



CAFE

CENTRE
FOR ACCESS
TO FOOTBALL
IN EUROPE

Disabled Fans Survey 2016

Centre for Access to Football in Europe

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Introduction

In April 2016, CAFE launched the European-wide Disabled Fans Survey in 10 languages. The survey had several aims including:

- To investigate the levels of accessibility at football stadia across Europe,
- To find out if disabled fans are attending live football matches
- To understand the existing barriers that may prevent or disadvantage disabled people from attending live matches.

In addition, the survey sought to understand perceptions around whether the footballing world provides inclusive employment opportunities for disabled people.

The online survey was available in Dutch, English, French, Georgian, German, Polish, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish and Turkish. CAFE promoted the survey via a social media campaign and also published dedicated CAFE website news articles to encourage disabled fans, their companions and their advocates to complete the survey.

CAFE received a total of 1074 responses from 36 countries.

The survey responses demonstrate that a great number of disabled people across Europe are attending live matches. However, many disabled spectators encounter difficulties in doing so.

Furthermore, the survey results indicate that many disabled fans feel their matchday experience differs, and is often worse than those of non-disabled supporters, with over one-third of respondent affirming this. Reasons for this include the difficulties encountered, prior to attending a match, or on the matchday itself.

The survey also shows that more disabled people would like to attend live matches. However, due to a number of barriers, disabled people feel they are unable to attend live games or are uncertain on how to get to a match.

The survey also illustrates that it is just as important for disabled people, as it is for non-disabled people, to attend live matches.

The following report summarises the responses received, demonstrating why good access matters, why attending live matches is important for disabled people and the most common barriers faced by disabled people. The report also provides possible solutions to help remove these barriers.

CAFE would like to thank the survey participants for having taken the time to complete the CAFE Disabled Fans Survey 2016 and to all those who promoted and shared the survey amongst their networks.

We hope that you will find the report useful in providing an overview of the barriers still faced by disabled fans across Europe today and that the suggested ideas help readers to make live football a welcoming and inclusive environment for all supporters.

Why Good Access Matters

Accessibility has often been seen as an issue relating only to disabled people. However, research has shown that approximately 40% of the population will require good access at any given time. This does not just include disabled people, but also families with young children, people with temporary disabilities such as a broken leg, pregnant women and the elderly.

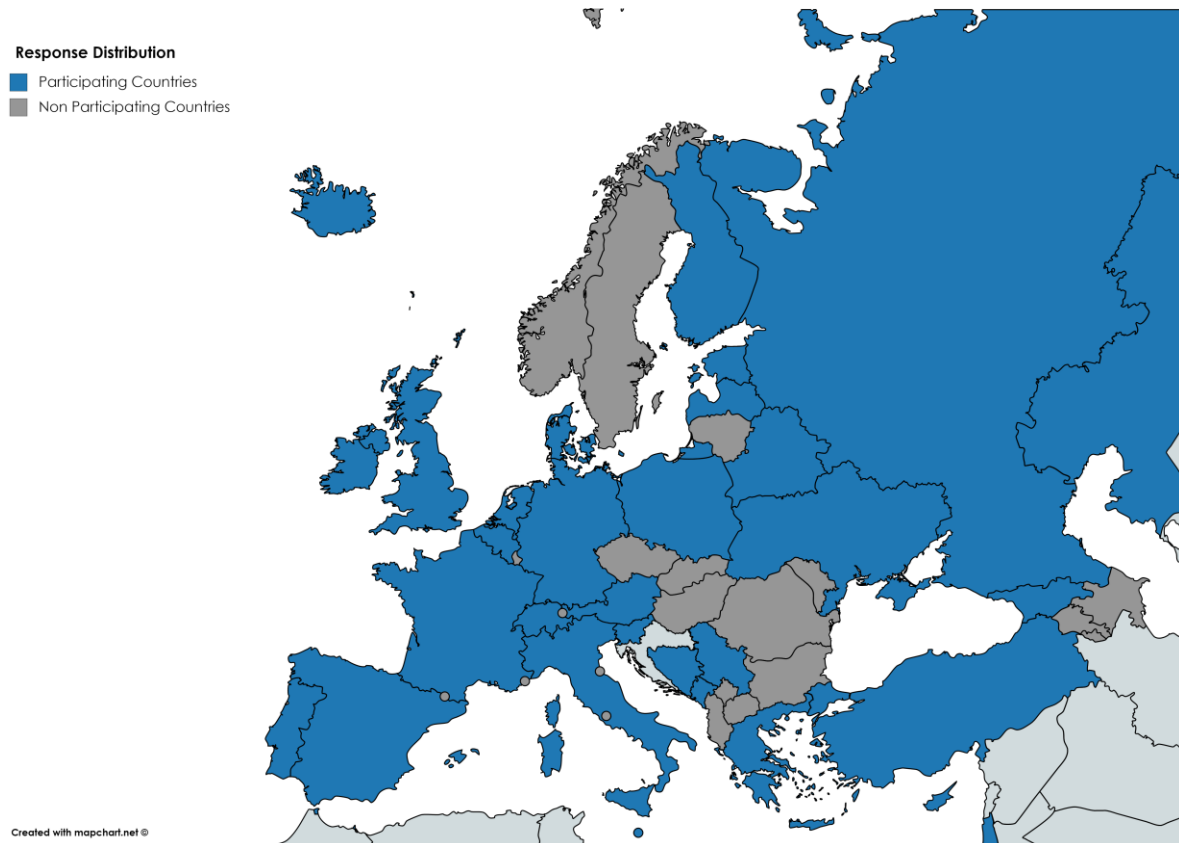
Having accessible football stadia and offering accessible services and facilities are in the best interests of all supporters, staff and visitors, all of whom may have an extensive range of access requirements and will benefit many people, both now and in the future.

Supporting a football team and attending live football matches is considered, by many, as an important part of European tradition and culture. This is no different for disabled people. Therefore, by providing an accessible and inclusive matchday experience and subsequently opening up the game to a much wider and more diverse audience, both clubs / stadia and fans will see great benefits.

Additionally, clubs and stadia that provide accessible facilities, services and amenities on non-matchdays place themselves at the heart of their local communities and are more likely to become employers of disabled people too.

Survey Respondents

In total, CAFE received over 1000 responses to the survey from 36 countries across Europe. The graphic below illustrates respondents' countries of residence.



Map showing countries of residence of participants of the CAFE Disabled Fans Survey 2016

The majority of the responses came from England, France, Germany and Poland. England had the highest number of respondents with 287, followed by France (143), Germany (141) and Poland (92).

These high numbers may be down to the fact that these countries have well-developed disabled fan networks. Each country has established local and national Disabled Supporters Associations (DSAs), who were able to promote the survey amongst their members, thereby making it easier to reach out to potential survey participants when compared to countries without such networks.

CAFE was surprised by the limited number of responses from countries such as Italy, Sweden, Norway and Denmark. This may be because, at present, to CAFE's knowledge, there are no local or national disabled supporters associations in these countries. Similarly, it may be due to a lower number of disabled people who attend matches on a regular basis.

As a result, CAFE will look to strengthen connections with clubs and disabled communities from these countries, with the aim to gain a better understanding of the landscape and to eventually increase the number of disabled people attending football matches in these countries.

There was also a low number of responses from countries across Eastern Europe and the Balkan region. Research has shown that around one-fifth of the overall population in Bulgaria, Croatia, Lithuania, Romania and Slovenia are non-internet users¹.

Other studies on worldwide access to internet services suggest that disabled people have significantly lower rates of access to internet services than non-disabled people do and in several countries, disabled people are even less likely to have a home computer than non-disabled people.

For example, disabled people in Bulgaria, Romania and Slovakia are less likely to have use of the internet than disabled people from Spain². This may explain why less responses were received from these areas as, due to limited access to the internet and access to computers, disabled people may not have been aware of CAFE or its survey.

Disabled people represent the largest minority group in society and there are currently over one billion disabled people living worldwide today. As the survey was predominately concerned with the experiences of disabled people at football matches, it was not surprising that, when CAFE asked participants "**Do you consider yourself to be disabled?**" a high percentage of respondents (74%) stated that they are disabled.

The remaining respondents, who stated they did not consider themselves to be disabled, comprised of advocates, companions, friends, and family members of disabled people.

More than half of those who stated they are disabled are wheelchair users and nearly 1 in 5 have limited or reduced mobility. This does not reflect the current population, with an estimated 10% of disabled people worldwide being wheelchair users, or would be if they had such resources.³ Reasons as to why CAFE received more responses from wheelchair users could be that other disabled people such as intellectually / learning disabled people or people

¹ Eurostat – Internet Access and use statistics – ec.europa.eu

² Eurostat - disability statistics - barriers to social integration – ec.europa.eu

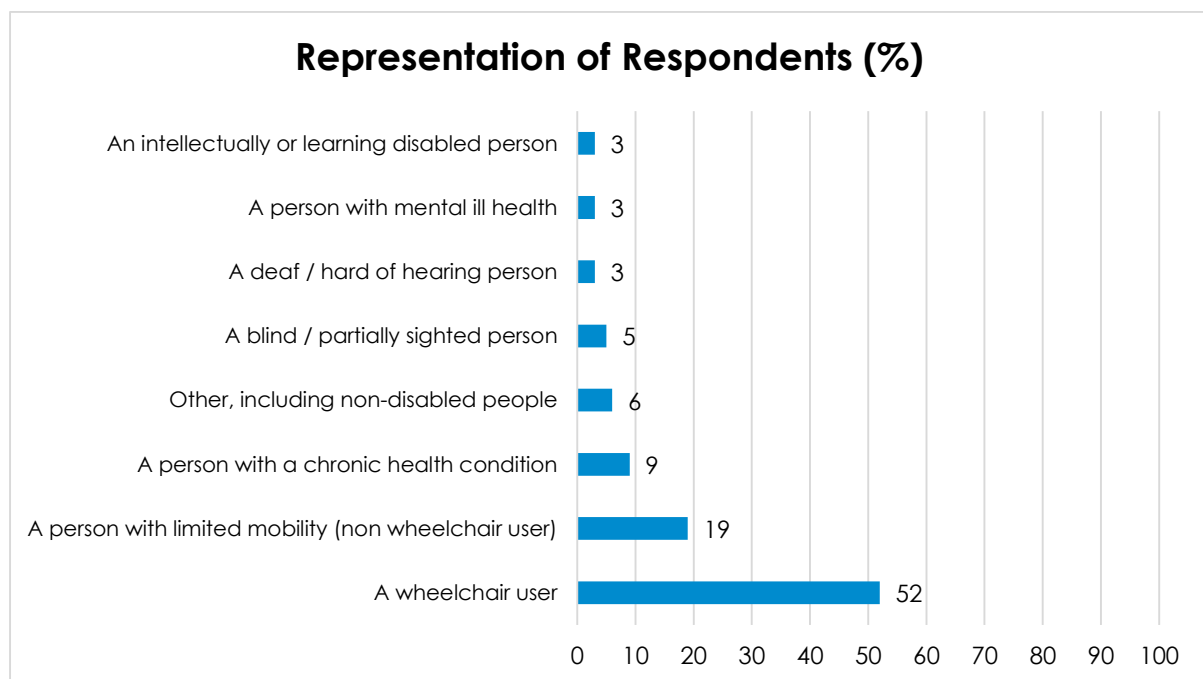
³ [World Health Organisation Factsheet on Wheelchairs October 2010](#)

with sensory requirements, may have found the survey more difficult to access and to complete. Alternatively, it could be that disabled people who are non-wheelchair users are less likely to attend football matches, due to a lack of accessible services and facilities that meet their particular access requirements.

CAFE promotes a pan-disability approach be taken to ensure differently disabled people are able to enjoy an inclusive matchday experience. As such, CAFE was delighted to also receive responses from blind and partially sighted people, deaf and hard hearing people, people with chronic health conditions, people with mental ill health and learning disabled people (please see the bar chart below for a detailed breakdown).

It is quite common for a disabled person to have more than one disability and whilst the CAFE survey gave the option for participants to select more than one disability, only 124 respondents did so. One reason for this may be that respondents only selected what they deemed to be their main disability.

For any future surveys that CAFE undertakes, we will look to readily provide the survey in alternative formats i.e. large font paper version to assist blind and partially sighted people who may not be able to have easily accessed the online version. This may help CAFE to get further responses from this specific group of disabled people.



Graphic showing representation of respondents

Attending matches

CAFE sought to gain a better understanding of how many disabled people are attending live football matches across Europe. In order to do this, CAFE asked questions about how often disabled people had attended live football matches over the previous 12 months.

Of the 810 disabled people who responded to this question, nearly half confirmed they were regular match goers, having attended more than 13 games within the previous 12 months. CAFE is pleased to see the figures show that many disabled people are regularly attending live matches and we believe that this demonstrates a strong desire amongst disabled people to be active match goers. Disabled people can often be a club's most faithful fans, with football matches sometimes being one of the only accessible activities they can attend in their area.

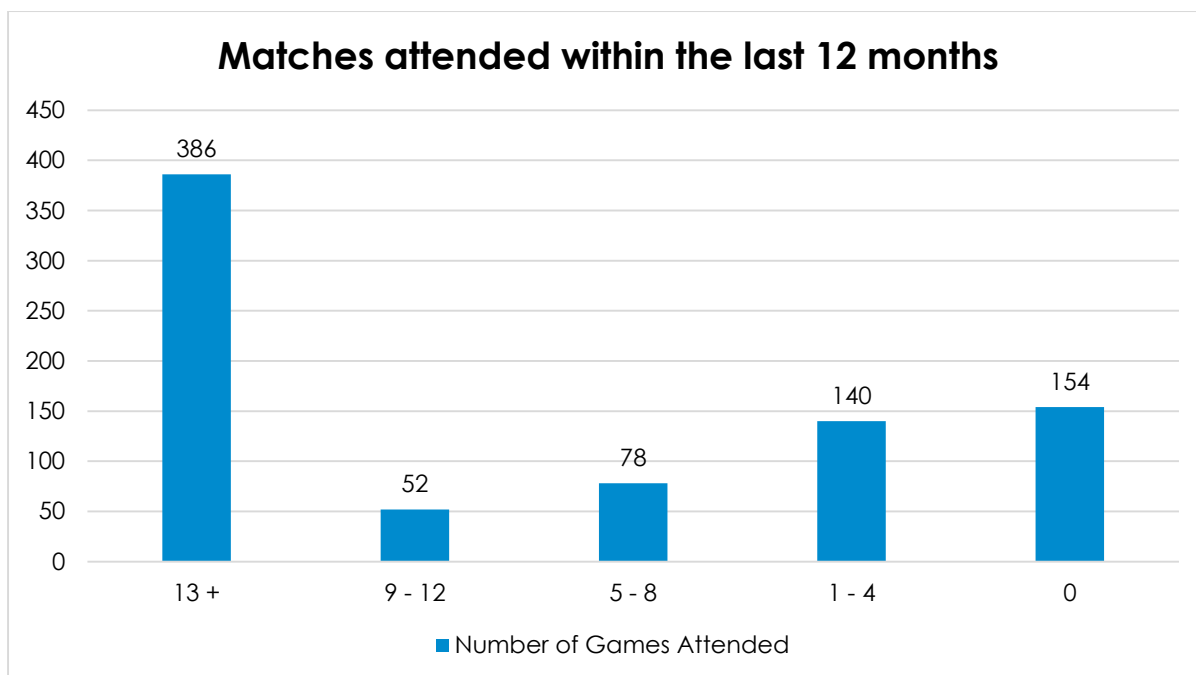
Nonetheless, statistics have shown that over 50% of disabled people worldwide have never been to a live public or sporting event⁴. Our research shows that over one third of disabled respondents had been to less than five games in the previous 12-month period and that 19% had never been to a live football game.

Some of the 154 respondents who informed us they have never been to a live match gave reasons as to why this is the case. They included: not having an opportunity to attend games due to a limited number of tickets for accessible seating areas, a lack of information readily available on accessible facilities and services at stadia, poor transport links, insufficient facilities (particularly for people with sensory needs and limited or reduced mobility), a shortage of accessible car parking facilities close to stadia and no audio-descriptive commentary available for blind and partially sighted fans.

“It’s far to the stadium and there’s no transport for disabled people”

A wheelchair user, Ukraine

⁴ European Disability Forum



Graphic showing number of live matches attended by disabled people within the previous 12-month period (2015)

Domestic vs International matches

The majority of respondents attended domestic team matches more regularly than national team games, with many respondents saying that they had little or no interest in their national team.

Most respondents also stated that disabled fans are often unable to attend midweek matches played in their national stadia, due to difficulties in travelling to the national stadium and in arranging suitable transport. A lot of public transport is either inaccessible or the limited accessible spaces available on trains, coaches and buses being already reserved by other disabled people.

Finding suitable accessible accommodation and ensuring the availability of a companion also has a major impact on whether disabled people can attend live international matches. Some disabled respondents also stated they did not know how to purchase accessibility tickets for international games or that there is an insufficient number of accessibility tickets available.

“International games do not take place near me and it is usually difficult to get a ticket”

A wheelchair user, Germany

CAFE also asked respondents if they would attend a match if their team were to qualify for the UEFA Champions League, Europa League or Super Cup. 79% said they would like to attend these matches. This again shows that there is a strong desire amongst disabled supporters to attend live matches and to support their team.

However, many had concerns on how practical this would be, due to limited time to make travel arrangements particularly in the later rounds of the competitions, the availability of tickets and accessible accommodation and other related costs. Whilst non-disabled fans also face these challenges due to short timeframes, disabled people often take longer to plan their journeys and accessible options can be far more limited.

Some respondents also raised concerns regarding the availability of matchday services such as audio-descriptive commentary and around the quality of sightlines at stadiums that they have never previously visited.

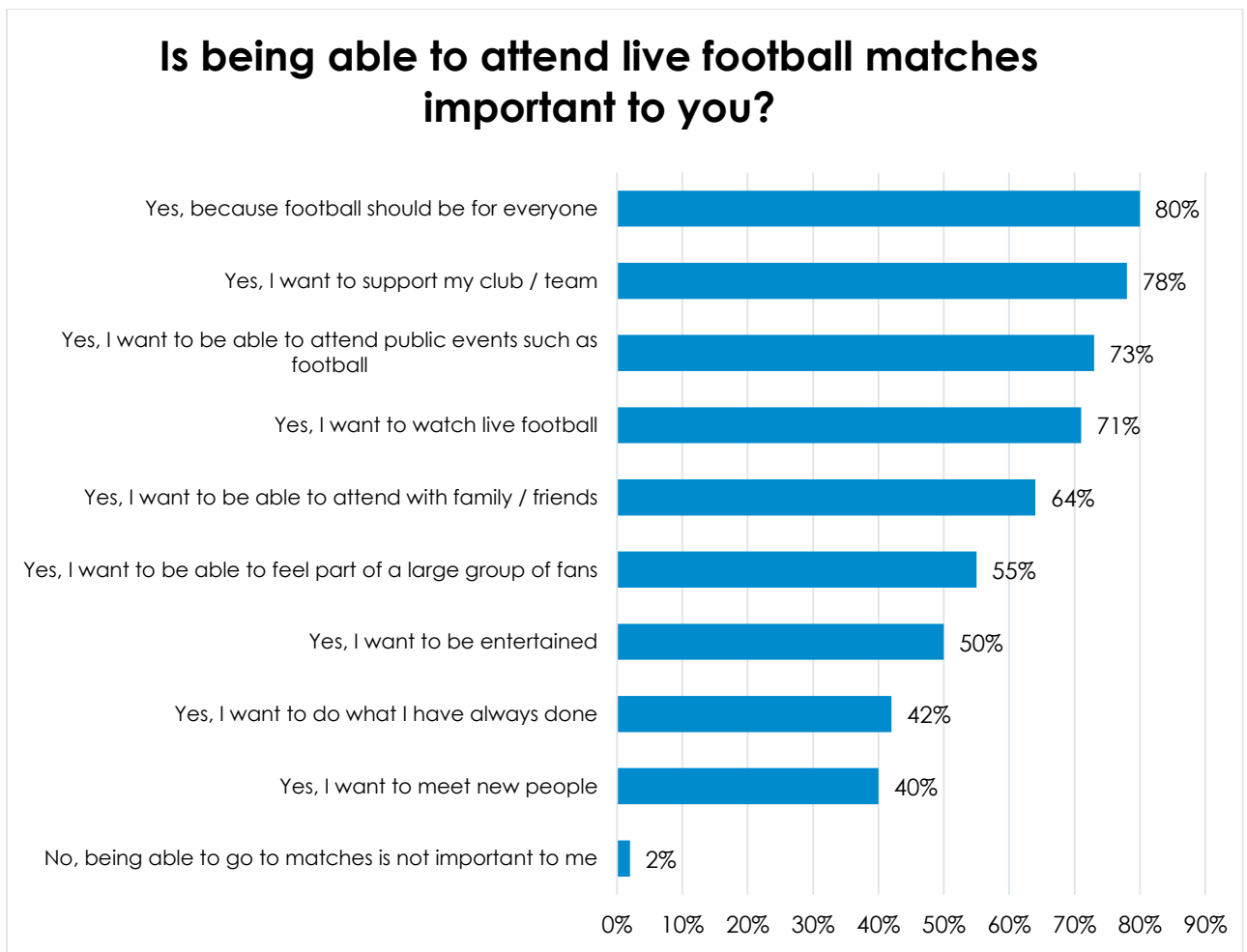
Importance of going to football matches

CAFE was also keen to increase its understanding on how important attending matches is to disabled people. To do this, we asked the question: **"Is being able to go to a live match important to you?"** We gave respondents 10 options and asked them to select all the options that were relevant to them. In total, 980 people responded to this question and the responses are shown in the table below.

The responses indicate that, as expected, attending live football matches is very important to disabled people. Disabled people believe watching live football should be possible for everyone and they want to have the same opportunities to support their football team and to attend live matches with their friends and family, just like non-disabled fans do.

Disabled fans are first and foremost supporters of their team, our disabilities should not stop us from being able to go to the match and to be just like all other fans

A wheelchair user, Wales



Graphic showing percentage breakdown of responses to 'Is being able to attend live football matches important to you?'

Barriers faced by disabled people attending live games

CAFE sought to gain a better understanding of what barriers (be they physical, sensory, attitudinal or intellectual), disabled people may have encountered when attending matches. We asked respondents to base their answers on the stadium that they visit most often.

Planning to attend matches

Disabled people often require longer to plan journeys and need to know additional access information about a venue well in advance of going to a live event, particularly if it is a first time visit to a venue, and attending a live football match is no different.

CAFE asked what problems (if any) disabled people had encountered in finding information prior to visiting a stadium. Whilst a high percentage of respondents – 71% - stated they had not encountered any difficulties in finding relevant information about stadia, those that had encountered difficulties stated the main problem was a lack of / or confusing information on the club's / stadium's own websites.

“There isn't a lot of information given on the clubs website about how to purchase disabled tickets, viewing areas, disabled car parking etc.”

A wheelchair user, England

CAFE predicates that the reason as to why such a high percentage of respondents did not encounter difficulties in finding information may be due to the question being related to the stadium they visit most often and therefore, their need to enquire about certain information about their home stadium may not be relevant.

Nonetheless, several respondents did state that there was a lack of accessibility and travel information available when visiting away stadiums, and especially for matches in the UEFA Champions or Europa League.

The CAFE website (www.cafefootball.eu/en/stadiums) has over 520 dedicated stadium pages with information on how to get to there, entering the stadium and the facilities and services available once inside the stadium.

CAFE also encourages fans who have visited stadiums across Europe to leave Fans Comments / Feedback on their matchday experience, which helps other disabled fans who may be planning to attend a match in a stadium that they are unfamiliar with.

Particularly with European stadia, there are very scant reviews by other fans. I make a point of submitting a review after every European away game. Where I have found reviews by other fans they are hugely informative, particularly how disabled fans travel to the ground and views at the stadium”

A wheelchair user, Wales

CAFE updates its stadium pages regularly to ensure the most recent and accurate stadium and travel information is included, and we will keep encouraging disabled fans who have attended matches to leave their feedback, which is proving to be a great source of help to others.

To help facilitate disabled spectators in leaving their feedback, CAFE has created the Matchday Evaluation Feedback Questionnaire. The questionnaire is designed to follow disabled fans matchday journey, from getting to the stadium to the view of the pitch. It also provides the opportunity for disabled supporters to leave any other comments that they may wish.

For further information on the CAFE Matchday Evaluation Feedback Questionnaire, please see <http://www.cafefootball.eu/en/news/cafe-launches-disabled-fans-matchday-evaluation-feedback-questionnaire>.

The question also highlighted that a lack of a dedicated club / stadium contact, who is able to answer specific questions concerning accessibility, creates another barrier for disabled people when planning a visit to a stadium. Some people reported that if they did not know that accessible car parking spaces would be available on a matchday, or, if easy access seating for a person with limited / reduced mobility could be arranged in advance of a game, then they would not attend the match.

However, with the implementation of Article 35bis into the 2015–18 UEFA Club Licensing and Financial Fair Play Regulations, clubs are now required to appoint a [Disability Access Officer \(DAO\)](#) to take responsibility for improving access for disabled people, both on match and non-match days. Part of the role of the DAO is to be the recognised point of contact for disabled people. CAFE believes therefore that the effective implementation of Article 35bis will help to overcome this barrier for disabled people attending live matches.

Access to stadia

Access to and from the stadium on a matchday provides another barrier which can either prevent disabled people from attending matches or cause difficulties for those who do attend. As stated earlier in the report, many forms of public transport across Europe are not accessible for disabled people; this can be seen with only 1 in 4 respondents saying they used this mode of transport to attend matches.

Due to many inaccessible transport links, disabled people will often use their own vehicles or car share with others when travelling to matches. Three quarters of respondents informed CAFE that this is their preferred method of travelling to matches. However, many disabled people stated that while this mode of travel is more favourable to use when getting to stadiums, it can also

cause difficulties, as many stadiums have a limited number of accessible parking spaces.

Without being able to park within the vicinity of the stadium, some disabled people find it difficult to attend matches. A lack of accessible parking spaces often means disabled people may have to park significant distances away from the stadium in order to find suitable parking space for their vehicles. As a result, disabled people can often encounter longer walks to stadiums, across terrain where there are uneven surfaces and a lack of low-level kerbs. For wheelchair users, those with limited / reduced mobility and blind and partially sighted people, this can make getting to and from stadia on busy matchdays particularly difficult.

It is considered best practice to allocate at least 6% of a stadium's overall car parking capacity to disabled people. Wherever possible, this percentage should be higher. If it is not possible to increase the numbers of accessible parking spaces at a football ground, clubs and stadia should identify drop-off and pick-up points as close to the stadium entrances for disabled spectators who arrive by taxi or car. This will help to avoid lengthy walking distances.

In addition, CAFE would recommend that club stewards / volunteers should be available to direct and offer assistance to disabled spectators to and from parking areas and the drop-off and pick-up points to the stadium entrances.

The implementation of an accessible shuttle service to help bring disabled people from off-site car parking venues or local public transport hubs is another way that clubs can help facilitate the matchday journey. Clubs could also introduce a wheelchair loan service, which can be particularly useful for disabled fans who are using the designated drop-off and pick-up points, and the on / off-site accessible parking areas.

Purchasing Matchday Tickets

Many disabled people find the process of purchasing tickets, either on a match-by-match or season ticket basis can be problematic. Our research has indicated the biggest problem faced by disabled supporters who want to attend matches is the limited number or lack of accessible seating that is available at many stadiums. This means that there is often a waiting list for season tickets, with waiting times in some cases being in excess of 3 years. In addition, match-by-match tickets are frequently allocated on a rota basis. As such, fans may only be able to attend two or three games per season.

“There is a waiting list to see all the matches. There are 50 places (wheelchair user spaces) at [the stadium] with more than triple of subscribers waiting to go to all the matches”

A wheelchair user, France

“Games are allocated on a rota system, I do not have any choice in what games I attend”

A person with a chronic health condition, England

Clubs should aim to provide the minimum numbers of wheelchair user spaces and easy access / amenity seating as recommended by the [UEFA and CAFE Good Practice Guide to Creating an Accessible Matchday Experience](#) (Access for All). It is important to remember that these numbers, which are based on European standards, are only minimum requirements. Where possible, clubs should look to exceed these numbers to be able to give as many disabled people opportunities to be attend live matches on a more regular basis.

“The seating with extra leg room is only in 1 area and they are very limited, meaning I may not always be able to go to the game”

A person with a chronic health condition, England

Our study also showed that many disabled people find the actual purchasing of match tickets problematic.

Just over 20% of 637 respondents said that they were unable to purchase their matchday tickets online, with some saying that had to telephone the club directly and some having to visit the clubs ticket office (where accessibility to the box office allows them too). Many disabled fans stated they found it frustrating not to be able to purchase their match tickets online as this is a more convenient, easier and quicker method. Purchasing tickets online also means the disabled person avoids having to incur any additional costs such as telephone charges or the cost of having to travel to and from the box office.

CAFE advises that disabled supporters should be able to purchase tickets for matches in the same ways as non-disabled people - be that online, direct from the ticket office, by telephone or by email. Whatever ticket purchasing systems clubs chose to implement, it is vital that these services are fully accessible so that differently disabled people are able make purchases, using whichever method is most convenient for them.

Accessible Seating Options

It is considered best practice for disabled people to have access to any floor of a new non-domestic building. In football, this means that disabled spectators should be given a choice of inclusive viewing areas and should be able to have access to facilities throughout the stadium. Where full access is not possible, alternative areas should be provided throughout the stadium.

It is important that these areas should not just include pitchside seating but also raised or elevated viewing areas. Many disabled fans often prefer elevated viewing areas as they often provide a greater overview of the match and better protection from the elements.

However, some fans do still prefer pitchside seating areas; this is particularly the case with blind and partially sighted fans who may like to hear the sound of the ball, helping them to follow the play better.

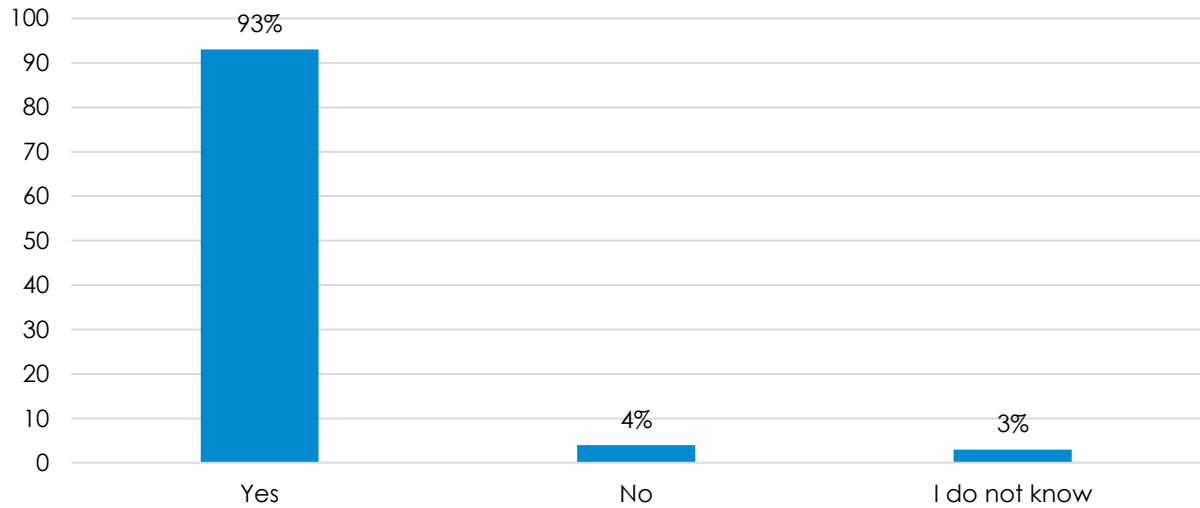
It is recommended that no more than 25% of available wheelchair user seating / amenity seating be at pitch level. Disabled spectators should also be given the opportunity to sit with their own team's supporters and our research has shown this is something many disabled fans from across Europe feel is an important part of the matchday experience.

“It’s important for me to be seated with my own team’s supporters at matches”

A wheelchair user, Poland

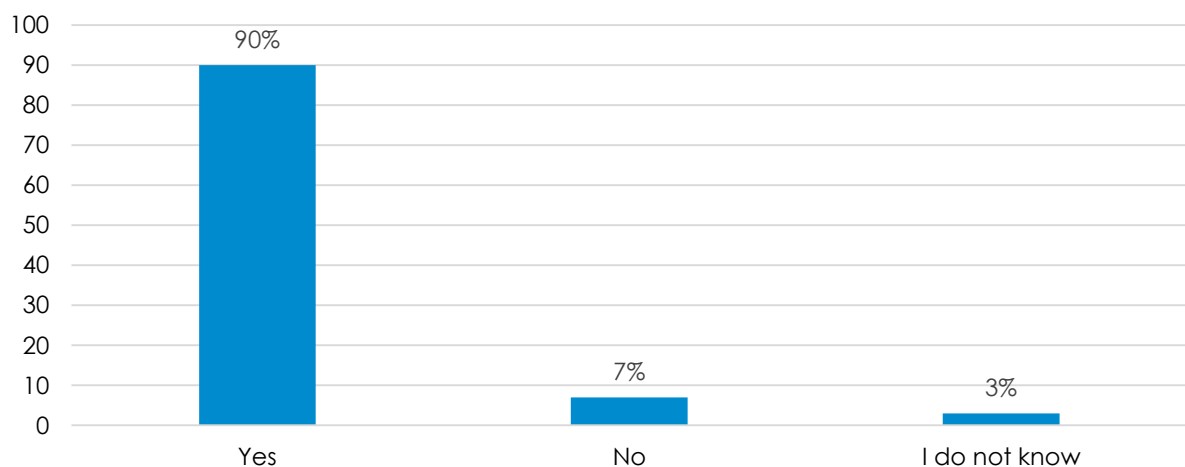
Not only are these seating options deemed to be best practice, they are of great importance to disabled people who attend matches. When asked **“Do you consider it important for disabled fans to have a choice of accessible seating across the stadium?”** and **“Do you consider it to be important for disabled fans to sit with their own fans?”** the answers to both questions were overwhelmingly **“yes, it is important”**.

Percentage of respondents who consider it is important for disabled supporters to have a choice of seating across stadia



Graphic showing percentage breakdown of responses to “Do you consider it important for disabled fans to have a choice of accessible seating across the stadium?”

Percentage of respondents who consider it is important for disabled supporters to be able to sit with their own supporters at stadia



Graphic showing percentage breakdown of responses to “Do you consider it important for disabled fans to sit with their own fans? (E.g. home or away fans)”

“A disabled fan should have the same choice of seating as all other fans do”

A wheelchair user, Republic of Ireland

“As a non-disabled supporter, I can choose which area of the stadium I sit in when attending home games, disabled supporters should also be given that same opportunity”

Companion of a disabled relative, England

Over 60% of survey respondents also stated their desire to be able to sit with their friends and family when attending live matches. Yet, at many stadia, this is not possible, with only one companion seat available for each disabled fan.

“Unfortunately, you can take only one accompanying person - no possibility for friends or family to attend with me”

A wheelchair user, Germany

Furthermore, some disabled fans with complex or multiple needs may need to attend a match with more than one companion, but are not able to do so. To help overcome this problem, flexible seating solutions could be used, such as installing tip-up or drop-down seats in wheelchair viewing areas to allow more than one companion to be sat with the wheelchair user.

Best practice is for companion seating to be adjacent to the wheelchair user spaces and easy access / amenity seats. In noisy stadia, this facilitates communication between the disabled spectator, who may have limited speech or movement, and their companion. Our research has shown that only 36% of respondents are able to sit next to their companion at live matches, with the rest being either sat behind or in front of the disabled supporter.

Whilst this issue was most common amongst wheelchair users, other disabled spectators informed CAFE that their companion is often sat away from them and that they would prefer to have adjacent companions seating.

“It is different from stadium to stadium, sometimes I sit next to my companion, sometimes they are sat away from me. I like to talk to my companion during the game to discuss what is happening on the pitch, I cannot do this when my companion is sat behind me”

A wheelchair user, England

Where possible, clubs and stadia should look to install adjacent companion seating to help ensure a more enjoyable match experience for disabled supporters.

Sightlines

It is important that everyone who attends a football match has a good view of pitch so they can not only fully enjoy the game but the whole matchday experience. This includes supporters sitting in wheelchair user spaces and easy access seats.

A clear and unobstructed view should be ensured for disabled supporters even when fellow supporters stand up in front. This is especially important for disabled fans who may not be able to stand for long periods of time, or at all, or who are unable to lean to the side to be able to get a clearer view of the pitch.

During a Champions League match in England, the spectators in front of me remained standing all the time and I could see only a small part of the game!

A wheelchair user, France

However, our survey has shown that many disabled people experience obstructed views when they attend football matches, with over one-third of respondents indicating they do not have good view of the pitch. Reasons for this include obstructions such as advertising hoardings, barriers and pillars. Other fans stated that cameramen, photographers and other fans, either standing or sitting in front of the wheelchair user spaces, caused obstructions.



“I see the game well but this is only the case if the spectators remain seated and there are no cameramen!”

A wheelchair user, France

Viewing areas for disabled fans should be designed so that the pitch and the surrounding areas can be clearly seen even when located behind standing accommodation or when supporters seated in front stand up. Clubs should ensure that, where possible, obstructions are removed from all accessible viewing areas, and that stewards are on hand during the match to help guarantee a clear view of the pitch.

Amenities and Services

Disabled spectators are no different from non-disabled spectators in wanting to purchase merchandise and refreshments on a matchdays. They may also wish to have access to bar and concourse areas and of course make use of toilet facilities. Disabled spectators may also want to buy hospitality packages. It is therefore important that, in addition to the stadium itself, all facilities and services are accessible to all.

Accessible Toilets

It is vital that adequate toilet facilities are provided for disabled people in all areas of a stadium. This is of particular importance for wheelchair users who are unable to use standard toilet facilities. Whilst most stadiums do provide accessible toilet facilities, nearly 10% of respondents stated that accessible toilets can be problematic at stadia.



An accessible toilet

CAFE research has shown that accessible toilet facilities are not always up to minimum size requirements as recommended in Access for All.

“More disabled-friendly toilets with sufficient space for wheelchair users and those with walking frames are needed in the stadium”

A person with reduced / limited mobility, Scotland

In other cases, there are simply not enough accessible toilets available.

“Not enough disabled toilets in the ground, taking into account that disabled people can take longer to use the facilities. This often results in queues to use the accessible toilets that are available”

A wheelchair user, England

It is best practice for accessible toilets to be located around all areas of the stadium to ensure all disabled supporters, including those with hidden disabilities, are within close proximity to an accessible toilet facility. However, our survey has highlighted that this is not always the case, with some fans stating that there are no accessible toilets in the area of the ground that they are located.

I'm on crutches and I don't sit in a disabled area, in order to keep my seat to sit with my family. The stand isn't very accessible, with steps up to the seats and there aren't accessible toilets either

A person with limited mobility, England

It is recommended that at least 10% of the cubicles (with a minimum of one) within toilet blocks are designed for supporters who have limited / reduced mobility. These cubicles should have support rails and enough space to accommodate supporters who use walking aids or have reduced leg movement.

Another problem highlighted by our survey is that accessible toilets are often abused by non-disabled supporters, particularly at busy periods such as half time.

“Most matches I have to wait for the accessible toilets as non-disabled fans use the accessible toilets”

A disabled person, England

“Accessible toilets can be very unclean as non-disabled fans are using them during the game leaving them dirty and unhygienic”

A wheelchair user, Scotland

Stadium staff and stewards should always ensure that non-disabled supporters do not abuse accessible toilets on matchdays and that the facilities are kept well maintained, clean and available for use during the whole matchday. A way to make it easier for disabled supporters to access the toilets on a matchday is for the accessible toilets to be locked and some countries use a special Euro or Radar key. For this to work, however, stewards must be situated nearby with spare keys and be able to open the door to those supporters who need to use it.

Refreshment and Concourse Areas

Disabled people should be able to access refreshment areas independently. Refreshment kiosks should be situated close to the accessible viewing areas and include low-level service counters to ensure wheelchair users and persons of short stature are able to make their purchases easily and independently. Disabled spectators may have difficulties in accessing concourses at particularly busy times such as just before kick-off and half time when these areas are at their most congested.

Again, our findings have highlighted that not all disabled fans are able to purchase refreshments due to a lack of access to the concourse areas or overcrowding.



Non-accessible refreshment kiosk

“For me to purchase drinks and food I need my companion to go as I’m unable to reach the desk.”

A wheelchair user, Germany

“Not all the concourses are accessible, away supporters have no access to the away concourse. One of the home stands doesn't have any wheelchair access into its concourse. The one concourse that has access is always very busy at half time”

A wheelchair user, England

If it is not possible to install low-level counters immediately, clubs can provide an 'at seat refreshment order service', where volunteers take orders from disabled fans prior to the kick off and bring their orders to them at half time. Hawkers selling a selection of refreshments in the accessible viewing areas may also be a potential solution to this common problem.

VIP and Hospitality

As previously stated, all areas of the stadium should be fully accessible for disabled supporters. This also includes the VIP and corporate hospitality areas. It should not be presumed by clubs that disabled supporters do not want to have access to these areas and take advantage of the facilities available on a matchday.

However, nearly one third of survey respondents have stated that these specific areas of stadiums are not accessible for disabled spectators.

“Very few of the hospitality boxes at the stadium are accessible”

A blind / partially sighted wheelchair user, Belgium

Inclusive design principles should be used in these areas, and clubs and stadium owners should make improvements where required, to ensure equal access is available in throughout all areas of stadiums.

“The hospitality suites in one of the stands are completely inaccessible as there are no lifts”

A wheelchair user, Scotland

Access to these areas should be considered from the design stage of any new stadium project or renovation and where possible, improvements to existing stadia should be considered at the earliest opportunity.

Audio-descriptive Commentary

It is important that the needs of differently disabled spectators are catered for to ensure all disabled fans have an inclusive matchday experience. For partially sighted and blind fans, this could include providing audio-descriptive commentary at matches.

Our survey has shown that a lack of audio-descriptive commentary has influenced partially sighted and blind fans' decisions to attend matches.

“I do not attend matches at my club as there's no audio-description available”

A blind / partially sighted fan, France

Audio-descriptive commentary (ADC) is a specialised service that provides additional information for spectators. It describes all significant visual information such as body language, facial expressions, scenery action, clothing, colours, and anything else that is important to conveying the image, venue, match, event or surrounding ambience.

A growing number of clubs and venues are now providing a dedicated audio-descriptive commentary service, in many cases replacing a previously used local radio commentary service. Whilst, a live radio broadcast can be useful for many partially sighted and blind fans, audio-descriptive commentary provides a much greater amount of detail and makes for a more inclusive experience. Other fans, both disabled and non-disabled alike, can also benefit from this specific matchday service.



Audio-descriptive commentary equipment

For further information on audio-descriptive commentary and the CAFE Audio-descriptive Commentary Network, please see <http://www.cafefootball.eu/en/cafe-audio-descriptive-commentary-network-and-training-programme>

Disability Discrimination

According to a report by the Office for Public Management, commissioned by the UK's Equality and Human Rights Commission "disabled people are at higher risk of being victimised in comparison with non-disabled people."⁵

Often disability abuse is often under-reported, with many disabled people simply accepting these incidents as a part of everyday life.

CAFE have been made aware of incidents of disability abuse and hate crime occurring at matches across Europe including verbal abuse and threats of physical violence. When asked "**Have you witnessed / experienced an act of disability discrimination (physical, verbal, exclusion) at a match?**" nearly 1 in 4 out of the 623 who responded to this question answered yes.

In reality, this figure is likely to be much higher, with several respondents preferring not to answer this question or, as mentioned above, respondents may have just accepted these incidents and not classed them as an act of disability discrimination.

"As Bayern fan, unfortunately, at almost every game get accosted and insulted - I find it unacceptable and sometimes at away matches, it is scary"

A person with a chronic health condition and a wheelchair user,
Germany

"I've experienced many verbal attacks based on me being wheelchair user from rival fans, but I always brush the incidents off as they're angry they lost the match"

A wheelchair user, England

To help combat this, clubs and stadia should implement, effectively communicate and promote mechanisms to allow the reporting of disability abuse and discrimination. The clubs should also ensure that these services are fully accessible for all differently disabled people to use.

Disabled people have the right to expect to receive the same level of customer service as non-disabled people. Clubs should also ensure that all

⁵ Disabled people's experiences of targeted violence and hostility, Chih Hoong Sin, Annie Hedges, Chloe Cook, Nina Mguni and Natasha Comber, Office for Public Management, Equality and Human Rights Commission 2009

customer facing staff i.e. matchday stewards, volunteers and ticket office staff are well trained in how to communicate effectively with disabled spectators.

Disability inclusion and etiquette training is the best way of help customer facing staff to become more aware of the needs and requirements of disabled supporters. This training will help club staff increase their understanding of various disabilities and provide them with the tools and skills necessary to effectively communicate and assist disabled supporters.

Clubs should also celebrate their disabled fans by clearly promoting access and inclusion on matchdays e.g. inviting disabled children as player escorts, publishing a detailed accessibility guide on the services and facilities available at the stadium or providing national anthems in sign language on screens. By doing this, awareness amongst other spectators about the importance of access and inclusion will increase.

Employability

CAFE believes that disabled people should be able to take their rightful place within football, not only as fans, but also as administrators, coaches, players, volunteers and media representatives.

Football should be a welcoming environment for disabled spectators and employees alike. However, only 42% of the 699 respondents to the question **“Do you consider football to be accessible for disabled people as employees?”** felt football was accessible for disabled employees. Nearly two-thirds of respondents stated they would welcome the opportunity to work within football in some capacity but felt it was not possible, mainly due to poor access at club venues such as the stadium or training ground.

“Being disabled should not stop someone from working in football at any level”

Parent of a child with autism, Wales

As mentioned earlier, all areas of a stadium should be made accessible to disabled people; this also includes the media tribunes, pressrooms and offices. For example, there is an ever-increasing number of number of accredited disabled press and media representatives, such as photographers and journalists, who should be provided with accessible facilities and services, just like their non-disabled colleagues. Many disabled students in the past have

been told not to opt for, or have been dissuaded from media-related studies, due to inaccessible working environments that they may face, and these include football stadia.

CAFE also asked if respondents would like to see more disabled people appointed to senior governance within football, an overwhelming 85% of the 700 people who responded to this question stated that they would. These respondents felt that disabled people at top levels would be more likely able to better represent concerns of other disabled people. However, most respondents also emphasised it is important that disabled people be appointed into positions because they are the most suitable candidate for the job, and not out of pity.

Conclusion

The CAFE Disabled Fans Survey has shown that not only are there large numbers of disabled people across Europe who attend live matches, but that many are attending games on a regular basis.

We hope to see this number continue to rise in the coming years as more and more football clubs become aware of the importance of having good access at their stadia and how this can benefit other supporters as well as disabled fans.

However, our survey also indicates that more disabled people would like to attend live matches, but feel unable to do so due to lack of information being available ahead of matches, a lack of suitable seating options, a limited number of accessible area tickets and an absence of accessible matchday services and facilities.

Disabled spectators, who do manage to attend matches, often do so encountering many challenges such as inadequate sightlines, being unable to sit with family / friends and difficulties with getting to and from the stadium.

CAFE is hopeful that with the advice given in this report, the information contained in [UEFA and CAFE Good Practice Guide to Creating an Accessible Stadium and Matchday Experience - Access for All](#) and the continued implementation of the Disability Access Officer (DAO) role across Europe, many of these barriers will be overcome.

Going further, CAFE strongly encourages the creation of Disabled Supporters Associations (DSAs). These user-led groups allow differently disabled football fans to represent not only their own interests but also those of other disabled supporters at their football club.

The main aim of a DSA is to support the club in creating an accessible and welcoming environment at their stadium, enabling disabled people to take their rightful place alongside other fans. For further information on DSAs and how to establish one at your club please see http://www.cafefootball.eu/sites/default/files/contentfiles/dsa_info_pack_final.pdf

CAFE is disappointed to hear of cases of disability discrimination happening across Europe. Clubs should be aware that disabled supporters may be encountering discrimination when attending matches but are not always reporting the incidents. Clubs should implement procedures to help make disabled supporters feel comfortable in reporting cases of disability discrimination and ensure that any cases are investigated thoroughly.

To help combat discrimination and raise awareness of disabled supporters, CAFE encourages clubs to actively promote and celebrate disabled supporters and the role they play, not only within their club but also in the wider society.

Initiatives such as the annual CAFE Week of Action is a great way of highlighting the important role disabled supporters have across all levels of football. Clubs also often have their own designated matchday events to celebrate access and inclusion for disabled fans.

CAFE finds it encouraging there are an increasing number of disabled people working within football and even more who like the opportunity to do so. It is important that clubs and venues provide the same opportunities for disabled employees as non-disabled employees and we will continue to champion an inclusive game for disabled spectators and employees.

CAFE will continue to work closely with UEFA, football clubs, national associations, disabled supporters and DSAs to ensure a more welcoming and inclusive game can be achieved and in doing so, allow disabled people to take their rightful place alongside their peers in all areas of the game.

About CAFE

Disabled people are the largest minority group at >15% and rising (World Health Organization) and it can be fairly assumed that many of the one billion disabled people living today will be football fans – the world's most popular sport. Many can still only aspire to watch live football with many stadiums around the world not yet accessible and inclusive.

The Centre for Access to Football in Europe was established in 2009 with support from UEFA to improve access and inclusion across the game using the unique power of football. CAFE works with national associations, leagues, clubs, disabled fans, fans groups, NGOs and other key stakeholders to ensure a more accessible, inclusive experience for disabled fans across Europe.

Further, by raising awareness and sharing best practice solutions, CAFE aims to improve access and inclusion across the game so that disabled people can take their rightful places as spectators, players, volunteers, coaches, administrators, and as leaders and decision makers.

Contacting CAFE

There are a number of ways that you can contact CAFE with any questions, queries or comments that you may have:

- **Email:** info@cafefootball.eu
- **Telephone:** +44 (0)20 8621 2405
- **Tweet:** [@cafefootball](https://twitter.com/cafefootball)
- **Facebook:** www.facebook.com/cafefootball

Alternatively, you can write to us at the following address:

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Wembley, London
HA9 0NP, United Kingdom

Alternative formats of this document are available on request

Total Football Total Access Total Sense