

Plane crash: April 10, 2010; Presidential Palace: April 10-16; Memorial Pilsudski Square, Warsaw: April 17; Presidential State Funeral: April 18, Krakow  
 The death of Polish President Lech Kaczynski

#### CONTEXT

On Saturday, April 10, 2010, a plane carrying Polish president Lech Kaczynski, his wife and dozens of Poland's top political and military leaders missed the runway in a thick fog and crashed just miles from the airport in Smolensk, Russia, killing all 97 people on board. Kaczynski and his team had been heading to Katyn Woods to commemorate the death of more than 20,000 members of Poland's elite officer corps, allegedly at the hands of the Soviet secret police, 70 years ago. Just days before the crash, Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin had become the first Russian leader to join Polish officials in commemorating the tragedy at Katyn.

The death of Kaczynski and many of the Polish elite has been described as the most tragic event in post-war Polish history. Eurovision was there from the beginning – from the crash in the western Russian city through the lying-in-state in Warsaw and the Presidential State Funeral in Krakow – and relied on our close cooperation with Eurovision members to cover the story in all its complexity and depth.

#### NEWS SPECIAL EVENTS

From the moment news of the crash of the Tupolev plane carrying Kaczynski near Smolensk started to filter through, the newsroom in Geneva swung into action. Eurovision Special Events, with the assistance of Polish Television TVP, started providing production and transmission services from the Presidential Palace in Warsaw by 11:00 GMT. Over the course of the next five days, we would successfully complete approximately 400 transmissions.

At the same time, preparations were under way for the announced memorial at Pilsudski Square in Warsaw and for the President's state funeral in Krakow, which would take place on the following day.

#### CHALLENGES

According to Marc Stanislas, Deputy Head, Special Events & Projects, the biggest challenge on a story of this magnitude was staying on top of the plans and schedules as they evolved, and ensuring that we were able to offer the world's broadcasters everything needed in order to cover this tragic event. Given the nature of the story, a great deal of sensitivity and decorum were required, as well. TVP staff and Eurovision producers Olivier Lalo and Ivan Stojanovic did outstanding work in the field to ensure that Eurovision met these challenges and delivered our usual standard of excellence.

"The role of Mrs Grazyna Baczynska, Head of the International Unit at TVP, was absolutely crucial. Her contributions toward finding SNG and production resources and solving organisational issues were essential to the success of the operation. This is yet another example of how we at Eurovision work with and rely upon our partners, including our member broadcasters, to do what we do. That's what we mean when we talk about partnership."

— Marc Stanislas,  
 Deputy Head, Special Events & Projects

