



Module 2 Learning Unit 7

The design of an accessible built environment for all users



Games Without Barriers

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Accessibility in the built environment is an essential and fundamental right for all members of society. Providing accessible places and spaces empowers people to enjoy the everyday activities and opportunities taking and enables them to participate safely, independently, conveniently, with confidence and with dignity.

The benefits of an accessible built environment are:

- Consideration of the diverse capabilities of human beings
- Safety and convenience for everyone
- Improvement of the quality of life
- Supports the independence of users

The accessible built environment includes:

- Private and and public buildings
- Movement to /inside/from - including emergency access and evacuation
- Public spaces and routes
- Parking
- Transport terminals - stations, ports, airports, etc.
- Buildings and environments for recreation and leisure; cultural, educational and sports facilities
- Building products and services (covered by the EU Construction Products Directive)
- Any technology products and services used in buildings, e.g. lifts, escalators, moving walkways

New design projects, buildings and environments can be accessible for all users, from the beginning by following building regulations and standards/guidelines for accessibility

Existing buildings and environments often require adaptations to make them accessible because they were designed at a time when access for all was not considered as a priority

By applying a Universal Design approach the design of the built environment will be accessible and suitable for the widest range of users, including people of different stature, people with temporary impairments or injuries, people with disabilities, people with long term illnesses, people with allergies, families with small children, old people and others.

Do we have an accessible built environment? What is the problem?

Although there are many rules, regulations and standards on accessibility in EU states, the actual accessibility of buildings and the built environment is not yet satisfactory.

There are many examples in the current built environment where completed buildings or spaces do not offer an appropriate level of accessibility, even in newly built facilities.

Main Existing standards and Guidelines

- National Standards and Guidelines
- ISO 21542 Building construction- Accessibility and usability of the built environment (under revision)
- ISO TC/228 Tourism and related services (under development)
- EU M420/CEN-EN 17210-Accessibility and Usability of the built environment-Functional requirements (under development)

Just following legislation and standards is not always enough because they may consider only minimum requirements and most professionals do not have specific knowledge and training to understand and apply standards appropriately in their designs.

Lack of accessibility is expensive to fix, wasteful of public funding and – fundamentally – it denies many EU citizens their rights to free movement and access to buildings and services.

The module presents some of the common access barriers faced by users, followed by examples of good practice in newly built and adaptations of existing environments and buildings.