

CHARTER ON ACCESS TO TRANSPORT SERVICES AND INFRASTRUCTURE

This Charter was adopted by the ECMT Council of Ministers on 19 and 20 May 1999 in Warsaw.

It underlines the political commitment in Europe to ensuring that all new transport infrastructure should be constructed to take into account the needs of people with disabilities.

1. The number of disabled people is growing

Disabled people make up a significant and growing part of Europe's population. With the ageing population, this number will increase substantially over the next 50 years. By 2020, there will be twice as many people over 65 in Europe as there were in 1960.

2. Everyone must have an opportunity for independent living

It is an unequivocal and agreed political objective to create a Europe in which all citizens, regardless of disability or age, have the opportunity for independent living. To achieve this, public buildings, the transport systems and infrastructure must be barrier-free.

3. New infrastructure must take account of the needs of people with disabilities

There are many new transport and infrastructure projects being planned or constructed in Europe. The lifetime of transport equipment and infrastructure can be extremely long and projects being considered now will remain in service well into the next millennium. It is therefore essential that these are built to meet the needs of disabled people. In any case, improvements in accessibility add to the system's quality and usually benefit all travellers.

4. Governments must ensure access

All governments have a clear responsibility to ensure that these projects are designed and constructed to the highest standards of accessibility.

5. Accessibility principles must be followed

Fundamental principles applying to any project must include:

- a) All projects considered for public funding (at national or international level) must, as a condition of this funding, agree to incorporate full accessibility, to approved standards or recognised best practice, into the design and construction.
- b) The design concept, from its earliest stage and throughout the design process, must be vetted and approved by experts in accessibility, including people with disabilities. National governments will propose and approve suitable sources of advice. Where national governments do not have sources of advice, the EU or the ECMT will provide them.
- c) The accessibility requirements must incorporate, as a minimum:
 - full access for wheelchair users (up to and including those using wheelchairs of ISO standard dimensions) including, where appropriate, accessible toilet facilities and lifts;
 - features to aid people with difficulties in walking, gripping, reaching or balancing (including non-slip surfaces, hand rails and handholds);
 - facilities to assist blind and partially sighted people (including consistent use of colour contrast, clear signing and lighting, non-reflective surfaces, audible as well as visual announcements and tactile and audible guidance and warning surfaces and systems (where appropriate);
 - facilities for people who are deaf or hard of hearing (including visual as well as audible announcements, induction loops and clear signs).

6. Public funding will be conditional

Projects will be monitored for compliance with accessibility principles. Continued public funding will be made conditional on achieving satisfactory progress with the inclusion of access features.