Interreg Danube Region

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DANOVA NEXT

# ASSESSMENT FEEDBACK REPORT

## Feedback collected from the target users through the local workshops and the online survey

**DANOVA NEXT**

**Smart Transport Network for the accessibility of Passengers with disabilities and reduced mobility in the Danube Region through innovative services**

June, 2024

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| Contributors | ***Magdalena Guzalić, Marica Mirić***<br>***All PPs provided their workshop report.*** |
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# 1. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this Feedback Report, in the context of the DANOVA NEXT Project, is to present the findings and insights gathered from the active involvement of target users through a series of local workshops organized by project partners and through conducting online survey. The primary aim of these workshops and online survey was to assess the needs of the target users and identify existing gaps between their requirements and the available services. The target users included blind and partially sighted persons (visual impairments), deaf and hard of hearing persons (hearing impairments), and persons with reduced mobility (physical impairments).

Each project partner (PP) was responsible for organizing one local workshop in their respective regions. Notably, Slovenian project partners collaboratively organized a workshop in Maribor, while Austrian project partners jointly hosted a workshop in Vienna. These workshops were designed to engage target users (TU) directly in the process of identifying their needs and the discrepancies between those needs and the current services provided. The aim of the online survey was to assess user satisfaction levels regarding transportation services for persons with disabilities, aiming to identify gaps between their accessibility needs and the provided services.

All project partners contributed to this Feedback Report by completing a template for workshops provided by Croatian Union of Associations of Persons with Disabilities-SOIH and by disseminating the survey questionnaire to relevant organizations for persons with disabilities in their respective regions, who then forwarded the questionnaire to their members with disabilities to fill out. SOIH was responsible for compiling the contributions and survey results, and preparing the final version of Deliverable D.1.1.4.

This document consolidates the feedback received from the target users to guide future actions and improvements in service provision, ensuring that the needs of the users are adequately met.

## 2. OVERVIEW OF THE PROJECT PARTNERS AND CONDUCTED WORKSHOPS

This section presents the project partners and their abbreviations, which will be used in the subsequent text, as well as the dates of the conducted workshops and the number of participants.

| Partner role/number | Abbreviation | Full name | Date of workshop | Number of participants |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **PP1** Lead partner | **DBV** | Dubrovnik Airport ltd | June 4 | 19 |
| **PP2** | **BUD** | Budapest Airport zrt | May 30 | 27 |
| **PP3** | **APM** | Airports of Montenegro JSC | June 6 | 23 |
| **PP4** | **SIA** | PC Sarajevo International Airport LCC Sarajevo | June 24 | 7 |
| **PP5** | **IS AIC** | State Enterprise "Chisinau International Airport" | June 18 | 9 |
| **PP6** | **POK** | Port of Kotor | June 5 | 15 |
| **PP7** | **LUP** | Pula Port Authority | June 18 | 14 |
| **PP8** | **MOM** | Municipality of Maribor | May 30 | 10 |
| **PP9** | **CSCC** | Czech Smart City Cluster | June 20 | 11 |
| **PP10** | **DPB** | Public Transport Company Bratislava | June 6 | 10 |
| **PP11** | **BSVÖ** | Austrian Federation of the Blind and Partially Sighted | June 5 | 9 |
| **PP12** | **ANSR** | Romanian National Association for the Deaf | May 31 | 9 |
| **PP13** | **SOIH** | Croatian Union of Associations of Persons with Disabilities | June 17 | 17 |
| **PP14** | **UM** | University of Maribor | May 30 | 10 |
| **PP15** | **BATTI** | Bulgarian Association for Transfer of Technology and Innovation – BATTI | May 31 | 14 |
| **PP16** | **WU** | Vienna University of Economics and Business | June 5 | 9 |

# 3. RESPONSES COLLECTED BY PROJECT PARTNERS THROUGH LOCAL WORKSHOPS

The questions listed in the template (which you can find in the appendix) are structured around three main thematic frameworks, individually for each workshop, and then as an overall result of all conducted workshops:

- **Assessment of legislation related to transport services for persons with disabilities:** This framework focuses on examining the legislative landscape in different countries pertaining to accessibility in transport for persons with disabilities (PWD). It involves an assessment of existing laws, regulations and policies governing accessibility standards for different types of disabilities in different modes of transportation (air, urban and water transport).
- **Current/existing state of transport services for persons with disabilities:** This framework involves assessing the current state of transportation services available to PWDs. It includes gathering information on the accessibility features, facilities, and services provided by different transport providers (air, urban and water transport) to accommodate the needs of PWDs. This assessment encompasses improvement suggestions, highlighting the most common difficulties encountered, assessing infrastructure accessibility and accessibility of terminals and vehicles, staff knowledge, and overall user experience.
- **Proposals for enhancing existing conditions:** This framework focuses on proposing recommendations and strategies to improve the current state of transportation services for PWDs. It involves identifying gaps, challenges, and areas needing improvement based on participants suggestions. Recommendations are various, such as legislative amendments, implementation of universal design principles, enhancement of staff training programs, introduction of new technologies, fostering collaboration with disability advocacy groups, etc.

### 3.1. DBV

*Country: Croatia*

- LEGISLATION

They mentioned that there is always room for improvement, noting that 2023 was a year marked by the passage of many new laws. However, they pointed out that the implementation of these laws at the local level is often inadequate. When these laws are handed down to cities and municipalities, the extent to which they will be enforced becomes questionable. They also observed that, despite the extensive existing data available, local authorities do not seem to be utilizing this information as effectively as they could.

- CURRENT STATE OF TRANSPORT SERVICES FOR PWD

The common agreement is that urban public transport in Dubrovnik (local public buses) are adequately accessible to people with disabilities with much more room for improvement. Dubrovnik Airport accessibility in the terminal and especially PRM service at Dubrovnik airport has been rated at the highest level. Maritime transport has been rated unsatisfactory especially vessels that operate to local islands and Port of Dubrovnik passenger terminal.

They acknowledged the progress made, noting that announcements at bus stops have been particularly beneficial for the association of the blind. However, they also pointed out that road works can lead to misunderstandings. Announcements have been introduced in the first part of the fleet where technical software capabilities allow, and sound announcements are now available on every bus equipped with a display. For those without displays, the goal is to implement at least voice announcements. The issue lies in the delay of the program and GPS, which are connected to the cash register. Additionally, specialized vehicles for persons with disabilities have been introduced and operate upon prior notification. They highlighted that progress has been made in prioritizing essential activities like commuting to work and medical appointments. Furthermore, employees have taken a sign language course to improve communication.

Regarding transport from Dubrovnik Airport to the City of Dubrovnik, they believe that the accessibility of these transport vehicles should be ensured by DBV. According to user feedback, it is crucial for them that such transport options are available, even if they are commercial. They emphasize that the airport and the

City of Dubrovnik should coordinate to establish a connection between the airport and the city with an accessible vehicle fleet.

They noted that the passenger terminal in the port is rarely used. They highlighted the issue of unavailable sidewalks from the bus station to the port, which poses a danger even to people without disabilities. Unfortunately, due to existing construction plans in the area, this issue cannot be addressed at this time.

Regarding staff knowledge, they mentioned that the main problem is that the staff addresses the assistant instead of the disabled person. They have held workshops on this aspect of communication, and people are always surprised to learn the correct approach. Although they write brochures, they believe it is challenging for brochures to reach the intended audience. They even made a film about accessibility in Lokrum, featuring a blind person in a wheelchair. They also emphasized that improvements can be made and that they are open to education. It is best to educate employees about how not to treat disabled people, as their desire to help often leads to incorrect actions.

They also emphasized the importance of Inductive Hearing Loops and noted that the problem arises when the boarding exit changes, as not every person has an app on their smartphone to be notified about it.

- SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENTS

The public transport segment from the airport should be accessible as currently it is not the case. In the development of specialized urban transport, when we should ensure accessibility, we must not only take into account people in wheelchairs, but also blind, visually impaired and deaf people.

Regarding maritime transport, when purchasing a vessel, it is mandatory to ensure accessibility. We see a positive step forward that is not yet enough. The country of Croatia is among the first countries to ratify and adopt the Convention for persons with disabilities, and we are proud of that, but we are late with infrastructural adaptations, while others first adapted the infrastructure and only then signed the Convention. The Convention binds everyone, it should be measured how much the adopted Convention affects the life of people with disabilities. We need to work on general awareness raising. ZLD recognized the importance of such projects. The regulations are going in the right direction, because every regulation must be in accordance with the Convention.

### 3.2. BUD

*Country: Hungary*

Note: replies received for air transport only.

- LEGISLATION

About 70,000 PRM passengers indicate their need for assistance every year, fortunately their number is increasing. Considering passengers who do not register the number is much higher.

People with limited mobility and Deaf and hard of hearing mentioned that legal framework includes accessibility, which is a legal obligation. In addition, there is the principle of "reasonable accommodation", according to which the individual needs of persons with disabilities must be accommodated. However, this is often not implemented properly and it is not always possible to know the needs in advance, the needs that pose a disproportionately large burden cannot always be met, and on the other hand, persons with disabilities are not always aware of their rights. In theory, higher level legal regulations help, but in reality, these rules are not always enforced properly. According to their experience, there is often a lack of knowledge on both sides, and the practical realization of equal treatment is a challenge. The legislation also includes communication accessibility (for Deaf and hard of hearing), for example the combination of loudspeakers and visual information. Regarding Blind people and partially sighted, the problem is not with the legislation and the legal background, but with their practical implementation. For example, practical testing is left out, which is one of the most important when creating legislation. They usually formulate a framework - some of which work well, some of which do not. The framework is often not uniform. Higher-level legislation is adopted more slowly, and it is not certain that the higher-level legislation is better. Standards contain a mixture of regulations, requirements, and recommendations, but it is difficult to determine which one is a requirement, and which one is a recommendation. Legislations are of a follow-up nature, they cannot keep up with technical advances, they are only created after the fact.

- CURRENT STATE OF TRANSPORT SERVICES FOR PWD

Persons with reduced mobility mentioned that the overall quality of airport services is generally adequate but there are some areas for improvement. The height of the counters and the lack of space at the security check are significant problems. There is also a need for further training of airport staff; those who are trained are doing their job great but stakeholders would welcome the training of

colleagues on an even broader scale. Further development of accessibility infrastructure is necessary. Airplane corridors are narrow, boarding and placing walking aids can be problematic, but this is the competence of airlines and aircraft manufacturers. Sometimes the request for help does not reach the airline, the helpers do not pass the information on to each other. The airport's bus stops can be reached by low-floor buses, the parking facilities are well designed (e.g., curbside waiting time is 20 minutes). AMS (airport assistance service company) can be notified in advance (on the website) or on the spot if assistance is needed. AMS colleagues take part in continuous training in order to provide the best service. In addition, they bring good practices from other areas, which are also incorporated at the airport. Barrier-free taxis are available, but the demand would be higher.

Deaf and hard of hearing mentioned (as positive aspect) that many places within airports have monitors that display important information. Unfortunately, these monitors do not always function properly. Due to communication difficulties, passengers encounter misunderstandings, especially when queuing, for example at security checks, boarding, and bus transportation. There is also a lack of light signals, which would greatly assist the hearing impaired in navigating the airport. Sign language accessibility is currently not resolved. Staff training on sign language basics would help in communication. Access to flights schedule information and its changes is often difficult. They recommended the development of visual notifications on the new website and applications. They feel that they don't know when the gate will be opened and they have to constantly watch what's going on, they can't relax while traveling. Due to their situation, they do not know if something will be announced, so they miss out on information- and never know what kind of information they miss out on. There are airlines that send SMS or notifications in case of changes, that’s a good practice. A large number of displays are available at the airport, but there are none in the toilets.

Blind and partially sighted mentioned that some railway stations and bus services are commendable in terms of accessibility, reliable and user-friendly, particularly because they announce directions at the terminal and support the Bindimaps application. Tactile strips are also generally well-maintained and not covered, ensuring a clear path. However, some negative aspects are highlighted such as that tactile guide lanes should be extended from the parking lot to the terminal to enhance navigability. The geometry of tactile signals is not uniform throughout the airport area, with some locations lacking indications of lane branches. Access to the visually impaired person entering the airport area is not guaranteed with continuous tactile pavement markings up to the emergency call or assistance, the signal is interrupted in several places. There is a lack of assistance who would even help them get off the bus or means of transport, so it is often difficult for them to

get to the place where the person helping them is waiting for them. After the passenger security check, they are left on their own, which results in a very vulnerable situation. When traveling with a guide dog, the rules are not clear, there is a lack of information. Parking on the curbside requires a permit, and the process to stamp the card for extended free parking for PRM passengers is cumbersome. When it comes to parking, it is unrealistic that in order to use free parking, it is necessary to stamp the parking card in a hard-to-find place inside the terminal. The process is difficult to understand and complicated. A parking machine or crossing gates should be equipped to read permits automatically. Public transport options to the airport at night are very limited, making access difficult. In relation to airport information (e.g., schedule), the website can be used without obstacles, no problems are experienced. Buying tickets on the websites of airlines and ticket agencies is not possible, they are not well accessible from the point of view of the blind and partially sighted (e.g., seat selection is usually done on a visual interface), they can only buy flight tickets with help, but this is the competence of airlines and travel agencies.

Budapest Airport designed a so-called quiet or sensory room, in which those who are overwhelmed with traveling can spend time. A room has been created on Pier 1, which enables a wide range of care for people with reduced mobility (e.g., lift, nursing bed, etc.) They mentioned Sunflower campaign: passengers with hidden disabilities can indicate with a sunflower symbol (e.g., badge, which will be available from the AMS coordinators) if they need extra help.

- SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENTS:

Extension of the navigation application that can be used on the terminal and expansion with further functions. For example, the deaf-blind cannot see or hear the voice announcements and the flight information monitors, so they can miss the gate change and announcements. ---> Bindimaps app on the landside was very useful for many people, with the help of this they were able to find e.g., the bathroom and cafe independently. It would be nice if they could also use it on the air side. It would be worthwhile to include different shopping opportunities, restaurants, and shops in the applications.

Staff training on sign language basics would help in communication with people with hearing impairments. Uniform comprehensive sensitization training would be optimal for the entire staff, not just for the assistance service provider; BUD employees who come into direct contact with passengers (and 2 out of 3 ground handlers' employees as well) receive special PRM training. Upon entering the airport area by taxi or bus, the passenger should receive assistance immediately. The passenger boarding stairs are shaky, not always properly equipped with

handrails, which is the responsibility of ground handlers. Perhaps the helper should inform the passenger in advance of the dimensions, the expected running out of handrails, or there should be continuous assistance on the stairs as well.

It would help if people with disabilities could go through the passenger security check with priority or in a dedicated corridor, they feel that they are holding up the line.

All terminal-related information should be available on a mobile app or web interface, e.g., location of shops, opening hours, offer, location of washrooms.

Placement of several flight information monitors at eye level in the terminal is recommended, which can also be used by persons with functional vision. When programming on existing monitors, it must be taken into account that it does not switch so quickly between Hungarian and English text.

When transporting from the terminal to the plane by bus, it is necessary to indicate on which side the doors open, this helps visually impaired passengers prepare for disembarking, which is the competence of the ground handler, but Budapest Airport is willing to convey the suggestion to them.

In the case of legal regulations, it would be important to first collect good practices and then create a standard from them, NOT the other way around. Validation of these practices with professionals would be necessary. In the case of legislation, according to the idea of the stakeholders, with the help of the airport trade union, it could be an option to put together material from good practices, and then take it forward and get it accepted at the international level. It is important that workplace trainings follow the legislation and that the training does not deviate from the legal requirements.

### 3.3. APM

*Country: Montenegro*

- LEGISLATION

It was mentioned that in 2008, the Law on Planning and Construction was passed, which defines the concept and aspects of physical accessibility and establishes that buildings for public and business purposes, other buildings for public use, and residential and residential-business buildings with ten or more apartments must be designed, built and maintained in such a way that all users, especially persons with disabilities, children and the elderly, can have unhindered access, movement and stay, i.e. use in accordance with the appropriate technical regulations, i.e. standards. In relation to this Law, the Government adopted a by-law, the Rulebook on Technical Standards for Planning, Designing and Building Buildings, which provides for standards that define mandatory technical measures and conditions for planning, designing and building buildings that ensure unimpeded movement and access for persons with disabilities, children and the elderly. Thus, this Rulebook ensures unhindered movement and access for persons with disabilities, children and the elderly. The application of the standards prescribed by this rulebook refers to the planning of new buildings and spaces, the design and construction and extension of new buildings (public, business and residential buildings), as well as the reconstruction and adaptation of existing buildings. However, in practice, breaking of these legal obligations is widespread, resulting in facilities that do not meet accessibility standards, as well as a weak penal policy for non-compliance with these provisions. On the other hand, this Rulebook does not regulate in detail the access and movement of persons with reduced mobility, while persons with hearing impairment are completely neglected in that Rulebook, because only one point regulating their rights is foreseen.

- CURRENT STATE OF TRANSPORT SERVICES FOR PWD

They emphasized the importance of enhancing the quality of airport services and improving airport infrastructure. It was also stated that the priority is the continuous improvement of airport infrastructure and the enhancement of existing capacities. The importance of raising awareness among decision-makers, service providers, and users about these crucial topics to create an inclusive and accessible society was also stressed. It was stated that it is extremely important that all segments of the airports are accessible to persons with disabilities, from parking spaces, counters, desks, corridors, toilets, boarding and disembarking

from planes, etc., since it is very important to respect the dignity and integrity of each person with disability, and not only to provide conditions for them to be able to use the plane as a means of transportation. It is pointed out that it would be of great importance if Airports of Montenegro did a visual representation of all relevant information available to passengers, through signposts and similar instructions that would facilitate their movement and navigation at airports, since many information are not accessible to them, especially to visually impaired and deaf people. It was also suggested that it is important to inform persons with disabilities that when purchasing airline tickets and cooperating with operators that provide ticket sales services, enter all necessary international codes so that persons with disabilities have all available services. At the same time, in the current activities of adapting the airport infrastructure, the goal is to make the counter for lost luggage accessible to PWDs, so that in the coming period, all available services, from check-in, to access counters, passport control counters and other contents on airports in Montenegro were accessible. Furthermore, the unscrupulous attitude of citizens towards marked parking spaces for people with disabilities, who, due to limited parking capacities, usurp marked spaces is especially noteworthy. Apart from the fact that there are very few parking spaces for PWDs, the competent services do not adequately punish persons who usurp parking space markings, which negatively affects the opportunities for people with disabilities to use the airport traffic infrastructure to a greater extent and be active participants in social life. It was also emphasized the importance of education in this area, especially for airport employees who come into contact with passengers who are disabled. Among the types of training, the training of sign language employees is very important, so that they can provide assistance in relation to the different disabilities that service users have. Education is also important for the service users themselves, persons with disabilities, about the possible services offered to them by the airport services, bearing in mind that persons with disabilities are often uncomfortable asking for assistance, but they often lack information. The participants of the workshop particularly emphasized the importance of educating and informing employees about passengers on the plane who are persons with disabilities, so that, in the event of an aircraft evacuation, they would assist persons who cannot evacuate on their own. In the end, it was mentioned that information desks should be accessible at Airports in Montenegro, that guidelines, road signs, and arrows should be clearly displayed for persons with disabilities.

- SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT

It is important to ensure the accessibility of public areas so that persons with disabilities have the opportunity to reach the airport without obstacles. All

segments of the airport infrastructure should be made accessible to people with disabilities (info desks, toilets, guidelines, instructions, etc.). It is necessary to adapt the counters and desks to be accessible to people with disabilities (for example, people of short stature). It is important to improve the accessibility of the services by which passengers board or disembark from the aircraft. It is necessary to organize training for airport personnel, personally employed in airport services who come into contact with passengers who are disabled persons. Among the types of training, the training of sign language employees is very important, so that they can provide assistance in relation to the different disabilities that service users have. Education is also important for the service users themselves, persons with disabilities, about the possible services offered to them by the airport services, bearing in mind that persons with disabilities often find it uncomfortable to ask for assistance, but often lack information. It is necessary to draft guidelines on the rights of passengers with disabilities. It is very important that the employees in the airport services have all the information about the passengers on the plane who are persons with disabilities, so that, in case of evacuation of the aircraft, they can assist persons who cannot carry out the evacuation independently. It is necessary that the instructions for handling and acting in crisis situations, evacuation situations, etc. to be available in Braille, but also to be available in an enlarged font so that they are also accessible to people with visual impairments. It is necessary to increase the capacities of marked parking spaces that can be used by persons with disabilities, while it is necessary to tighten the penal policy for persons who usurp parking spaces for persons with disabilities. It is necessary to strengthen cooperation with operators that provide ticket sales services and advocate that they enter all the necessary international codes when purchasing airline tickets so that persons with disabilities have all available services. It is necessary that civil society organizations and non-governmental organizations dealing with the protection and promotion of the rights of persons with disabilities, at their internal presentations, publish the rules that passengers must follow, which are available on the website of the Airport of Montenegro, in order to be familiar with all segments of rights and obligation. It is recommended that the Airports of Montenegro make available to passengers a visual representation of all relevant information, directions and similar instructions that would make it easier for them to move and find their way around the airports, since much information is not accessible to them, especially to visually impaired and deaf people. Further reconstruction processes of the existing terminal should be carried out in accordance with international standards when it comes to adapting the airport infrastructure to persons with disabilities.

### 3.4. SIA

*Country: Bosnia and Herzegovina*

Note: replies received for Deaf and hard of hearing individuals only.

- LEGISLATION

Passengers with reduced mobility have rights established by Regulation 110712006 concerning the rights of disabled persons and persons with reduced mobility when traveling by air. These rights have been incorporated into the Law on Obligations in Civil Aviation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. When purchasing an airline ticket and concluding a transport contract, persons with disabilities can declare themselves as passengers with reduced mobility. They can register and request assistance from the airport operator 48 hours before the flight. The operator is obliged to provide assistance from the point of arrival to the boarding gate and upon arrival from the aircraft to the airport's point of arrival. The importance of involving PRM passengers in developmental infrastructure was highlighted. The legislative framework for persons with disabilities needs improvement, especially for deaf and hard of hearing individuals in FBiH whose number goes up to 20,000.

- CURRENT STATE OF TRANSPORT SERVICES FOR PWD

Deaf and hard of hearing individuals are satisfied with air transport and the services they receive at airports. However, there is dissatisfaction with urban and bus transport. A significant problem is the lack of knowledge of sign language among staff. It was suggested that staff providing assistance to deaf and hard of hearing individuals should undergo training in sign language.

Announcements at bus and train stations, as well as in all means of transport, would be very beneficial for the deaf and hard of hearing persons, along with announcements in tram, trolleybus, and bus transport. Airport staff, as well as staff in other modes of transport, should complete a sign language course to communicate more easily with deaf and hard of hearing persons. They emphasized that airport staff should know how to translate around 100 words into sign language to provide adequate service. The infrastructure is unsatisfactory. The accessibility is inadequate in bus, tram, and trolleybus transport. Deaf and hard of hearing individuals need clear instructions on navigating through the terminal building. They propose more active participation of local and federal authorities, changes in legislation, and the establishment of assistance programs for persons with disabilities.

- SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENTS

Deaf and hard of hearing individuals suggest the use of displays - televisions at tram and trolleybus stops to inform them of the schedule, Additionally, there should be displays in all tram, trolleybus, and bus vehicles, with the texts on the displays corresponding to the content of announcements.

### 3.5. POK

*Country: Montenegro*

- LEGISLATION

The discussion highlighted the legislative framework governing accessibility in public areas and facilities for persons with disabilities, emphasizing its inadequate implementation. The Law on Planning and Construction of 2008 mandates that buildings must be designed and maintained to ensure unimpeded access for all users, particularly persons with disabilities, children, and the elderly. Despite these requirements, the majority of public spaces and facilities have not been adapted accordingly since the law's 2013 deadline. Additionally, the Rulebook on Technical Standards outlines specific measures for accessible building design, including new constructions and the retrofitting of existing structures. However, widespread non-compliance and ineffective enforcement of these standards persist, leading to inaccessible environments that fail to accommodate people with disabilities. The report underscored the paradox where even supposedly accessible ports and airports are impractical for disabled individuals due to surrounding inaccessible public areas. Particularly concerning is the situation in Kotor and Montenegro, where very few public spaces are accessible, exacerbating the challenges faced by persons with disabilities.

- CURRENT STATE OF TRANSPORT SERVICES FOR PWD

The situation in both Kotor and Montenegro is almost alarming considering the very few public areas and facilities that are accessible to persons with disabilities. Inspection services do not punish institutions or individuals who violate the law, so the situation in this area is worrying.

The discussion underscored the critical need for education among Port of Kotor staff to effectively assist passengers with disabilities, emphasizing training in accessibility, communication, and support. They advocated for broader educational initiatives, highlighting the importance of a sign language course at Kotor High School to foster responsible citizenship towards vulnerable groups. Regarding accessibility equipment, it was advised against ordering hydraulic systems due to maintenance challenges, favoring the installation of ramps or panoramic elevators as more viable solutions.

The importance of training public institution employees to integrate PWDs into society equitably was stressed. They also proposed installing induction loops in terminal buildings to aid hearing-impaired individuals, although adapting them

for open port environments like Kotor remains a challenge. Furthermore, they recommended screens with sign language for notifications to improve accessibility in transport services.

Regarding the Port of Kotor, concerns were raised about the lack of a disembarkation platform and support services for yacht passengers with reduced mobility. Suggestions included acquiring a sea-level elevator platform and establishing an information desk for sea arrivals. Participants highlighted broader issues in traffic accessibility for PWDs, citing inadequate public facilities, infrastructure, and transport services, compounded by insufficient governmental resolve to address these challenges effectively.

It was pointed out that it is important for the Port of Kotor to acquire wheelchairs in the coming period, since shipowners have them, but not all of them, so it is necessary to acquire them for persons arriving on yachts in order to access the Port in an adequate way.

- SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENTS

When purchasing equipment that will enable greater accessibility for persons with disabilities, it is very important not to order hydraulic equipment, because there are not many companies in Montenegro that have the ability to maintain that equipment. Therefore, it is suggested that the most efficient and easiest way is to build ramps or install a panoramic elevator.

However, it is important to ensure the accessibility of public areas and other public facilities so that persons with disabilities have the opportunity to reach the Port of Kotor without hindrance.

It is very important that other segments are accessible to PWDs such as: monitors, visual displays, boards, notifications, induction loops for people with hearing impairment, etc.

It is especially important to pay attention to induction loops that amplify the signal for hearing aids in people with hearing impairment, so it can be a good solution for the terminal building of the Port of Kotor.

For the purposes of distribution of information, the installation of a screen with sign language would be an excellent solution for people with hearing impairment to use transport services without hindrance.

People with reduced mobility who come with yachts to the Port of Kotor do not have available support and assistance services and this is very important to solve, so it was suggested to consider the possibility of building a platform for

disembarking passengers from the ship, since the Port of Kotor does not have a platform but the ships lower the platform themselves. Also, the acquisition of a lift platform that descends to sea level is suggested and this can be a very good solution to transfer passengers from the ship to the shore. At the same time, it is suggested that the Port of Kotor create an information desk for passengers coming from the sea, which will also be accessible for persons with disabilities.

It is very important to initiate the education of staff members in the Port of Kotor who come into contact with passengers with disabilities. Namely, adequate training in the field of access, communication with persons with disabilities, providing assistance to persons with disabilities is extremely important since it is important for workers to be educated, sensitive and trained. Additionally, a very important training can be the training of sign language employees so that they can provide adequate assistance and service to the hearing impaired persons.

### 3.6. LUP

*Country: Croatia*

- LEGISLATION

The legislative framework for PRM exists for airports, but not for ports and they are not satisfied with the legal framework. There are various illogicalities in the classification of the disabled, the degree of disability, etc. Conditions for progress in equalizing opportunities should be created.

The law for blind and partially sighted should be upgraded, regulations should be established that are practical and enforceable in everyday life. Sanctions should be introduced for non-compliance with legal provisions.

Regarding deaf and hard of hearing individuals, the existence of the law on personal assistance is positive, but it prescribes the minimum number of hours of weekly assistance. Deaf people need more hours of weekly assistance. There is also a regulation on orthopedic aids, the application of which would enable better/more modern hearing aids. The Act on Croatian Sign Language and other systems of communication of deaf and deaf-blind people in the Republic of Croatia has existed since 2015. It prescribes good things that are not implemented in practice. Every institution should have an interpreter who interprets sign language. In this way, a single person would not spend his own hours as an assistant to go, for example, to the doctor's office/ to the hospital/ any public institution. According to the law, there should be a person in public institutions who could interpret signs and help. The illogic in the legislation is that the Law on Accessibility of Websites and Software Solutions stipulates those institutions are obliged to have websites in sign language, but the same law does not exist adapted to sign language.

Overall, the legislative framework is better in writing than in practice. They agree with the statements that the legal framework is limited and that there is absence of regulations for the implementation of legal provisions for each individual form of physical disability, as well as absence of regulations for each individual form of transport.

- CURRENT STATE OF TRANSPORT SERVICES FOR PWD

All participants unanimously concluded that they use public transport very little, they don't have the habit. In the past, transportation was not available. The situation is improving, but they have learned to manage independently. Most of

them need a companion. They say that for individual members of their own organizations who do not need an escort, there are still opportunities for progress in every segment of traffic for every form of physical disability, that is, traffic can be closer and better to them.

For bus transport, it would be good to install a sound board - a sound guideline for blind people, and in the bus, the next stop should be announced with an accent on the time it takes to get to a certain stop - so that the person can prepare for departure in time. Guide lines are also needed. Buses should be equipped or new ones should be purchased with electric lifts, cameras and place(s) suitable for pushchairs. Buses have a written sign of the next stop, there are no sound signs.

Sea transport is less used, so it is proposed for the port to purchase a crane that could transfer a passenger in a wheelchair to the ship (princesses), or an expanding ramp (connecting platform) that connects the shore with the ship, without steps. The ramp should be wide enough for wheelchairs to pass. On the ship, it would be good to install tactile and sound strips and guide lines, a movement plan, and Braille markings at the sanitary facilities in the terminals and in passenger ships.

For deaf and hard of hearing individuals, the bus transportation is fine, there is a written notice on the bus about the next stop. What is more difficult to access are changes in the timetable, changing lines due to work, new bus lines. There are no sign language notifications. During longer journeys when the bus stops for a 10- or 15-minute break, the deaf person needs to be additionally informed because he cannot hear when the announcement is made on the microphone. A video with sign language can also be installed.

In maritime transport, the passenger should also be informed when his stop is, and if there is a certain delay, he cannot follow the public address system. It is necessary to inform him specifically about changes (delay due to crowding, breakdown, works, etc.) Carrier websites need to be upgraded with sign language.

All participants unanimously concluded that it is almost impossible to travel alone, of course depending on the level of difficulty of each individual. Most common difficulties they encounter is impossibility of independent travel and movement, inequality of staff education and station equipment during travel, especially if the means of transport and/or country is changed.

Staff working in public institutions, terminals and stations are generally not trained in how to communicate and explain to people with different types of backgrounds, how to get around and where and how to continue their journey. The staff is friendly and willing to help in all possible ways, but they are not educated and do not know how to act properly. The lack of aparatures and lack of

the education of the staff is not their weakness, they have the will. If the regulations were adapted, if the basic equipment were acquired and staff were trained, it would be a good start for the independence of passengers with disabilities. It is necessary to improve the education system for persons with disabilities, as well as to educate people who are employed at airports, stations, institutions.

The availability of information for blind people is poorly regulated, there is a low percentage of adapted websites and applications available in Braille. There are applications that have a label and begin with a search, but after the basic data it is impossible to independently continue the search/purchase of tickets, etc. Such an application is not fully customized, but only its initial or general part. The existence of the Slavica platform will help facilitate the communication of deaf and hard of hearing people, but it is necessary to inform individuals about the existence of this platform and teach them how to use it.

- SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENTS

PRM individuals appeal for an increase in the number of ramps on the streets/bus stops/waiting rooms/terminals, and the removal of obstacles from sidewalks and waiting rooms. Installation of elevators in places where there are no ramps or where it is not possible to install them. Purchase of more modern buses, which facilitate entry and exit for persons with disabilities.

Equipping marine terminals/buses (display button for speaking) and bus stops with tactile strips, setting up voice guidelines, equipping with orientation maps, audio signs and digital written signs, adapting web pages to Braille and much more is necessary.

For the needs of deaf people, a display can be installed on which is information about the station to be reached, the time needed to get to that station, where it is possible to set up a video wall with an avatar explaining in sign language.

The education of employees and the education of persons with disabilities is necessary in order to facilitate travel, but also the performance of everyday activities.

### 3.7. MOM & UM

*Country: Slovenia*

- LEGISLATION

There appears to be a lack of widespread knowledge regarding the legal framework for accessible transportation for people with disabilities. While some are familiar with specific aspects, a significant information gap exists. This highlights the need for better dissemination of relevant legislation. Additionally, the emphasis on accessibility by one individual suggests potential areas for further legal development to ensure a more inclusive transportation system.

Some reasons why people might know little about legislation:

- Lack of Publication
- Inconsistency Across Services and Countries
- Focus on Announcement-Based Systems
- Limited Accessibility of Information

This points to the importance of ensuring information is available in accessible formats for people with various disabilities. These factors can contribute to a general lack of awareness about legislation on accessible transportation.

- CURRENT STATE OF TRANSPORT SERVICES FOR PWD

Air and urban transport are rated medium, while air transport is generally rated well, though dependent on provider. Some general observations are that accessibility and staff helpfulness vary widely by provider and location, larger cities tend to have better accessibility and different transportation types lack cohesion, leading to confusion. Most common travel difficulties for persons with disabilities are lack of clear and accessible information (visual or auditory) about stations, stops, and accessibility features, inconsistent accessibility features (e.g., narrow minibuses vs. wider ones) and staff training, public transport employees often lack awareness of the accessibility needs and rights of visually impaired individuals, communication challenges for people with hearing impairments due to drivers' unwillingness or inability to use sign language or written communication, difficulty booking or relying on accessible transportation services, especially for those with mobility impairments. Significant disparities exist in the accessibility of road infrastructure for persons with disabilities. Cities like Ljubljana show improvement efforts, but challenges remain in many areas.

Lack of proper infrastructure like sidewalks, traffic lights, and guidance systems creates significant challenges for blind people. For mobility impairments there are difficulties finding taxis large enough to accommodate walkers or wheelchairs, requiring special orders; poor sidewalk conditions with potholes create tripping hazards. Regarding accessibility of transport terminals, they highlighted that, overall, accessibility improvements are slow and inconsistent across locations. Simpler solutions (ramps) are often preferred over complex and potentially malfunctioning technology (lifts). Staff training and a dedicated information point for persons with disabilities would improve accessibility at stations. Regarding accessibility of vehicles, significant disparities exist between the accessibility of Ljubljana's public transport and that of other regions. A lack of accessible intercity transportation options is a major concern for people with mobility impairments. Collaboration between stakeholders is needed to develop improved solutions for accessible vehicles across all transportation types. Staff knowledge on disability etiquette and communication appears to be variable and could benefit from additional training. A more standardized approach to handling disability-related situations would improve experiences for passengers. Empathy and willingness to help are crucial factors in positive interactions. Regarding the quality and availability of information provided to persons with disabilities, inconsistency exists in the accessibility and timeliness of information provided across different transportation providers. Information about delays and changes in service is a specific concern, especially for those who rely on visual cues. People with hearing impairments would benefit from alternative communication methods (e.g., text alerts, sign language interpretation) for delay announcements. While some find apps helpful, improvements to online information accessibility are needed (e.g., screen reader compatibility for visually impaired users).

- SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENTS

For urban transport: Make websites and timetables accessible for blind passengers (screen reader compatibility, braille options). Improve signage clarity with tactile elements and high-contrast fonts. Install visual announcement displays alongside audio announcements on buses and trains. Improve sound quality and clarity of loudspeaker systems at stations. Reduce noise levels of announcements and improve clarity of communication on trains. Implement elevators or lifts for easier boarding on to buses and install handrails on all staircases. It is important to increase the availability of accessible trains throughout the day and ensure platform accessibility at all stations. Train drivers have to handle mobility aids (walkers, wheelchairs) with care and respect passenger needs (bathroom access). Provide a centralized information source on accessible parking spaces and fees in different cities. Develop a network of

accessible intercity transportation options, including low-floor buses with ramps or lifts, dedicated wheelchair spaces, and accessible vans operated by disabled people's organizations

For air transport: Establish a single call center for assistance bookings. Invest in airplanes with improved accessibility features (ramps, direct wheelchair entry from terminals).

For water transport: Install ramps or lifts for boarding ferries to eliminate reliance on stairs. Improve the safety and condition of existing ferry staircases.

In general, it is important to ensure all transportation information (websites, schedules, announcements) is available in accessible formats (visual, tactile, auditory) and to increase public awareness campaigns regarding accessibility legislation and passenger rights for persons with disabilities. Staff training is also important - implement sensitivity training programs for transportation staff to improve their understanding and ability to assist passengers with disabilities. Involving persons with disabilities in the design and implementation of improvements is crucial for ensuring they effectively address accessibility needs. By prioritizing these areas, significant progress can be made towards creating a more inclusive and accessible transportation system that benefits everyone.

### 3.8. CSCC

*Country: Czech Republic*

- LEGISLATION

It is well-regulated for air transport: EU Regulation 1107/2006 is efficiently incorporated, ensuring rights to transport within airport halls, boarding, and exiting assistance, and free transport of wheelchairs or guide dogs. Also, Prague Airport offers assistance for disabled persons, ideally booked in advance. There is some lack of specific legislation: there is no special legislation beyond general acts for deaf and deaf-blind persons. Missing praxis-based regulations for tactile guidance.

For urban transport legislation is sufficient: Disabled persons receive a "ZTP" certificate for free travel in most city transports and discounted railway tickets. A mobility allowance of 900 CZK per month is available. In rural areas National law lacks special benefits, though cities are integrating on-demand transport. Incorporated Norms includes specific standards for parking, local roads, and transport stops.

Regarding water transport, the target group had no specific experience or feedback on water transport legislation.

In general norms are focused to provide:

-provision of guidelines, consisting mainly of elements protruding above the pedestrian plane, in justified cases (platforms, stop areas, road crossings, etc.), elements perceptible by sticks and treads, located in the pedestrian plane (special paving with a surface that is tactilely characteristically different from the surroundings);

-identification of the immediate surroundings (e.g., the presence of spatial staircases, footbridges, platform ends, waiting rooms, etc.);

-conveying information about the surroundings and services (mainly acoustically).

- CURRENT STATE OF TRANSPORT SERVICES FOR PWD

Airport transport is generally good, minor communication issues with staff - staff training at security checks needs improvement. For blind people there are significant issues with missing tactile guidance, small lettering on boards, excessive glass surfaces, lack of Braille signs and escalator information. Orientation beacons are a positive feature.

Urban transport is overall rated as high quality, comparable to top European cities. There are significant discrepancies between big cities and rural areas. Inside vehicles are equipped with visual and audio information, newer buses/trams have large-font visual systems for the visually impaired. Outside vehicles the visual information is available, audio information often missing but orientation beacons help. There are Braille signs on buttons and for mobility-impaired assistance buttons are available.

Some obstacles they highlighted are that designated areas for disabled persons are often occupied by others, stations have non-permitted barriers like scooters, lack of sign language interpreters and materials, especially in emergencies, audio-only information for sudden changes (not suitable for deaf people), misunderstandings during security checks and queuing, insufficient tactile guidance and obstacles in guiding lines, vehicles not stopping at the start of the platform or second vehicles not continuing to the start of the stop, non-functioning acoustic information systems, malfunctioning orientation beacons, gaps between vehicles and the pavement, insufficient space at designated seats for guiding dogs, out-of-order elevators.

Road infrastructures they use when accessing the air transport is assessed very positively, only minor misunderstandings. Urban transport terminals are recently renovated with modern visual information tables. Those visual information + audio information (orientation beacons) are assessed very positively. Again, there is a huge difference between big cities and rural areas. Deaf people highlighted that sound signals at traffics lights are not sufficiently audible in noisy locations (during weekends, holidays or evening hours - sometimes completely switched off).

Regarding the accessibility of the transport terminals, in air transport there is a flight agent available but must be booked in advance and is only first available at the check-in desk (bad navigation / none from parking or bus stop). The assistance starting from the check-in desk is working great (guiding the person until she/he is seated at the plane). Information signs are very high and in small print (problem for people with reduced vision). Emergency announcements are almost always through spoken language on speakers – deaf persons cannot understand if something is going on. It is also very uncomfortable for people with reduced mobility to get on a plane (no special escalator type platform available) - in case the plane is not directly connected to the airport and there are no special seats for them on airplanes. Urban transport terminals are being renovated, featuring modern shelters with electronic visual information tables (visual live information about departures and barrier-free accessibility). In high peaks, vehicles are overcrowded making it more difficult for persons with disabilities to board in / out of the vehicle and there are often big gaps between platform and boarding (bus,

underground, tram). Other than that, there are many low-floor, accessible trams / bus (information on terminals or on-line) available.

Regarding staff knowledge, in general, the staff is very helpful. Would be advisable to complete special training how to handle people with limited mobility e.g., at security checks. Tram / bus drivers are trained to help impaired persons. Nevertheless, there is again big discrepancy between big cities and rural areas. The quality and availability of provided information to passengers with disabilities is considered to be high (new station around the city equipped with visual systems). Each terminal is equipped with printed timetables, mostly with electronic information boards displaying live departure times and barrier-free availability. Passengers with disabilities lack a unified app comprising all transport information including notifications about traffic closures and other operational changes.

For water transport they had no feedback since the target group had no specific experience.

- SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENTS

General improvements: increase awareness and training for staff across various services to handle specific needs of persons with disabilities. Ensure consistency in the functionality and maintenance of orientation beacons across different cities and rural areas. It is advisable to take into consideration the application of anti-slip spray irrigation on platforms (helping not only disabled people, but it also beneficial e.g., for elderly).

<u>Air Transport</u>

For deaf individuals: Provide interpreting services and sign language materials. Train airport staff in basic sign language. Access to interpreters when emergency.

For blind individuals: Improve tactile guidance from parking spots/bus stations to terminals. Eliminate obstacles at road crossings and ensure clear pathways without excessive glass surfaces. Provide clear information during bus transfers to planes about door opening sides.

For mobility-impaired individuals: Enhance training for airport staff on handling physically disabled persons, particularly during security checks. Increase the availability of accessible taxis. Online available information about how to travel with a wheelchair (especially regarding electric wheelchairs etc.)

<u>Urban Transport</u>

General: Equip transport stations with sign language videos. Add audio information at bus/tram/underground terminals where visual panels are used. Regularly maintain and check orientation beacons to ensure they work properly. Provide sockets/charging stations for electric wheelchairs at more locations. Same accessibility available in big cities for rural areas.

For blind individuals: Expand areas designated for blind people in buses to accommodate guiding dogs. Install more orientation beacons, particularly in smaller cities and rural areas. Regular technical controls of orientation beacons. Add acoustic information at toilets and Braille signs at seats.

For mobility-impaired individuals: Ensure new train models are fully accessible for different wheelchair sizes. Adapt charging stations for e-vehicles to be accessible for people in wheelchairs by providing ramps or lowered pavements. Address the issue of request-based bus stops that may pose challenges to people without limbs.

For deaf individuals: Ensure that emergency information is provided in written or visual formats, not just spoken.

Water Transport

The target group had no experience with water transport.

### 3.9. DPB

*Country: Slovakia*

Note: replies received for Blind and partially sighted individuals and for urban transport only.

- LEGISLATION

Legislation in the construction field is satisfactory. Majority of specifics regarding technical infrastructure are covered in the legislation.

Regarding the legislation in the field of providing information for passengers, this topic is not contained in the Slovak legislation sufficiently, or at all, when it comes specifically to the providing information in transport.

- CURRENT STATE OF TRANSPORT SERVICES FOR PWD

In general, the quality of the urban transport is evaluated very positively. According to their respondents, Slovakia and Bratislava are at very high level in terms of the quality of urban transport. Urban transport is rated as efficient due to its extensive network, high frequency of buses, trams, and trolleybuses, comprehensive area coverage, good availability of information and well-equipped modern vehicles.

Also, from the point of view of blind and visually impaired passengers, the gradual improvement of urban transport is perceived. In general, the system setup is perceived well, the problem is that not everything always works as it should. There are still some obstacles and deficiencies that blind and visually impaired people face. One of the biggest problems for blind and partially sighted persons is when not every vehicle stops at the beginning of the platform (at the stop marker), if several vehicles arrive at the stop at the same time. Although drivers are required to wait for the previous vehicle to leave and then stop at the beginning of the platform when a person with a disability is spotted, this does not always happen in practice. Another major difficulty arises when acoustic information systems (such as reporting stops within the vehicle or audio announcements about the number and direction of the line for blind persons entering the vehicle) are not working due to some technical reasons. Blind and partially sighted persons often face problems with the placement of seats in vehicles when traveling with a guide dog. Seats designed for disabled passengers frequently lack sufficient space for both the person and their guide dog. Purchasing tickets can also be challenging, as vending machines at stops are not accessible, and the app for the Integrated

Transport System of the Bratislava Region is also not fully accessible for blind people. Additionally, buying a ticket via SMS does not offer the option to purchase discounted travel tickets to which people with disabilities are entitled.

Although the road infrastructure is considered good, especially the presence of tactile guidance paths is appreciated, there are still some problems. For their target group, the biggest challenge regarding the road infrastructure are sound signals of traffic lights, which are not sufficiently audible in noisy locations or in some places they are completely switched off during weekends, holidays or evening hours. Transport terminals (bus, trolleybus and tram stops) are being renovated all around the city, to be accessible and barrier-free, featuring modern shelters and electronic visual information tables, which is appreciated among our target group. Especially electronic boards, which provide not only visual live information about the departures of buses, trolleybuses and trams, but also the possibility to play this information acoustically for blind passengers, are received very positively. Despite this, the biggest concern is considered to be the width of the platforms, which is not sufficient (especially at some stops). Additionally, sometimes there are obstacles on the platforms (columns or other equipment), placed also within the tactile guidance paths. In some cases, shelters obstruct the visibility of electronic boards for partially sighted people. All buses and trolleybuses, and most trams currently operating in Bratislava, are low-floor and accessible. Passengers with disabilities have at least two reserved and clearly marked seats located at the front of the vehicle. Our respondents rated positively that in new vehicles, these seats are visually well differentiated by their blue covers, unlike the other red seats, making them clearly visible for partially sighted persons. The downside, as mentioned above, is that in buses and trolleybuses, these seats do not provide enough space for a guide dog. Another positively evaluated aspect is that all buttons in new vehicles (buttons for opening doors and 'stop' buttons) are accompanied by Braille. Additionally, the acoustic announcement of stops in vehicles is much appreciated by blind and partially sighted passengers. However, it would be rated positive if these announcements could be replayed.

The communication and interaction with drivers were rated positively. Our respondents mostly reported good experiences, as drivers usually automatically inform blind and partially sighted passengers of the line number and destination of the vehicle they are entering. They also inquire about the passengers' intended stop and notify them upon arrival. Also, drivers typically offer assistance when needed. Blind and partially sighted passengers have had fewer positive experiences with ticket inspectors, who often fail to verbally announce their approach or completion of ticket/card checks. The quality and availability of information provided by DPB is considered to be of a high standard. Each stop is

equipped with printed timetables, and electronic information boards display live departure times and any service changes, with the option for acoustic announcements. These live updates are also accessible online on passengers' smartphones. However, passengers with disabilities lack a unified app that is fully accessible and provides all necessary information, including the ability to purchase travel tickets and receive notifications about traffic closures and other operational changes.

- SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENTS

In the field of technical infrastructure not many improvements are suggested. The improvement is suggested only when it comes to the enforceability of the legislation. Legislation aimed at providing information should define standards for printing principles, timetables, visual labelling - contrast ratios, accessibility of websites and apps and many others, as these topics are very poorly covered right now. Legislation should be harmonized with European legislation.

Their participants would also appreciate having travel assistants at stops to provide travel information to persons with disabilities. A unified smartphone app for buying tickets and providing all information, which would be fully accessible for blind people, is also suggested. Other suggestions were aimed at improving those measures that already exist, but do not always work properly.

### 3.10. ANSR

*Country: Romania*

Note: replies received for Deaf/hard of hearing and PRM individuals only.

- LEGISLATION

For Deaf/hard of hearing individuals, there is no particular benefit in air transport coming from the national law. There are no discounts for internal flights or any other type of benefit. In urban transport, if deaf persons are registered as having a disability certificate, they can receive up to 12 tickets that can be used for national transportation on the road or by railway (you must choose which one you prefer). These 12 tickets are one way or, if someone wants to go to a place and return, two tickets must be used. The law also mentions benefits for personal transportation by car, meaning a deaf person with a disability certificate could receive up to 150 euros per year for covering gas expenditures. However, one must choose between this or the aforementioned tickets. Separately, deaf persons can enjoy urban transportation free of charge including the subway system (for the ones living in Bucharest, which is the only city in Romania that has a Subway); the particular document that is given from local authorities is recognized nationally, so one can use urban transportation vehicles in other places, not just their resident towns. For rural areas, national law does not mention any special benefit, however these facilities could be related to any local regulations, such as decisions from the city hall.

For PRM, the legislative framework in Romania faces significant criticism and challenges. Legislation is ambiguous and difficult to understand, leading to widespread dysfunctions in infrastructure and public transport services. There is also the need for information sessions to better inform individuals of their rights. They also expressed concerns about the lack of adherence to the laws. Smaller towns are especially deficient in accessible transport, and they underscored the inconsistencies in the legislative framework, leading to discrimination and difficulties in accessing urban and maritime transport. Despite established legislative requirements, the implementation is hindered by financial constraints, insufficient human resources, lack of public awareness, and discrimination. Air transport is relatively more accessible, while urban transport is particularly problematic. It was noted that not all vehicles are accessible, and even when ramps are available, they are often not used. Accessibility at stations is also a major issue. Maritime transport is described as largely inaccessible, with significant risks and lack of facilities for persons with disabilities. Overall, the legislation in Romania, while existing, falls short in practical application and

enforcement, leading to significant barriers for persons with disabilities across various modes of transport.

- CURRENT STATE OF TRANSPORT SERVICES FOR PWD

For deaf persons, the situation is not that problematic. The participants declared they can use the systems rather normally, but there is still a problem when it comes to communication. Some drivers are not respectful, overall, this is considered manageable but far from ideal. Most common difficulties they encounter when traveling is lack of sign language interpreters and lack of sign language materials (adapted as such). There are problems when flights are delayed and this is not clearly understood by all deaf persons. There are extra problems outside the country because many deaf persons have difficulties with written communication. Also, in general, sound-only announcements are not accessible anyhow. The personnel are usually respectful and understanding but negative exceptions are known. For urban transport there are general problems for every citizen in terms of old vehicles, not respecting the time of arrival, even small crimes (theft), lack of SL video materials on the monitors in the vehicles. In terms of infrastructure alone, deaf persons do not consider there are big issues, except better parking spots for disabled individuals. Regarding transport terminals, not many problems were detected but deaf users would still need more information available, rather directly in written form on monitors and posters. Airport terminals are decent but not great in terms of information, for deaf people. No messages in sign language, difficult access to an interpreter in case of emergency. It depends on the airport if the information is well presented or not – the markings, the signs, the monitors etc. Emergency announcements are almost always through spoken language on speakers – deaf persons cannot understand if something is going on. Regarding staff knowledge, they lack actual knowledge about deaf people's needs especially for those who use a sign language as primary language. They do not know sign language except maybe some very isolated cases. They do not really know that for these persons an interpreter is important especially in tougher scenarios – and also, sign language video materials. Most of them do offer assistance for reaching the correct gate with no problem, they are more polite compared to bus drivers for instance. In urban transport, some of the drivers lack respect, understanding for deaf people. Some don't realize they have deaf travelers and they get surprised when they find out. Most of the staff in general do not know the needs of deaf persons, they believe they can manage everything in written form which is not always the case.

For PRM individuals, the quality of transport services in Romania varies significantly across different modes of transport, with several common issues

identified. Air transport is generally considered low quality due to inadequate accessible services for wheelchair users. Instances of untrained staff handling passengers inappropriately, leading to discomfort and safety concerns. There is lack of accessible toilets meeting national or international standards. The quality of urban transport is generally rated as poor to medium. Common issues include poorly designed infrastructure, untrained employees, and a lack of accessibility features in vehicles. Users often face challenges with uninformed passengers occupying reserved seats. Specific cities like Oradea are noted for having a higher percentage (60-70%) of accessible transport, while others, like Târgu Jiu, are making progress but still have significant room for improvement. Key areas for improvement include better training for staff, equipping all vehicles with necessary accessibility features, and changing public attitudes towards the needs of people with disabilities. For water transport there is limited feedback, but generally perceived as insufficient and lacking proper accessibility.

PRM passengers in Romania face a range of common difficulties across different modes of transport. In air transport, there is lack of specialized assistance services for individuals with physical disabilities, from entering the airport to boarding and disembarking. Smaller airports are particularly problematic, with insufficient facilities and poorly trained staff. Navigating security checks can be challenging, especially for those with metal implants. In urban transport, you can find inadequate infrastructure at stations, such as non-adapted ticket counters, toilets, and platforms, and significant height differences between curbs and vehicle platforms. Many public transport vehicles lack functional ramps or lifts, and doorways are often too narrow for wheelchairs. Staff are not properly trained to assist passengers with disabilities, leading to hostile or unhelpful attitudes. There is a lack of public awareness and respect for designated spaces for individuals with disabilities, which are often occupied by other passengers. Drivers often lack patience and do not wait for passengers with disabilities to board or find a seat safely.

PRM passengers in Romania face several challenges related to road infrastructure, which significantly impact their mobility and safety. Many pedestrian crossings are not adapted to the needs of persons with disabilities, with issues such as raised curbs, lack of tactile and visual guiding surfaces, unmarked and non-audible traffic lights, and inaccessible buttons. Bollards and other obstacles placed at crossings hinder accessibility. Sidewalks are often uneven, with potholes, protruding sewer covers, and traces of unfinished interventions on drainage systems, making them difficult to navigate for wheelchair users. Street lighting poles and other obstructions are frequently placed in the middle of sidewalks. In many areas, sidewalks lack ramps at the ends and at pedestrian crossings, with very high curbs posing significant barriers. Only

major boulevards tend to have ramps at pedestrian crossings, while peripheral areas are often completely lacking in accessibility features. Urban bus stations are undeveloped and not designed according to accessibility standards, making it difficult for persons with disabilities to use public transport effectively. In some cities, the central areas may have acceptable accessibility, but bordering and peripheral areas are severely lacking. Many terminals have infrastructure that is not aligned with accessibility standards. Issues include low curbs compared to the platform height of transport vehicles and poorly located stations inaccessible to wheelchair users. In rural areas and older terminals, accessibility is particularly limited, with insufficient implementation of accessibility standards. Specific examples include tram stations that are only accessible by stairs or require illegal road crossings, highlighting significant barriers for wheelchair users. For water transport, accessibility is poor, with issues such as non-compliant pontoons and inadequate boarding facilities on vessels. For individuals using crutches, accessibility is rated around 40%. Many airlines operating in Romania are budget-oriented, leading to limited accessibility services on their aircraft. Issues include inadequate space, lack of specific accessibility equipment like transfer seats and accessible toilets, and overly strict criteria for transporting electric wheelchairs, often at higher fares. Smaller aircraft for domestic flights frequently cannot accommodate wheelchairs, making accessibility dependent on the destination and airline. The bus fleets are often outdated and not disability-friendly, affecting individuals with locomotor, hearing, and vision impairments. Problems include poorly marked reserved seats, emergency equipment at inaccessible heights, and lack of audio announcements for stops. Accessibility varies by location. In Oradea, all buses are accessible, and trams are about 60-70% accessible, with newer vehicles being more disability-friendly. The overall accessibility of urban transport vehicles heavily depends on the age and modernization of the fleet. Airport staff attempt to follow basic protocols for assisting persons with disabilities, but these protocols are often insufficient and incorrectly applied. This highlights a pressing need for comprehensive training and awareness courses for staff to better accommodate passengers with diverse disabilities. Many urban transport employees struggle with handling passengers who require special boarding and disembarking procedures, even if they have received some training. The operation of accessibility features like ramps and bus "kneeling" is often inadequately performed or contested by drivers. Overall, the knowledge and empathy of public transportation drivers are estimated at around 60%, influenced by both upbringing and training. Some staff members, although empathetic, lack formal training, making it necessary for passengers to explain their needs. Staff in naval transport generally show a higher level of training and friendliness, with about 80% of personnel being adequately trained and empathetic. However, there are still exceptions where communication and assistance could improve.

- SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENTS

Deaf/hard of hearing individuals: Given there are no specific benefits in air transport for deaf persons, some ideas could be taken into account, such as encouraging air traveling by offering discounts for some flights, probably internal flights. Also, there are problems with access to interpreters. Basically, no airport has interpreting services. They do not even have some sign language materials, so that could be watched. There is much room for improvement in this department. In urban transport, more benefits are needed, such as more tickets for traveling to various places in the country. Also, the procedure for paying the gas expenses (150 EUROS) is very difficult for the deaf, with a lot of bureaucracy. The amount given is considered ridiculous, barely covering a bigger trip. Also, bus stations should have clear images and information accessible, panels with sign language videos if possible. For sure inside the buses and trams these should be considered normal, however there is a lack of accessible information for deaf persons. Some of the announcements are entirely audio (by speech), people who cannot hear may not know what is going on. Flight attendants may learn basic sign language skills for most common messages. This is also a good idea for all the staff in the airports. Access to interpreters including video remote interpreting is also an important element. When a ticket is purchased, there should be a way to signal that a deaf person bought it and he/she may need assistance. Regarding water transport, there is a huge need for a better involvement from the authorities so that deaf people can use this mode of transport more often in general.

Based on the feedback from individuals with locomotor disabilities, several suggestions for improving transportation services for passengers with disabilities in Romania have been identified. There is a need to simplify and clarify legislative norms to ensure better understanding and implementation, to adapt laws to address the specific needs of different types of disabilities, to conduct campaigns to raise awareness about the needs of persons with disabilities and to promote respectful and informed attitudes among the public and transportation staff.

Some suggestions regarding air transport: increase accessibility and ensure the availability of qualified staff to assist passengers with disabilities from the moment they enter the airport; improve signage and guidance, including tactile-visual markings for visually impaired passengers, advocate for authorities to enforce existing laws and regularly check for compliance proactively, rather than just responding to complaints.

Some suggestions regarding urban transport: ensure all public transport vehicles are equipped with functional ramps or lifts and that these are consistently used;

fully make stations accessible, including sidewalks and curbs; provide comprehensive training for drivers and transport staff to assist passengers with disabilities appropriately; increase the number of accessible buses and minibuses, especially in small towns; comprehensive assessment and improvement of ticket counters, staff training, infrastructure, vehicles, and digital facilities in collaboration with organizations representing persons with disabilities to enhance the overall experience.

Some suggestions regarding maritime transport: introduce or improve ramps and gangways to ensure accessible boarding from pontoons to ships; adapt facilities on private and public boats to better accommodate passengers with disabilities.

### 3.11. SOIH

*Country: Croatia*

- LEGISLATION

For deaf and hard of hearing individuals is pointed that the legislation does not cover them at all. In air transport, blind and partially sighted people view the legislative framework as satisfactory. PRM individuals acknowledged that the legislative framework exists at the EU level and has been implemented in Croatian legislation. However, implementation lacks consistency and orderliness. Urban transport regulations for PRM persons are not adequately aligned with the needs for independent living, with local communities establishing their own regulations independently. Furthermore, it is stated that the legislative framework has not sufficiently encompassed persons with disabilities in the context of water transport.

- CURRENT STATE OF TRANSPORT SERVICES FOR PWD

Experiences with air transport are generally positive, but there is a recognized need to improve the communication systems for better accessibility. Most common difficulties they encounter in this mode of transport are difficulties in communication during flight disruptions, lack of dedicated waiting areas for persons with disabilities (PWDs) at airports, especially for those with guide dogs, poor announcements on speakers both at the airport and on airplanes, which are often inaudible, reluctance to accept suggestions from PWDs for assistance, concerns about safety and potential damage to orthopedic aids, issues with electric wheelchairs meeting safety standards but experiencing problems with stopping and transfers, leading to delays. Passengers' express satisfaction with the accessibility of the road infrastructure they use when accessing air transport. The accessibility of the transport terminals they use is rated as satisfactory. In air transport, there is a lack of ability to use personal wheelchairs and inadequate restroom accommodations. Regarding staff knowledge, best understanding of procedures with PWD is in air transport.

In urban transport, there are issues with communication, particularly concerning auditory systems that are frequently out of order on public transport vehicles. Most common difficulties they encounter in this mode of transport is lack of access to and inadequate information and communication with staff, insufficient use of assistive technologies (AT), inadequate advocacy through current laws and regulations for persons with disabilities, unavailable information and lack of

consideration from other passengers, inability to board certain trams due to accessibility issues, inaccessible parts of tram and bus stations, particularly with high steps, some staff do not treat persons with disabilities kindly, and drivers may lack patience and understanding. Passengers' express satisfaction with the accessibility of the road infrastructure they use when accessing urban transport, but there is lack of guiding lines for blind, tactile surfaces, and audible signals at traffic intersections, inaccessibility of all bus stops, inaccessible stations, inadequate maintenance of transportation surfaces, frequent construction works, occupation of public areas by service activities (e.g., cafés), and frequent vehicle parking that obstructs passage. In urban transport, digital accessibility is needed, information about transferring from one terminal to another is necessary (e.g., from the main station to the railway) – important to introduce a digital schedule information system with connectivity options to other modes of transport. Communication accessibility does not meet expectations; proposing the need for education of blind individuals during the procurement of each new vehicle. Regarding staff knowledge, trainings conducted within the framework of the ETM (European Mobility Week) show significant results because persons with disabilities (PWDs) articulate the difficulties they face during transportation. Subsequently, drivers express the challenges they encounter, and then collaborative agreements are reached to propose solutions. All PWDs participate in these discussions. For example, issues like the exit button being pressed by an assistant, display malfunctions posing problems for the hearing impaired, and insufficient information are addressed.

Regarding water transport, passengers with disabilities feel insufficiently supported with information in water transport. Blind individuals face challenges with orientation at ports and on vessels. Some progress has been observed on certain ferries and catamarans, but overall adaptation for persons with reduced mobility (PRM) remains inadequate for ensuring their security and comfort. Most common difficulties they encounter in this mode of transport are issues with accessibility to information, difficulty with orientation at ports and inside vessels and not all ferries and vessels are adapted for persons with disabilities, leading to limiting accessibility and comfort during travel. Water transport needs better maintenance of road access surfaces and installation of guiding lines and tactile surfaces. Not all ports and harbors are adapted and accessible, nor are additional facilities near the ports. Water transport terminals are insufficiently equipped for all types of disabilities, with few examples of good practice like Zadar. Information about the transport chain (e.g., from arriving at the railway station to reaching the ferry) is lacking. Regarding staff knowledge, the staff are not educated; education is needed.

- SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENTS

Regarding air transport: To address the issue of informing deaf individuals during flights. Improved digital connectivity with mobile devices, ensuring passengers have access to all critical information at all times – establish a system where individuals on the plane can use a mobile phone that does not interfere with the navigation system. To better ensure methods for boarding and disembarking from planes, and possibly seating near aisles (not by windows), resolve the issue of inaccessible toilets on planes; introduce accessible apps with clearer instructions – standardize rules/capabilities across all airlines and provide real-time information. Harmonize service quality across all airports, technical aids for transfer assistance, and staff education.

Specifically for deaf people: Implement visual alerts or notifications for important announcements such as safety instructions, turbulence warnings, and landing procedures. This could include flashing lights or visual displays on seat-back screens. Provide text-based communication options via in-flight entertainment systems or personal electronic devices. This could involve displaying text on screens or offering real-time chat options. Make sign language interpreters available on flights for critical communications. Airlines could offer this service upon request or during specific phases of the flight. Provide assistive technology devices such as hearing loop systems or induction loops that amplify announcements directly to hearing aids. Ensure that all safety information and announcements are available in accessible formats prior to the flight, such as on the airline's website or through pre-flight communications.

Specifically for blind people: Ensure all important announcements are also made audibly, including safety instructions, flight updates, and arrival information. Train flight attendants to provide personalized assistance to blind passengers, including verbal descriptions of meals, cabin layout, and any necessary assistance during the flight. Offer pre-flight briefings or orientation sessions for blind passengers to familiarize themselves with the aircraft layout, safety procedures, and available amenities. Develop or utilize smartphone apps that provide real-time flight information, boarding announcements, and onboard services accessible via audio or tactile interfaces.

Specifically for PRM people: Development of a written protocol for handling passengers using electric wheelchairs. Consideration of introducing/adding a special boarding line for PWDs; provision of rest zones specially adapted for PWDs (seats, backrests...), information desk for PWD; priority boarding (not just for persons with airport support); accessible toilets; ensuring additional benefits for PWDs and companions (no existing privileges, e.g., cheaper/free baggage). Ensure

there are accessible lavatories onboard equipped with grab bars, call buttons, and sufficient space for maneuverability.

Regarding urban transport: Implement a system with external and internal visual announcements, introduce a digital schedule information system, and enable integration with other transport options. Introduce a digital schedule information system with connectivity options to other modes of transport, audible announcements inside and outside vehicles, installation of tactile surfaces at all stations, and improved driver education. Introduce low-floor buses and trams on all routes, educating all drivers, installing adapted restrooms at all major stations, introducing accessible real-time information; urban transport is still insufficiently accessible, introducing on-demand public transport services in all cities (dial-a-ride public transport for PWDs), tailored to demand rather than as a single vehicle solution.
Specifically for deaf people: Install visual information displays at bus and tram stops as well as inside vehicles. These displays should provide real-time information about routes, schedules, and any service disruptions. Visual displays can include text-based information and graphical representations. Implement inductive loop systems or hearing loops in public transport vehicles and stations. These systems transmit audio announcements directly to hearing aids equipped with telecoils, allowing deaf passengers to hear announcements clearly without background noise. Offer text messaging services or apps that provide real-time updates and alerts about transit services. Deaf passengers can receive notifications on their smartphones or other mobile devices, ensuring they are informed of any changes or delays. Ensure that all signage, including route maps, station names, and safety instructions, is clear, well-lit, and easy to understand visually. Use universally recognized symbols and icons to convey information effectively.

Specifically for blind people: Ensure that all bus and tram announcements are audibly announced, including upcoming stops and route changes. This can be achieved through automated announcements or by drivers making clear verbal announcements. Install tactile maps and guides at key stations and stops to assist blind passengers in navigating the transport network independently. These maps should include raised symbols, braille labels, and auditory information. Provide accessible ticketing machines and information boards with tactile features and audible instructions. Additionally, offer alternative formats for schedules and route information, such as braille or digital formats that can be accessed via smartphones or other devices.

Specifically for PRM people: Universal Design - urban transportation should adopt universal design to be accessible to a larger number of persons with disabilities. This practice should be legally standardized. Universal design includes low floors

in vehicles (level with the station), accessible ramps, wide doors, and other elements that facilitate boarding and disembarking. This is especially needed outside of the City of Zagreb. Visibility of Accessible Stations: It would be beneficial if accessible stations were clearly marked. This information should be visible at the stations themselves, on the internet, in mobile applications, and even on screens inside public transportation vehicles. This would facilitate trip planning for people with disabilities and reduce stress and uncertainty.

Regarding water transport: Establish a better information system at docks and on ferries. Implement a voice announcement system at ports and in vehicles. Ensure accessibility on all vessels, activate existing but unused elevators, enhance staff training, digitize systems, establish accessible toilets, and adapt ports (taking Zadar ferry port as a good practice example).

Specifically for deaf people: More advocacy campaigns, collaboration with disability organizations, use of assistive technology in all modes of transport, at terminals, adaptation, raising awareness among staff about accessibility and communication with people with disabilities.

Specifically for blind people: Implement tactile maps, braille signage, and auditory announcements throughout the vessel to aid navigation and provide essential information. Ensure policies and facilities are in place to accommodate guide dogs, including designated relief areas and accessible pathways. Equip vessels with accessible technology, such as screen readers or audio guides, to provide real-time information and enhance navigation. Apply universal design principles in the layout and facilities onboard, ensuring ease of movement, clear pathways, and accessible amenities.

Specifically for PRM people: The legislative framework functions well on all ferry routes with a public service obligation, but there is no obligation on seasonal routes without a public service obligation. Development of a written protocol for handling passengers using electric wheelchairs. Ensure that all vessels are equipped with accessible boarding ramps or lifts to facilitate easy embarkation and disembarkation for passengers with reduced mobility. Allocate specific areas on board that are easily accessible and have adequate space for wheelchair maneuverability. These areas should be clearly marked and equipped with appropriate seating. Implement digital information systems onboard to provide real-time information about schedules, services, and emergency procedures in accessible formats. Incorporate universal design principles in the layout and amenities of the vessels, such as wide corridors, low thresholds, and tactile indicators, to enhance accessibility for all passengers.

### 3.12. BATTI

*Country: Bulgaria*

- LEGISLATION

The legislative framework is well regulated for persons with disabilities for all three modes of transport. There are laws, but the problem comes from the fact that they are not respected or circumvented. More effective monitoring measures and stricter penalties for non-compliance should be introduced.

- CURRENT STATE OF TRANSPORT SERVICES FOR PWD

All modes of transport are rated very bad and they need urgent improvements. Staff do not have special knowledge on how to interact with disabled people. However, most of the time the attitude is good and the staff are willing to help.

The most common difficulty they encounter when using air transport is the orientation of the terminals and the moment before boarding the plane. There are no tactile aisles at the airport. It is difficult for visually impaired people to get from the terminal to the plane when passengers are walking. There are no tactile paths. There is no flight attendant or ramp agent to escort passengers. Information signs are very high and in small print, which is a problem for people with reduced vision. Beeps can be confusing. There is no sign to indicate where the doors are. Going through a scanner is also not suitable for the visually impaired. Orientation is almost impossible without a companion. For people with mobility problems, it is extremely uncomfortable to get on a plane. There is no escalator type platform available to facilitate the boarding process. There are no special seats on airplanes for PWDs. At the airport, people are not really trained to interact with people with different types of disabilities. There was a case where they forced a blind person to be moved with the help of a wheelchair, which is extremely unethical and disrespectful. Information signs are very high and in small print, which is a problem for people with reduced vision. There is no app that makes it easy to access information about departing and arriving flights.

Regarding urban transport, it is difficult for visually impaired people to know which bus is coming and to navigate where to get on. Orientation from, to and at bus stations and railway stations is difficult due to lack of appropriate infrastructure and information systems. Tactile paths and pedestrian paths in the urban environment are often interrupted by trees, buildings, bike lanes. Municipal scooters and bicycles that are rented are subsequently left in unmarked spaces, creating additional obstacles. People ride scooters and bicycles on footpaths

despite laws against it. There are no accessible lanes for electric wheelchairs and they are often part of the traffic, which is dangerous. Blind buttons on traffic lights don't always work. When they are on the peg, they are often placed in such a way that they hinder rather than help. The infrastructure is not well maintained. Information signs give confusing beeps. Audio systems were introduced at bus stops to announce which bus was arriving, but these were not accurate, were then not maintained and are now defunct in most places. A visually impaired person has to ask others which bus is coming, and if no one else is there, it often happens that the passenger misses the bus. At railway stations, there are no tactile paths and no sound system - announcements of which train is arriving are not enough. Buses are overcrowded and this makes it even more difficult for PWDs to board the vehicle. Optimization of the schedule and increase in the number of vehicles is required. Electric buses are quite quiet and this is also a prerequisite for dangerous situations for a blind person. When the doors open without an additional signal, it is difficult for a blind person to navigate exactly where the door is to get in. Ticket machines on the bus are not adapted for people with visual or mobility impairments. Boarding a train is difficult and almost impossible without assistance for a person with visual or motor impairments. The shortcomings of public transport are that there are no conductors and no one to help with orientation. Due to the traffic and the busy schedule, the drivers are in a hurry and pass the stops or stop for such a short period that a blind person does not have time to find out which number the bus is. Often the front door to the driver does not open and there is no way to ask for help. Buses stop and go very abruptly. In trains, the conductors are fine - they help and assist as much as they can. But at the stations, the employees are not kind and empathetic. Not all buses have an audio system available that announces the next stop and which stop the passenger is at. The illuminated signs on the buses that indicate which number the bus is, often do not work. There is not always an employee at the information counter at the Railway Stations.

For water transport, no specific answers and ratings were given to the following questions, as most of the participants never used it or used it extremely rarely. This type of transport is not available and is quite dangerous for them. That's why they avoid it.

- SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENTS

For all three modes of transport improvements are needed in the infrastructure, in the training of employees. It is recommended to implement new technologies that improve the transport environment and facilitate the daily life of persons with disabilities. Laws to be changed after consultation with disabled people's

associations. Infrastructure projects should be more carefully reviewed before they are implemented and PWDs should be taken into account. More effective monitoring measures and stricter sanctions for non-compliance. It is recommended to implement new technologies that improve the transport environment and facilitate the daily life of persons with disabilities

Bus drivers should be further trained. When a person is alone at the bus stop and does not signal to the driver that he wants to get on the bus, he often does not stop and passes the bus stop. And a person who cannot see cannot indicate which bus he wants to get on.

Good practices, which people with reduced vision recognize and would like to be implemented in Bulgaria are the following:

- There should be a computer available at the terminals that reads text using a voice synthesizer. It is used with its own headphones and thus receives the desired information and at the same time does not disturb other passengers.
- At the airport, there should be special small buses for PWDs.
- There are currently sound and visual boards available as two different devices. It is recommended that they be synchronized in one device so that the transmitted information is more accurate.
- There used to be small remote devices, specifically for blind people, that announced which bus number was coming. This was done using a transmitter on the bus. The problem came from the fact that the bus drivers did not always change the transmitter when changing the bus number, again it was not well maintained and this innovation fell out of practice. The representatives of the Union of the Blind find it really useful and would like it to be active again.
- Every first seat in train carriages should be for PWDs.
- Social services offer a service for a person in need to call and have a future assistant sent to help with mobility. This service needs to be better promoted because even some of the workshop participants were not familiar with it. The information was shared by a member of the Union of the Blind.

### 3.13. RMO

*Country: Moldova*

Note: replies received for air transport only.

- LEGISLATION

Regulation (EC) 1107/2006 of the European Parliament and the Council, National Facilitation Programme of the Republic of Moldova, Annex 9 to the Chicago Convention ICAO, ECAC Doc 30 obliges the Chisinau International Airport to provide a special assistance to persons with disabilities and persons with reduced mobility (PRM) during their use of air transport.

Definition “disabled person” or “person with reduced mobility“ (PRM) means any person, whose mobility when using transport is reduced due to any physical disability (sensory or locomotor, permanent or temporary), intellectual disability or impairment or any other cause of disability or age and whose situation needs appropriate attention and the adaptation to his or her particular needs of the service made available to all passengers.

- CURRENT STATE OF TRANSPORT SERVICES FOR PWD

The vast majority of aspects evaluated at RMO has been classified as accessible and acceptable). The overall need for intervention is low. The representative of association for passengers with vision impairment point that there are some difficulties in the terminal, a point of concern in multiple areas is the lacking visual contrast in navigation (signs) and the existence of glare. Unfortunately, no personal assistive technologies of any kind are in operation throughout the airport. Furthermore, there is no TWSI guidance, and the design of the pathways is inappropriate in the car park area. Check – in counters and passport control counters are no completely accessible for wheelchair users. The signs throughout the airport are not readable for persons with visual impairments due to the fact that the color, the contrast and the font used are inadequate, and there is a lot of glares. At the RMO Airport handling agent provides the following assistance to PRM(s) - assistance during boarding/disembarkation the Aircraft (to/from Aircraft) if necessary. For above assistance handling agents provide equipment for PRM, which has to be compliant with the recommendations of ECAC Doc. 30 Part 1 Section 5. During the workshop the representative of Chisinau International Airport explained that at the RMO Airport handling agents provide the following assistance to the persons with disabilities:

- Assistance at check-in counter;
- Assistance with security procedures;
- Assistance with customs and emigration procedures;
- Assistance through the terminal to the departure gate;
- Assistance during boarding/disembarkation the Aircraft (to/from Aircraft);
- Assistance at the luggage belt (assistance with all PRM passenger luggage);
- Assistance at lost & found counter;

All above service is provided by trained staff - initial training for newly appointed staff upon beginning and refresh in accordance with the training manuals.

Regarding provided information, forms on the website cannot be filled out using accessible software, and the app does not comply with W3C levels and does not provide accessibility information on the building urban transport. No video call service for passengers with hearing impairments is provided. Unfortunately, no personal assistive technologies of any kind are in operation throughout the airport

- SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENTS

Areas in which improvements are suggested are in terminal, parking zone, IT technologies, web site.

### 3.14. BSVÖ & WU

*Country: Austria*

- LEGISLATION

The legal framework varies depending on the transport mode under consideration. In general, the air transport is well-regulated, so is the international rail transport. However, when it comes to local rail transport as well as urban public transport, there is still a lot of room for amelioration. The participants of the workshop were not aware which laws and regulations apply to water transport, and if there are any. It is seen as problematic that no „global" regulation or law exists for all modes of transport. In existing regulations, there are too many exceptions. The EU regulations cannot be, or have not been yet, implemented in several areas of concern. The legal framework is difficult to understand, especially for the less experienced public transport users as well as for those who are not concerned by the regulations as to passenger rights and/or rights of passengers with disabilities. The legal framework is barely existent, or even non-existent, for on-demand transportation and for long-distance bus transport (esp. international). The taxis are only regulated by bodies such as the Chamber of Economy (Wirtschaftskammer Österreich, WKO), but not on a federal/national level from an official government institution. There is little opportunity to complain about local transport. In the case of buses, it is impossible to determine which operator is running them and this makes it impossible to contact them and to complain; there are hardly any legal means of control. Standardization of definitions in regulations would be desirable. Uniform pricing regulations for the whole of Austria would make things easier (now left to the individual operators). Lack of implementation of existing regulations e.g., attention field in front of level crossing.

- CURRENT STATE OF TRANSPORT SERVICES FOR PWD

The main question which a person with disabilities asks themselves is to what extent are they able to use a specific transport mode or a specific transport option autonomously / on their own, without any help from other people? Is it necessary to ask for and accept help from other people when using this transport option? Most common difficulties they encounter when traveling are listed below. Information (flow) about delays, cancellations, disruptions, track changes, alternatives and connecting transport options, is not at all sufficient and not satisfactory. Lack of acoustic signals (stations are not announced, incorrect station announcements, etc.) - especially at double stops this is very confusing for BPS

travellers. Only 1 attention field at the front of a vehicle which is often not observed or missing, therefore no orientation is possibility for BPS people. In case of rail transport, there is still old inaccessible rolling stock in service. Furthermore, more and more stations are not manned. The combination of both makes rail travel not possible for passengers with disabilities. When it comes to water transport, the ships are often old and inaccessible, and so are the ports. International long-distance bus travel is barely possible for wheelchair users. Malfunctioning elevators is also a big point of concern; what is even more concerning is the fact that the passengers are not informed about this fact beforehand. The increasing demand for public transport is not helping with the accessibility issues. The main points of concern here are the “competition” with prams and bicycles on vehicles, as well as general “comfort problems”. Poorly trained staff. Regarding road infrastructure, it is the point of concern, which is adjacent to the transport terminal, but does not belong to it anymore. It is often the case that the transport terminal infrastructure is perfectly accessible, but the urban infrastructure (pavements, curbs, …) is not at all accessible or only accessible with external help. This disturbs a seamless, fully accessible travel chain. There is a lack of attention fields at stops. There are no barrier-free stops in rural regions. Scooters, etc. obstruct tactile guiding systems. Stops cannot be found because they are not defined as such although there are regulations on what they should look like. Shared spaces/cycle paths sometimes run between stops and sidewalks and over tactile guidance systems. At roadway stops (there is a roadway in between the stop and the sidewalk) you cannot hear the streetcar approaching and it is very dangerous to cross for BPS people. Incomplete traffic light systems: no green, no acoustic signal or you cannot hear that it is red; you cannot cross independently. Roadworks’s safety barriers along the route are sometimes inadequate or not implemented in accordance with strict legal requirements. The accessibility of the transport terminal varies strongly across different regions and across different transport modes. Airports usually work quite well. It is often the case that there are not enough elevators provided, especially in case of malfunction. In case of the local transport company, Wiener Linien, a test phase has been started to announce the line and the direction of travel on several stops with use of speakers on the vehicle as soon as they arrive at the stop. This is a wrong solution, though, since the announcements cannot be clearly understood, and they overlap when there are multiple vehicles at one stop. Finding the escalator is difficult when it is not in operation. A solution introduced in Germany, concerning escalators moving in both directions depending on which one is needed, has been proposed. Bus stations are not barrier-free, there often are no announcements, boarding and alighting points are not identical or change, is not possible without assistance or technical aids to use them.

The Austrian Federal Railways, ÖBB, provide an assistance service which can be booked before travel. This assistance service is only provided to the door of the train, and not within the train itself, which is not optimal. Finding the reserved seat in the train poses problems since the placards with seat numbers are positioned at a considerable height and cannot be easily read. In the newer vehicles, ÖBB has decided against installing seat number placards in Braille. The signage of seats for persons with disabilities on trains is altogether bad, with only a placard. The new vehicles for the Viennese metro (X-Wagen) are better, since the seats are blue and clearly distinguishable from the other seats. A major problem is the ruthless behavior of other passengers, e.g., when it comes to vacating a seat for persons who need it more. Handles to hold on to easily are important. Stop request button gives no haptic or acoustic feedback which makes it hard to know whether it worked. Underground and trams are poorly maintained, therefore one can't hear the announcements properly. More loudspeakers in the carriages for better quality are needed. The carriage numbers are also difficult for visually impaired people to read as they are written too small. In the toilets, there are often only buttons for opening/closing the door. This is often difficult for a blind person to find. Even if there are only buttons in the toilet without any labelling, you don't know what you can do with which button. Buttons that you have to press with your feet to turn on the water are also very unpleasant. Blind people usually can't find them. It would be great for blind/visually impaired people if they could read the current menu of the on-board restaurant/bistro on their cell phone. This could be done, for example, with a QR code that is easy to find and recognize.

There is still a problem with transport staff communicating in a wrong way with passengers with impairments (comments, making a face, “side eye”, ...). An urgent need for sensitization and empathy training exists! A plus point is that transport companies such as ÖBB provide lessons about handling people with disabilities within their training programs and cooperate with initiatives (MyAbility) in this regard. But there is no quality assurance and there are no consequences for staff members if they do not comply. Air travel works very well. Urban transport and shipping almost don’t work. All in all, an information (flow) deficit exists. When it comes to rail transport, the vehicles are actually accessible, but there are many disruptions or services that are non-operational. These disruptions are not well communicated to the passengers. Correct real-time information in digital form is needed. Good examples: Ticket machines with voice response; accessible timetable information via apps from transport operators (some are better than others, information is often incorrect); “Simply Go”, which offers GPS-controlled ticket sales directly at the station and the EU-projects “Ways4Me” and “WaystoGo”; reduced prices for travelers with disabilities.

- SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENTS

In general, the railway transport falls behind when it comes to services or amenities for passengers with disabilities or impairments. There are different regulations in different countries when it comes to the assistance for persons with disabilities who need it – this may lead to discrimination. International recognition of foreign national identity cards for people with disabilities is to be striven for. The assistance for passengers for international flights is not free of charge – this should be changed to avoid discrimination. Some other suggestions:

- A solution from Germany that the security line on the platform also serves the purpose of TWSI – this makes it possible to avoid that people are standing on the TWSI and are obstructing the way for passengers with visual impairments.
- Information (flow) on disruptions, delays and cancellations should be made available everywhere and be more reliable.
- The services and amenities provided at railway stations should be unified and made available at each station.
- Creation of awareness and sensitization should be addressed, both when it comes to the transport companies themselves, but also when it comes to the greater public. There should be more training services provided by the transport companies to their staff with regard to handling passengers with impairments and communicating with them.
- The transport modes used daily (for which the demand is the most important) should clearly be prioritized.
- Maybe it is a good idea to use existing solutions that function elsewhere – and not necessarily invent something completely new?
- Acoustic signals that are correctly positioned, e.g., at a height of 180 cm.
- trained staff.
- Even unforeseen changes must be clearly perceptible; disruption announcements must not overplay station announcements.
- Announcements on the train must be louder.
- Cooperation with disability organizations and experts is needed.
- Automatic and audible door opening.
- Enough time for boarding.

# 4. WORKSHOP RESULTS THAT EMERGED AS THE MOST COMMON RESPONSES

This chapter details the outcomes of workshops conducted across various countries, focusing on the most frequently mentioned responses. It synthesizes common themes and insights that emerged, providing a comprehensive overview of shared perspectives. The findings highlight the similarities in experiences and challenges faced by participants, regardless of their geographical location.

## 4.1. Assessment of legislation related to transport services for PWD

*Overall conclusions*

**Legislation vs. Practice:** Legal frameworks are often better in theory than in practice, with significant gaps in implementation.

**Knowledge gaps:** There is a general lack of widespread knowledge about the legal framework for accessible transportation, which suggests a need for better dissemination and education.

**Inconsistencies:** Inconsistencies across services and countries hinder effective implementation.

**Accessibility of information:** Information needs to be available in accessible formats to ensure that people with various disabilities are aware of their rights and the relevant legislation.

**Need for sanctions:** Effective sanctions for non-compliance are necessary to ensure laws are followed.

These conclusions underscore the need for improved practical implementation, better dissemination of information, and consistent enforcement of legal standards to enhance accessibility in transportation services for persons with disabilities.

## 4.2. Current state of transport services for PWD

From the collected PPs reports, general conclusions about the satisfaction of persons with disabilities (PWD) regarding transportation services are as follows:

*Air transport*

**High ratings:** Generally, airport services receive high ratings, particularly the PRM (Passengers with Reduced Mobility) services at Dubrovnik Airport. However, several areas for improvement are noted, such as counter heights, space at security checks, and the narrowness of airplane corridors.

**Communication and information:** For deaf and hard of hearing individuals, visual information systems at airports are appreciated but often malfunction. There is a need for light signals and better visual notifications for flight schedules and gate changes.

**Mobility and assistance:** Issues with the accessibility of airport transport vehicles, the need for continuous tactile pavement markings, and better assistance from staff are highlighted. The cumbersome process for parking permits and lack of clear rules for guide dogs are also points of concern.

**Staff training and awareness:** Continuous staff training, particularly in sign language and awareness of the needs of PWD, is crucial. Educating both staff and PWD about available services is necessary to improve the overall experience.

*Urban transport:*

**Accessibility improvements needed:** While there is some satisfaction with the accessibility of urban public transport (e.g., buses in Dubrovnik), there is a significant need for improvement. Announcements at bus stops and in buses, especially sound and visual announcements, are crucial. However, delays in implementing these features and technical issues reduce satisfaction.

**Staff training:** The need for better staff training, especially in communication with PWD (including sign language), is frequently mentioned. Staff often address the assistants of PWD rather than the individuals themselves, which is a point of dissatisfaction.

**Infrastructure deficiencies:** The lack of accessible sidewalks and tactile guide lanes poses challenges for PWD. Bus stations and stops require better design and maintenance to ensure safety and ease of use.

*Water transport:*

**Unsatisfactory accessibility:** Maritime transport, especially services to local islands and passenger terminals, is generally rated unsatisfactory. Improvements

such as cranes, expanding ramps, and better signage (tactile and Braille) are recommended.

**Communication challenges:** Similar to other modes of transport, the need for clear announcements and information about delays or changes is essential for both deaf and hard-of-hearing and blind passengers.

*General observations:*

**Lack of independence:** PWD often feel that independent travel is almost impossible due to various barriers, including insufficient staff training, inadequate infrastructure, and lack of appropriate equipment.

**Uniformity in services:** There is a significant issue with the inconsistency of services and facilities across different transport modes and locations. This inconsistency makes it difficult for PWD to rely on public transport for regular use.

**Technological solutions:** The use of technology, such as apps for notifications and information, is seen as beneficial but often not fully accessible. Improvements in the design and functionality of these tools are needed.

**Cultural and educational shift:** There is a strong emphasis on the need for a cultural shift towards inclusivity, which involves educating both service providers and the general public about the needs and rights of PWD.

Overall, while there are positive developments and high ratings in specific areas, the overall satisfaction of PWD with transport services remains mixed, with a strong call for better infrastructure, consistent services, improved staff training, and greater awareness and understanding of their needs.

### 4.3. Proposals for enhancing existing conditions

- **Accessibility across all transport modes:** Ensure comprehensive accessibility for all transport modes, including public transport, air, maritime, and urban transport. Make infrastructure adaptations for wheelchairs, the blind, visually impaired, and deaf individuals.
- **Staff training and sensitization:** Implement uniform, comprehensive training for all staff, including sign language basics and sensitization to the needs of PWD. Regular and continuous training to handle specific needs of PWD effectively and respectfully.

- **Information accessibility:** Ensure all transportation-related information (websites, schedules, announcements) is available in accessible formats (visual, tactile, auditory). Place flight and transport information monitors at eye level and ensure they display information at a pace that is easy to follow.
- **Priority services and assistance:** Provide priority lanes or dedicated corridors at security checks and other service points to reduce waiting times for PWD. Ensure immediate assistance is available from the moment a PWD enters the transport area.
- **Technological solutions:** Develop and expand navigation and information applications to assist PWD in finding services and navigating transport hubs independently. Ensure apps are accessible and include features such as visual announcements, tactile elements, and high-contrast fonts.
- **Infrastructure improvements:** Install ramps, elevators, tactile strips, and handrails to improve physical accessibility at all transport hubs and vehicles. Adapt counters, desks, and public toilets to be accessible for people of short stature and those in wheelchairs.
- **Legislation and standards:** Harmonize regulations and standards with international conventions and best practices. Collect good practices, validate them, and create standardized procedures before implementing new regulations. Strengthen penal policies for non-compliance with accessibility standards.
- **Public awareness and participation:** Increase public awareness campaigns about the needs and rights of PWD in transportation. Involve PWD in the design and implementation of transport improvements to ensure their needs are met effectively.
- **Enhanced communication:** Equip transport vehicles and hubs with visual and auditory announcement systems, and improve the clarity and quality of these systems. Ensure information on disruptions, delays, and changes is reliably and clearly communicated.
- **Inclusive design and services:** Model accessibility services after successful examples from other regions. Enhance cooperation with civil society organizations and NGOs to better understand and address the needs of PWD. Regularly review and evaluate accessibility measures to ensure continuous improvement.

By focusing on these common suggestions, significant progress can be made towards creating an inclusive and accessible transportation system for persons with disabilities.

# 5. OVERVIEW OF THE ONLINE SURVEY

In this section, we present a comprehensive overview of the online survey conducted for this project. This includes the design and development of the survey instrument, the sampling methodology employed, the distribution channels used to reach participants, and the data collection process. We also provide an analysis of the response rate by countries and some demographic characteristics of the survey respondents. This foundational understanding of the survey framework sets the stage for the subsequent analysis and interpretation of the data collected.

Firstly, this chapter details the meticulous process behind the creation, deployment, and execution of the online survey conducted as part of our project. The primary objective of this survey was to gather insights and perspectives on the necessity of improving the accessibility and availability of transportation services for individuals with disabilities and reduced mobility.

## 5.1. Survey instrument design and development

The survey was developed through a collaborative effort involving SOIH, ANSR and BSVÖ. Questionnaire was in Google Forms and was designed to be multilingual, accommodating the official languages of all project partners, ensuring inclusivity and comprehensibility for a diverse respondent base.

The questionnaire featured predominantly closed-ended questions, employing satisfaction scales to gauge respondents' experiences and opinions accurately. To allow for more detailed feedback, the final question was open-ended, inviting any additional comments or suggestions. Key demographic information was also collected, including respondents' country of residence, age, and type of disability.

## 5.2. Sampling methodology

The target group for this survey consisted of individuals with disabilities. The sampling methodology was purposive, aiming to reach a specific population segment whose feedback was crucial to the project's aims. Given the specialized nature of the target group, a non-probability sampling approach was deemed most appropriate to ensure that the collected data would be relevant and insightful.

### 5.3. Distribution channels

To effectively reach the intended respondents, the survey was distributed through various organizations dedicated to supporting persons with disabilities. Each project partner disseminated the survey link to relevant organizations within their respective countries. These organizations, in turn, forwarded the link to their members and networks via email, maximizing outreach and participation. This multi-tiered distribution strategy helped ensure that the survey reached a broad and representative sample of the target demographic.

### 5.4. Data collection process

The survey was conducted from the beginning of June until June 21st. During this period, responses were collected and monitored to ensure a steady inflow of data. The data collection process was streamlined to encourage maximum participation while maintaining the integrity and confidentiality of the responses. Regular follow-ups and reminders were sent to participating organizations to boost response rates and ensure comprehensive data collection.

By the end of the data collection period, we had garnered valuable feedback from a significant number of participants, providing a robust dataset for subsequent analysis. The insights obtained from this survey are instrumental in understanding the current state of transportation accessibility for individuals with disabilities and identifying areas for improvement. This chapter lays the groundwork for the detailed analysis and discussion presented in the following sections, highlighting the critical need for enhanced transportation services for this often-overlooked demographic.

### 5.5. Data analysis

In this section, we begin by presenting the demographic data crucial to this project. Specifically, we focus on the respondents' country of residence, age, and type of disability.

We received a total of 623 responses. The highest number of responses came from Croatia (150) and Hungary (104), followed by the Czech Republic (84), Romania (60), Bulgaria (52), and Slovenia (48). The countries with the fewest responses were Moldova (28), Slovakia (25), Montenegro (23), Austria (19), and Bosnia and Herzegovina (19). Additionally, 19 respondents indicated that they were from other countries.

Regarding the age distribution of the respondents, the majority were between 31-50 years old, totaling 294 individuals. This was followed by 169 respondents in the 51-70 age group, 109 respondents aged 18-30, and 51 respondents aged 71 and older.

Concerning the type of disability among the respondents, 227 individuals identified as having reduced mobility, 161 as blind or visually impaired, and 120 as deaf or hard of hearing. Additionally, 115 respondents indicated that they did not have any disability. For these respondents, the survey ended immediately, resulting in a total of 509 relevant responses for the subsequent analysis.

The analysis of these demographics is illustrated in the following charts.

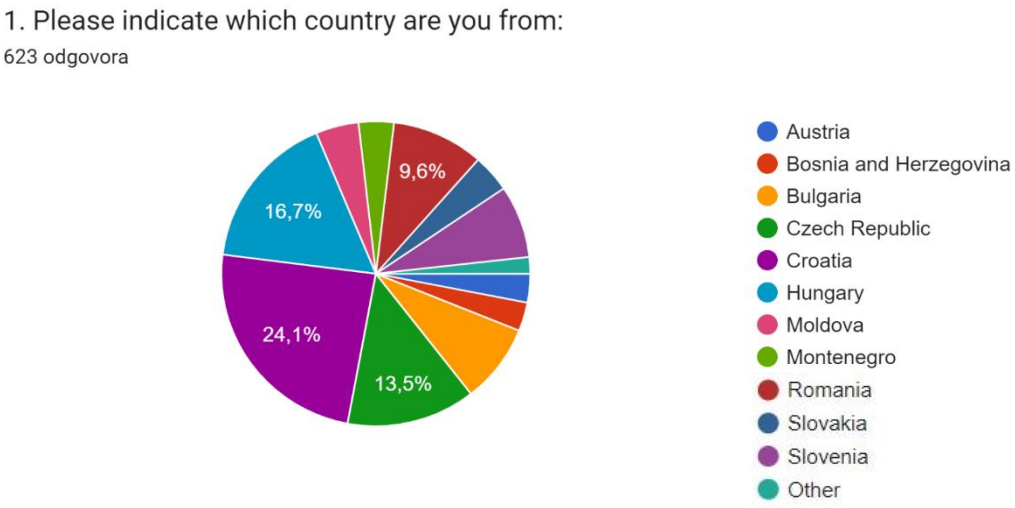


*Chart 1. Distribution of survey responses by country of residence.*

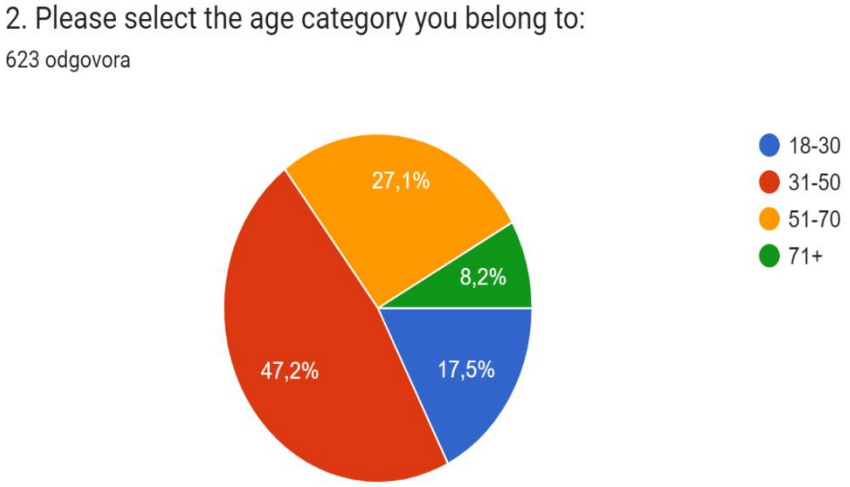


*Chart 2. Distribution of survey responses by age category*.

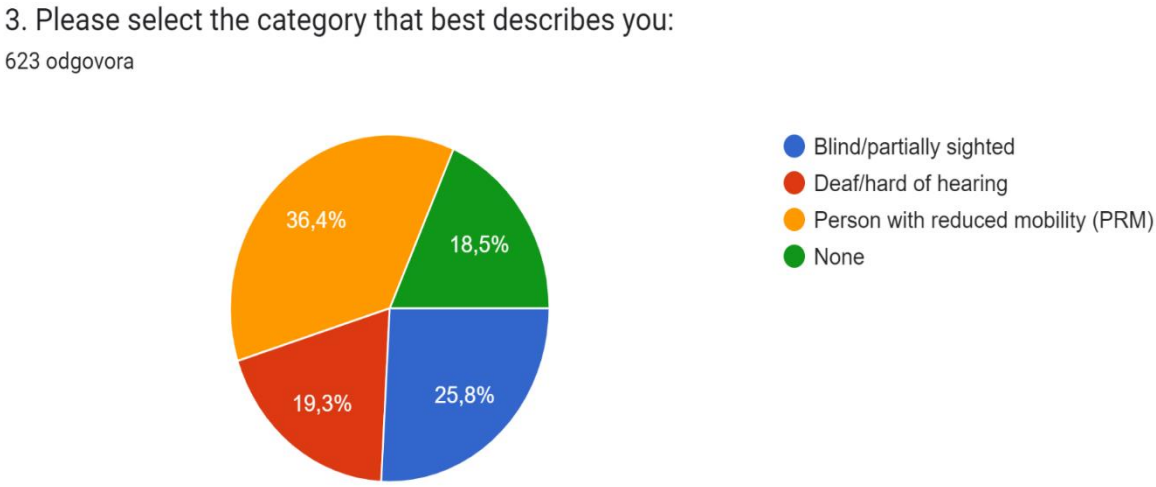


*Chart 3. Distribution of survey responses by type of disability.*

In the next question, we examined how frequently persons with disabilities utilize various modes of transportation, specifically focusing on air, urban, and water transport. For both air and water transport, the majority of responses indicated that these modes of transport are never or very rarely used. In contrast, urban transport was reported to be used daily by most respondents.

The results are shown in the following graph.

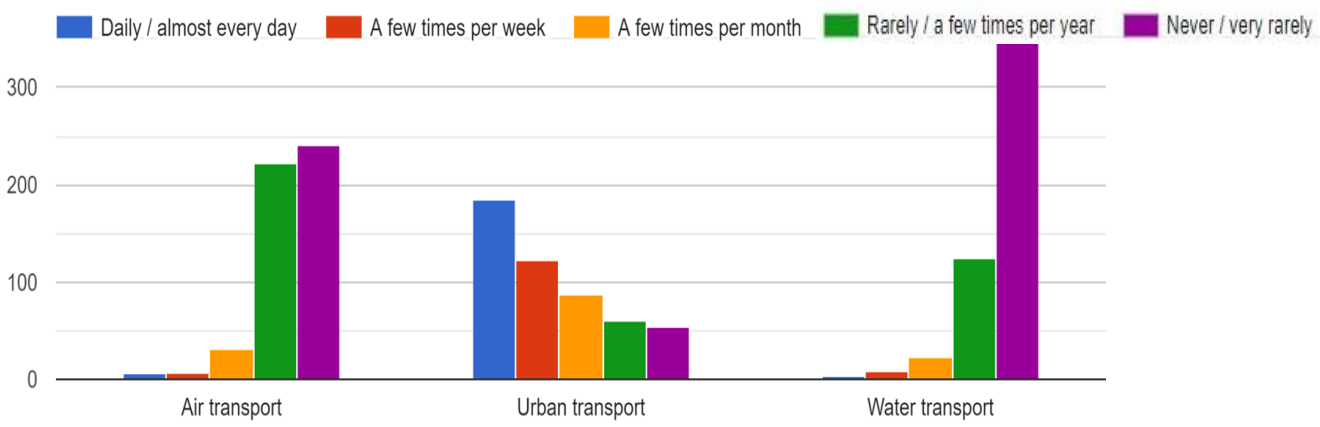


*Chart 4. Frequency of use of different modes of transportation by persons with disabilities.*

The data reveal distinct patterns in the use of different transportation modes by persons with disabilities. The infrequent use of air and water transport can be attributed to several factors.

Firstly, air and water transport are typically less accessible on a daily basis due to their nature and infrastructure requirements. Airports and seaports are often located outside urban areas, making them less convenient for regular use. Additionally, the cost associated with air travel can be prohibitive, especially for frequent use. For individuals with disabilities, additional barriers such as the need for specialized assistance and the inconsistent availability of accessible facilities further complicate regular use of these transportation modes.

On the other hand, urban transport systems, such as buses, trams, and metros, are integral to daily commuting in cities. The higher frequency of use reported for urban transport reflects its essential role in the daily lives of many individuals with disabilities. Urban transport is generally more accessible, with many cities investing in infrastructure to accommodate passengers with reduced mobility. The presence of accessible vehicles, designated seating, and station facilities makes urban transport a more viable and necessary option for daily travel.

In conclusion, the significant disparity in the usage frequencies of different transport modes underscores the need for improved accessibility and infrastructure in air and water transport. Enhancing the accessibility of these transport modes could provide individuals with disabilities greater travel flexibility

and opportunities, aligning more closely with their usage patterns for urban transport.

From questions 5 to 9 we focused specifically on the satisfaction levels of persons with disabilities regarding various aspects of transportation services. The responses ranged from very satisfied to very dissatisfied, with the option to indicate that they do not use this type of transportation. Respondents rated their satisfaction on the following items:

*Availability of accessible vehicles (Q5):* Respondents evaluated how satisfied they are with the availability of vehicles adapted for persons with disabilities (e.g., wheelchair ramps, low-floor buses etc.)

*Assistance provided by transport staff (Q6):* This item assessed satisfaction with the assistance provided by transport staff, including help with boarding and alighting from vehicles and assistance during the journey for all modes of transport.

*Accessibility features at transport stations/stops/terminals (Q7):* Respondents evaluated the accessibility of infrastructure at stations, stops, and terminals, including ramps, elevators, and other accessible features.

*Level of accessible information given at terminals (Q8):* This included rating the availability and clarity of information provided at terminals, such as schedules, signs, and other important information tailored to persons with disabilities.

*Accessibility features provided at service desks and information points (Q9):* Respondents assessed the accessibility of service desks and information points, including the comprehensibility of information and the adaptability of services to persons with disabilities.

For each item, respondents had the option to choose one of four satisfaction levels (very satisfied, satisfied, dissatisfied, very dissatisfied) or to indicate that they do not use that type of transportation. This method of evaluation allowed us to gain detailed insights into various aspects of the transportation experience for persons with disabilities and to identify areas that require improvement.

Below are the graphs related to questions 5-9 and a brief analysis.

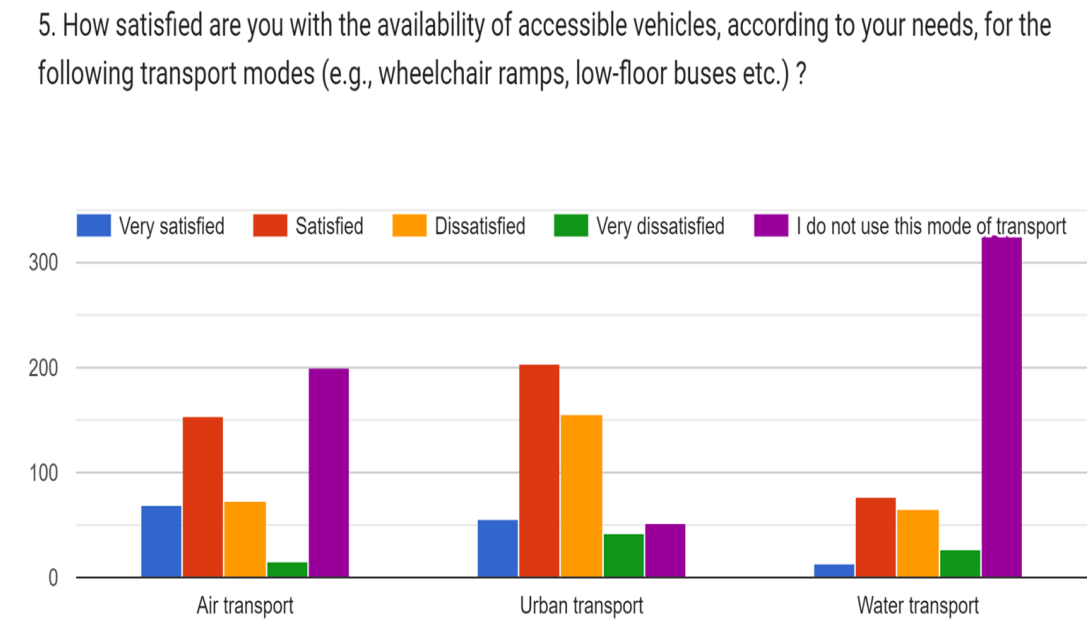


*Chart 5. User satisfaction levels with the availability of accessible vehicles.*

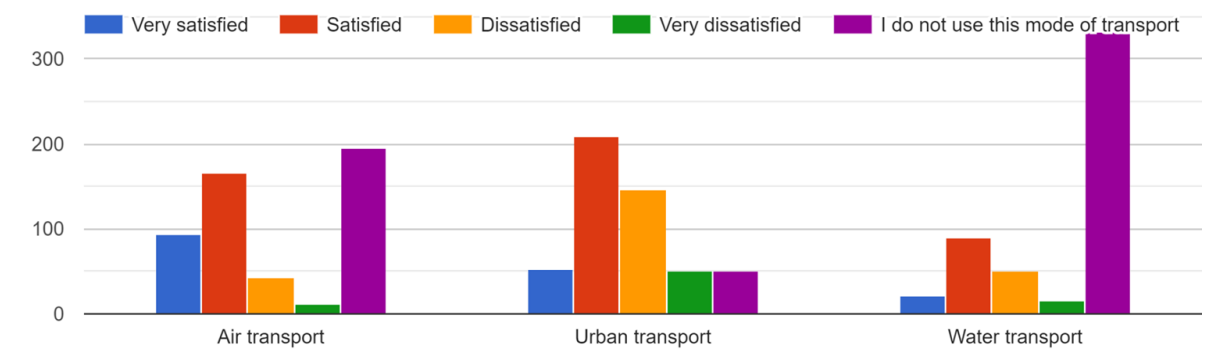


*Chart 6. User satisfaction levels with the assistance provided by transport staff.*

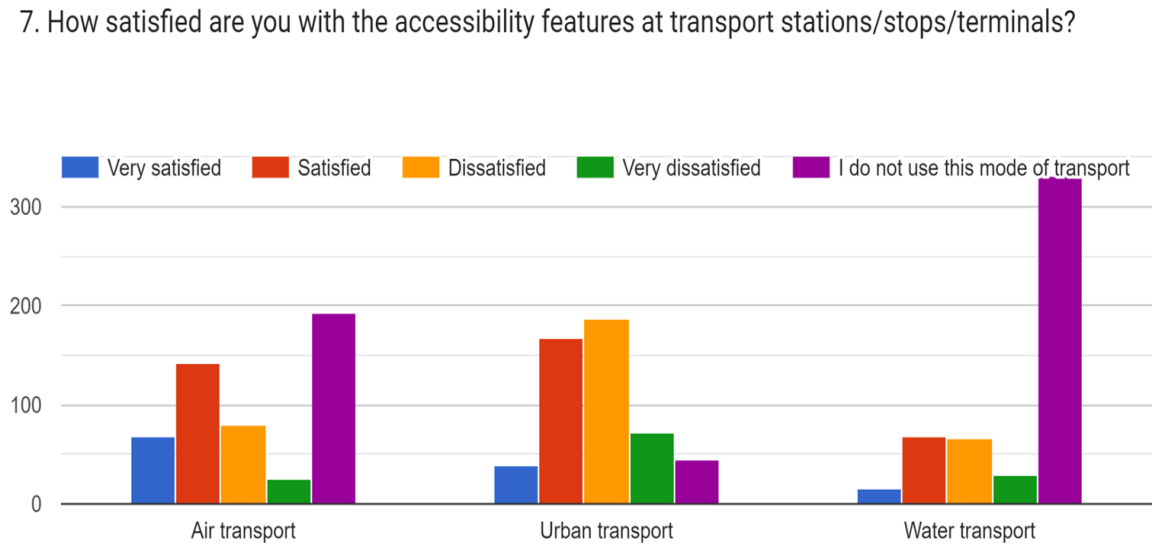


*Chart 7. User satisfaction levels with the accessibility features at transport stations/stops/terminals.*

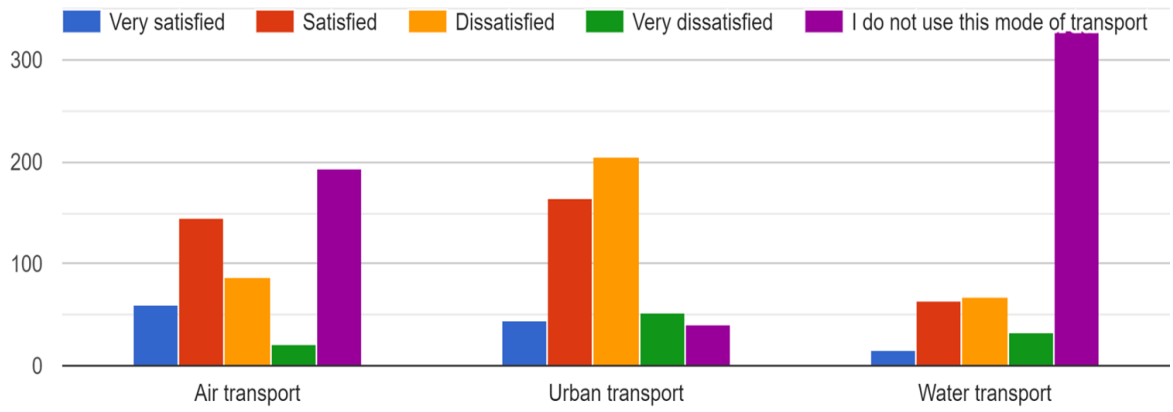


*Chart 8. User satisfaction levels with the level of accessible information given to them on terminals.*

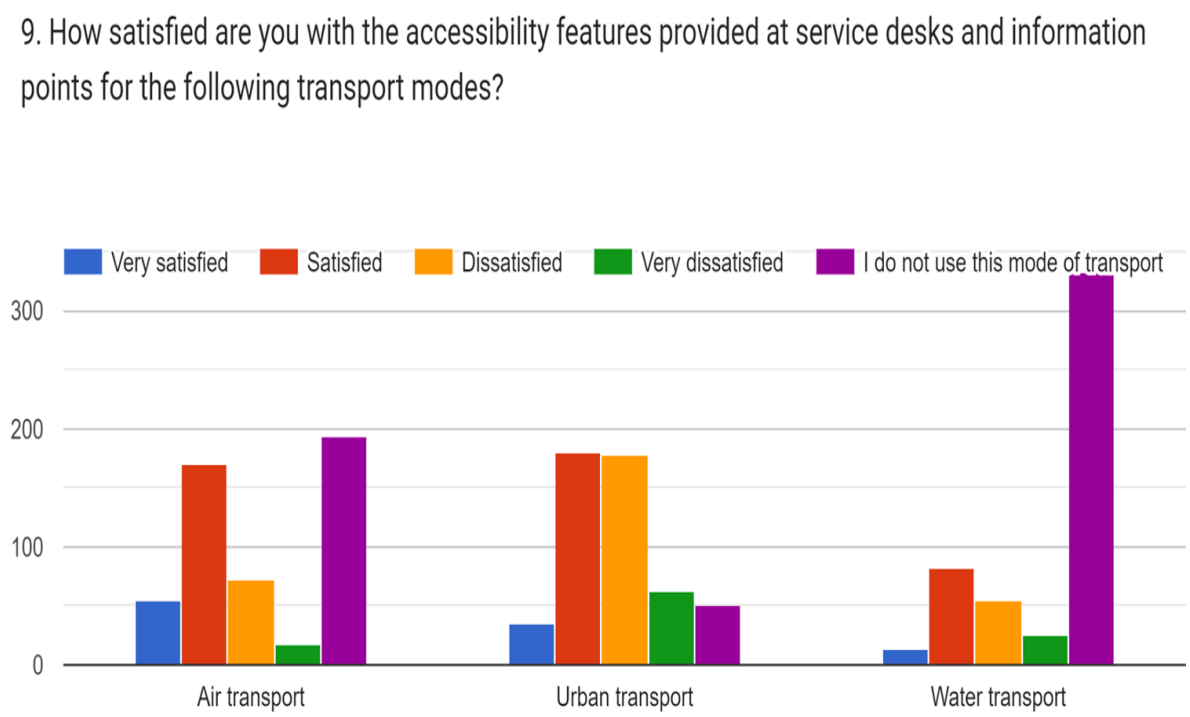


*Chart 9. User satisfaction levels with the accessibility features provided at service desks and information points.*

The analysis focuses exclusively on respondents who provided a satisfaction rating, excluding those who indicated they do not use that type of transportation.

Across all types of transportation, the majority of responses to questions regarding the availability of accessible vehicles, assistance provided by transport staff, and accessibility features provided at service desks and information points indicated that users were more "satisfied" than “dissatisfied” with these aspects. However, for questions related to accessibility features at transport stations/stops/terminals and the level of accessible information given at terminals, there were more respondents who were dissatisfied than those who were satisfied.

In the case of air transportation, the situation is notably positive—none of the questions had more dissatisfied respondents than satisfied ones. Moreover, a significant number of respondents were very satisfied with the mentioned aspects, indicating that, on average, air transportation received the highest satisfaction ratings from the respondents.

Conversely, for water transportation, there was a substantial number of respondents who indicated that they do not use water transportation at all. Additionally, air transportation also had a high number of respondents indicating non-usage, although this number was somewhat lower than for water transportation.

Upon closer examination, it becomes evident that the general satisfaction with the core services such as vehicle accessibility, staff assistance, and service desk accessibility points to effective service provision in these areas. The lower satisfaction levels for accessibility features at stations and information availability suggest potential areas for improvement. These findings highlight the importance of not only having accessible vehicles and helpful staff but also ensuring that the entire travel experience, including waiting areas and information dissemination, is fully accessible.

An interesting pattern emerges when comparing different types of transportation. Air transportation shows a higher overall satisfaction, possibly due to better infrastructure and more rigorous standards for accessibility in airports. This suggests that standards and regulations play a significant role in user satisfaction.

On the other hand, the high non-usage rate for water transportation might indicate either a lack of accessible options or a general lack of need for this mode of transport among respondents. This could be an area worth exploring further to understand the underlying reasons—whether they are related to accessibility, convenience, or other factors.

The final question in our survey was: "Which of the following answers do you believe are the most important to increase the level of accessibility in transport? Please select only three, most relevant options." Respondents were given six options to choose from, and the results were as follows *(Chart 10):*

- Better legislation ensuring accessibility standards - **214 votes**
- Improved sanctioning procedures for non-compliance with accessibility regulations - **253 votes**
- Comprehensive training programs for transportation staff - **292 votes**
- Implementation of new technology solutions for accessibility - **304 votes**
- Promoting awareness and education campaigns about accessibility - **215 votes**
- Regular accessibility audits and evaluations of transportation services - **247 votes**


*Chart 10. Key factors to improve transport accessibility: top three priorities according to respondents.*

The results indicate a clear prioritization among the respondents regarding the measures that could enhance transport accessibility. The most frequently selected options highlight a multifaceted approach to improving accessibility:

**Implementation of new technology solutions for accessibility (304 votes):** This option received the highest number of votes, underscoring the importance of technological advancements in making transportation more accessible. This might include innovations such as mobile apps for real-time information, improved assistive devices, and automated systems designed to aid passengers with disabilities.

**Comprehensive training programs for transportation staff (292 votes):** The second most popular choice emphasizes the crucial role of well-trained staff in providing accessible services. Comprehensive training programs can equip transportation staff with the necessary skills and knowledge to assist passengers with disabilities effectively, ensuring a more inclusive and supportive environment.

**Improved sanctioning procedures for non-compliance with accessibility regulations (253 votes):** This option points to the need for stricter enforcement of accessibility standards. Respondents believe that having robust sanctioning procedures can ensure that transportation providers adhere to established accessibility regulations, thereby maintaining high standards of service.

Other notable options include regular accessibility audits and evaluations of transportation services (247 votes), which highlight the need for continuous monitoring and assessment to identify and address accessibility issues promptly. Promoting awareness and education campaigns about accessibility (215 votes) and better legislation ensuring accessibility standards (214 votes) were also considered important, though they received fewer votes compared to the top three options.

The answers suggest that respondents view technological innovation, staff training, and stringent enforcement of accessibility regulations as the most critical factors in enhancing transport accessibility. By focusing on these areas, transportation providers can make significant strides toward creating a more inclusive and accessible transport system for all users.

At the end of the survey, respondents were given the opportunity to leave **additional comments**. Although this question was optional, a significant number of respondents chose to provide further feedback. Here are some of the comments:

- Implementation of an EU-Wide transport card:

"To improve the accessibility of all means of transport for persons with disabilities, I suggest the implementation of an EU-wide transport card for persons with disabilities. This card would ensure that individuals can access accessibility services and urban transport facilities across all EU member states. It would provide legitimacy and ensure consistent access to special tickets or discounts, regardless of where they travel within the EU. Another key aspect is the education and training for transport staff, particularly in Romania. There is a significant need for staff to understand the importance of empathy and proper assistance for persons with disabilities. While infrastructure is an issue, the lack of understanding and a supportive mentality among staff is a more pressing concern."

- Need for better accessibility options:

"I have never travelled by plane (because I didn't need to) or by boat (because I couldn't board), so we definitely need more/better accessibility options. Even driving around with my wheelchair, many buildings still do not have a ramp, and many sidewalks do not have a ramp on both or even one end. So, while I'm sure that making better legislation would help, as would improved sanctioning procedures for non-compliance, laws and sanctions mean nothing if there's nobody enforcing them. I think the most important thing to improve is the regular audits and evaluations. I'm sure that if people inspected the accessibility of roads, buildings, etc., there's enough legislation and sanctions in place to make the system work, but the 'inspection' part is where we lack the most."

- Training and sensitization of staff:

"Training videos on the needs and possible assistance for persons with disabilities for drivers, exchange of drivers with persons with disabilities to raise awareness and more understanding for the other side. Participation of persons with disabilities in any new acquisitions or planning. The experiential knowledge of persons with disabilities should be mandatory in advance in decisions. Laws, standards, etc., must be easy to understand and clear. Accessibility must be a mandatory subject in all education and study programs, part of the driving license, awareness and education that accessibility is a human right and benefits everyone. Inspections and evaluations must also be conducted by persons with disabilities."

- Universal accessibility solutions:

"It is necessary to focus on accessibility based on universal accessibility, i.e., solutions that include all participants with accessibility issues (mothers with strollers, elderly people, etc.), not just persons with disabilities. Sometimes the simplest solutions are also the best (e.g., a basic concrete ramp instead of an electric ramp that breaks down or requires a key or regular maintenance). In our country, solutions involving platforms or electric ramps instead of building slopes (where possible, e.g., in underpasses for public transport) do not work because they often break or are not maintained, thus losing their purpose, despite large funds being spent."

- Standard accessibility features:

"Ramps and elevators should be standard in all stations and stops, with clear signage and ample space for maneuvering. Vehicles need designated spaces for wheelchairs, with securement systems and easy access. Staff should be trained to assist with dignity and respect. Real-time information systems must be accessible, with visual and auditory alerts. Thoughtful design and consistent maintenance of accessible features are essential to prevent barriers."

The additional comments provided by the respondents offer valuable insights and practical suggestions for improving transport accessibility. These suggestions underscore the importance of a holistic approach to accessibility, encompassing legislative, infrastructural, educational, and technological aspects to create a truly inclusive transport system.

# 6. APPENDIX

The following section presents the questions that were part of the discussion in each conducted workshop, and the questions obtained in the online survey.

## WORKSHOP ON Activity 1.1. ASSESSMENT OF NEEDS AND EXISTING SOLUTIONS OF TARGET USERS

1. How do you assess the current legislative framework related to transport services for persons with disabilities *(please specify according to the type of disability*)?

- air transport
- urban transport
- water transport

2. In which areas do you suggest improvement *(please specify according to the type of disability*)?

- air transport
- urban transport
- water transport

3. How would you rate the overall quality of the transport you use *(please specify according to the type of disability*)?

- air transport
- urban transport
- water transport

4. What are the most common difficulties you encounter when traveling *(please specify according to the type of disability*)?

- air transport
- urban transport
- water transport

5. How do you rate the accessibility of the road infrastructure you use when accessing transport *(please specify according to the type of disability*)?

- air transport
- urban transport
- water transport

6. How do you rate the accessibility of the transport terminals you use *(please specify according to the type of disability*)?

- air transport
- urban transport
- water transport

7. How do you rate the accessibility of vehicles *(please specify according to the type of disability*)?

- air transport
- urban transport
- water transport

8. How would you rate the staff knowledge on how to communicate and interact with persons with disabilities *(please specify according to the type of disability*)?

- air transport
- urban transport
- water transport

9. How would you rate the quality and availability of informations provided to persons with disabilities as passengers (digital accessibility, schedule information, delays, changes in service provision, prices, etc.) - *please specify according to the type of disability*?

- air transport
- urban transport
- water transport

10. What are your suggestions for improving the accessibility of transport for persons with disabilities *(please specify according to the type of disability*)?

- air transport
- urban transport
- water transport

11. Additional comments

## ONLINE SURVEY ON Activity 1.1. ASSESSMENT OF NEEDS AND EXISTING SOLUTIONS OF TARGET USERS

**Accessibility of Transport - Satisfaction Survey for Persons with Disabilities**

This survey is being conducted within the Danube NEXT project DRP020298, co-founded by the European Union that will tackle 3 main innovation aspects: physical accessibility of transport in the Danube Region for all disabilities through innovative services; provision of data on networks' accessibility through fully accessible DTIS (Digital Travel Information Services) and creation of a Smart Network of transport facilities working on the sharing of data, practices & services in the Danube Region.

The aim of the survey is to assess user satisfaction levels regarding transportation services for persons with disabilities, aiming to identify gaps between their accessibility needs and the provided services, with a focus on air, urban and water transport.

This survey should take approximately 5 minutes to complete.

1. **Please indicate which country are you from:**

   ☐ Austria

   ☐ Bosnia and Herzegovina

   ☐ Bulgaria

- ☐ Czech Republic
- ☐ Croatia
- ☐ Hungary
- ☐ Moldova
- ☐ Montenegro
- ☐ Romania
- ☐ Slovakia
- ☐ Slovenia
- ☐ Other

**2. Please select the age category you belong to:**

- ☐ 18 - 30
- ☐ 31 - 50
- ☐ 51 - 70
- ☐ 71 +

**3. Please select the category that best describes you:**

- ☐ Blind/partially sighted
- ☐ Deaf/hard of hearing
- ☐ Person with reduced mobility (PRM)
- ☐ None

**4. How often do you use the following transport modes?**

A. Air transport

- ☐ Daily / almost every day
- ☐ A few times per week
- ☐ A few times per month
- ☐ Rarely / a few times per year

- ☐ Never / very rarely

B. Urban transport

- ☐ Daily / almost every day
- ☐ A few times per week
- ☐ A few times per month
- ☐ Rarely / a few times per year
- ☐ Never / very rarely

C. Water transport

- ☐ Daily / almost every day
- ☐ A few times per week
- ☐ A few times per month
- ☐ Rarely / a few times per year
- ☐ Never / very rarely

**5. How satisfied are you with the availability of accessible vehicles, according to your needs, for the following transport modes (e.g., wheelchair ramps, low-floor buses etc.) ?**

A. Air transport

- ☐ Very satisfied
- ☐ Satisfied
- ☐ Dissatisfied
- ☐ Very dissatisfied
- ☐ I do not use this mode of transport

B. Urban transport

- ☐ Very satisfied
- ☐ Satisfied
- ☐ Dissatisfied
- ☐ Very dissatisfied
- ☐ I do not use this mode of transport

C. Water transport

- ☐ Very satisfied

- ☐ Satisfied
- ☐ Dissatisfied
- ☐ Very dissatisfied
- ☐ I do not use this mode of transport

**6. How satisfied are you with the assistance provided by transport staff for the following transport modes?**

A. Air transport

- ☐ Very satisfied
- ☐ Satisfied
- ☐ Dissatisfied
- ☐ Very dissatisfied
- ☐ I do not use this mode of transport

B. Urban transport

- ☐ Very satisfied
- ☐ Satisfied
- ☐ Dissatisfied
- ☐ Very dissatisfied
- ☐ I do not use this mode of transport

C. Water transport

- ☐ Very satisfied
- ☐ Satisfied
- ☐ Dissatisfied
- ☐ Very dissatisfied
- ☐ I do not use this mode of transport

**7. How satisfied are you with the accessibility features at transport stations/stops/terminals?**

A. Air transport

- ☐ Very satisfied
- ☐ Satisfied
- ☐ Dissatisfied
- ☐ Very dissatisfied
- ☐ I do not use this mode of transport

B. Urban transport

- ☐ Very satisfied
- ☐ Satisfied
- ☐ Dissatisfied
- ☐ Very dissatisfied
- ☐ I do not use this mode of transport

C. Water transport

- ☐ Very satisfied
- ☐ Satisfied
- ☐ Dissatisfied
- ☐ Very dissatisfied
- ☐ I do not use this mode of transport

**8. How satisfied are you with the level of accessible information given to you on terminals for the following transport modes?**

A. Air transport

- ☐ Very satisfied
- ☐ Satisfied
- ☐ Dissatisfied
- ☐ Very dissatisfied
- ☐ I do not use this mode of transport

B. Urban transport

- ☐ Very satisfied
- ☐ Satisfied
- ☐ Dissatisfied
- ☐ Very dissatisfied
- ☐ I do not use this mode of transport

C. Water transport

- ☐ Very satisfied
- ☐ Satisfied
- ☐ Dissatisfied
- ☐ Very dissatisfied
- ☐ I do not use this mode of transport

**9. How satisfied are you with the accessibility features provided at service desks and information points for the following transport modes?**

A. Air transport

- ☐ Very satisfied
- ☐ Satisfied
- ☐ Dissatisfied
- ☐ Very dissatisfied
- ☐ I do not use this mode of transport

B. Urban transport

- ☐ Very satisfied
- ☐ Satisfied
- ☐ Dissatisfied
- ☐ Very dissatisfied
- ☐ I do not use this mode of transport

C. Water transport

- ☐ Very satisfied
- ☐ Satisfied
- ☐ Dissatisfied
- ☐ Very dissatisfied
- ☐ I do not use this mode of transport

**10. Which of the following answers do you believe are the most important to increase the level of accessibility in transport? Please select <u>only three, most relevant options</u>.**

- ☐ Better legislation ensuring accessibility standards.
- ☐ Improved sanctioning procedures for non-compliance with accessibility regulations.
- ☐ Comprehensive training programs for transportation staff.
- ☐ Implementation of new technology solutions for accessibility.
- ☐ Promoting awareness and education campaigns about accessibility.
- ☐ Regular accessibility audits and evaluations of transportation services.

**11. Do you have any additional comments or suggestions to improve the accessibility of all means of public transport for people with disabilities?**

**(Optional)**

***Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey. Your feedback is essential to enhance transport services for persons with disabilities. Your responses will remain anonymous.***

DANOVA NEXT TEAM