

Senate Department for the Environment,
Transport and Climate Protection



EUROCITIES – “Barrier-free City for All” Working Group



Minutes of the 20th Working Group Meeting jointly with the WG on Urban Ageing

Place	Ljubljana
Time	Wednesday, 12 th – Friday 14 th of June 2019
Participants	see Annex 1
Programme / Agenda	see Annex 2
Moderation	Karin Oster

The BCA working group was invited to a meeting of the working group on Urban Ageing (Social Affairs) due to the thematic overlap and potential synergies that lie in an exchange between the two working groups.

1. Welcome

The event was opened with a greeting by **Dejan Crnek**, Deputy Mayor.

Greetings from the working groups followed:

Mr. Tom van Benthem, city of Amsterdam, vice chair of the WG urban ageing and **Mr. Matthias Pfeil**, city of Dresden, on behalf of **Barbara Berninger**, City of Berlin, chair of WG barrier free city for all and Urban Aging.

2. Presentation on efforts of the host

Alenka Žagar, city administration, presented Ljubljana’s strategic plan for accessibility and ageing in Ljubljana with the focus on good practices that improve the access for elderly. **Tamara Deu Ošlak**, Public Transport Company of Ljubljana presented efforts to make public transport accessible for all ages, **Sašo Rink**, Public Housing Fund of Ljubljana, outlined Ljubljana’s programme for the provision of sheltered housing or life-long living environments and principles for the design of apartments, **Mojca Preglau**, city administration, presented the CrossCare’ project, supported, among others by Interreg, pioneering new and innovative care solutions.

2.1. Site visits

The **City Museum** of Ljubljana is designed to be accessible to all ages. The exhibition spaces, the conference hall, café and the museum shop of the City Museum of Ljubljana are fully

accessible (elevators, ramps, comfortable seating and public toilets). The space is tailored for the special needs of movement-impaired, blind and visually impaired, deaf and hearing-impaired people. The companions are granted free entry and guide dogs are allowed.

The **historic city centre** was transformed into a largely emissions free with very limited motorized traffic. Publicly funded electric vehicles can be used free of charge in that area, an electric train provides public transport. Accessibility concerns were met through filled gaps between cobblestones, tactile ground markings, dropped kerbs and ramps. Persons with limited mobility can call ‚Kavalir‘ and travel for free in a golf cart within the historic centre.

2.2. Critical friend feedback

After the site visits a SWAT Analysis and brainstorming was done focusing, on the one hand, on elements that work, should be built on and could be transferred to other cities and, on the other hand, on things that should be done differently.

Ljubljana’s efforts were generally very positively mentioned, namely: that drivers and elderly users of public transport are being trained together, the possibility to support elderly living in their homes (via care and financial aid: elderly in financial difficulties can sell their flat to the city and rent it back with safeguards and accessibility upgrades provided), a ticketing platform selling mobility and event/ culture tickets on the same platform, multisensory guided tours, tactile plans in the stone pavement, emissions-free and free of cost accessible transport in the historic centre.

Danči Maraž, Ljubljana city administration, thanked participants for the positive feedback but also took on board critical remarks: more work and engagement with citizens, stakeholders and civil society together with experts should be aimed at, the private sector should be engaged more. Participants’ concerns that areas surrounding the car-free centre might be overcrowded with cars could be refuted as an effective park and ride system is in place.

In a subsequent world café session challenges, success factors and key stakeholders in relation to Ljubljana’s projects were identified by participants.

3. Presentation of the Accessible City Award and European Accessibility Act

The Access City Award was presented to participants by **Thomas Segretain** and **Marco Migliosi** of DG Employment via Skype. The Award 2020 will be handed over on the 29th of November 2019 in Brussels in the frame of the European Day(s) of Persons with Disabilities on the 28th and 29th of November. The application period will start at the end of June (possibly early July - the Commission will make the opening public via their social media channels) and last until September. For the first time the winner will receive a financial award of €100,000 €. The jury will give a special mention to outstanding efforts of accessible cultural heritage that are encouraged as a follow up to last year’s European year of cultural heritage.

During the EU day of persons with disabilities in November (28th and 29th) the main topic will be the EU strategy on persons with disabilities and its evaluation. The new strategy is expected to be finalised by June 2020.

The Access City network will meet on the 20th of September 2019 discussing the theme of accessible tourism in Breda (Netherlands).

The two Commission representatives then outlined the **European Accessibility Act**, an internal market directive that aims at setting accessibility standards for goods and services. The built environment is a non- mandatory part of the act. Computers, operating systems, phones and other digital products need to be able to interact with the user on at least 2

channels (visual/sound). The same applies to services, like online banking, apps and websites (e-commerce, also emergency services) which need to be available in easy language. Cities must take the act into account in procurement processes. Member states have three years to transpose the act and another 3 years until the national law must enter into force. The directive will mainly cover:

- ATMs, ticketing and check-in machines
- smartphones
- TV equipment related to digital television services
- telephony services and related equipment
- audio-visual media services such as television broadcast and related consumer equipment
- services related to air, bus, rail and waterborne passenger transport
- banking services
- e-books
- e-commerce

4. Transfer Cities presentations – Thursday, June 13th

Transfer cities (Berlin and Bologna) presented their challenges and needs for advice and guidance on how to mainstream or improve accessibility for all ages. **Karin Oster**, Berlin, presented two aspects of the challenge facing the city: (1) shortage of housing in general and of accessible housing in particular and (2) the implementation of the new Berlin regulation on the provision of accessible housing and efforts to promote implementation using guidelines and handbooks as well as a seminar for students of architecture (TU Berlin) on the new regulation in connection with a design challenge (what is the smallest possible accessible flat - under 25m²).

Participants provided valuable feedback and raised interesting questions. **Jan Lambrecht**, Ghent, proposed to include information on accessibility in databases that list prices and size etc. of flats.

Karin Oster mentioned that databases were piloted in Berlin, however, that the data is very difficult to update. Using a census may be a possibility, **Jan Lambrecht**, Ghent, floated the idea of using the Einwohnermeldeamt, (Office for registration of residents) to gather and update data.

Representatives from Ghent shared their experiences advising architects and developers on accessibility pointing out that architects must learn the language of the disabled/ elderly and vice versa. Ghent uses occupational therapists who were trained to read the architects' plans to train architects and developers. Ghent also mentioned awareness raising campaigns for architects and developers that used a positive narrative citing present and future market demand, opportunities, low additional costs etc.

Paul McGarry, Manchester, stroke in a similar vein underlining the possibility of 'soft power' and the need for experts, politicians and citizens to learn to speak a common language and to create an 'eco-system' for accessibility.

With regard to market demand and buying power of the elderly **Karin Oster** stressed that, unlike other European populations, Berliners are mainly (~ 80%) tenants who do not own flats.

Hanna Malik Trocha, Warsaw, asked whether tax incentives for owners, who make sure that accessible flats are rented to persons in need may be an option.

Representatives from Amsterdam explained their city's approach to encourage the construction of adaptable housing, significantly reducing the cost of later changes and their system to allocate flats to the right target group also by incentivising elderly to move to lower floors and smaller apartments.

As another solution for identifying accessibility flats using a 'label' e.g. *accessible flat, safe home, barrier-free*, was brought into the discussion by **Lisa Holtz**, Gothenburg. Her city uses a website (flats are registered and mapped for a fee of 10 € per year).

The question of how apartments (and the potential and cost of adaptation) could be assessed and the strengths and weaknesses of having that done by experts (quality assessment vs. financial and time resources) or users (faster assessment of more flats, however, challenge to ensure all users apply the same criteria in their assessment, training or at least guidance needed, using simple parameters, collecting photos) was discussed. A middle way that emerged was to have the job done by students of architecture.

Jan Lambrecht, Ghent, proposed to use the target group to conduct the assessment: Elderly people have time and motivation and could receive a simple training on a handful of parameters to check.

Paul McGarry, Manchester, outlined the positive effects of the long-standing cooperation with schools of architecture and design. Students profit from access to real life challenges and projects, the city from often innovative solutions.

The group proposed to tackle the challenge (what is the smallest possible barrier-free flat) using a 'collaboratory' with the participation of students, experts and affected persons.

The discussion on Bologna's challenges took place in parallel.

5. The future of EUROCITIES

Patricia Couti, EUROCITIES, presented EUROCITIES's strategy to become a more competitive and impactful network. The network started with a focus on lobbying for the cities' interests and developed a stronger focus on thematic impact, influencing topics and EU strategies. Implementation will start with work on yearly action plans, a strategic plan (2020 – 2025) and the development of organizational vision and goals (2020 – 2030). The presentation will be shared with the network.

6. Presentations on the use of Geographic Information Systems (GIS)

Originally planned for a session of the WG BCA only, the presentations and subsequent discussion was moved into the plenary session because of the shared interest both WGs had in the topic. **Matthias Pfeil** presented Dresden's information portal „Barrierefreiheit“ (barrier-free) provides a wide variety of relevant information. The database allows inhabitants and visitors to upload data (user generated) on the accessibility of the built environment, guided by a set of pre-defined questions and criteria. The data's validity is checked and, if necessary, corrected externally.

Challenges are the cost-effective maintenance of data and the design of a simplified questionnaire. For the latter issue, the solution found is to have a dynamic questionnaire that recognizes and omits irrelevant questions based on an automatic assessment of answers given.

Another challenge **Mr. Pfeil** outlined is the integration and compatibility of other data sources in using an open data approach. An automatic data transfer between organizations and institutions making similar efforts is possible – the process is supported by wheelmap, a project of Sozialhelden e.V..

Jonas Deister and **Alan Piatek**, Sozialhelden e.V. presented wheelmap, a globally operating mapping system of accessibility that uses a variety of sources. The team of wheelmap advises a variety of actors on how to mainstream data on accessibility. They organize mapping events,

social days in the private sector to raise awareness, share their data and help solve problems with interfaces and provide app-solutions on demand.

“Our aim is not to make wheelmap big, but to mainstream how it works and integrate it where needed.”

7. Internal work of the working group

Karin Oster explained the reason behind this joint meeting between the two working groups. Ms. Oster regretted the relatively low turnout of members of the WG BCA, mentioned, however, that a number of reasons help explain that fact: Personal reasons in some cases, a relatively short notice from EUROCITIES and the somewhat shifted focus of work made it difficult for some members to obtain a travel permission.

The minutes of the last meeting in Berlin were approved and dates proposed for the next WG BCA meeting in Warsaw from **Sept. 30th (midday) until 2nd of October 2019 (midday)**. The working group discussed initial ideas for the agenda in Warsaw. Warsaw is hosting a large cultural festival during that time. Proposed topics are accessible cultural events and the structure and management of accessibility efforts. **Donata Kończyk** floated the idea of organizing a joint (panel) discussion with the festival’s organizers. The possibility of a joint application of working group members for the Accessible Cities Award was discussed, possible with a joint data project.

8. Reports and presentations from cities – Friday, June 14th

Representatives from Ghent, Ljubljana and Milan presented solutions and pathways and associated success stories as well as challenges.

Mr. **Andrea Canevazzi** presented "Accessible Milan" with a focus on GIS-Data on sidewalks, public spaces and traffic infrastructure (presentation attached).

Mr. **Aljoša Škaper** presented the app "Ljubljana by Wheelchair", please find the website, the app and more information here.

Mr. **Bart Vermandere** from Gent presented a variety of data platforms (see below) collecting and making available data on accessibility. "The City of Gent is looking for collaborations with the Flemish Government for a Data-platform on accessibility data in order to share information that is useful for Ghent. Gent is working on adding accessibility information to internal processes, e.g. the reservation of a meeting location or sports facility, in the main or core process, rather than creating a new accessibility website."

- Open Data Portal with information on accessibility
<https://data.stad.gent/data?s=toegankelijkheid>
- Open “accessibility” Data Tourism Flanders
<https://data.toerismevlaanderen.be/datasets>
- Database “accessible Flanders”
<https://toevla.vlaanderen.be/publiek/nl/register/start>
- OnWheels APP in Flanders
<https://www.onwheelsapp.com/app>
- AccesSEAbLe APP Belgian Coast
<https://www.onwheelsapp.com/app>
- And new, a video of a ACCESSIBILITY HACKATHON
<https://vimeo.com/343394666>

9. Miscellaneous

Ingeborg Stude (Berlin) participated in an information workshop to discuss the draft standard EN 17 210 on the 5th of June 2019 in Brussels. A brief information note on this event is attached as an annex to these minutes. There will be an opportunity to discuss this in more detail during the next meeting in Warsaw.

Note on prizes won by Ljubljana:

- The Golden Apple 2016 (prize for excellence in the tourism industry)
- Tourism for tomorrow Destination 2015 Award
- Access City 2015 Award (third place)
- Access City 2017 Award (second place)
- European Green Capital 2016 Award
- European Mobility Week 2013 Award

10. The next BCA meeting

Dates proposed for **Warsaw: Sept. 30th (midday) until 2nd of October 2019 (midday)**.
Initial ideas for the agenda: accessible cultural events and the structure and management of accessibility efforts.