

## Shots on goal

*The Euro 2012 football championship is a belated spur to Poland's bureaucracy.*

The Dziesieciolecia football stadium stands as an emblem of Polish history. First built to celebrate ten years of communist rule, it was the site of a spectacular public self-immolation in 1968 by Ryszard Siwiec, an anti-communist protester. Poland may have shrugged off communism, but the scandalously bad infrastructure that it bequeathed lingers on. The stadium's decaying shell became an anarchic market selling everything from fake sports gear to real Kalashnikovs. Now the site epitomises something different. Twenty giant cranes are hard at work building a €300m (\$440m) national stadium. Floodlit at night, work never stops.



*If we build it, will they come? – East News*

This is a transformation. After joining the European Union in May 2004, Poland got an infusion of cash to modernise its choked roads, antiquated railways and tatty public buildings. But local and national politicians squabbled interminably about new projects. Compensation deals got bogged down in a labyrinthine legal system. Bad transport links do not just stifle growth; they are dangerous too. Poland's roads are the deadliest in the EU, with 5,437 deaths last year.

The big moment was not Polish EU accession but the decision three years later by UEFA, the European football authority, to make Poland and Ukraine joint hosts of the 2012 Euro football championship. A rigid external timetable on an issue that mattered to all politicians, and to the football-loving prime minister, Donald Tusk, sparked real change. The Polish parliament passed an enabling act to speed the construction of railways, airports, hotels and stadiums stipulated by UEFA. Half the €20 billion budget comes from domestic taxpayers, the rest from the EU—part of the €67 billion Poland is due to receive by 2013, so long as it can spend it well.

UEFA does not demand new motorways, as fans travel mainly by plane and train. But Poland has also doubled the pace of its road-building programme. A new private-sector outfit called PL2012 is co-ordinating other works needed for the championship. Its board is drawn from the oil and technology industries; they are reckoned to be better at project management than the civil service. A corruption scandal involving a gambling law has just forced the resignation of the sports minister, Miroslaw Drzewiecki, and led to the dismissal of three other cabinet ministers too.

The story is even gloomier in Ukraine. The Ukrainian parliament has passed a law to make the country's wobbly banks pay for building stadiums. By redesignating accommodation previously ruled substandard, the authorities have "created" hundreds of hotel rooms in Kiev. Despite lavish hospitality from Ukraine's football-loving tycoons, UEFA is unhappy and may even cancel some matches planned in Lvov. Poland may yet win an even bigger share of Euro 2012.

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