

Richard SENDI

The rights of the disabled to barrier-free access (2nd Phase)

Project premises

In 2009, work continued on the second phase of the research project “Measures for the realisation of the rights of the disabled to barrier-free access”, which was launched in 2008. The basis for this research is two government documents: *Strategija Dostopna Slovenija* (the Accessible Slovenia Strategy) and *Akcijški program za invalide 2007–2013* (the Action Programme for the Disabled 2007–2013).

In the first phase of the research, we conducted an extensive analysis of the current situation for caring for the disabled in Slovenia. With reference to the goals specified in both documents, analyses were conducted regarding accessibility of the built environment, communication and information. The main aim of this phase was to investigate the major barriers that disabled people encounter in exercising their right to barrier-free access and the implementation level of the measures for guaranteeing free access and social inclusion that were adopted by the government. The core of the research project was represented by two extensive surveys, one conducted among individual disabled persons and the other among disabled organisations operating in Slovenia.

One of the major findings of the first phase was that most of the measures proposed by the respondents for improving the situation were already included in the Accessible Slovenia Strategy and the Action Programme for the

Disabled 2007–2013. The respondents listed numerous problems that would have been solved long ago if the measures foreseen by these documents for remedying them had been effectively implemented. Notwithstanding the adoption of several legal provisions and regulations governing the rights of the disabled to barrier-free access, the respondents’ answers show that there has been no significant improvement yet. Many respondents pointed out, on the one hand, a frequent lack of compliance with current legislation and other relevant regulations and, on the other hand, inefficient monitoring of their implementation.

These findings, together with proposals for improvement suggested by the respondents, represented the basis for carrying out the second and third phases of the research project.

Project purpose

The main purpose of the second phase of research was to analyse the existing barriers in the built environment and communication, and to investigate how the rights of the disabled to barrier-free access are exercised in practice at the national level. The analysis primarily focused on the following goals specified in the strategy, which are described in greater detail in the Action Programme:

- Removing built-environment and communication barriers in public buildings and facilities;
- Constructing all multifamily residential buildings to enable

adaptation with minimal structural change to the needs of people with mobility and sensory impairments;

- Guaranteeing access to public transport;
- Guaranteeing access to education, training and employment.
- Guaranteeing access to health and social care;
- Guaranteeing access to public administrative services;
- Guaranteeing access to services by cultural institutions;
- Guaranteeing access to sports and recreation facilities.

Aims of the project

The second phase relates to exercising the rights of the disabled to barrier-free access by implementing the measures determined in Goal 1 of the Accessible Slovenia Strategy, namely:

- Removing built-environment and communication barriers in public buildings and spaces;
- Constructing all multifamily buildings to enable adaptation with minimum structural changes to the needs of people with mobility and sensory impairments;
- Guaranteeing access to education;
- Guaranteeing access to employment.

Research in this phase focused on the first objective of this strategic goal: removing built-environment and communication barriers in public buildings and spaces.

Project summary

The second phase consisted of three major parts:

- A survey of people with disabilities to obtain information on the actual barriers that exist in their living environment;
- An extensive field analysis focusing

- on existing barriers in the built environment in major public buildings in the main regional centres in Slovenia;
- Preparing an Internet guide for the disabled on the accessibility of public buildings in Slovenia.

Survey of the disabled

The survey collecting information on existing barriers in Slovenia obtained a total of 181 responses from individual disabled persons and ten representative disabled organisations.

Field analysis

The investigation of existing built-environment barriers was conducted in all major centres (in accordance with the statistical region classification). The analysis included public buildings in the areas covered in the first phase of the research (transport, education and employment, healthcare, public administration, cultural institutions and leisure). In this part of the research we:

- Conducted a thorough analysis of accessibility of major public buildings;

- Created a specially designed database in which data from the field survey were stored;
- Prepared a catalogue of irregularities discovered during the survey that must be promptly remedied.

Research results

The detailed field analysis sought to discover existing barriers, prepare a catalogue of these findings and alert those responsible about the irregularities found. Accordingly, the findings from the field survey were presented in the form of a checklist to all those responsible for managing the facilities where irregularities were discovered. The checklist included a demand that the irregularities be promptly remedied.

At the end of the second phase we also designed an Internet website, which will be developed further during the third phase of the research project. In long run, the website will be continually updated with new information and various activities connected with the built environment and communication barriers.

Project financing

The project is co-financed by the Slovenia Research Agency and the Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs of the Republic of Slovenia.

Research team

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More information about this project is available at <http://dostopnost.uirs.si>



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Professional analyses in regional and spatial planning: a roundtable discussion (Ljubljana, 11 Nov. 2010)

On 11 November 2010, the Department of Geography at the Faculty of Arts, University of Ljubljana, and the Association of Slovenian Geographers organized a roundtable discussion on the role of professionals in various fields conducting research on spatial issues in regional and spatial planning. The aim of the meeting was an interdisciplinary discussion about current open issues in regional and spatial planning proce-

dures. The result of the discussion was a joint resolution on the future role of experts in regional and spatial planning, especially in preparing the professional analyses necessary for making appropriate decisions on formal planning procedures.

This meeting was dedicated to Academy Member and Professor Igor Vrišer on the occasion of his 80th birthday. He

was a leading expert, researcher and scholar in regional and spatial planning from the 1960s to the 1990s and the author of the only book on regional planning in Slovenian.

The roundtable discussion was opened by Andrej Černe, the vice dean of the University of Ljubljana's Faculty of Arts. He congratulated Vrišer on his birthday and presented his role in the development of regional and spatial planning in Slovenia. After this, he presented the goals of the meeting. Jernej Zupančič, the head of the Department of