

Summary:

Accessible public transport

A view of Europe today – policies, laws and guidelines

Introduction

This report is the deliverable from work package 1 *Review of current policies and regulations* within the project *For a European Accessibility of Public Transport for People with Disabilities*¹ (Euro Access), funded by the DG Research of the European Commission, under the 6th framework programme.

The Euro Access project

The objective of the Euro Access project is to contribute to the development of EU policy on the accessibility of the transport systems in the 27 member states, and two EFTA countries (Iceland and Norway). The aim is to promote social integration and active participation in society of people with disabilities.

The main goals of the Euro Access project are: to establish an inventory of current policies and legal frameworks and guidelines on accessibility of public transport systems in the EU; to raise awareness of user needs and expectations for an accessible public transport system for people with disabilities; to highlight best practice in the EU on national policies, technical innovations, services provided and their potential correlations with the employment of people with disabilities, and; to make recommendations for a common legal framework in the EU on the accessibility of transport systems.

Accessible public transport systems are in the project (and in this report) understood to be systems which integrate all people – including those with mobility, sensory, cognitive impairments, mental health problems, environmental sensitivities and allergies – when delivering public transport services. This includes not only being able to get on and off vehicles, but also being able to understand how the public transport system works, being able to get to and from terminals or stops, to buy a ticket and travel with confidence. Urban as well as rural areas are covered. All surface public transport is covered: train, bus, metro, tram, taxi etc., local as well as long distance and international transport (e.g. intercity train and coach services).

About this work

The overall objective of Euro Access' Work package 1: *Review of current policies and regulations*, of which this report is the result, is to provide an inventory of current policies and regulations regarding accessibility of public transport systems for disabled people. The findings of this report will be one of the data sources that will be used in the later analyses in the Euro Access project.

¹ For more information, see the Euro Access web site: <http://www.euro-access.org/>

The work package has the following objectives:

- To provide an inventory of current EU policy and legislation concerning accessibility of public transport systems
- To provide an inventory of policies, strategies and action plans promoting improved accessibility of the public transport systems in 27 EU member states and two EFTA countries
- To provide an inventory of current legislation - laws, provisions, regulations, standards and guidelines - concerning accessibility of public transport systems in those countries
- To describe pricing strategies and other means used to improve accessibility of public transport systems
- To analyse in particular national provisions governing accessibility to the public transport system for people with disabilities in relation to employment and education

The main data sources for this work are: an extensive questionnaire to ministries responsible for public transport; policy and regulatory documents concerning accessibility of public transport systems, and; general literature on the topic.

The report is descriptive. We have reviewed some documents, in order to give a short description of objectives and contents, but due to e.g. time resources, language problems and accessibility to the documents, we have not been able to read most of the documents that are mentioned in the report (about 350 documents). Thus, there are no judgements on the quality of the documents, or to what extent the policy documents, regulatory documents etc. may deliver accessibility of public transport systems for disabled people.

EU policy and regulations

The EU has developed and is continuing to work on an action plan called Equal opportunities for people with disabilities: A European Action Plan (Commission of the European Communities 2003)². The plan states that contributing to shaping society in a fully inclusive way is the overall EU objective. In this respect, the fight against discrimination and the promotion of the participation of people with disabilities into the economy and society play a fundamental role.

Reducing transport barriers is one way of decreasing social exclusion and poverty among disabled people. Accessible public transport systems are crucial for independent living, social inclusion and sustainable development. Accessibility of public transport for people with disabilities will be increasingly important in order to provide a society with equal rights.

Since 2000, the EU has implemented and developed several directives and regulations aiming at making public transport systems more accessible and useful for all. These include specific directives as well as regulations concerning various modes of transport, and more general directives.

Policies, strategies and action plans

Policies, strategies and action plans demonstrate countries' will to change the status quo. Most of the countries in this survey have, or are in progress of making, policies aimed specifically at accessibility of public transport systems, as well as action plans to support and implement the policies.

² <http://europa.eu/scadplus/leg/en/cha/c11414.htm>

Countries work with policies and action plans for accessibility of public transport systems in various ways. They also differ in how far they have come. Some countries have clear policy objectives, defined actions on how to implement these, and have provided the necessary funding. Some have passed acts or laws with accompanying provisions which place strong requirements on new construction, purchase of public transport etc. General policy documents show that other countries will focus more on accessibility of public transport systems, while yet other countries describe preliminary work that will eventually result in specific policy documents, action plans, acts or requirements. In some countries, there seems to be no clear or focused attention to accessibility of public transport systems.

Laws, provisions and regulations

Translating a will to change into a legal framework is an important means to achieve real improvements. The respondents were asked whether they have laws, provisions or regulations that require accessibility to public transport for all/disabled people. The ambition has been to include all areas of the legal frameworks specifically dealing with accessible public transport on roads.

Countries have incorporated requirements for accessibility of public transport for disabled people in various areas. Most of the countries have general regulatory texts on accessibility. Most countries also have planning and building acts that incorporate the needs of disabled people to access buildings etc. This is most crucial to construction of terminals, bus stops and railway stations. Half the countries also have a transport or a public transport act that recognizes accessibility for disabled people. Half of them also have regulations on accessibility of vehicles based on EU directive 2001/85/EC.

Standards and guidelines

The respondents were asked whether there are standards and guidelines in place for public authorities, operators and others on how to make public transport systems accessible for all people or for disabled people.

Most countries have or are in progress of developing detailed guidelines connected to their planning and building legislation, which are important for accessibility to and in terminals and other buildings, and which require accessibility to be assessed when planning and building large constructions. Guidelines which describe accessible vehicles are widespread. Most countries have or are in progress of developing some kind of guidelines for planning and design of roads and streets. These will have an impact on accessibility of public transport systems, not least when it comes to bus stops and the journey from e.g. home to terminal.

Reducing barriers to employment, education and independent living

The respondents were asked if there is anything in the policies or legal frameworks concerning provision of public transport services to disabled people that is specifically aimed at ensuring that transport is not a barrier to employment, education, study or independent living. More than half of the respondents answered no to this question, and few respondents submit substantial information.

However, based on the questionnaires and on reviewed documents, we find that most countries do have a special focus on reducing transport as a barrier to work, study and independent living. Firstly, reducing transport as a barrier to education, study and independent living is expressed, explicitly or implicitly, as a general objective of policies and legal frameworks. Secondly, special transport services are organised in order to allow people who are not able to use ordinary transport services to work, study and live independent lives. Thirdly, several countries have particular projects and schemes directly focused on reducing transport as a barrier.

Other initiatives

In addition to policies and legal frameworks, some initiatives may be taken in order to encourage or require improvement of the accessibility of public transport systems. The respondents were asked to give details of if and how various means are used in their countries: pricing systems for reducing individual economic barriers; special transport services; budget requirements; economic incentives; strategic plans; training of disabled people, service personnel as well as planners, architects etc.; and development of indicator systems for measuring development of accessibility of public transport systems.

Almost all countries have or are in progress of developing some kind of concessionary fares for disabled people, in order to reduce individual economic barriers to ordinary public transport systems. Public authorities finance the reduced fares in various ways.

Many respondents view special transport services as a contribution to the improvement of accessibility of the public transport system. The various systems are described in the report.

A majority of the respondents report that budget requirements and/or economic measures and incentives are used in order to improve the accessibility of public transport systems. Almost half of the respondents describe that budget requirements are included in the legal framework, requiring accessibility to be considered and implemented in procurement of vehicles and design and construction of infrastructure, buildings and other constructions influencing accessibility. Many respondents describe how public authorities at various levels set requirements for accessibility through tendering processes, concession processes and other consultations between authorities and contractors. Various funds specifically designed to improve the accessibility of public transport systems are described by at least six respondents. How these funds are arranged and focused varies.

We asked if it is required that authorities or operators (bus, railway and taxi) develop strategic plans to take into account people with disabilities. A minority answered that operators are required to develop strategic plans on accessibility, while a majority answered that it is required that authorities develop such plans.

14 countries have requirements, programmes, plans or other initiatives aimed at training drivers and other personnel who are in contact with travellers. Eight countries have measures on how to train planners and others involved in planning, designing and constructing physical environments. Only four countries have initiatives to train disabled people in how to use public transport.

Only a few respondents report that their country has developed or is in progress of developing indicator systems in order to monitor developments of the accessibility of public transport systems.

Status, approach and influence

In an attempt to get an overview of the status of policies and legal frameworks regarding accessibility of public transport systems, we asked the respondents to respond to the following questions: What is the overall status of your work in this field? Which groups are policies and legal frameworks in this field mainly focused on? Which groups have influence on the development of the legal frameworks on accessibility of public transport? The respondents were invited to tick the most appropriate answer in tables, and to add comments.

None of the respondents answered that the work is completed or that the work has hardly started in their country. 11 respondents answered that their country has come a long way, five say that they are in a state of rapid improvement and ten that they are improving, but slowly. The comments to this question mostly deal with the discrepancy between what is achieved in the legal framework and what is achieved *in situ*, and why this discrepancy

exists. Other comments emphasise certain projects and achievements as examples of status or progress.

There is a shift going on in the discussions on accessibility, from focusing on disabled people and especially mobility impairments, towards accessibility for all people. A large majority of the respondents find that policies as well as legal frameworks in their countries are directed towards most disabilities (mobility, sensory, cognitive...) or towards all people (universal design, design for all). The comments in answer to this question all emphasised the ongoing shift of focus from mobility impairments to all kinds of impairments, and from accessibility for disabled people to accessibility for all.

User groups (defined as disability organisations, senior citizen groups etc.) and the EU are the groups that are seen as having a high degree of influence on development of the legal framework by the highest percentage of respondents, followed by politicians, the public administration, experts and developments in other countries.

References - inventory

The extensive references are organised as an inventory. They are listed by country, under the main headings: general references; EU policy and legislation; policies, strategies and action plans; legal and technical frameworks, and; other initiatives. The inventory may be useful for others dealing with accessibility of public transport systems.