2nd International CAFE Conference 2015
Total Football Total Access

Delegate feedback report

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Introduction

On 30-31 October, 2015, CAFE held its 2nd International CAFE Conference - Total Football Total Access. Expert speakers, partners, key stakeholders and disabled fans from around the world came together to share best practice and to celebrate access and inclusion within football.

The two-day event, held at the Stade de France, Paris, brought together a wide range of CAFE’s key stakeholders, including representatives from clubs, leagues and national associations, equality organisations, architects along with representatives from UEFA and FIFA, and disabled fans themselves.

Around 200 people, from 27 countries attended the Conference, with more than 600 viewers watching the sessions via live stream on the CAFE website. The sessions and presentations were provided in English with simultaneous translations to French, German, Polish, Russian and International Sign Language (for Deaf attendees).

The Conference was jointly opened by Jacques Lambert, President of UEFA EURO 2016 and CAFE Chairman David Bernstein, with a keynote introduction from Emmanuelle Assmann, President of the French Paralympic Committee and a EURO 2016 Tricolore Ambassador to President Hollande.

During the two days, experts and advocates discussed a range of topics which included an update on the accessibility preparations for UEFA EURO 2016. Other topics included the new UEFA Club Licensing criterion (requiring clubs to appoint a Disability Access Officer), preparations for UEFA EURO 2016, the employability of disabled people in football, the (English) Premier League’s pledge to meet Access for All standards by 2017 and a panel session on improving access around mega sporting events.

Specific focus was also given to improving the matchday experience for fans with hidden disabilities including supporters with autism, those with dementia and deaf and hard of hearing fans.

The Conference proved to be a great success with many delegates inspired and challenged to extend their local works to improve access and inclusion for all.

Three months later, CAFE launched a survey for Conference participants, seeking feedback on what could be improved at future events and to reflect on what delegates had learnt from the event, and the impact to their ongoing works and activities.

The survey was sent to each Conference participant and was available in English, French, German, Polish and Russian. CAFE received responses in all languages, from 77 delegates.

CAFE was delighted with the level and quality of the feedback received, which further highlighted the value in sharing best practice amongst all of football’s stakeholders.

The survey also asked delegates how CAFE can make improvements regarding the organisation and running of future Conferences, and the comments received will be taken on board when planning for the 3rd International CAFE Conference.
Thank you for taking the time to answer our Conference survey and we hope that you find the following summary report helpful. This report aims to provide an overview of the impact of the 2nd International CAFE Conference.

**Conference attendees**

The Conference welcomed representatives from across football and was a pan-disability event, with many differently disabled delegates in attendance.

CAFE firmly believes that establishing well-motivated, local user-led disabled supporters groups that can positively interact with their clubs, leagues and national associations can be one of the most effective ways of ensuring lasting change and sustainable improvements. Where an open dialogue exists, stadium facilities and services are usually more accessible and disabled fans can enjoy an inclusive match day experience. As such, we were delighted to see a large number of European disabled supporter groups represented at the two-day event.

30% of delegates who attended the Conference were either individual disabled supporters or representatives of club/national disabled supporters groups.

Finally, with so many representatives and key stakeholders from across football in attendance – from international Federations to individual clubs - CAFE was pleased to provide a platform for an ever increasing interest and awareness in access and inclusion for disabled people across the game.
Accessibility

Given the topic of the Conference, it was of the utmost importance that CAFE provided an accessible Conference venue, as well as sharing relevant information for disabled attendees. The 2nd International CAFE Conference provided a platform for new topics and ideas to be discussed and survey respondents commented that they had gained a new understanding of a range of disability, access and inclusion topics they had not previously considered.

In applying to attend the Conference, all delegates were asked a range of pre-event questions including aspects such as specific access requirements to ensure we could best welcome and accommodate all our attending speakers and delegates. CAFE then ensured that these requests were considered, including any physical, sensory and intellectual access requirements, along with accessible information, formats and dietary requirements.

In preparing for the Conference, CAFE made a number of visits to the Stade de France in the months leading up to the event to ensure our access requirements could be met. CAFE was also in regular communication with the Stade de France to raise any concerns and to discuss how disabled delegates would be able to enjoy the Conference in an accessible and welcoming environment.

CAFE identified a potential problem with the event being held below ground level. Elevators and staircases were available for disabled people to transfer between floors, and CAFE paid to install accessible portaloos on the conference hall level. The placement of the portaloos was commented on by a number of delegates, who found their location to be very convenient. Additionally, CAFE hired the venue’s access team as we had a number of concerns regarding the ease of access around the venue.

We were let down at the event, as there were a number of problems with the access lifts. A number of delegates commented that the lifts failed on numerous occasions, and this caused significant inconvenience with a number of delegates missing the start of the event. It also caused a delay in transferring between the entrance, registration hall, conference hall and dining room. The CAFE team worked hard to manage around these issues and ensure any delays were kept to a minimum.

Was the venue appropriate for the Conference?

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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>YES</th>
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<td></td>
<td>96%</td>
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Thank you for your work, all will help me to understand, act and work in favour of access for all

Disabled Supporters Group representative
CAFE had also visited all of the suggested Conference hotels to gauge the ease of access, and strived to provide suitable accommodation for all delegates who applied for the relevant bursary.

81% of respondents said their hotel was easy to find, and 95% said the hotel accommodation was suitable and sufficient. Of those who commented, delegates found the accommodation to be “very good and convenient for the stadium”, “very accessible and really near to the conference venue” and “nice and clean”. One delegate responded to say that no accessible hotel rooms were available. This is a common issue as most hotels have a very limited number of accessible rooms. Given the large number of disabled delegates attending the Conference, CAFE had to split guests between 4 different hotels which is not ideal and restricts the opportunities for networking.

**Presentations**

The two day event included presentations from a variety of football’s governing bodies, leagues, clubs, disability NGOs, architects and disabled fans.

Best practice examples from across the region gave delegates an insight of just how much can be achieved to improve and promote access and inclusion, with the will and determination and most often using only limited resources.

CAFE’s post-Conference survey asked attendees whether they thought the presentations and panel sessions were useful. The feedback was overwhelmingly positive, and showed that the presentations and panel sessions were well received. Delegates were impressed by the broad range of topics covered and many participants were pleased to be introduced to new topics.

I think that the small CAFE team did a fantastic job of organising and delivering on the conference and highly commend for their work and hope that the organisation continues to grow and play its part in influencing good practice across Football stadiums in Europe and beyond.

Disabled Supporters Group representative
“It was my first time participating in such a kind of conference. The topics covered increased my level of understanding of the barriers faced by disabled people in stadiums and other sporting venues. It also gave me some ideas on what could be done in my country. I was really impressed! Thank you!”

NGO representative

All of the presentations were warmly received by Conference delegates, and were found to be largely useful. The most popular Conference presentations amongst delegates covered topics such as colour blind awareness, the Disability Access Officer criterion and fans with hidden disabilities.

The CAFE Conference presentations are all published and available to watch on the CAFE website at [http://www.cafefootball.eu/en/presentations-0](http://www.cafefootball.eu/en/presentations-0) and CAFE hopes that they will continue to provide a useful online resource towards implementing Total Football Total Access.

Impact

The 2nd International CAFE Conference 2015 provided a platform for new topics and ideas to be discussed and survey respondents commented that they had gained a new understanding of a range of disability, access and inclusion topics they had not previously considered. In order to recognise the impact of the Conference, CAFE asked delegates two key questions.

1. “What changes have you made to improve access & inclusion for disabled people at your club or organisation since the Conference?”

Feedback received from this first question revealed that delegates found the Conference to be an extremely positive and motivating experience with many lessons learnt and knowledge shared on improving the matchday experience for all disabled supporters.

“It was absolutely useful for us. We met many interesting people, all of them specialists in their fields of work. Our minds were widely opened to new ways to help our fans. All the subjects were interesting and the speeches were very good… We will try to apply everything we learned there. There’s a lot of work to do, but we are sure we will make it.”

Football club representative

“We are now focusing on disabilities that we were not focusing on before the Conference. We are implementing some of the policies included in the speeches.”

Football club representative
• A Ukrainian disabled supporters group (club) has begun work on the implementation of audio descriptive commentary (at its club). In addition, they “are starting a dialogue to implement changes that will benefit people who are colour blind” and “have also developed a program to attract differently disabled people to the stadium.”

• And, a French disabled supporters group stated they had an increased “understanding of the barriers faced by deaf and hard of hearing and blind and partially sighted fans; and (are) now improving current communications for these groups”

It was a great conference, very useful and interesting. We have seen how to solve the problem in Europe and what we can do to improve our approach

NGO representative

2. “Do you have any final comments about the 2nd CAFE International Conference and the impact it has had on you and your organisation?”

Replies to this question were, again, extremely positive with several respondents taking the opportunity to thank the CAFE team for providing a well organised and thought-provoking event.

In addition, many delegates noted that the Conference had introduced to them to new themes that they had not previously considered, such as the employment of disabled people, and this had led them to take a more pan-disability approach to access and inclusion at their organization.

Many respondents underlined the great networking opportunity that the Conference provided. CAFE believes that to achieve Total Football Total Access it is essential to share best practice solutions and new ideas and to increase disability, inclusion and access awareness amongst all stakeholders, across the different regions and from other sports. CAFE was delighted that many Conference delegates were able to make new contacts, to meet colleagues and to make new friends as this had been a key ambition of the event.
“The CAFE Conference has been an amazing experience, on which we draw frequently. It was eye opening, touching and extremely informative. We made some great contacts and met some fabulous people! We are looking forward to the next one”

Conference speaker

Delegates told us about the importance of the CAFE Conference, as a way to increase awareness and to share best practice examples:

“I think it’s important to be kept up to date with all the work that is going on [in] the field, taking away examples of good practice and sharing this information with other disabled fans and those working in the field of access at home.”

Disabled supporters group representative

Another delegate underlined the breadth of this topic - access and inclusion for all:

“Good networking opportunity and to see at first hand the challenges and solutions around pan-European access for disabled people and supporters”

Football governing body representative

Finally, a disabled fan emphasised that such events are important if we want to achieve continued improvements in Total Football Total Access:

“We need to go further and faster in access and inclusion for all disabled people so that disabled people’s rights as citizens can be recognised.”

Disabled supporters group representative

Future CAFE Conferences

CAFE asked participants if they would be interested in attending the 3rd International CAFE Conference. The responses were overwhelmingly positive with 98% of respondents confirming they would be interested.
The survey also encouraged delegates to propose agenda topics for the next International CAFE Conference. These included:

- Access requirements for hard of hearing, deaf and learning disabled fans
- Management of disabled fans tickets and ‘proofs of disability’
- Impact of the new Disability Access Officer UEFA Club Licensing Criterion
- Club case studies - accessible facilities and services
- Changing Places and peninsular toilets
- Challenges faced by disabled fans in following their national teams
- An evening social and networking event

Delegates also provided more critical feedback which CAFE will take on board of in preparing for our next International Conference. This will include reviewing the travel and accommodation bursary system, and with wider notice, information and publicity ahead of the event.

CAFE will certainly take all of the delegates’ suggestions on board in planning our next Conference.

CAFE would also be keen to welcome more representatives from other sports to our next Conference, and to bring together an even greater number of stakeholders from across Europe and beyond.

**Conclusion**

The 2nd Total Football, Total Access Conference was hailed a resounding success not only by its organisers, but also by the delegates and speakers themselves.

The Conference met CAFE’s aims of raising disability awareness, sharing best practice examples and ideas across Europe and in empowering disabled supporters, their clubs, leagues and federations to continue to seek better access and inclusion for all.

After the Conference CAFE’s Managing Director, Joyce Cook OBE, said:

“It is always a delight to bring so many people with one shared goal together. It was hugely satisfying to spread the message of Total Football Total Access.”

“It is particularly pleasing that so many people came together and in one collective voice said that football must do more to be truly accessible. We must all now continue to work together to ensure all fans enjoy full inclusion.”
David Bernstein CBE, CAFE’s Chairman added:

“The contributions here have been absolutely amazing, with such a great range of expertise.”

Feedback received since the Conference has proven to be very positive, with representatives from the clubs and governing body representatives in particular stating that the Conference has led them to become more aware of the access requirements for many differently disabled fans. Furthermore, they have since confirmed their determination to improve access and inclusion for disabled supporters at their own clubs.

Delegates also commented on how the Conference had provided them with an excellent networking opportunity. For many, the two-day event had given them additional incentive and inspiration to continue in their push for improvements in access and inclusion at both local and national levels.

CAFE has also noted the constructive feedback we have received, and will take this all into consideration when planning our next Conference. It can often be difficult to secure a Conference venue that provides suitable access for an event of this size and topic, which also has suitable accommodation and transport links nearby and a relevance to the topic matter. In arranging the next CAFE Conference, it will be essential to find a suitable venue that fulfils our requirements.

The impact of the Conference can been seen by the overwhelming response from delegates wishing to participate in the next International CAFE Conference, with 98% of participants stating that they wish to attend.

CAFE would like to thank all the Conference speakers, participants, translators and volunteers who helped to make the event such a great success. We are delighted to have seen Total Access Total Football bring so many passionate and motivated disabled fans and disability and equality NGOs, together with football’s governing authorities, leagues and clubs.

Whilst CAFE looks towards the next International Conference, we encourage those who attended the 2015 Conference in Paris to continue in their critical works to improve access and inclusion for us all.

In closing, the CAFE Board of Directors wishes to thank UEFA for its continued support which enables CAFE’s ongoing projects including the hosting of its International Conferences. We could not undertake the critical works we do without this support and we are proud to be a UEFA CSR Associate Partner.
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 (CAFE) was established in 2009 with support from UEFA to improve access and inclusion across the game using the special influence of football.

CAFE works with national associations, leagues, clubs, disabled fans, fans groups, NGOs and key stakeholders to ensure a more accessible and inclusive matchday 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.

www.cafefootball.eu