

## **The Blind group were not included in the list of the Elite Guests of the Bar - Sportsmen holding on to each other were considered to be drunks by the guards.**

### **Selection by beauty and ability**

The nightclub Prospekto Pub, situated in the city centre chooses its clientele according to their appearance. Unwelcome guests at the club do not only include wearers of trainers or those who do not conform to the club's dress code, but also those who are disabled. Three citizens of Vilnius who have a visual disorder are a living proof for that. Zydrunas Simkus, Arvydas Juchna and Linas Balsys did not pass the so-called "face control". The security doormen, as well as later on the club manager, insisted the men leave the club without hiding the fact that the reason for their exclusion was their disability.

### **Women did not meet the men inside**

Three visually impaired citizens of Vilnius wanted to enjoy themselves at the Latin music party which took place in said club. The men were not going to the party alone – they had arranged to meet Laimute Mizgiriene and Indre Bitinaite there; two ladies who work at the Lithuanian Blind Sports Federation.

All three men also belong to the Blind Sports Federation. This year Z. Simkus and A. Juchna became the world champions of goalball. The ladies, who came to the club earlier and were waiting for their friends there, got a phone call. The men had been stopped at the door and complained that the doormen wouldn't let them in.

### **Looked for signs of drunkenness**

The fact that the men looking like sportsmen came to the club holding on to each other raised the suspicions of the doormen who checked the visitors. They thought that A. Juchna, who hung on the arm of Z. Simkus, was drunk and unable to stand on his feet. However, on that occasion, the less visually impaired friend of A. Juchna was his guide since if A. Juchna walks without a white stick, he needs help. Having entered the dark hall of the club, the other two men couldn't see a thing either and their colleagues couldn't rule out the possibility that any one of the men could stumble on the stairs.

### **Chose another club**

L. Mizgiriene and I. Bitinaite came downstairs to help their friends but they couldn't convince the doormen that the men were disabled and that they could take care of them. The angry ladies summoned the manager of the club. The man who came to the door didn't even try to hide the fact that that blind people were not welcome in the club. He explained that having entered the club, visually impaired people could bump into other guests and upset them.

The men, who were not let inside the Prospekto Pub and their colleagues went to another party at Brodvejus, a club situated in the old town, where they never had any problems on the grounds of their disability.

### **Defended the Doormen**

The manager of Prospekto Pub at the time was Ligita Gričiute and she confirmed that the disabled men did not meet the "face control" requirements.

"Our club is always crowded and one never knows what might happen to disabled people. If they got injured or something else occurred, the pub would be responsible. The question "why did we let them in?" would then arise, commented the club's manager.

The fact that the visually impaired men were accompanied by the girls did not appear a solid argument to L. Gričiute. The manager once again explained that the club strictly selects their visitors.

The visually impaired men do not often face such strict selection. "This is the third time this year that I could not enter this club. I just don't feel like depressing myself, so I chose another place", said A.Juchna.

### **Considered the stick as a weapon**

More than the disability, the white stick creates problems for A. Juchna. Usually he doesn't go anywhere without it, but the stick often arouses suspicion for the doorman of the clubs. Once, the doormen of the bar "Bix" started checking the disabled man, but when they saw the stick folded in smaller pieces, they let the man into the club. Then,

another doorman approached and asked him to reveal who he was going to beat up, as he considered the flexible stick a weapon.

### **Discussed with the border guard**

L.Mizgiriene said that once a similar situation occurred at the Vilnius international airport, when the disabled sportsmen were flying to a competition that took place abroad. One officer couldn't understand the purpose of the stick, checking it in all possible ways. The officer opened and folded it a few times and only afterwards could the sportsmen persuade him that it was a necessary tool for blind people.

The representative of the Blind Sports Federation L. Mizgiriene noticed that, having found out that the guest is blind, waiters in restaurants and bars often feel uneasy. "They don't know how to serve them and communicate in a way as though they were scared of blind people", said the lady. A.Juchna said that usually he goes out for a meal or a drink with his friends and therefore doesn't feel any inconvenience.

### **Could win in court**

Henrikas Mickevicius, Director of the Human Rights Monitoring Institute said that such employee behaviour is obvious discrimination of the disabled.

According to H.Mickevicius, the men who were not allowed to enter the club could easily win in court and get compensation for the moral damage experienced.

"Every person has the right to use the service which is offered in public, if there are no serious reasons not to provide the respective service to a person", -- explained the director of the institute.

According to the human rights specialist, the owner of the club who did not allow the disabled persons to enter the club would need to find very well-founded arguments supporting their position. They could only justify their behaviour by the fact that their club would certainly not be a safe place for the disabled. However, the men came to the club with girls without disabilities.

H.Mickevicius doubts whether the men who experienced discrimination would win in a court in Lithuania, as there is still no experience of such cases. The disabled persons

could also write to the Human Rights Monitoring Institute regarding the experienced discrimination.

### **Assessment by experiments**

The director of the institute said that in other European countries, discrimination tests are organised for various institutions. Disabled persons or persons belonging to ethnic minorities are sent to various institutions to try out their offered services. If they are not employed or are not provided with the corresponding service, other persons are later sent to the same institution. If they, however, are provided with the service in question, then the institutions are sued for discrimination.

Such practice is not only applied in Western countries, but also carried out in Hungary and Slovenia. In these countries, the experiments are most often performed with people of Roman nationality. If the heads of the institutions reply to the Romans that the vacancies are already filled, the institutions of human rights send a person there of a different nationality.