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The impact of Euro 2012 on the development of municipalities hosting national teams – the case of Gniewino

Abstract. The UEFA European Football Championship, held in 2012 in Poland, has brought a wide range of benefits, including the development of the recreation infrastructure and hotel facilities across the country. The championship has changed the way Poland and Poles are perceived by Europeans and has also contributed to improving the standard of living for inhabitants of many Polish towns and cities. The aim of this article is to evaluate the impact of Euro 2012 on the development of the Sports and Conference Centre in Gniewino and how it has affected the quality of life of its residents. The study is based on the analysis of literature and source documents as well as opinions collected in a survey of 450 respondents who answered a questionnaire consisting of 9 closed questions in December 2012. The findings indicate that the Sports and Conference Centre in Gniewino is currently one of the leading training centres for major football clubs from countries around the world. It can also be concluded that the organization of the Euro championship has had a positive impact on the quality of life of residents of Gniewino.

Keywords: sport; hospitality, sports infrastructure, tourism, football, impact of Euro 2012, quality of life, satisfaction of residents

JEL Codes: O18; Z31; Z32

1. Introduction

According to Gratton, Shibli, & Coleman, the UEFA European Football Championship is the third largest sports event in the world after the Summer Olympic

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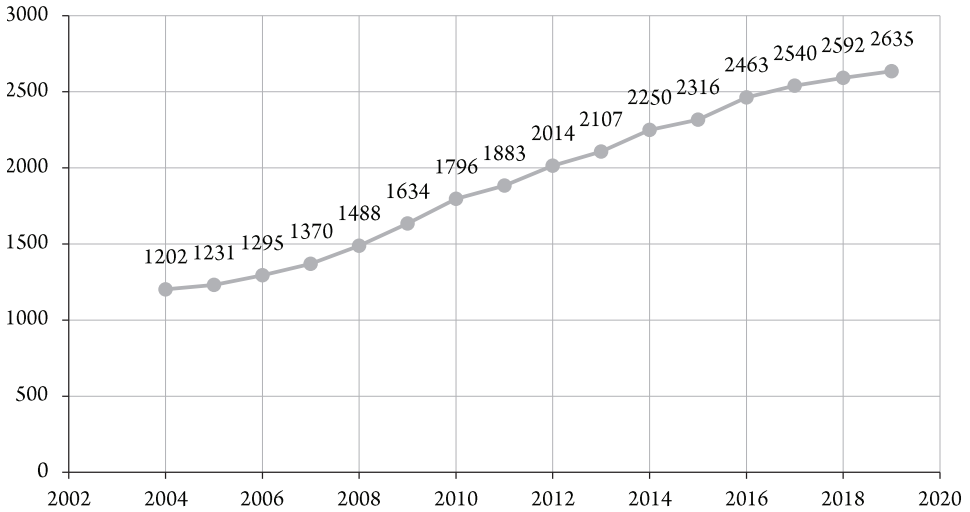
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and the FIFA World Cup (Gratton, Shibli, & Coleman, 2006). The fact of hosting a major international sports event can bring a number of benefits and stimulate changes not only in particular host cities but also in surrounding regions and the country as a whole. In order to even out visible differences between training facilities and social and living conditions in different countries, UEFA organizes cyclical sports tournaments, granting the privilege of organizing them well in advance (about 6 years) to a country that needs an investment boost in the sports and accompanying infrastructure (including the hotel and transport infrastructure) (Jedel, 2013). Poland ranks low in terms of global competitiveness because of its poor and limited infrastructure, which in turn is due to underinvestment (Będzik, & Gołąb, 2020, p. 74). The fact that Poland and Ukraine were selected as co-hosts of the UEFA Euro 2012 tournament stimulated the development of many sectors of the economy. It can be argued that the organization of that tournament was a pivotal moment in the country's recent history, after the transformation of 1989 and the accession to the European Union in 2004. From this perspective, Euro 2012 can be perceived as another milestone – an opportunity to change the whole country (Brand, Niemann, & Spitaler, 2010; Hagemann, 2010; Koller, 2010). The example of the World Cup in 2006 in Germany demonstrated that national macroeconomic effects can be transferred to the regional level and to individual towns (Ahlert, 2005, pp. 3-5). Apart from investments in the road infrastructure, the construction of modern stadiums and other facilities, which represented a significant improvement of the recreation base, Euro 2012 also provided a strong growth impulse for the hotel sector in preparation for the expected increase in demand for hotel services before and during the tournament. A significant increase in the number of hotel facilities could be observed after the announcement in April 2007 of the decision to award the organization of Euro 2012 to Poland and Ukraine (Fig. 1).

According to surveys commissioned by PL.2012 Sp. z o.o., the special-purpose state-owned company (supervised by the Minister of Sport and Tourism), in June 2012, an estimated 650 thousand ordinary spectators and 15 thousand official UEFA guests (VIP, UEFA Family and NFP guests) came to Poland to participate in Euro 2012 tournament. Taking into account the 16 finalists, the largest groups of supporters came from Germany (15% of all foreign fans), the Czech Republic (14%), Russia (14%), and Ireland (13%) (Borowski, 2012).

The impact of sports events on the hotel industry has been the subject of research for a long time. For example, within just two years before the start of the 1992 Olympic Games in Barcelona, 30 hotels were built in the city. The number of incoming tourists continued to increase in the following years (1990 – 1.7 million, 1992 – 1.9 million, 2000 – 3.1 million) (Szwichtenberg & Borzyszkowski, 2008, p. 170). However, in the run-up to the Olympic Games

Fig. 1. The number of hotels in Poland in 2004-2019



Source: based on data published by Statistics Poland.

in Sydney in 2000, hotel bed occupancy decreased from 83% (in March 2000) to 67% (just before the opening on September 15). During the event itself, the occupancy rate rose to 80% and prices increased by 40%. Immediately after the games, the number of hotel customers kept falling for three years (Jesiółowska-Rygas & Rygas, 2013).

Sports events can also provide a significant economic stimulus for cities. Sports activity stimulated by the participation in sports events has a significant impact on the development of tourism (Poczta & Malchrowicz-Moško, 2016). Currently, in an effort to diversify their offering, new facilities are increasingly multifunctional (hotels that can be used as congress and exhibition centres or host commercial events). One example of this trend is the Olympic Park in Munich, where sports events are only part of the offering for tourists and residents of the city. The Park is well integrated with its surroundings (Kozak, 2010, p. 55) and it was one of the inspirations for the Gniewino Sport Centre during the preparations for Euro 2012.

The authors of the study believed that analyses of the impact of Euro 2012 should not be limited to changes observed in the host cities. For this reason they conducted an opinion survey among residents of the Gniewino commune to learn about their perception of the effects of the championship on the quality of life in the commune.

2. Preparations for Euro 2012 in Gniewino

The commune of Gniewino was one of several sports centres that joined Euro 2012 project in 2007 in order to meet UEFA's requirements concerning the organization of the accommodation base for national teams taking part in the tournament. During the five years of preparations, the commune, with a population of just over 6700 residents in 2007, underwent a number of verifications carried out by Euro 2012 company UEFA Poland, the Ministry of Sport and Tourism, the Polish Football Association and UEFA. Gniewino was one of 160 applicants that applied for the status of residence centres in Poland.

In 2012, the sports centre in Gniewino, which was still under construction at the time the application was submitted, was entered into the UEFA catalogue and became one of 13 centres that hosted the national teams that participated in the final tournament.

3. Literature review on the quality of life

The construction of a modern accommodation complex was supposed to improve the quality of life for residents of the commune. The quality of life is one of the most frequently analysed subjects of research and a key aspect of human existence. Depending on the discipline and the scope of research, the quality of life is defined in different terms (Petelewicz & Drabowicz, 2016, p. 7). From the economic perspective, it can be measured by Gross Domestic Product, which is an indicator of the wealth of a given country and the degree of its development (Sompolska-Rzechuła, 2013). According to a definition used by WHO, a person's quality of life is affected by their "physical health, psychological state, level of independence, social relationships, and their relationship to salient features of their environment" (WHOQOL Group 1993, p. 153). The standard of living experienced by inhabitants of a given area depends not only on the degree to which their needs are satisfied but also on the costs incurred to achieve this goal, i.e. the amount of time spent at work, inconveniences associated with work, available ways of spending leisure time, the quality, range and availability of goods and services, etc. From the socio-economic perspective, the standard of living includes all factors that affect material, cultural and social conditions of life in a given community (Piasny, 1993). In order to attract new residents and retain existing inhabitants local authorities must constantly work to ensure a sufficient quality of life. Nowadays, one way of accomplishing this objective is to provide suitable conditions for personal development by exploiting the growing interest in healthy life-

style and sports activity (Wąskowski & Wyciszkievicz, 2019, p. 376). There are two basic ways in which local authorities can do this: by investing in the development of sports and recreation infrastructure and by organizing sporting events. In addition to having a positive impact on the quality of life of residents, such initiatives generate tourist traffic, which enhances economic growth of a given community (Crouch & Ritchie, 1999; Śniadek & Zajadacz, 2014).

4. Aim of the study, materials and methods

In the preliminary phase of the study (before Euro 2012) the authors hypothesized that the organization of a large international sports event would have a positive impact on the development of the Sports and Conference Centre in Gniewino and the quality of life of its residents.

The following research questions were formulated at this stage:

1. How did the Euro 2012 European Championship affect the development of the Sports and Conference Centre in Gniewino?
2. How has the Euro 2012 European Championship affected the quality of life of residents of the Gniewino commune?

To answer the above questions the authors conducted a survey in which they used a questionnaire consisting of 9 closed questions. The survey was carried in December 2012 on a random sample of Gniewino residents. From the population of 7268 persons living in the commune (as at June 30, 2012), the authors selected the sampling frame, consisting of 5625 people aged 18 or older who had lived in the commune since 2005. 1125 persons (20% of the sampling frame) were selected by simple random sampling and asked to complete an online questionnaire. 450 responses were obtained.

5. Results

5.1. The impact of Euro 2012 on the development of the Sports and Conference Centre in Gniewino

For this part of the study, the authors analysed the report prepared by Kuźma-Wasilczyk and Orzeł (2012). In preparation for Euro 2012 tournament, the commune of Gniewino established a Sports and Conference Centre, which involved a number of investments completed in between 2007 and 2012:

- the construction of a four-start Mistral Sport Hotel, located close to the modern Arena Mistrzów Stadium, with 105 double rooms and 8 suites;
- the construction of the Arena Mistrzów Stadium with a 105 × 68-meter top quality grass pitch, with artificial lighting;
- the construction of a 90 × 50 meter additional pitch, with artificial lighting;
- the construction of an athletics stadium with a high quality tartan running track surrounding, the main field with long jump, high jump tracks and throwing grounds (hammer, bullet, javelin);
- the construction of a sports and entertainment hall, one of the showpieces of the Center. Designed in modern style, suited for sports such as indoor soccer, basketball, volleyball, handball, uni-hockey and others.

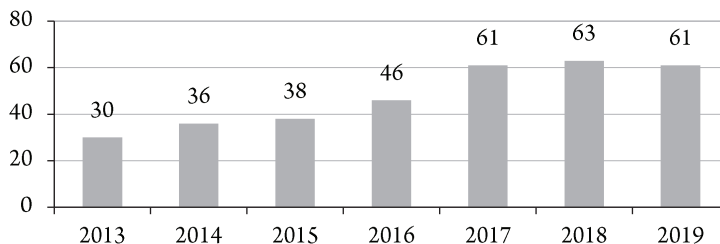
All of the above facilities have been in use since Euro 2012 and are part of the Gniewino Sports and Conference Centre. All this infrastructural development was the most important benefit of Euro 2012 for Gniewino.

The second effect of Euro 2012, no less important than the infrastructural development, was the publicity associated with being the official residence of the Spanish national team, the winners of Euro 2008. From May until the moment they left, about 300 shorter interviews were given by representative of the commune. Reports about the Training Center in Gniewino appeared in the main national weekly magazines (*Polityka*, *Wprost*, *Newsweek*) and in the main daily newspapers (*Rzeczpospolita* and *Gazeta Wyborcza*). Several dozen interviews were given by representative of the commune to radio stations (RMF FM, Radio Zet, Radio Gdańsk, RMF Max). During the stay of the Spanish national team, local regional media wrote about Euro 2012 in Gniewino almost on a daily basis. 140 articles appeared on websites dedicated to sports news. Gniewino featured regularly in reports broadcast by nationwide TV stations, such as TVP, TVN, TVN24, Polsat, Polsat Sport, and TVP Info. Apart from the national media, Gniewino was visited by a very large number of journalists from other countries including Sweden, France, Spain and China (over 100 accreditations, the highest number in the history of Gniewino). Thanks to regular reports, Gniewino enjoyed free publicity, which it could later benefit from. On the basis of media valuation, it was estimated that in order to achieve the same media coverage without such an event, the municipality would have had to spend about PLN 8 million on ads in all public media. One of the most frequently analysed effects of organizing international sports events is the short-term increase in demand caused by the influx of tourists, athletes, and guests participating in the event (Ribeiro et al., 2014; Rütter et al., 2004). For small, largely rural communities, long-term effects of such events are much more important. In the case of Gniewino, it is the fact that since the tournament the hotel complex has been visited by football fans, who had a chance to see the Sports and Conference Centre from outside and were motivated enough to return to Gniewino as hotel guests. During the stay of the

Spanish national team in the hotel, its supporters were not allowed inside, so visitors were naturally curious the pitches and other facilities. Fans were also eager to watch open training sessions organized by the Spanish national team during the tournament. More than 8 thousand tickets were distributed to fans from all over Poland for eight training sessions held at that time. Open training sessions were very popular, which is evidenced by the fact that over 6000 fans had to be turned away because no more places were available. Guests eagerly visited other attractions of the commune, including the Kaszubskie Oko Complex with a watchtower in Gniewino, as well as the Nadol marina, where small tourist information centres were set up, with materials printed in Spanish, English and German. The staff of those centres provided information not only about the commune but also about the entire region of Northern Kashubia. Another benefit of the tournament is all the experience and knowledge gained throughout that time. All employees involved in the UEFA Euro 2012 Project in Gniewino from the very beginning remained in the centre after its completion and some of them currently work in the Gniewino Sports and Conference Centre.

The positive impact of Euro 2012 on the development of the Sports and Conference Centre in Gniewino is confirmed by the growing number of sports teams that have stayed at the Centre since 2012. There are still images of famous football players on the doors of rooms in which they stayed, and individual guests still ask for Iker Casillas' or Andres Iniesta's room. In 2012, the management of the Mistral Sport Hotel decided to designate the most important target groups for the centre, with sports teams being the key clients. This strategy has been validated by the growth recorded in the following years: while in 2013, the centre was visited by only 30 teams, in 2019 it already hosted 61 teams (see Fig. 2). The positive reception of the Gniewino brand and the growing trust on the part of the most demanding athletes is a kind of capital built up by the center for the coming years.

Fig. 2. The number of sports groups staying at the Gniewino Sports and Conference Centre between 2013 and 2019



Source: own study.

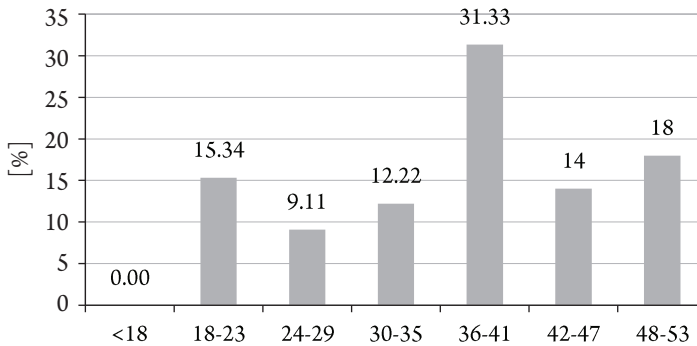
5.2. Residents' opinions about the impact of Euro 2012 on the quality of life in the commune

The analysis of the impact of Euro 2012 on the quality of life of residents of Gniewino is based on respondents' answers to 9 questions asked in the survey. 69% of the 450 respondents were men, 31% were aged between 36-41 years (see Fig. 3), and over 62% had higher education (see Fig. 4).

In the first survey question the respondents were asked if they considered Gniewino an attractive place to live and over 80% answered positively (see Fig. 5).

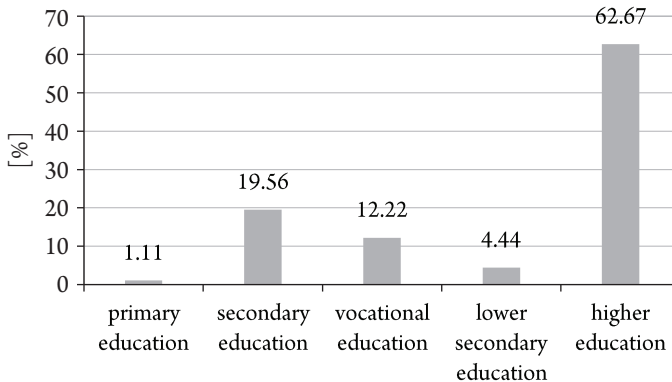
In the following question, they were asked to compare their current place of residence with other communes. 75% of respondents (315 people) considered

Fig. 3. Respondents by age ($N = 450$)



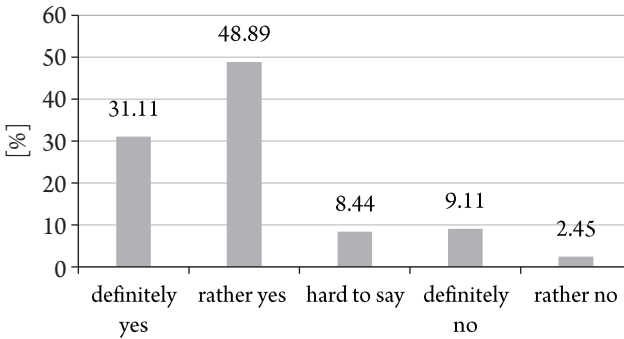
Source: own study.

Fig. 4. Respondents by level of education ($N = 450$)



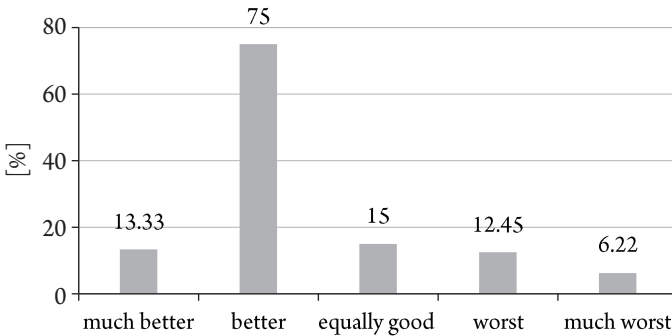
Source: own study.

Fig. 5. Respondents' answers to the question "Do you consider Gniewino an attractive place to live?" (N = 450)



Source: own study.

Fig. 6. Respondents' answer to the question "How do you evaluate the level of development of the Gniewino commune in comparison with the neighbouring communes?" (N = 450)



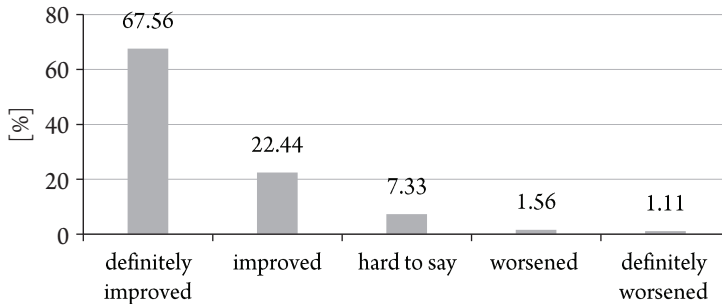
Source: own study.

the development of their commune to be better than that of the neighbouring ones (see Fig. 6).

Asked about changes in the living conditions in Gniewino since the start of preparations for the Euro tournament, 90% of respondents said they had improved (Fig. 7).

In the last three questions respondents were asked to evaluate the impact of Euro 2012 on their quality of life (Table 1). Answers could be provided using a five-point Likert scale (1 – definitely positive, 2 – rather positive, 3 – hard to say, 4 – rather negative, 5 – definitely negative).

Fig. 7. Respondents' answers to the question "How have the living conditions in Gniewino changed since it joined the Euro 2012 programme in 2007?"



Source: own study.

Table 1. Respondents' assessment of the impact of Euro 2012 on the quality of life in Gniewino ($N = 450$)

Question	Scoring				
	1	2	3	4	5
How do you evaluate the impact of Euro 2012 on the development of sports infrastructure in Gniewino?	312 (69%)	67 (15%)	21 (5%)	17 (4%)	33 (7%)
How do you evaluate the influence of Euro 2012 on the economic development of the commune?	251 (56%)	101 (22%)	55 (12%)	31 (7%)	12 (3%)
How do you evaluate the impact of Euro 2012 on the quality of life in Gniewino?	376 (83%)	54 (12%)	12 (3%)	4 (1%)	4 (1%)

Source: own study.

The results of the survey clearly indicate that inhabitants of Gniewino appreciated the changes associated with the Euro tournament and their positive effect on their quality of life, which confirms the hypothesis formulated at the beginning of the study.

6. Discussion

When Michel Platini announced that Poland and Ukraine would host the European Football Championship in 2007, nobody could have guessed what immense consequences that news would have for a small commune, 60 km away from Gdańsk. The commune's involvement in the preparations for the tournament led to the establishment and brand recognition of the Sports and Conference Center in Gniewino and initiated the construction of a modern four-star

hotel in the heart of Gniewino. Thanks to the hotel's clever marketing strategy, which capitalized on the stay of the Spanish national team and the organizational success, the number of teams staying at Gniewino has increased in the following years. The facility benefited from extensive media coverage during the tournament, and as a consequence, guests from all over Poland visit the hotel as a tourist attraction. 2% of the total investment outlays, which were used to prepare Accommodation Centres, turned out to be sufficient for professional athletes, youth academies and amateur athletes from all over the world to learn about the commune of Gniewino thanks to its modern training centre. The Sports and Conference Centre is a showcase of Gniewino and has brought the commune national and international publicity. The investments undertaken as part of the preparations provided residents with additional jobs and boosted the quality of life.

Earlier studies on the impact of large sports events conducted in other countries, such as South Korea and Japan, hosts of the FIFA World Cup in 2002 and Germany, hosts of the same event in 2006, identified a number of mostly positive impacts for residents of host cities (Kim, Gursoy, & Lee, 2006; Kersting, 2007). However, until recently, such studies have mainly focused on measuring economic effects, paying little attention to perceptions and attitudes of residents regarding socio-cultural impacts (Fredline & Faulkner, 2000).

So far no studies have been published on how the fact of being involved in the organization of a large sports event affects the quality of life of residents. It is also not possible to draw comparisons with other residence centres in Poland, because only one of them – the Remes Hotel in Opalenica was specially prepared for Euro 2012. Others, such as Dwór Oliwski Hotel in Gdańsk, used the pitch ground near the hotel for another investment.

7. Conclusions

It can be concluded that Gniewino's involvement in the organization of Euro 2012 has had a positive impact on the quality of life of its residents.

One limitation of the study is the low response rate (below 50%), which resulted in a realized sample size of just 8% of the adult population of Gniewino. Another possible problem was the predominance of male respondents and those with higher education. Finally, in the absence of respondents' opinions about the living conditions in the commune before the Euro, the reliability of the results could not be validated.

The activities carried out by the authorities of the Gniewino commune in connection with Euro 2012 have been appreciated by its inhabitants as contributing to raising the commune's prestige of on the national and international level.

The results of the survey clearly indicate that Gniewino's involvement in the Euro 2012 project was the right decision and has helped to improve the quality of life for its inhabitants.

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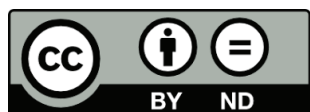
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Wpływ Euro 2012 na rozwój gmin goszczących reprezentacje narodowe – studium przypadku Gniewina

Streszczenie. Mistrzostwa Europy w Piłce Nożnej, które odbyły się w 2012 r. w Polsce, przyniosły wiele korzyści, w tym rozwój infrastruktury rekreacyjnej i bazy hotelowej w całym kraju. Mistrzostwa zmieniły sposób postrzegania Polski i Polaków przez Europejczyków, a także przyczyniły się do podniesienia poziomu życia mieszkańców wielu polskich miast. Celem artykułu jest ocena wpływu Euro 2012 na rozwój Centrum Sportowo-Konferencyjnego w Gniewinie i na jakość życia jego mieszkańców. Badanie opiera się na analizie literatury i dokumentów źródłowych i opiniach zebranych od 450 respondentów, którzy w grudniu 2012 r. odpowiedzieli na ankietę składającą się z 9 pytań zamkniętych. Z ustaleń wynika, że Centrum Sportowo-Konferencyjne w Gniewinie jest obecnie jednym z wiodących ośrodków treningowych dla najważniejszych klubów piłkarskich z całego świata. Podsumowując, można stwierdzić, że organizacja mistrzostw Europy pozytywnie wpłynęła na jakość życia mieszkańców Gniewina.

Słowa kluczowe: sport, gościnność, infrastruktura sportowa, turystyka, piłka nożna, wpływ Euro 2012, jakość życia, satysfakcja mieszkańców



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