

Project no.: **44289**
Project acronym: **PTaccess**
Project title: **Public Transport Systems' Accessibility for People with Disabilities in Europe**

Specific Support Action

CALL IDENTIFIER: FP6-2005.SSP-5A

Priority Area 2.4: Quality of life issues relating to handicapped/disabled people

Task 1: Accessibility of public transport systems for people with disabilities

Title of Report:

State of the Accessibility of Public Transport Systems for People with Disabilities in in Germany (DE)

Status: final

Start date of project: **1. February 2007**

Date of preparation: **3.November 2008**

Duration: **24 months**

Prepared by: **FGM-AMOR**

Quality control by: **JMP**

Dissemination level: **PU (public)**

PTaccess – Public Transport Systems' Accessibility for people with disabilities in Europe

One specific area, for which there is still a lack of EU level data, is the accessibility of public transport for people with disabilities and its impact on their employment and social integration prospects.

The European project 'PTaccess' offers the chance to fill this gap in knowledge and obtain information on the current state of accessibility of urban and rural public transport systems in 25 EU member states. For each member state PTaccess analyses the state of accessibility of public transport from the point of view of national disabled organisations, national transport operators, and governmental authorities. For regions where public transport is not accessible PTaccess identifies and analyses applied alternative transport solutions (WP1).

PTaccess also identifies and analyses good practices and innovation in making public transport accessible, and enhances the scientific base of policy by providing a sound assessment of the costs and benefits of making public transport accessible (WP2).

Furthermore PTaccess deepens the understanding of the transport-related contexts of social exclusion of disabled people, and draws conclusions about the effects that accessible public transport has on the employment and social inclusion prospects for disabled people. (WP3).

The PTaccess-project runs from the 1st of February 2007 until the 31st of January 2009.

More information about PTaccess can be found on the project's website: www.ptaccess.eu

The PTaccess consortium:

- FGM AMOR (Austria)
- Independent Living Institute ILI (Sweden)
- TU Dresden, Lehrstuhl für Verkehrsökologie (Germany)
- JMP Consultants Limited (United Kingdom)

This project is supported through the **Research for policy support** heading of the **European Union's Sixth Framework Programme**, PRIORITY 8.1 Policy-oriented research, Scientific support to policies – SSP CALL IDENTIFIER: FP6-2005.SSP-5A

Priority Area 2.4: Quality of life issues relating to handicapped/disabled people, Task 1: Accessibility of public transport systems for people with disabilities]

Table of Contents

1	Introduction.....	4
2	Accessibility of Public Transport in Germany (DE)	6
2.1	<i>General Information.....</i>	7
2.2	<i>Accessibility of Public Transport.....</i>	13
2.3	<i>Alternatives to public transport.....</i>	20

1 Introduction

This document aims to give an overview on the current state of the accessibility of public transport in Germany (DE).

This document has been prepared within the framework of the European project PTaccess by FGM-AMOR based on interviews conducted with representatives of people with disabilities, transport operators and governmental authorities in 25 European countries.

In order to draw a comprehensive picture of the current state of the accessibility of public transport in Europe, the following topics have been discussed with the interviewed national experts:

- Statistical data
- Legal and regulatory framework conditions
- Organisational framework conditions
- Accessibility of passenger information
- Accessibility issues in ticketing
- Accessibility of stops and stations
- Accessibility of vehicles
- Safety, reliability and services
- Alternatives to public transport

How this report has been made

In order to obtain actual information on the current state of accessibility of urban and rural public transport systems in Europe, the PTaccess team has directly contacted and interviewed national experts within 25¹ EU member states. In each of these 25 member states a representative of a national disabled organisation, a representative of national transport operators, and a representative of a governmental authority have been interviewed and asked to provide their point of view regarding the accessibility of public transport in their country. In order to obtain comparable interview results in each of these countries, interview guidelines and questionnaires have been prepared by the PTaccess consortium. The interviews (at least three per country) have been conducted personally by “national contact persons” in their national language.

For each of the investigated 25 countries the results of all the interviews with the national experts have been compiled into a draft “country report” by FGM-AMOR. These “country reports” describe the state of the accessibility of public transport from the point of view of disabled people, transport operators and governmental authorities. In order to make sure that the interview results have been interpreted correctly, these draft country reports have been checked and corrected by the national contact persons, who had conducted the interviews with the national experts. This is the finalised country report for in Germany (DE).

What can be expected from this report

This report gives an overview of the state of the accessibility of public transport in Germany (DE). However, this report does not provide only “official” data and information, since in most countries such data and information does not exist. Instead the report provides spotlights on the current situation regarding the accessibility of public transport from the subjective, but informed, point of view of people with disabilities,

¹ At the time of the preparation of the PTaccess-project Bulgaria and Romania haven't been member states of the European Union, yet. Therefore no interviews have been conducted in these two countries.

transport operators and governmental authorities. Since each interview-partner brought in her/his subjective viewpoint, it must not be expected to get an objective overview of the situation in the country. However, by asking different experts (representing three important stakeholder groups) about their point of view, and by taking into account the viewpoints of all these concerned stakeholder-groups the authors of this report hope to be able to draw a picture of the situation regarding the accessibility of public transport for people with disabilities in Germany (DE) that is not too biased.

Important: The reader of this report must always keep in mind that this report is based on the viewpoints of individual people (i.e. each interview partner has brought in her/his personal point of view and her/his personal experiences), and therefore the information given in this report must not be interpreted as an objective official “national” view!

How to use this report

People, who are interested to get **more (detailed) information on the accessibility of public transport in Germany (DE)**, should read this “country report”. There are also “country reports” for each of the other 24 countries, where PTaccess surveys have been made.

People, who are interested to get **a quick overview on the actual state of the accessibility of public transport in Europe**, should read chapter 3 of the summary report “State of the Accessibility of Public Transport Systems for People with Disabilities in Europe”.

People, who would like to know more **details about the interviews** which form the basis of this report, should read Annex II of the summary report “State of the Accessibility of Public Transport Systems for People with Disabilities in Europe”, where all interviewers, interview-partners and questionnaires are listed.

2.1 General Information

2.1.1 About the PTaccess interviews

Interviewer:	Name	Organisation
PTaccess National Contact Person	Holger Dalkmann	Traffic Research Laboratory, Center for Sustainability, UK (Mr. Dalkmann has been working for Wuppertal Institute, Germany before)
Interview partners:	Name	Organisation
Representative of Transport Operators	Dipl.-Geogr. Hartmut Reinberger-Schueller	VDV – Verband Deutscher Verkehrsunternehmen
Representative of People with Disabilities	Manfred Moers	Sozialverband VDK
Representative of Governmental Authority	Peter Lindner	Hessisches Ministerium für Wirtschaft, Verkehr und Landesentwicklung

Table 1: Interviewer and Interview-partners in Germany

2.1.2 Statistical Data from Germany

Statistical Data for Germany	
Number of inhabitants	82,351,000 ²
Inhabitants with disabilities	6,800,000 of the total population ³
Inhabitants with motor impairments	no details available
Inhabitants with visual impairments	no details available
Inhabitants with hearing impairments	no details available
Inhabitants with cognitive / learning impairments	no details available
Inhabitants who are functional illiterates	no details available
Share of disabled people living in urban areas	no details available
Share of disabled people at working age	no details available
Share of disabled people at working age who are actually working	no details available

Table 2: Statistical data for Germany

2.1.3 Legal and regulatory framework conditions in Germany

There is a national anti-discrimination law in Germany which came into affect in 2006.

The regulations regarding the accessibility of public transport are mainly at a federal state level. The regional regulations include general guidelines for the level of accessibility.

Accessibility is increasingly becoming a major topic on the political agenda, mainly because of the growing number of legal frameworks.

Anti-discrimination law

A new national law has been in place since 2006: Allgemeines Gleichbehandlungsgesetz (AGG).⁴

It is a national law, enacted 2006, focussing on discrimination against age, religion, gender, ethnical background, sexual identity and phiyical and mental disability, major focus on access to work, education and all kind of infrastructure (including transport). In charge is the 'Beauftragte der Bundesregierung für die Belange

² Source:

<http://www.destatis.de/jetspeed/portal/cms/Sites/destatis/SharedContent/Oeffentlich/AI/IC/Publikationen/Jahrbuch/Bevoelkerung,property=file.pdf>

³ Source: www.bmas.de, Statistische Bundesamt

⁴ Source: http://www.allgemeines-gleichbehandlungsgesetz.de/agg_text.pdf

behinderter Menschen', which means: Instructor to the Federal Government for the interests of people with disabilities.

Regulations regarding the accessibility of public transport

The regulation is mainly at the federal state level, e.g. Hessisches OEPNV Gesetz, and is a law to regulate the accessibility of public transport in the federal state Hessen. It includes general guidelines to the level of accessibility. However, the technical specifications are not part of the law. These developed by the 'Hessische Strassen und Verkehrswesen'. All public transport funding has to be in line with the technical requirements.⁵

All public transport funding requires direct accessibility standards. However, in Hessen this is decreasing due to decreasing governmental influence and the market oriented public transport model. Dr Sieger, Institut fuer barrierefreie Gestaltung und Mobilitaet (Institute of design without barriers and mobility) developed a guidance document for public transport vehicles. This is mainly used in the call for tenders.⁶

"Priority" of the accessibility of public transport on the political agenda

As a result of the legal requirements accessibility is a major topic. Since the change of the federal law in the early 1990s that there should be equal rights for disabled people, they set up a social national law (Sozialgesetzbuch), where the integration of disabled people becomes a legal requirement. This refers also to accessibility of public transport system. However, the law is quite weak and key standards are partly missing.⁷

Monitoring of the accessibility of public transport

There is no monitoring conducted although there is a discussion if the federal agency that railways (Eisenbahnbundesamt) should monitor their accessibility. The disabled groups have the opportunity to take railway operators to court if the new stations do not meet the requirements (e.g. elevator instead of lift at stairs).

Special fares and public transport tariffs for people with disabilities

According to the interview-partner from the Department for Economy, Transport and Development there is a regulation for people with disabilities. They can either choose to get a reduction to their car tax or a reduced yearly ticket. The government is paying for the additional costs. Every transport operator receives an average added budget. If a transport operator assumes they are carrying more disabled people than the budget perceives they need to prove it via a census.

According to the interview-partner from the Social Association VDK there is free use of local and regional transport for people with disabilities within a radius of 50 km. The criteria are defined in the law (see reference). For general train use there is a 50% discount for disabled people for the BahnCard 50 (50% reduction on all trains). Each province ("Laender") is paying for the loss of revenue to the operator. There is an average fee per person. If the transport operator believe they transport more people, this needs to be proven via independent traffic census.

According to the interview-partner from the Association of German Transport Undertakings VDV there are no free riding opportunities. However, people with a high grade of disability (over 50%) are allowed to buy a ticket

⁵ Source: http://www.wirtschaft.hessen.de/irj/HMWVL_Internet?cid=5556cabe80191d84747fef9f60798196

⁶ Source: http://www.bmas.de/coremedia/generator/2762/property=pdf/2007__06__12__rede__sieger.pdf

⁷ Source: Sozialgesetzbuch iX Teilhabe und Rehabilitation under http://www.sozialgesetzbuch.de/gesetze/09/index.php?norm_ID=0900000
Further information on specific Laender level you can find under <http://www.oepnv-info.de/freifahrt/index.php>

for the local public transport service. The costs are covered by the social service. The people can choose between the ticket and a reduction of car taxation.

2.1.4 Organisational framework conditions

In general the cooperation of the different stakeholders concerning issues of accessibility is quite good in Germany. There are some working groups – as well on national and on regional and local level – which deal with the topic accessibility of public transport.

Governmental authorities dealing with anti-discrimination and social inclusion issues referring to people with disabilities

- **representatives of the Federal Government for the interests of disabled people:** Karin Meyer Everss⁸

Governmental authorities responsible for public transport

- **National: Federal Ministry of Transport, Building and Urban Affairs Referat A 13:**

Heike Höttler, Phone: 0049 / 30 / 2008 – 2441, Mail: heike.hoettler@bmvbs.bund.de

- **Regional: Department for Economy, Transport and Development**

Peter Lindner, Phone: 0049 / 611 / 815-2394, Mail: Peter.Lindner@hmvwl.hessen.de

Main transport operators and Public Transport associations

- Association of German Transport Undertakings - (VDV)

Dipl.-Geogr. Hartmut Reinber-Schueller, Phone: 0049 / 22157979-136, Mail: reinberg-schueller@vdv.de

Main disability organisations

- **Social Association VDK:**

Herr Moers, Phone: 0049 / 228 / 82093-0, Mail: moers@vdk.de

Cooperation among stakeholders

Cooperation between the governmental authorities and disability organisations

According to the interview-partner from the Department for Economy, Transport and Development there is a Landesbehindertenbeirat - an institution where all representative organisations for disabled people are consulted by the federal state government. There is a working group for public transport. The cooperation is seen as very positive.

⁸ Source: <http://www.behindertenbeauftragter.de>

Cooperation between the transport operators and disability organisations

According to the interview-partner from the Social Association VDK on the local level a board is obligatory, where different interest groups have the opportunity to participate (named: Fahrgastbeirat).

According to the interview-partner from the Association of German Transport Operators VDV there is a high level of cooperation between the different stakeholder associations based on a long-term fundament. On the local level most of the transport operators consult disabled organisations to discuss the design of new vehicles and stations.

Cooperation between the transport operators and governmental authorities

According to the interview-partner from the Department for Economy, Transport and Development a good example of cooperation is the German Railway (Deutsche Bahn). There is a working group that discusses issues of accessibility. The lead person is Frau Dr. Engel.

According to the interview-partner from the Association of German Transport Operators VDV there is a high level of cooperation. Example of outcome: Common position papers, several research projects.⁹

Attitude of the stakeholders regarding the importance of accessibility of public transport

According to the interview-partner from the Department for Economy, Transport and Development the main barrier are finances. The technical and structural knowledge is very well developed and there is a willingness to tackle the problem.

According to the interview-partner from the Association of German Transport Operators VDV the attitude during the last two centuries changes a lot. Public Operators see the accessibility for people with impairments as a key issue. The general strategy is to develop a "design for everybody". So has a barrierfree boarding a lot of advantages for all kind of people. However, public transport operators cannot meet all requirements from all groups. There is a general requirement in the German law (Behindertengleichstellungsgesetz) that public transport should be "generally speaking" accessible for all groups. However, there are no specifications. There is a DIN norm (18024), but this is just used as a recommendation.

Attitudes of the stakeholders regarding the use of public transport by people with disabilities

According to the interview-partner from the Department for Economy, Transport and Development there is a positive attitude in general. However, the service and the awareness is stronger in urban areas than in rural areas. There is special attention at places where there are facilities for disabled people, e.g. Marburg with a school for blind people. The public transport operators are really supportive. Exceptions are regional bus operators. They are often small or medium enterprises and struggle with the extra costs for the vehicles. All operators get financial support by the government when they buy buses with low floor entrance.

According to the interview-partner from the Social Association VDK there is a positive recognition of the belonging of disabled people. There is a major improvement during the last 20 years. The key driver was the law, despite this not being precise. There is good will especially from the German railways (Deutsche Bahn). There is cooperation between the representatives of the disabled people and the German Railways. Key for

disabled people is to have an independent life. Therefore, more people prefer technical solutions enabling them to be move independent. However, some people require personal support and often there is a need for personal support even technical options are available. There are no official statistics on this issue. However, there are 6.8 million people with disabilities in Germany. The percentage of people having the right to use local public transport for free is not known.¹⁰

⁹ Source:

<http://64.233.183.104/search?q=cache:iuPwabcVAuEJ:www.verkehr.hessen.de/internet/binarywriterservlet%3FimgUid%3Daa96001a-380c-f801-be59-26f2d6b51cdd%26uBasVariant%3D11111111-1111-1111-1111-111111111111+Direkt+heft+47/51+Verkehr&hl=de&ct=clnk&cd=1&gl=de>

¹⁰ Source: www.bmas.de, Statistische Bundesamt

2.2 Accessibility of Public Transport

Pre-trip information / On-trip information: The accessibility of pre-trip information is improving – especially the information provided on the internet. There is printed pre-trip information available (leaflets), information via telephone and the internet. Trains, undergrounds and trams generally provide more accessible on-trip information than buses (especially at stops and stations). At most underground and train stations information is available via loudspeaker and written information. The principle of two way information (acoustic and visual) is seen as a standard which is recognised on most vehicles. The future is seen with information provided to mobile phones.

Ticketing: According to the Department for Economy, Transport and Development people with disabilities can either choose to get a reduction to their car tax or a reduced yearly ticket. According to the interview-partner from the Social Association VDK there is free use of local and regional transport within a radius of 50km.

Stops and stations: According to the interview-partner from the Social Association VDK a strategy exists to upgrade/renovate all stations with more than 1000 travellers a day. A continuous improvement of the accessibility of stops and stations can be seen. These refer specifically to dense populated areas like cities. The bus stops, especially in rural areas, lack barrier free access.. Underground and trams are better equipped. The regional transport is improving, but is still not at a satisfactory level.

Vehicles: The accessibility differs between the modes. Most city buses provide a low level access so that it is easy for people with motor impairments to get into the bus. Regional buses often miss this opportunity. Regional trains are quite old and often there is no lift or similar equipment provided. The high speed trains provide nearly 100 % accessibility.

Safety, Reliability, and Service: People with disabilities do not think that travelling by public transport is dangerous. The public transport system is seen as safe. However, as the German Railways reduce their level of personnel it may become a problem in the future. Generally people feel more uncomfortable if the service is more crowded.

The reliability of the accessibility of vehicles and stops/stations in each of these public transport modes is generally high. The punctuality of long distance trains is 90%, local service 80 - 90 %, local train in Berlin (S-Bahn) 99%.

The customer service is generally seen as declining. More and more stations do not provide any attended desk in smaller stations. Ticket counters and luggage storage is often not accessible.

According to the interview-partner from the Social Association VDK there is still a fear of contact between the people working at public transport operators and people with impairments. However, there is a clear improvement. Younger people seem to have fewer problems and are more motivated to help. There is also a stronger self confidence of people with disabilities which can improve communication.

2.2.1 Accessibility of passenger information

According to the interview-partner from the Social Association VDK generally speaking the information improved last year enormously. However, there is a decrease in personnel and therefore, less information is available in the stations (e.g. last service in Mainz at 7pm).

According to the interview-partner from the Association of German Transport Operators VDV there is a positive perception regarding the accessibility of public transport.

Pre-trip information

According to the interview-partner from the Department for Economy, Transport and Development the information being provided on the internet is seen as excellent. A good practice example is seen as the RMV site (Rhein Main Verkehrsverbund). They provide detailed station maps, as well as information about the available equipment in all vehicles. In the future all this information will also be available on mobile phones. An excellent service exists on the trains: The DB has a central service number, where you get personal information. It also helps you to get a pick up service at the stations.¹¹

According to the interview-partner from the Social Association VDK the pre-trip information is sufficient: hot-line to organise trips and provide cost-free pick-up service at stations for disabled people at railways. The internet access improved enormously, but there is a problem with less personnel and information at smaller stations. A specific print product was developed for disabled people in cooperation with the disabled association (Brochure "Mobil mit Handicap").¹²

According to the interview-partner from the Association of German Transport Operators VDV the pre-trip information is good

- Print: Leaflets, print information on every line, Document showing all travel information;
- Phone: National wide Public Transport Service (19449), Digital service of some Transport Operators (Berliner Verkehrs Gesellschaft (BVG), HVV (Hamburg));
- Online: Details trip information from DB (Railways as well as Public Transport operators)

On-trip information

According to the interview-partner from the Social Association VDK, underground stations and the majority of railway stations provide real time information via loudspeaker. Some now use LED. The new LED generation is seen as a better product for people with visual impairments. Specific problems exist for missing standards for people with hearing and visual impairments. One example is the contrast and colours for visual information. There is also the conflict with designers (e.g. CI of ICE train, where the button to open the door is in the same colour like the rest of the train). The principle of two way information (acoustic and visual) is seen a standard, which is recognised on most vehicles.

According to the interview-partner from the Association of German Transport Operators VDV it is estimated less than 10 % of the city bus stops provide real time information. A good practice example is Bielefeld with a high level of real time information at their stations. This information is particularly limited in rural areas. The future is seen through information sent to mobile phones. Most of the real time information is already available on the internet.

¹¹ Source: <http://www.rmv.de/coremedia/generator/RMV/Service/BarrierefreiesReisen/index.html>,
<http://www.bahn.de/p/view/home/handicap/handicap.shtml>

¹² Source: Brochure Mobil mit Handicap "http://www.bahn.de/p/view/mobilitaet/handicap/mobil_trotz_handicap_broschuere.shtml

2.2.2 Accessibility issues in Ticketing

According to the interview-partner from the Department for Economy, Transport and Development there is a regulation for people with disabilities. They can either choose to get a reduction to their car tax or a reduced yearly ticket. The government is paying for the additional costs. Every transport operator receives an average added budget. If they assume they are carrying more disabled passengers they need to prove this via a census. Tickets can be bought by Ticket Machine, at the Counter or online.

According to the interview-partner from the Social Association VDK people with disabilities have free use of local and regional transport within a radius of 50km. The criteria are defined in the law. For general train use there is a 50% discount for disabled people for the BahnCard 50 (50% reduction on all trains). Each province is paying for the loss of revenue to the operator. There is an average fee per person. If the transport operator believes that they transport more people, they need to prove this via an independent traffic census. The majority, and especially the elderly, use a ticket counter to purchase tickets.

According to the interview-partner from the Association of German Transport Operators VDV there are no general free riding opportunities for all groups with disabilities. However, people with a high grade of disability (over 50%) are allowed to buy a ticket for the local public transport service. The costs are covered by the social service. The people can choose between the ticket and a reduction of car taxation. Most of the time the option for a yearly ticket will be used, so that the people will use the counter. Other options: Ticket on the mobile phone, Internet.

2.2.3 Accessibility of stops and stations

Strategy regarding the improvement of the accessibility of public transport in Germany

According to the interview-partner from the Social Association VDK there is currently a strategy to upgrade/renovate all stations with more than 1,000 travellers a day. The upgrade refers also to providing easily accessible platforms (via elevators or ramps) for people with motor impairments. There is an ongoing debate concerning less frequently used stations. It is recommended by several disabled organisations that there should be at least one upgraded station within a reasonable distance. There is an opportunity for individuals as well as organisations to participate in the planning process. There is good practice guidance available on how to integrate requirements from disabled people. However, the most developed are for people with motor impairments, while for other impairment groups clear standards are still under discussion.

According to the interview-partner from the Association of German Transport Undertakings VDV any further station renewal/new constructions have to include barrier free accessibility. If this does not occur there will be no public funding available. There are no further general strategic influences at a national level. The decision will be made by the local operators. Some operators focus on refurbishing a whole line while others focus on key stations.

Current state regarding the accessibility of bus stops and stations in Germany

According to the interview-partner from the Department for Economy, Transport and Development generally speaking, there is a continuous improvement. However, in the last years a lot of governmental funding was available and not fully used by the DB Station and Service who are responsible for the train station development.

According to the interview-partner from the Social Association VDK, generally the accessibility of public transport stops seems to be satisfactory. These specifically refer to densely populated areas such as cities. In areas with a lower density the accessibility declined. The level of satisfaction of people with motor impairments is excellent in cities and sufficient to poor in rural areas. There are fewer stops in rural areas in general and not all stations are designed for people with impairments. However, a lot of work was done during the last 10 years and there could be seen a lot of improvement. The German Railway (Deutsche Bahn) as a major German train operator set up a huge program defining requirements for people with motor impairments. The program covers trains as well as stations. There is a check list for station development which is seen as best practice. Other smaller private train operators do not have similar standards so far. The program mentioned above also covers people with visual impairments. However, as previously mentioned, there are gaps in the standards.

According to the interview-partner from the Association of German Transport Operators VDV the general perception regarding the accessibility of public transport is moderate. The bus stops, especially in rural areas, are lacking with regard to a barrier free access. Underground and tram are better equipped. The regional transport is improving, but is still not at a satisfactory level. There are 95% bus stops to be equipped for people with motor impairments and 40% for people with visual impairments. The estimation of bus stops for people with hearing impairments is low.

2.2.4 Accessibility of vehicles

Strategy regarding the improvement of the accessibility of the public transport vehicles

According to the interview-partner from the Department for Economy, Transport and Development there are new legislative restrictions in relation to the improvement of vehicles. The responsibilities are taken over by an independent authority. Therefore, it is up to them to set final standards which have to be used during the call for tender.

According to the interview-partner from the Social Association VDK there is no official strategy with regard to fleet renewal. Most renewed vehicles (buses as well as trains) are providing easy access for their vehicles. Having said this, the federal states are responsible to provide regional train transport. The requirements for people with motor impairments are not legally binding.

According to the interview-partner from the Association of German Transport Operators VDV the number of barrier free city buses is already high. All new vehicles will have a low-floor access. For tram and underground there is a long-term target to have barrier free access. There is no particular national strategy. The responsibilities are decentralised.

Actual state of the accessibility of the public transport vehicles in Germany

According to the interview-partner from the Department for Economy, Transport and Development the general perception is very good. All new vehicles have barrier free access and provide special seating for people with impairments. For trains the situation is good, but needs further improvement. While all new vehicles have the necessary equipment (ramps/lifts), older vehicle and not all fully equipped. Another problem is that not all stations are fit for purpose. E.g. some of the platforms are too small for using a lift. Furthermore, vehicles with tilt technology have problems to use lifts.

There are no numbers of city buses that provide at stops along the route they operate barrier-free boarding and alighting for people with disabilities. Since three years there are no new busses with high steps in place.

According to the interview-partner from the Social Association VDK the general perception differs between the modes. While buses have a shorter life cycle, most city buses provide low level access so that it is easy for people with motor impairments to board the bus. Regional buses often miss this opportunity. Regional trains are especially quite old and often there is no lift or similar equipment provided. The same issues are relevant to toilets in regional trains, which are too narrow and not accessible for people with motor impairments. The high speed trains provide close to full accessible equipment.

The level of satisfaction relates to the age of the vehicle. Often in larger municipalities the buses are new and are therefore already equipped with a low floor entrance. The level of satisfaction of people with motor impairments regarding accessible boarding / alighting of city buses is high: new buses with new equipment. The level of satisfaction of people with motor impairments regarding accessible boarding / alighting of regional buses is low: older buses. There is not a need for more design of vehicles for people with visual impairments regarding accessible boarding / alighting of. The key activity for people with cognitive impairments is individual training, which is mainly done by the social service. The requirement varies and therefore, there is no general design or specific facilities. The satisfaction is based on the age of the vehicle. As stated above, high speed trains are generally new and provide good facilities with enough space for manoeuvring, automatic doors, 2 seats per wagon. The modern ICE trains are seen as a best practice example (in comparison to the French TGV). The toilets are accessible for wheelchair users and provide all necessary equipment (including technical device contact to the driver). City buses are generally less than 10 years old and provide enough space for seating and manoeuvring. The older regional trains are not satisfactory. A lot of improvement is provided for people with visual impairments (good). Even, it is not an obligatory requirement while commissioning a new vehicle; most of the vehicles provide automatic doors, having a contrast design and displays with big letters. There are not a lot of activities for people with hearing impairments. Most of the buses and trains provide visual announcements.

According to the interview-partner from the Association of German Transport Operators VDV the average share of city buses that do have barrier-free interior design for people with motor impairments is 100%. There are two seats at the door for people with motor impairments and handrails as a support in every bus. For people with visual impairments there is high contrast (yellow/dark), automatic doors.

2.2.5 Safety, Reliability and Service

Safety aspects

According to the interview-partner from the Department for Economy, Transport and Development no information from the government is available.

According to the interview-partner from the Social Association VDK there were some cases in Munich and the federal state Hessen, where they choose a fast automatic door closing, which led to several minor accidents. These relate to all disability groups. For this specific train (9-23), they tend to use a person in the train and work on technical improvements. People with disabilities do not think travelling by public transport is dangerous. The public transport system is seen as safe. However, due to the fact that the German Railways reduce there personnel and as a consequence have less service personnel on the train, it might be a problem in the future. This does not belong to people with disabilities in particular. As a rule of thumb it could be said, that the people feel more uncomfortable, if it is more crowded. In addition, the technical service in rural areas are a worse than in urban areas.

The level of satisfaction of wheelchair-users with the special safety equipments for wheelchair users is generally good. There are a lot of new buses, trams and long-distance trains with modern equipment. The level for

wheelchair users in local trains is not so good. There are a lot of old vehicles. Fleet renewal of trains is much slower than for buses.

According to the interview-partner from the Association of German Transport Operators VDV there is a space in the bus, with a specific space for wheelchairs. The wheelchair is secured to the back on a long board. There is a button to press for stopping the bus. All buses after 2003 have this equipment (70%). The regional buses are often not equipped with any additional features for wheelchair users. Regional buses often have steps to get into the bus. Usually the trams have a low floor ramps and space for wheelchairs at the first and second door. The wheelchairs will be fixed "transverse" to the heading direction of the vehicle. Apart from two older vehicle types all local trains (S-Bahnen) provide low floor ramps and specific places for wheelchairs. Long distance trains provide at least one space per wagon and in general they are equipped with low floor ramps. The emergency plans are not publicly available.

Reliability and Punctuality

According to the interview-partner from the Social Association VDK there is a Hotline at railways for people with disabilities. The local service occasionally operates late. The punctuality of long distance trains is 90%, local service 80 - 90 %, local train in Berlin (S-Bahn) 99%.

According to the interview-partner from the Association of German Transport Operators VDV the reliability of the accessibility of vehicles and stops/stations in each of these public transport modes is generally high. In all city buses ramps do exist. Regional buses often do not provide any support. Lifts exist, but they are often out of order. On trams and the underground there is a 30 minute guideline to guarantee the reliability of the services. The punctuality of city buses: 90%, regional buses: 85%, trams: 95%, underground: 98-99%, local trains: 80%, long-distance trains: 90%.

Customer Service

According to the interview-partner from the Department for Economy, Transport and Development with regard to rail service, the service is decreasing. It is a general development, that personal ticket services at lower frequented stations are closed. For the public transport so-called mobility service counters are open and easy accessible. They provide also a lot of information for people with impairments. Good example:RMV (Rhein Main Verkehrsverbund).¹³

According to the interview-partner from the Social Association VDK the customer service is seen as general declining. More and more stations do not provide an attended desk in smaller stations. This relates also to services like luggage storage. Only in larger stations you will find services, which could be used by people with disabilities. The information desks are not designed for people with motor impairments. The majority of ticketing machines are not considered to be barrier free. At some stations you will find a touch screen for people with hearing impairments.

According to the interview-partner from the Association of German Transport Operators VDV the accessibility of the customer service is seen as in need of improvement. The ticket counter (rail) is often not accessible for people in wheelchairs. It is slightly better in ticket offices of local transport operator. Services for luggage storage rarely exists at bus stations. The number of storage opportunities is decreasing. Only in major stations different options exist. Often there are no storage opportunities with personnel.

¹³ http://www.rmv.de/coremedia/generator/RMV/Service/Infos/MobiZ/1__Verkehrsinzel/inhalt.html

Staff Training

According to the interview-partner from the Department for Economy, Transport and Development staff training is not the major focus at the moment. However, the personnel are trained to use the lifts at the station.

According to the interview-partner from the Social Association VDK there is still a fear of contact between the people working at public transport operators and people with impairments. However, there is a clear improvement - especially younger people seem to have fewer problems and are more motivated to help. But there is also seen a stronger self confidence of people with disabilities, which improves communication.

According to the interview-partner from the Association of German Transport Operators VDV, the training is seen as adequate although there is a need for further improvement. There is a training program for drivers especially for wheelchair users.

2.3 Alternatives to public transport

According to the interview-partner from the Department for Economy, Transport and Development there are special services which are under the responsibility of the social ministry. Special services are offered for the transport of people with cognitive impairments to their work/school. These are organised by the local social services. The local communities are responsible for the service and quality varies.

According to the interview-partner from the Social Association VDK there is a general trend of using more public transport services. The quality improves enormously and so more and more people use it.