an aid campaign for

members of the Association of Interned and Repressed Prisoners in Częstochowa; aid campaign for the Polish junior high school Konstanty Parczewski in Niemenczyn in Lithuania, during which they collected gifts for 32 Polish students of the school; renovated the orphanage in Częstochowa at 82 Kolorowa Street; collected money for the treatment of sick children, each time focusing on a specific child, often from Częstochowa, and often related in some way to Raków or the milieu – the most memorable one was the action of fighting for a heart for a seriously ill daughter of one from the fans of Raków - Hania; annual collection of food and necessary items for the Częstochowa Shelter for Homeless Animals under the banner of "Wieczny Raków for animals"; of collecting things needed for a school starter kit for Polish children living permanently in Kazakhstan; as part of the "Red-Blue Gift" campaign, visiting children's wards in Częstochowa hospitals: Parkitka, PCK and St. Barbara Hospital to giving the youngest patients gifts; support action for the Single Mother's House in Częstochowa; fundraising for the Intervention Pre-Adoption Center 'Dom Życia' in Częstochowa under the banner of "Wieczny Raków for kids", where, apart from things for babies, everyday equipment to facilitate work with children was organized; and support actions for the Hospice in Częstochowa.

This impressive list of initiatives is a proof of a powerful social agency of the fans that has not been captured by the media. The focus on hooligan activity and violence on stadiums might obscure the charitable work for local community of the fans and, indeed, substantiate their grievance of misrecognition.

3 (b) Art project

The most critical part of D.Rad WP8 is the art 'intervention' at a sports programme. The intervention in Poland was carried out by D.Rad in cooperation with the by the football fans on April 16, 2023 during a football match between RKS Raków Częstochowa and Widzew Łódź. A display 'Czestochowa belongs to Rakow' in club colours was created together and presented at the game emphasizing a local sentiment of the fans.

In the first phase of the intervention, one of the researchers for this project, a law academic from Jan Dlugosz University, met with the representatives of the Raków Fan Club Association to discuss this project. The researcher engaged in a long conversation and exchange of views with the fans about the idea of a game setting, its meaning for the fans as well as the content of the messages displayed in terms of expression of their identity. The fans' views quickly formed a list of grievances - they talked about various situations in which they were mistreated by the Police. They expressed that this mistreatment is a result of a stereotype of football fans as a hooligans – stadium bullies. Because of such beliefs, fans are subjected to many restrictions when traveling to matches in other cities, and they are often treated as criminals. The researcher explained again the purpose of the study, discussed

the scope of D.Rad project and reassured the fans that the purpose of the research is not to make judgements about them. This dialogue led to a change in the attitude of the fans towards the research project. The initial reluctance decreased and the trust towards each other started to unfold. It was agreed that the binding would contain a strong local message and, moreover, would not contain any xenophobic or offensive elements. As a result of the discussion an inscription "Częstochowa belongs to Rakow" and colours, i.e. white and red (colors of Rakow), were agreed.

Community building has been observed by the researcher during preparation of the binding. The participants worked together and were overcoming obstacles together. For example, when there was no delivery vehicle available to deliver the materials, the fans organised its transport in their private cars to the hall where a large canvas could be freely spread out. While tasks were assigned to individual persons, the researcher observed the fans gaining confidence from working together and achieving results. Subsequently, a slogan was painted on the surface of the material, - 'Częstochowa belongs to Rakow' - in club colors and it was distributed within the "sector box" at the stadium.

On the day of the match, on April 16, 2023, immediately after its start, with the help of a large group of fans gathered in the stadium sector, a huge inscription 'Częstochowa belongs to Rakow' was spread over the fans gathered behind the Rakow club sector. Later in the match, fans in that sector received various flags in the colors of the Club. The flags were flying over the Raków fans' sector and a substantial number of people participated, which was captured on Picture 1:



Picture 1. Football fans of Rakow with the flags. Author: Pawel Ruksza

During the presentation of the setting, the fans gathered at the stadium in the sector colloquially known as “the mill” joined in. The sector banner was so large that it would not have been possible to spread it out without the participation of fans gathered in the stands. The final game setting was captured on Picture 2:



Picture 2: Final game setting. Author: Pawel Ruksza

What was special about this particular setting, besides the collaboration with the D.Rad project, was that it was aimed at the local community, and went beyond having a meaning just for the fans' community. The social cohesion aspect was unique and the fact that the setting did not contain a negative message, as it happens often on the stadiums. Moreover, it seems that the setting on April 16, 2023 was a kind of testing ground for a different direction in the message content and was an inspiration for the next game setting - a colorful inscription 'Raków Champion.'

3 (c) 'Wieczny Rakow' on I-GAP Spectrum

D.Rad conceptualises radicalization through the I-GAP spectrum (injustice-grievance-alienation-polarisation). The organisational activities of Fans Association 'Wieczny Raków' relate to I-GAP spectrum in particular as far as they aim they have an impact on consolidating fans (thus preventing their alienation). The injustice and grievance play an important role in the formation of alienation.

One of the main aspects discussed with the fans are their grievances and misrecognition. On one hand the hostility is a part of Polish fandom identity, which is often grounded in the concept of an enemy (police, football fans of the opposing team, LGBT, feminists, 'enemies of the Fatherland' etc.). Violence can often be seen as purposeless (prearranged group fights 'ustawki') and might be very serious (knife fights, premeditated murders). What is also worth to emphasize is football fans are not a homogeneous group, but are multidimensional in terms of their anti-social activities. The

differences between fans, ultras, hooligans ('kibole') and criminal gang members are sometimes difficult to capture and do not seem to be captured in the media. Hooligans use football as a pretext for engaging in bloody prearranged group fights, while criminal gangs use football as solidarity building tool for the purpose of criminal activity, mostly drug trade.

The hostility might reflect how they see and make meaning of the world, but might also be reflected in how they are seen by the mainstream society. To illustrate this point the fans compared their situation to the situation of LGBT+ community indicating how their misrecognition is even more serious. The fans gave an example that when they stop somewhere while travelling for the game, the police would warn owners of the restaurants with toilet availability to close them down because they are coming. In this way the fans do not have a possibility to use toilets and or to buy food. They contrasted it with the situation of gay community indicating that if that would happen to this community, the society would be outraged. This shows how they feel alienated from the society – the fans believe that the general public should have no reasons to fear or avoid them.

Football fans are known for contributing to polarization, not only on football stadiums, but even society at large. One might even argue that the mere creation of the association is with the purpose of polarizing. The Association was founded of the fans' initiative of and for fans to represent interests of the fan community. It is involved in organizing trips to Raków matches, consolidation of the fan community, and presenting the settings during matches on the fanatics' sector. 'Wieczny Rakow' is voice of the fan community in talks with the board of Raków club. However, it seems that the association through its social activism might be at the same time promoting social inclusion.

Conclusion

Those who are seen by by the society and their surroundings in a negative way ('misrecognised'), may be struggling with accepting their self-worth and importance of their achievements (Taylor 1992; Fanon 1952). This report aimed to answer the question what is the perceived connection between lack of recognition and expression of social agency among members of 'Wieczny Rakow.' To answer this question we used focus groups, individual interviews and an art intervention. While the analysis will be conducted elsewhere, the data provided in this report offered some initial conclusions.

First, the respondents pointed out to misrecognition. They felt that they are being misrepresented. They complained about the lack of objectivity in media coverage. One respondent recalled how when taking pictures, he sees a different reality through his lenses, while something different is presented in the media. In the words of another fan: 'Nie ma zadymy, nie ma krwi to nie piszemy'- 'there is no fighting, no blood, so we don't write [about football fans]'. They quite often talked about law enforcement bias, in particular unjustified and unprovoked police brutality. One recalled how he was hit by an officer, just because he did not move out of his way. Another one was kicked in the head while he was tying up his shoelace. Because of the misrecognition and brutality, they feel socially alienated. According to the fans, misrecognition causes social tensions and unjustified fears of the of the fans by the general public.

Secondly, another important discovery was the impressive social agency, that could be considered a 'weapon' against misrecognition. It demonstrates that they actively oppose their alienation and misrecognition by engaging in charitable and social activities, even beyond sports. Moreover, their activities are often aimed at challenging otherness and promoting social cohesion. The fans could be utilizing their personal social agency on many different levels and ways – by engaging with different organizations, but their choice is to fundraise or perform charitable activities as a part of 'Wieczny Rakow'. However, at the same time the organization does not actively display its charitable activities, do not seek publicity, and not soliciting attention. In the words of one of the fans: 'The fan community in general is not courting anyone's favor, it doesn't need 'good media output'. Rather, everyone wants to be themselves, and not do something 'for publicity'. The association consists of the fan community and we are faithful to these stadium principles. We generally don't care how we are perceived. We do what we do regardless of the opinions of others.' This quote reflects that the intention is sincere, and the social agency is not aimed just to be an answer to the assigned bad reputation.

Thirdly, the art intervention showed how creating a narrative together with researchers promoted dialogue by exchanging opinions and enabled both sides to see things from different

perspectives. Joint implementation of the assigned tasks and overcoming the difficulties that appeared during the implementation resulted in bonding within the fan community and building mutual trust between the fans and the researchers. This collaborative initiative of fans and D.Rad researchers fostered important discussions about ways of working together to identify, investigate and solve important common social problems. During the implementation of the match setting, the fans and researchers performed together tasks related to the preparation of the setting, after discussing the method of implementing the task and defining their individual duties, went on to exchange thoughts and views on various topics, not only related to football. Creating together through arts and sports helped to express themselves to each other by 'conceptualizing a phenomenon by fleshing out different facets in order to get a nuanced understanding of it' (Butler- Kisber & Poldma, 2010, p. 4).

Finally, this report demonstrated how sports engagement may contribute to the closing of the I-GAP spectrum and ultimately may help with deradicalisation. 'Wieczny Rakow' would like to be perceived not through hostile attitudes and antagonistic objectives, but through assisting their club to flourish and enriching their local community. Just this fact contributes to a peaceful coexistence, social cohesion and makes ground for initiatives that will foster mutual understanding.

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Appendix

Programmes in Poland that aim to challenge aspects of social isolation

Organisation Name	Date set up	Bio	Place	Activity	Target Group	Aims
'Never Again' Association, Polish Football Association	1996	The problem of racism and discrimination is still an issue in football. The project 'Let's Kick Racism out of Football Stadiums' ² has been initiated by Marcin Kornak, football fan and a founder of the "NEVER AGAIN" Association that aims to prevent racism and xenophobia.	Poland	Removing fascist/racist symbolism from stadiums.	Football fans, players, coaches, referees, sports activists and journalists.	Promoting anti-racist attitudes among football fans

² <https://www.nigdywiecej.org/o-nas/nasze-inicjatywy/wykopmy-rasizm-ze-stadionow>.

Ministry of Sport and Tourism	Unknown	'Football Fans Together' ³	Currently there are 18 local branches of the project	Education of football fans against violence, racism and intolerance.	Football fans	It aims to develop empathy, civic virtues and 'positive patriotism' without xenophobia.
Foundation for Freedom	2004	'Etnoliga' ⁴ was founded by the Foundation for Freedom whose mission is to 'develop an open society by supporting and stimulating vulnerable groups regardless their origin, skin colour, gender, or religion'.	Warsaw	Football games	Mostly migrants	Creating an environment where people can play football free from racism, sexism and homophobia.
Ministry of Administration and Digitisation	Unknown	'Partnership for Active	Bialystok	Civic education on diversity	Local residents and	Intergenerational cooperation and

³ <https://kibice-razem.pl>

⁴ <https://www.etnoliga.org/en/>.

		Estates' ⁵ was initiated to integrate and educate the local community in a region prone to radicalization.		through arts and sport.	students .	increasing the sense of acceptance for the diversity and multiculturalism among local people.
Fans' Association Pogon Szczecin "Portowcy"	2020	'Niepełnosprawni niewykluczeni' ('People with disabilities not excluded') was an initiative of Fans' Association Pogon Szczecin "Portowcy" to include those football fans who live with a disability .	Szczecin	purchase of a specially adapted bus for fans of Pogoń Szczecin who live with a disability	Football fans of Pogon Szczecin who have a disability	Involvement of football fans of Pogon Szczecin who have a disability in its activities so that they can actively participate in fan life.

⁵ <https://www.prezydent.pl/archiwum-bronislawa-komorowskiego/witryna-obywatelska/witryna-obywatelska/projekt,284.html>.

