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**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 Spain (ES)**

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## 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](http://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)

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

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## 1 Introduction

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

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

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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 25<sup>1</sup> 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 Spain (ES).

### What can be expected from this report

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This report gives an overview of the state of the accessibility of public transport in Spain (ES). 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, transport operators and

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<sup>1</sup> 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.

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 Spain (ES) 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

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People, who are interested to get **more (detailed) information on the accessibility of public transport in Spain (ES)**, 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	Alicia Garcia de Miguel	ETT
Interview partners:	Name	Organisation
Representatives of Transport Operators	Alberto Cillero (Director of the Consulting and Projects Unit, Development Division, ALSA)  Juan José Cobo, (Director Urban Transport, ALSA)	ALSA (National Bus Transport Operator)
Representatives of People with Disabilities	Ms Pilar Villarino (European Affairs Responsible, CERMI)	CERMI – Spanish Committee of Representatives of Disabled People
Representative of Governmental Authority	Mr. Luis Miguel Martínez Palencia (Director of the Urban Transport Area)  Mr. José Joaquín Lozano (Area of interurban services)	Consorcio Regional Transportes de Madrid (Transport Authority of Madrid)

**Table 1: Interviewer and Interview-partners in Spain**

#### **Experiences from the Interview with the Organisation of Representatives of People with Disabilities: CERMI – Spanish Committee of Representatives of Disabled People**

CERMI is a platform representing, defending and acting on behalf of Spanish disabled people. More than 3 million people and their families are aware of their status of non supported and unfavoured social groups. They decided to unite through certain organisations to increase recognition of their rights with the aim to achieve equal opportunities and rights to the rest of the population. CERMI is a meeting and political platform constituted by the main disabled organisations of the country.

The general impression is that the institution is working very hard in the fight for recognition of disabled people rights. One of the fields where they are especially active is the transport sector. Although they think that the situation has favourably advanced in the last two decades, they believe there is still a lot to do and aim for the

more active involvement of politicians and operators. They claim that there is a need for further actions to be implemented.

As in the other interviews, it was generally a complicated issue to obtain statistics or quantitative data. They had some data available but the division of possible impairments/disabilities of which a disabled person may be affected (motor, visual, hearing, knowledge impairments) was too specific.

**Experiences from the Interview with the Governmental Authority: Consorcio Regional Transportes de Madrid (Transport Authority of Madrid)**

The interview partners were Mr. Luis Miguel Martínez Palencia, Director of the Urban Transport Area of the Transport Consortium of Madrid and Mr. José Joaquín Lozano, Area of interurban services. In order to cover the regional context, some questions were answered by the person responsible of interurban transport.

The Transport Authority of the region of Madrid was created in 1986 for the purpose of coordinating services, networks, and fares with the objective to offer users a high capacity and high quality transport system.

In this context, this body comprises the efforts of the national government, the regional government and the city councils of the region of Madrid along with public and private companies working towards the same objective. A total of 176 municipalities belong to the Transport Consortium of Madrid, this represents almost the entire population of the Madrid region.

The interviewee was very collaborative to transmit any information we requested and provided any data available.

The general impression of the interview is that the institution is very well disposed towards the improvement of accessibility in the transport sector, and towards the disabled people in particular, although they are also aware of the limitations and the reservations of the transport operators to make such huge investments for the existing demand.

In general, it was a complicated issue to obtain statistics or quantitative data. They did not have available data segregated into the division of possible impairments of which a disabled person may be affected (motor, visual, hearing, knowledge impairments).

In this sense, the general view is that this classification is very specific and complete quantitative statistics of the status of accessibility for the different groups are not available.

It was especially interesting for them to provide best practice examples that have been recently implemented; such is the case of the new tram lines recently opened or the tests that are being carried out at the moment.

**Experiences from the Interview with the Representatives of Public Transport Operators: ALSA (National Bus Transport Operator), Director of Consulting and Projects Unit**

ALSA is a national bus operator with over 100 years experience in the transport sector. It is nowadays a leading company in Spain. The main activity of ALSA is road passenger transport operating integral transport services.

Currently the company offers:

- Long-distance, national and international transport
- Regional transport
- Urban transport
- Tourist and special transport services
- Rail systems operations

In parallel, ALSA also participates in other activities, such as management of maintenance areas, bus stations and service areas. In the 60s, ALSA incremented their international presence, and at the moment they are also present in Morocco, Europe, China and Chile.

The interviewee was extremely collaborative to transmit any information we requested and provided any data available. A very long conversation in which he provided quite fruitful and useful information was maintained.

The general impression of the interview is that the company has carried out a tremendous effort in the last few years to incorporate new services in a very difficult and competitive market.

ALSA representatives were very well disposed towards the improvement of accessibility in the transport sector, they are highly implicated in the development of their activity and towards disabled people in particular, although they are also aware of the limitations and the reservations of the transport operators to make such huge investments for the existing demand but in any case they are well aware of the law obligations and are implementing new improving measures in the new bid proposals they are presenting.

In general, it was a complicated issue to obtain statistics or quantitative data. They could not provide quantitative information. Also, all information referred to the other modes was left blank.

They pinpointed that in general it is needed to seek a balanced approach, such as for example that specific expeditions are adapted or have a person on board to assist disabled people. Not all routes and vehicles may be equipped in this way at all times as the costs increase considerably. However, specific services at specific times could be implemented for these groups. In this way, this would allow to adapt the mobility needs of each disability to the required solution.

## 2.1.2 Statistical Data from Spain

Statistical Data for Spain	
Number of inhabitants	44,708,964 <sup>2</sup>
Inhabitants with disabilities	3,528,221 <sup>3</sup>
Inhabitants with motor impairments	1,255,810 <sup>4</sup>
Inhabitants with visual impairments	830,775 <sup>5</sup>
Inhabitants with hearing impairments	820,873 <sup>6</sup>
Inhabitants with cognitive / learning impairments	514,871 <sup>7</sup>
Inhabitants who are functional illiterates	53,546 <sup>8</sup>
Share of disabled people living in urban areas	8% of the urban population are people with disabilities, 11,7% of the rural population are disabled people (around a 1M people in the rural areas). <sup>9</sup>
Share of disabled people at working age	96% is at working age (3,410,360 persons older than 16 years of age)
Share of disabled people at working age who are actually working	28.5% (666,900 persons) <sup>10</sup>

**Table 2: Statistical data for Spain**

<sup>2</sup> Latest data available from January 2006  
Source: National Estatistical Institute

<sup>3</sup> 9% of the Spanish population (1999)  
Apart from the figures below, there are also in Spain 299,429 persons with disabilities related with the nervous system, 514,871 persons with mental dissabilities, 324,850 persons with visceral disabilities and 521,615 persons with other disabilities  
Source: Antonio Abellán, Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Cientificas / National Scientific Research Board (Barómetro: "Dissability in Spain) - II Action Plan for Disabled Persons 2003-2007 - (Ministry of Work and Social Affairs)

<sup>4</sup> 54% of the share of total number of disabled people - 33,9 % (this is the rate for 1,000 inhabitants)  
Source: II Action Plan for Disabled Persons 2003-2007 - (Ministry of Work and Social Affairs)

<sup>5</sup> 22,4% (this is the rate for 1,000 inhabitants) - 17,69% of the total number of disabled persons  
Source: II Action Plan for Disabled Persons 2003-2007 - (Ministry of Work and Social Affairs)

<sup>6</sup> 22,2% (this is the rate for 1,000 inhabitants) - 17,47% of the total number of disabled persons  
Source: II Action Plan for Disabled Persons 2003-2007 - (Ministry of Work and Social Affairs)

<sup>7</sup> 13,9 % (this is the rate for 1,000 inhabitants) - 10,96% of the total number of disabled persons  
Source: II Action Plan for Disabled Persons 2003-2007 - (Ministry of Work and Social Affairs)

<sup>8</sup> This figure is the number of persons with dissabilitites related to the language, speaking and voice capabilities - 1,14% of the total number of disabled persons  
Source: II Action Plan for Disabled Persons 2003-2007 - (Ministry of Work and Social Affairs)

<sup>9</sup> The regions with a higher rate of disabled people are Andalucia, Cataluña, Madrid and Valencia.

<sup>10</sup> Source: II Action Plan for Disabled Persons 2003-2007 - (Ministry of Work and Social Affairs)

### 2.1.3 Legal and regulatory framework conditions in Spain

There exist two anti-discrimination laws in Spain: a national law of “Social Integration of Disabled Persons” (Law 13/1982) that regards – amongst other issues – also the accessibility of public transport, and the law for “equal opportunities, non-discrimination and universal accessibility of disabled people” (Law 51/2003) that extends the accessibility responsibility to all levels of the administration and private organisations.

There is no standard criteria for the implementation of accessibility measures in stops, stations, buses, trains, etc. Each regional government has its own criteria stated in its regional legislation.

The national, regional and local administrations are dedicating considerable efforts to the topic of accessibility of disabled people. They are particularly hard in the enforcement of these laws in all the new infrastructure constructions and the use of accessible vehicles. The process is slower when it comes to adapting the existing infrastructure and vehicles.

There is not an entity dedicated to follow up and monitor the accessibility of transport services. But there are several studies and (local) assessment committees that follow up the activities of certain bodies / certain regions.

In Spain some operators offer fare-reductions to people with disabilities. (For example the railway operator RENFE offers a special discount card called “Gold Card” to people with a grade of disability of at least 65%. For example the Madrid bus operator offers a special pass (10-trips ticket) called BONOTET to disabled people that must prove that their incomes are below the threshold set by the government.) However, reduced fares for disabled people are not applied everywhere in Spain (e.g. at ALSA (big Spanish bus operator) the regular ticket prices without reduction are applied to disabled users.)

#### Anti-discrimination law

The Law for Social Integration of Disabled People (LISMI) (1982) was the first law that defined the special condition of the disabled persons. This law was insufficient and a new law project was presented: Law 51/2003 "Equal opportunities, non-discrimination and universal accessibility of disabled people" (LIONDAU). This incorporates new measures against direct and indirect discrimination. The law extends the accessibility responsibility to all the levels of the administration and private organisations. It introduces a progressive implementation strategy, based first on awareness, second on create normative and finally implementation. In the framework of this law, the IMSERSO (Elderly and Social Services Institute, organisation depending of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs) has assumed the obligations related to the promotion of accessibility by developing transversal actions that complement those of other administrations. In many cases the laws are not yet enforced as the law allows a progressive implementation.

#### Regulations regarding the accessibility of public transport

According to the A, the LISMI: Law 13/1982 of Social Integration of Disabled Persons is a national law, besides each regional government has competences and their own legislation following the same criteria: urbanism, building, transport and communication. LIONDAU extends the responsibility to all administration levels and introduces a progressive implementation strategy. This is why in many cases the law has not been entirely enforced. The instruments that will help in the implementation of this law are the Plans. Two plans have been designed by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs: "National Accessibility Plan 2004-2012" and "II Action Plan for Disabled People 2003-2007". The 2000/78/CE EU Directive related to the establishment of a general framework for equal employment opportunities is also transposed. In the 1990s, agreements were signed between the IMSERSO (an organisation depending of the Ministry of Social Affairs) and the FEMP Spanish Federation of Municipalities and Provinces) to provide funding for municipalities to acquire new low floor

vehicles. At this time, underground and rail stations start to be renovated with accessibility criteria. Furthermore, accessibility to taxis experienced a great advance. There is not an entity dedicated to follow up the accessibility prerequisites of vehicles and in general of services of the transport chain.

There is not a standard criteria for the implementation of accessibility measures in stops, stations, buses, trains, etc. Each regional government has their own criteria stated in their regional legislation. Uniform criteria of rights and obligations of passengers and staff or even regarding the level of responsibility of operators is not well defined. It is needed that the public administrations at all levels analyse, revise and follow up the different steps of the transport chain to make sure that accessibility is a reality. For example, regional governments of Madrid and Barcelona have accessibility laws that oblique the elimination of physical barriers. Many governments and public administrations provide subsidies to the transport operators that acquire low floor adapted vehicles. In the case of Madrid, Law 8/1993 of Promotion of accessibility and elimination of architectural barriers enacts the accessibility criteria for the construction of buildings, pedestrian itineraries, parking, vehicles, stops, etc.

For the acquisition of buses the following standards must be observed: acquisition of those vehicles that are most appropriate for the use of any person: height of the vehicle platform, access system, information systems, lighting, safety measures, etc. Urban and interurban buses must reserve at least 2 spaces per vehicle to disabled persons. The reserved seats must be tip-up seats, providing seat belts and located next to the exit doors. They must be clearly signalled. A ring button must be placed at an accessible location for passengers with disabilities to press.

For rail and tram systems, technical standards are set by law: for example the area in the border of the platforms of stations has to be signalled with a non-slippery pavement with a different texture and colour in order to allow a quick identification of the level change between the platform and the vehicles. In the inner spaces, the curtain effect will be suppressed in order to avoid reflexes with an adequate lighting. Rail stations of cities with over 50,000 inhabitants will count with personnel that may help disabled users in and out of the vehicles. Vehicles and stations must have audio equipment and visual information systems in order to inform passengers about arrivals, departures and other incidents.

For the case of underground vehicles, each will have an intercom system, as well as visual information systems that allow travellers to find out in advance any changes of timetables or any other incidences.

60% of the train stations have already adopted the agreed criteria for the height of platforms (680 mm). As far as the vehicles, 318 new CIVIA trains will be purchased. These will provide adapted access at floor level. There are currently 36 units. 45% of the vehicles will be acquired by 2014. The currently operating vehicles have no adapted access. The necessity to adapt these is currently being studied. By 2014 only 55% of the vehicles will not have adapted access.

RENFE has already adapted the High Speed Stations (except the High Speed Madrid - Sevilla and Atocha at 550 mm). All the TALGO trains have access to floor level and the height of platforms is at 760 mm (adopted criteria). There exists in general auxiliary access platforms that may be used when needed.

There is no pictographic information or Braille system. Audio information is also not provided. The information and ticket sales counters are high and this makes it very difficult to communicate with staff. There is no specific information about accessibility issues. In general no standards are put in place.

#### “Priority” of accessibility of public transport on the political agenda

The national, regional and local administrations are dedicating considerable efforts to the topic of accessibility of disabled people. They are particularly working to enforce these laws in all the new infrastructure constructions and the use of accessible vehicles. The process is slower when it comes to adapting the existing vehicles. At national level the Spanish government approved the Disabled Integration Law (LISMI) centred in the application

of positive actions to protect disabled persons. In 2002 as a result of a research study from the IMSERSO and the Aceplan Team from the University Institute of European Studies of the Autonomous University of Barcelona it was created the Green Book of Accessibility in Spain. The objective of this study was to identify the situation of accessibility at national level in order to create the basis for the First Integral Action Plan 2004-2012. In 2003, an important step was made, when Law 51/2003 (LIONDAU) was approved. At regional level, all the regional governments have a less detailed development of legislation on transport issues. In general terms they establish the need to have accessible infrastructure and rolling stock. The technical accessibility norms are usually very sectorially focused and need a more complete development of consolidated infrastructure and rolling stock. For example, at local level in the region of Madrid has shown a great interest in improving the quality of transport services for all users of the system irrespective of differences of personal mobility conditions. Law 8/1993 of Promotion of Accessibility and Barriers Removal of the Region of Madrid establishes diverse measures to favour accessibility to public transport. In order to incorporate new rolling stock adapted to the requirements of disabled people. Among these measures the contribution of several public institutions of financial aid to purchase was new adapted vehicles.

According to CERMI accessibility of public transport is an important issue but the developments are very slow and further actions are required in order to achieve an acceptable level of accessibility. Problems are reported in terms of the application of created laws..

#### Monitoring of the accessibility of public transport

The Transport Authority of Madrid stated that in 1992, 10 years after the LISMI came into force, studies were carried out to reach conclusions regarding the impact and compliance of the law on these issues. The results of these studies showed that the objectives were not being met completely during these 10 years. A new strategy was put in place to focus on the long term. At this point, in Spain the studies value impact of this law although they recognise that there are many unfulfilled issues and numerous deviations. A greater impulse is needed to complete and deepen the development of this law and to incorporate new approaches and innovations of the sector. For example, a follow up commission was created in the region of Madrid to pursue and control the compliance of the planned objectives in the Agreements signed between the different financing bodies (Government of the Region of Madrid / Transport Consortium of Madrid and IMSERSO) and resolve interpretation or compliance problems that may arise. <sup>11</sup>

CERMI stated that in some cases, assessment committees are formed to follow up the activities of certain bodies, but since the law contemplates a progressive implementation, its compliance is not always as fast as wished.

#### Special fares and public transport tariffs for people with disabilities

According to the Transport Authority of Madrid, LISMI is inspired in principles stated in the National Spanish Constitution Law, which recognises the dignity of disabled people and the right to their complete personal realisation and total social integration. This law rules the main aspects that affect disabled people, the State obligations, their rights and social aid and economic loans and assistance. This coverage is extensive to the guarantees of mobility and compensation of transport costs. The section of the law that relates to the topic of mobility states that a progressive adaptation of collective public transport is implemented. It refers to the reservation of parking spaces and seats in vehicles. There are also more concrete regional laws as the competences are transferred to the regional governments. There is also a Real Decree 2574 / 1983 that establishes the prescriptions related to the characteristics of vehicles used for collective transport systems.

CERMI stated that according to the associations representing people with disabilities, the legislation at national level is still limited. Real Decree 3250/1983 authorises guide dogs in public transport and Real Decree

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<sup>11</sup> Source: Adapted Transport Guide of Madrid by M<sup>a</sup> Isabel Velasco (Discapnet)

556/1989 demands minimum accessibility conditions to public buildings of public transport systems. At regional level the regional governments (CCAA) have created barrier suppression legislation with a quite developed level of requirements. As a result of a too optimistic anxiety to legislate or to mimicry a more advanced legislation of other regional governments. This has resulted in non compliance of most of these laws. Only few regional governments have developed this law with regalement or accessibility codes, and those who have done it have not developed the transport sector enough, especially in terms of technical requirements of rolling stock. The sectorial legislation in relation to accessibility of disabled people to transport services is very different depending on the transport modes. It is fundamentally centred on technical norms, although in some cases there are also ticket control norms, customer attention and fares control. Air transport is the more developed mode in terms of legislation, followed by the rail mode.

CERMI meant that although there are various opinions with regards the applicability of reduced fares for disabled people, it is true that there are reduced fares for the elderly and disabled people in Spain. However, it is still necessary that a more magnanimous fare reduction for these groups is achieved as they are in a poor economic situation. Some of them are not able to work because they cannot use public transport. In order to be entitled they need to be considered disabled people by the government, they need to show a special card that proves their condition.

According to ALSA there are the same regular ticket prices without reduction applied to disabled users.

#### 2.1.4 Organisational framework conditions

In Spain the national government holds the responsibility to act in the accessibility topic in order to reach the objective of equal opportunities. Since in Spain the public transport competences are decentralised to the regional and local authorities, the authorities responsible for public transport are usually regional governments (Governments of Autonomous Communities) and municipalities. The regional level authorities (Autonomous Communities) have created laws which contain general principles, objectives and definitions. The local authorities (municipalities), which have the executing competences for the regional normatives, develop “Municipal Accessibility Plans”.

In Spain the level of cooperation of stakeholders with regards to the accessibility of public transport is quite high: according to the PTaccess interview-partners, the national government and the main national associations of disabled people (ONCE, CERMI) work together along with the main transport operators to define the criteria and the most appropriate measures to improve accessibility of disabled users to public transport.

Attitudes regarding the use of public transport by people with disabilities: disabled people do not want to use public transport because they do not feel secure; they feel certain insecurities and worry about whether they will be able to get off on time or if they will fall or if they will not be able to understand and access information or how to behave in case of an emergency. People with mental / knowledge disabilities, people with hearing disabilities, and people with visual disabilities are most likely to use public transport, whereas people with motor impairments, especially wheelchair-users, are not likely to use public transport as they face the most serious barriers.

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

There are three levels that set up the normative framework for the promotion of accessibility:

- 1) EU level, which defines the strategy by means of Communications (Ex.: Communication about Equal Opportunities for Disabled Persons" (1996), adopting the Principles established in the Uniform Norms of the United Nations
- 2) the national (State) level which holds the responsibility to act in the accessibility topic to reach the equal opportunities objective, and
- 3) the regional level (Autonomous Community) which has the exclusive competence, and the great majority has chosen to create laws which contain general principles, objectives and definitions and left to the reglaments the creation of technical rules that determine how accessibility must be understood in the different spaces.

There are four sectors that already count with normative: urbanism, building, transport and sensorial communication, and also, accessibility promotion and barriers removal. However, it is the local administrations (municipalities) that have the executing competences of the regional normatives. Some of the instruments they use are called Municipal Accessibility Plans.

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## **Governmental authorities responsible for public transport**

Since the public transport competences are decentralised to the regional and local authorities, the authorities responsible for public transport are usually regional governments (Governments of Autonomous Communities) and municipalities. It does not make sense to name the General Directions of Transport of each region of Spain and/or of each municipality in Spain.

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## **Main transport operators and Public Transport associations**

The main transport operators of the country by mode are:

Bus: ALSA, Continental Auto;

Train: RENFE, FEVE, Euskotren;

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## **Main disability organisations**

- CERMI - Spanish Committee of Representatives of People with Disabilities
- IMSERSO - Institute of Migrations and Social Services - Ministry of Work and Social Affairs
- AESLEME
- Fundación ONCE

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## Cooperation among stakeholders

### Cooperation between the governmental authorities and disability organisations

According to the Transport Authority of Madrid, the national government and the main national associations of disabled people (ONCE, CERMI) work together along with the main transport operators to define the criteria and the most appropriate measures to improve accessibility of disabled users to public transport. For example, RENFE, the national railway operator which has recently edited a guide in cooperation with the ministry, the railway infrastructure administration (ADIF), and the CERMI, the organisation representing disabled people. This guide offers information about rail services for disabled users. This organisation's views are also incorporated in many official documents, to which they present allegations.

According to CERMI, the cooperation of disabled people and the administration is done through the associations representing this collective. It has been moderate to high. The Spanish Committee of Disabled People Representatives (CERMI) in cooperation with the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs and the Ministry of Promotion developed in 1998 and approved in 1999 a plan that defined the needs of disabled persons in relation to accessibility and possible measures to be implemented by the Administration.

### Cooperation between the transport operators and disability organisations

CERMI stated that agreements and cooperation contracts are continuous with operators and administrations at different levels.

ALSA stated that the level of cooperation is high. There is a stable collaboration relationship with CERMI, ONCE and FEMP (Spanish Federation of municipalities and Provinces). They all have signed permanent agreements to implement measures in the cities they are present. The FEMP also has a financing agreement to subsidize low floor platforms on buses.

### Cooperation between the transport operators and governmental authorities

CERMI stated that in the 90s, organisations representing disabled people and public administrations focus on the elimination of physical barriers especially in already constructed environments.

According to ALSA, the cooperation level is limited to the concessions and the negotiations of bids and tenders.

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

The Transport Authority of Madrid stated that the investment needed to adapt stations and vehicles is the main barrier hindering a faster development of accessibility in the public transport sector. The need to acquire new adapted vehicles to the bus fleets, new trains, or trams, etc. is without any doubt the main barrier. Both administration and operators are willing to incorporate accessibility rights to their services, but the financing of these measures is not always an easy and quick process.

According to ALSA, the public transport operators are aware of the need to adapt the fleet, mainly because it is required by law, and secondly because they also need to introduce improvements to the tenders and bids they participate in order to gain market share.

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

In the opinion of the interview-partner of A, disabled people feel insecure when talking about the use of public transport. They feel that they will not be able to continue the trip, arriving to their destination and are afraid of all

types of impediments and difficulties. They are afraid of not being able to get into the vehicles due to the lack of ramps, or not being able to do it before the driver starts the trip and falling down, or not having enough time to request the stop and overpass the desired stop, or of full buses or trains and not being able to move. Usually the bad experiences prevent disabled people from using public transport. People with disabilities are not having enough information about the state of public transport and if the vehicles are adapted to their needs. There are still other mental and psychological barriers among the transport operator's staff and the rest of passengers. There are lobbies focused on improving the current situations, disabled people are represented in associations that are pressing the administration for a more accessible public transport.<sup>12</sup>

For public transport operators it is an important issue and major efforts have been done in the last decade, but they are limited by the huge investments needed to adapt or renew the fleet.

The Transport Authority of Madrid believes the provision of accessible public transport would help disabled people to find/keep a job. One of the main problems that disabled people face to be able to work is the mobility issue. A lack of measures that enables them to be able to move freely is one of the main barriers that hinder their integration in the labour environment. In the opinion of the Transport Authority of Madrid it is not likely to use public transport for wheelchair users because there are too many barriers for them to use public transport vehicles. Many subway stations do not have lifts or ramps, etc. For blind people and people with cognitive/learning impairments it is likely to use public transport. Many blind people are daily users of it.

According to CERMI, disabled people do not want to use public transport because they do not feel secure. They feel certain insecurities and worry about whether they will be able to get off on time or if they will fall or if they will not be able to understand and access information or how to behave in case of an emergency. In some cases drivers are not very collaborative and do not seem to understand the special needs of these users. In some cases they have had bad experiences that have dissuaded them to use public transport, in other cases it is a lack of knowledge about the status of public transport and if it is adapted to their mobility needs. The value of public transport services vary according to the needs of each group. Those with mental or knowledge disabilities are always above the average, also those with auditory disabilities (except for signalling and megaphones). However, physically impaired people and wheelchair users offer the lowest values given their difficulties to access vehicles and stations, which the other groups may consider not so important.

It is clear to disabled people that they need technical measures that enable them to access vehicles, etc. however, they consider that human assistance is a "must". The presence of this type of professional should be mandatory in many stations, interchangers, etc. They request staff with knowledge of: sign language, Braille language, knowledge about the different disabilities, and their difficulties when using public transport, first aid, ability to understand through drawings, ability listen and read lips, knowledge about times, schedules, timetables, routes and itineraries, assistance systems such as ramps, elevating platforms, bus kneeling, and legal rights of disabled people, etc.

An exact figure about the percentage of people with disabilities who are using public transport is not available, but the percentage is very, very low, as the existing barriers make it very complicated or even in some cases, impossible for disabled people to use public transport.

Disabled people hardly use public transport for their daily mobility, given the low accessibility degree of the vehicles. When disabled people do use public transport, they do it alone and avoid peak hours. They claim that the start of the journey is one of the most dangerous moments because they need time to get to a safe place and hold on. Usually they lose equilibrium and feel insecure. The current state of the vehicles, even those with access ramps does not allow the development of activities to these persons. Disabled people state that they rarely use

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<sup>12</sup> Source: <http://www.cermiaragon.org>. Accessibility to bus transport Study by Pilar Vega and Fernando Alonso. Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs. 2006. <http://www.ceapat.org>

public transport to visit friends, go shopping, or to the theatre or the movies, and they do not use it to go to work or to school. Only 27 % of the disabled users feel secure when they travel by bus, for example. For many of these people the offer is very limited and does not allow a total freedom of movements. Many areas of the cities are not covered by accessible buses or trains.

CERMI also thinks that it is not likely for people with an electric wheelchair to use public transport because there are too many physical barriers. Visually impaired people are the most numerous group using public transport in their daily life but it is not very common. It is not very likely for blind people to bring their children to kindergarten, school or leisure activities by public transport.

ALSA thinks that the provision of accessible public transport would help people with disabilities to find/keep a job in some cases. Although it is thought that they do not feel secure and they probably prefer the private mode. For electric wheelchair users there are too many barriers to use public transport in their daily life. A very small number of blind people already use public transport, but it is still limited. With children it would be too complicated for disabled people to travel by public transport.

## 2.2 Accessibility of Public Transport

**Pre-trip information:** Travel planning information such as brochures, network maps and schedules are printed and may be found in subway, train and bus stations or bus stops, and this information is also available on the operator's web site. In most cases the information is sufficient for the regular non-disabled users. In general the accessibility of public transport passenger information for disabled people is poor. Disabled people do not get enough clear information about the services they can use or what they will face when travelling by public transport. Pre-trip information regarding the accessibility of public transport stations, stops, vehicles and services is very limited.

**On-trip information:** There is very limited passenger information available at public transport stops in rural areas, in some cases there is not even printed material located on the posts, and the regular bus stops are not equipped with audio systems. At stops and stations in urban areas timetable and route information is displayed visually, and incidents are announced acoustically. There are no specific measures taken that make this information accessible to disabled users. In urban and regional buses the next stop is announced visually (about 80% of these buses are equipped with screens), but no detailed information is provided. Occasionally, if the screens in the buses are not working, there are acoustic announcements of the next stop. In trams and new underground trains the next stops and unexpected incidents are announced visually and acoustically. Voice announcements are common in local trains.

**Ticketing:** In Spain public transport tickets may be purchased through several channels: tickets for metro and trams may be bought at stations, tickets for urban and interurban buses can be bought in the vehicles, and tickets for longer distance buses and trains can be bought at stations and interchanges. In Madrid reduced fare tickets for people with disabilities (e.g. multi-tickets or pass-cards) can be bought at the metro stations (at the automatic vending machines or at the counter) or at newspaper/tobacco shops.

Most ticket vending machines are not accessible for blind people (only about 6% of the vending machines are adapted for visually impaired people). The counters are too high for people in wheelchairs, and most counters are not equipped with hearing-loop systems. (Only about 9% of the stations are equipped with hearing loop systems).

**Stops and stations:** According to the interviewees, the accessibility of public transport stops and stations is poor (especially for people with motor impairments). For example, only about 38% of bus stops in urban areas are accessible for people with motor impairments, but some of these stops still have access difficulties that hinder buses to approach and operate the ramp correctly (e.g. due to occupation by illegally parked vehicles). For example, only about 25% of the bus- and train-stations have automatic entrance doors and only 18% of the stations have doors wide enough for a wheelchair to pass.

The national government announced that all rail stations with more than 1,000 passengers per day will have priority to be adapted for better accessibility of disabled people. The improvement of the accessibility of bus-stops and stations is the responsibility of the municipalities and in most cases there is very limited improvement.

**Vehicles:** According to the PTaccess interview partners, in general the accessibility of public transport vehicles is low in Spain. The government has put considerable effort in promoting the adaptation of vehicles and stations in the short/medium term. There is awareness about the fact that there is still a lot to do, but positive changes have already been accomplished in the last decade: A lot of urban buses do already have low-floor and are equipped with ramps, and new accessible trams and light-rails are being implemented at the moment in Spain. However, only a small share of interurban and rural buses is accessible, and also the accessibility of the underground, with the exemption of the new Bilbao underground, is poor. Only about 9% of local trains and only about 35% of the long distance trains in Spain are adapted to be accessible for people with disabilities.

**Safety, Reliability, and Service:** In Spain there are not many cases of accidents involving disabled people in public transport. According to the PTaccess interview partners this is due to the fact that not many people with disabilities use public transport. People with disabilities think that riding a bus is the most dangerous form of transport due to the occasional aggressive manoeuvring of the drivers. Travelling by underground and by local train is also assessed by people with disabilities to be dangerous as the vehicles are crowded and they are not equipped with safety devices. Long distance trains and trams are assessed by people with disabilities to be quite safe modes, since the vehicles are quite new and well equipped, however the access to long-distance trains is not possible in all stations.

Information on emergencies is available through acoustic channels in all transport modes. Visual announcements are only available in some modes, especially in stations, not so much in the vehicles themselves.

The level of reliability of the accessibility of vehicles and stops/stations is assessed to be low for regional buses and undergrounds, moderate for city buses and local trains, and high for trams and long-distance trains. Reliability of accessibility in train stations is low, since only a few stations are equipped with elevators; accessibility to buses is also low, because not all the buses of the fleets are equipped with low floors or ramps; furthermore in many cases, the drivers may not open the ramp due to problems like illegally parked private vehicles on the bus stops or because the drivers are unable to open the non-automatic ramp, having to abandon their seat. Accessibility to regional buses is low because most of them are not equipped with ramps and have stairs to access the vehicles. In those regional buses, which are equipped with ramps, in many cases the ramps are not functioning since these type of ramps is a very complicated equipment that requires high maintenance efforts.

The accessibility of customer services (e.g. luggage storage, counters, information desks) is in general poor. Only 60% of the stations have personal assistance. Rural stations do not offer luggage storage facilities and they are not designed to be barrier-free, in most cases there are not even elevators. The railway operators provide assistance for people with disabilities at about 100 train-stations throughout Spain; this service is for free, but it has to be booked 48 hours in advance. There is no assistance offered to people with disabilities at local bus stations and metro stations. The bus drivers may assist people with disabilities, if necessary, but it is always dependant on the driver as they are not obliged to provide assistance.

According to the interviewees, public transport operators and administrations are not totally aware of the importance of accessibility to improve quality of service. They are making progress in renovating the fleet, but have not understood that this must be completed with an improved service towards the user, especially towards the disabled user. There are no specific training actions for staff of the transport sector. Bus drivers are trained in how to use the ramps, but there is no training provided on driver behaviour or the communication tools needed to assist disabled people.

There are a lot of barriers for people with motor impairments in public transport in Spain: In city and regional bus stations there are stairs or long inappropriate access ramps, long corridors, and slippery floors and high counters that make it complicated to communicate with the staff. In some cases there are no waiting rooms or no seats to wait. The buses have stairs or are unable to set the ramp. Inside the vehicles, there are no empty seats or cannot hold on before the driver starts the motor. When reaching the destination, the alighting is also complicated.

People with visual impairments face barriers in public transport in Spain: There are no guiding systems signalling the entrance of the city buses. The ticket and the information systems about the trip and the tickets are not in Braille language. The voice systems do not exist or are not working in many cases. The exact location where the bus will stop is not well signalled. Drivers are not very collaborative. Inside the vehicles there are no interior guides or information in Braille language. Since they cannot see where the bus is riding within the line,

and there are no audio announcements there are misunderstandings and mistakes with passengers getting off at the wrong station/stop.

People with hearing impairments have no difficulties to enter the stations or the vehicles. However, communication problems with drivers are very common. Usually, the drivers do not address passengers and are always in a hurry. This complicates the purchase and validation of tickets for this group as they cannot communicate with the drivers. There are no signal information systems or they do not work. There is not a visual system through screens that announce the existence of the bus. The user does not understand the price of the ticket or the destination because the driver does not provide precise information.

For people with cognitive/learning impairments, no guiding systems are available, they could get disoriented easily. There is no staff available to help passengers. People with cognitive/learning impairments have no serious difficulties to enter the city-buses; however in some cases they have orientation problems. When the disability is serious, they have problems to pay the tickets or to know where they are going. They get disoriented if the stop is not well signalled.

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### **2.2.1 Accessibility of passenger information**

#### Pre-trip information

In general the Transport Authority of Madrid perceives that in Spain public transport passenger information is not always as broad and clear as it should be. In most cases disabled persons feel afraid using public transport because they are unsure of how to use it. Some modes have made available information on the internet. However in many cases, urban and local public transport information is not always easy to find. Travel planning information such as brochures, network maps and schedules are printed and may be found in subway, train and bus stations or bus stops. These are also available on the operator's web site. In most cases the information is sufficient for the normal users, but not so easily accessible to the disabled user. The level of information available on pre-trip information is very poor. In some cases, for example in the underground network there are stations where there is not even staff to provide information or assistance. The information about tariffs and tickets may be obtained on the Internet, the operator's websites, or on the public transport stations or interchanges.

Only some modes offer certain services or information on pre-trip details. Such is the case of rail service; RENFE offers information on their website and a telephone number where for example accompanying services may be requested. But in general, in other modes, such as underground or local, regional buses this information is not so accessible. In many cases these services do not even exist. Pre-trip information on special transport services does practically not exist. If any, it can be found on the Internet.

According to CERMI, accessibility of public transport passenger information for disabled people is generally poor. Disabled people do not have enough clear information about the services they can use or what they will face when travelling by public transport. The information of travel planning is very poor. Especially for visually impaired people, as the other groups may be able to access pre-trip information in the stations/stops or on the web, printed maps of the network, announcement boards and staff at the counters. There is little information in relation to pre-trip conditions available, at least not in printed format. Information may be obtained only by directly calling the operator. Some detailed information about what stations are accessible is available on the website of the Transport Consortium and on the route maps, as is the case of the underground in Madrid. The level of pre-trip information for disabled people concerning tariffs and tickets is in general very poor. They have to rely on the usual methods for purchasing tickets or obtaining information about fares, these are: telephone, Internet or over the counter at the stations. There are not any other adapted means to obtain this information. In

the rail mode, for long distance rail trips, RENFE has edited a guide and has posted information on the web about special services, accompanying services or reservations of spaces on trains. The pre-trip information of other modes on customer services is also generally poor: firstly, because such services do not exist, and secondly because no specific information is available. Special transport services are not common. When they exist, there is information on the Internet, but in general this information is not easily accessible and widely unknown.

In the opinion of the interview-partner from ALSA, the accessibility of transport information is not at its best, but there is information available on the web, bus stations, by telephone, etc. According to ALSA there is travel planning information available on the web, bus stations, on board the buses, by telephone, etc. Although in general specific information for disabled users is poor. Pre-trip information regarding the accessibility of public transport stations, stops, vehicles and services is very limited, almost non-existent. Concerning tariffs and tickets, there is only the information oriented to the regular non-disabled user. There are no specific or discounted fares and ticket prices for disabled people in ALSA's concessions. Pre-trip information on customer services may be provided by the bus drivers or the bus stations staff. There is no specific printed material for disabled users available. Information about special transport systems is available in printed brochures, as is the case of rural on-demand transport systems in the region of León. Also, there is some information on the website, for example in this case, on the web of the regional government of Junta de Castilla La Mancha.

#### On-trip information

According to the Transport Authority of Madrid, the information on stops available is the general one for the common passenger; there are not any special measures for disabled users. Accessibility to information is therefore not guaranteed. In some cases there are information screens but not Braille or signalling info systems are used. In some cases, acoustic messages are also provided, especially to announce incidences.

The information available in the rural environment is very much limited. There are no specific measures that make this information accessible to disabled users. No real-time information is available.

In general, only 1 of every 3 urban stations (bus, trains) has lighting rolling information screens.

The city buses of the region of Madrid have a dynamic information system that announces the name of the approaching station/stop in the screen. In some occasions, as it is not always working, there are voice announcements, the problem is that sometimes the tapes run faster than the buses or the train and therefore the stop being announced does not coincide with the real position of the bus. For hearing impaired users only the screens are available.

The regional buses offer a similar level of accessibility of information as the urban buses. The announcements of the next stop are shown in the dynamic screens. No detailed information is provided.

In trams and new underground trains they announce the next stop and unexpected incidents through screens and voice announcements but not specific tools are used for disabled people.

Voice announcements are common on local trains. There are also screens that announce the next stops and the possible interchangers in each station/stop. Emergency issues are announced via voice messages.

According to CERMI, people with hearing impairments can obtain information only where there are screens. But great difficulties are met for this group to obtain information in any transport mode. The passenger information for people with cognitive/learning impairments is also poor. No special measures for this type of impairment are implemented. There is only the regular information available.

The accessibility of passenger information in the vehicles for people with motor impairments is poor. People with motor impairments can access regular information offered by all transport modes through screens, audio announcements, etc. No special measures are in place.

In the vehicles there is no information in Braille language; therefore, the level of accessibility to information in the vehicles is very poor.

Only visual information on screens or announcement boards (timetables, routes, etc) is provided for people with hearing impairments. No other special information systems are implemented.

The information is usually provided through channels, screens and audio announcements, which is not enough for users with cognitive or learning impairments.

According to ALSA, the information available in bus stops in urban areas is quite limited, only through printed material located on the posts. There is no information for visually disabled users, as the regular bus stops are not equipped with audio systems. Only the major interchangers are better equipped with special audio systems and screens where the departures and arrivals are shown.

The information available in bus stops in rural areas is more limited, in some cases there is not even printed material located on the posts. There is no information for visually disabled users, as the regular bus stops are not equipped with audio systems.

In the regional and city buses there are no special measures implemented for people with motor impairments. For people with visual impairments the driver makes voice announcements of arrivals and destinations in some cases. 80% of the regional and city buses provide information about the next stops on the onboard bus screens so that it is also accessible for people with hearing impairments. For people with cognitive/learning impairments there are no special measures implemented.

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## 2.2.2 Accessibility issues in Ticketing

According to the Transport Authority of Madrid, RENFE for example has a special discounted card called Tarjeta Dorada RENFE (Gold Card RENFE) entitled to those with a disability of 65% or more. An accompanying adult will also be entitled to this type of card. The Gold Card is valid for a year and can be purchased in the stations, RENFE sales offices and travel agencies. The discounts applicable to the holders of this card are among 25 - 40 % depending on the train and day of the week of the trip. Bus operators also offer special discounted tickets for disabled people. For example the Madrid bus operator offers a 10 trips ticket at the price of 0.30 € (compared to the normal one that costs 6.40 €). In order to apply for this special ticket the person must prove that his/her incomes are below the threshold set by the government. This must be requested in the Social Services Centre of their municipality and then the ticket may be purchased in press/tobacco kiosks. In the case of Madrid there is also a special pass called BONOTET for the bus network, it is a 10 trips ticket available to holders of a special disability card (awarded by the Municipality to those that comply with certain criteria) and the trips only cost 0.30 €

Public transport tickets may be purchased through several channels: for metro/subway, tram at stations; in the case of urban and interurban buses in the vehicles; for longer distance buses and trains at stations and interchanges; to buy the multi-tickets or pass-cards it is required to go to the metro stations (automatic vending machines or over the counter) or to the tobacco shops.

The public transport vending machines have tactile buttons that blind people cannot use. They have no acoustic guidance either, so they cannot use them. Among the group of people with disabilities, only people with hearing impairments may be able to use the ticket vending machines.

Only 6% of the vending and information machines are adapted for visually impaired people. Only 9% of stations are equipped with hearing loop systems for hearing impaired people.

CERMI stated that although there are various opinions with regards to the applicability of reduced fares for disabled people, it is true that there are reduced fares for the elderly and disabled people in Spain. However, it is still necessary a more magnanimous fare reduction for these groups as they are also in a worst economic situation. Some of them are not able to work because they cannot use public transport. In order to be entitled for public transport fare reductions they need to be considered disabled people by the government and show a special card that proves their condition.

In most cases (except when travelling by long distance trains) people with disabilities need to purchase the ticket at the train or bus stations or even in the vehicles in the case of interurban and urban buses. The counters are usually not adapted to the special height of wheelchairs users. In some cases there are only vending machines available. Only some vending machines are adapted for visual impaired people. The representatives of disabled people propose the suppression of physical barriers, such as the height of counters where sometimes it is even difficult to communicate with the sales officer.

The average share of public transport ticket vending machines that are accessible is not available. Some vending machines in the underground (METRO) have Braille language, however it is not very clear how these vending machines are used by visually impaired people because the screens are touch-based and it does not seem very easy for a blind person to be able to select an option from the screen.

According to ALSA, the same regular prices without reduction are applied to disabled users. The tickets may be purchased on the regular places, on the bus, on tobacco shops and bus stations. On-line tickets may also be purchased on the web. There are no special vending machines available for disabled users; they have to follow the regular channels.

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### **2.2.3 Accessibility of stops and stations**

#### Current state regarding the accessibility of bus stops and stations in Spain

It is stated that in the year 2000, only 36% of the 7,500 buses had low floors and only 2/3 of the stops had stop shelters. According to the Transport Authority of Madrid, 38% of the bus stops in urban areas are accessible for people with motor impairments. Although some of these stops still have access difficulties for buses to approach: City buses cannot properly approach the stops and open the ramps in more than 83% of the cases. Only 20% of the bus stops have an acceptable width, 15% of them are occupied by illegally parked vehicles that hinder the correct manoeuvring of the bus and the opening of the ramps.

In the opinion of CERMI, the level of accessibility for motor impaired users is very low, especially because there are many physical barriers to access stations and stops, it is not always possible to use ramps, and elevators are not installed in all stations. All these barriers limit the destinations people with motor impairments can access. Accessible facilities or vending machines are also not available in all stations.

According to ALSA, none of the bus stops have special facilities for disabled people. ALSA stated that the situation of bus stops and stations is poor, but the maintenance competences are not from the operators but from the local administrations, the municipalities.

The regional services bus stations have partial deficiencies. Only 80% of the stations make the transit of wheelchairs (entrance, ticket sales and platforms) possible.

According to the Transport Authority of Madrid only 1 of every 4 bus and train stations have automatic entrance doors. Only 18% of the stations have doors wider than 82.5 cm; (doors with a width of less than 82.5 cm are not

accessible for wheelchair users). In more than half of the stations the approaching itinerary is accessible both from the main street and from the public transport station.

The accessibility level varies in the railway system depending on the company / operator (RENFE, FEVE) or even depending on the business units in which RENFE is structured, or in the different lines of the networks. In general, it can be said that stations of almost all operators previously mentioned have started to eliminate architectural barriers and the five AVE (High Speed) stations are almost fully accessible. RENFE has also a quite well developed programme in its 72 commercial stations. Some of the regional stations (CERCANIAS) are also starting to introduce accessibility measures. There is still a lot to do in other minor/rural stations. 60% of the local or medium distance stations have already been adapted to 680 mm height to allow level floor access to disabled people. All the new trains will have low floor access. The need to adapt the trains currently in operation is also being discussed. The ADIF-IMSERSO Agreement plan an investment of 7.4 Mio € The objective is to have unique criteria for platform heights and to purchase local and medium distance trains with total accessibility capabilities. The high speed lines use special auxiliary platforms and provide customer attention services.<sup>13</sup>

#### Strategy regarding the improvement of the accessibility of public transport in Spain

In June 2007, the national government announced that all rail stations with more than 1,000 passengers per day will have priority to be adapted for better accessibility of disabled people, which should be complete in the case of renovations of facilities above 50% of their national value. The trains renovated above 30% of their value will also have to be adapted. All the stations, the space between them, the access to the trains and all the vehicles have to be completely accessible.

According to CERMI the strategy regarding the accessibility of stops and stations is competence of the Municipalities; there are very limited improvements in this topic.

### **2.2.4 Accessibility of vehicles**

CERMI stated that in general, the situation regarding the accessibility of public transport vehicles is poor. Greater efforts and improvements are necessary in order for disabled people to be able to access public transport.

ALSA thinks that the accessibility of public transport vehicles in Spain is generally low.

According to the PTaccess interview partners, in a lot of local trains and most of the regional buses, there are no spaces available for wheelchairs. In city buses, trams, new underground vehicles, and long distance trains there are two spaces reserved for wheelchairs.

#### Buses and Coaches:

According to the Transport Authority of Madrid there have been efforts to improve accessibility to urban and interurban buses and metro. In some cases, new buses equipped with low floors and ramps are purchased; in other cases, the existing vehicles have been adapted with electronic ramps that may be operated with a remote control or through a button on the exterior of the bus.

In the year 2000, only 36% of the 7.500 city buses had low floors.

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<sup>13</sup> Source: Ministry of Promotion, March 2007. Follow up Commission. Framework Programme of Collaboration MFOM – CERMI

According to CERMI, there is a concerted effort to improve accessibility of public transport vehicles. Some state institutions are financing the adaptation of buses with elevating ramps. Improvements are being done, but not all models may be technically adapted. Passengers are not well informed about the strategy for use of these vehicles in service or about the developments regarding the accessibility of vehicles.

According to ALSA, the newly purchased city buses have two spaces for wheelchairs, priority seat for elderly, pregnant women or women with children and other disabled users, handholds, special non slippery floors and low ramps.

According to ALSA, the strategy for improving the accessibility of urban bus-transport includes the installation of ramps and SAE systems (ITCS - Intermodal Transport Control Systems) in the buses that are not equipped and the purchase of fully equipped buses that comply with the legislation.

The Transport Authority of Madrid stated that the government is putting considerable effort to promote the adaptation of vehicles and stations in the short/medium term. However, this is a slow process that requires time due to the large investments needed. There is awareness about the fact that there is still a lot to do, but very positive changes have already been accomplished in the last decade. Vehicles are equipped with low floors and ramps, and non-slippery surface. Vehicles also have a device to hold the wheelchairs situated in the central platform. Disabled children do not have to stand up and close the chairs as long as they have requested a special identification (in the case of Madrid, to the bus operator, EMT). The buses have reserved seats for disabled persons. In Madrid 93% of the urban buses are equipped with low floors.

It is more common that the buses are equipped with measures that facilitate accessibility to persons with visual impairments. Info screens are installed in all urban buses to provide information about stops. Acoustic information is being introduced to provide details about stops or incidences in urban bus lines.

In some cases the drivers do not know the functioning of the mechanisms of boarding for disabled people (ramps or kneeling of the vehicles). In some cases the behaviour of the drivers is not the best and they continue without allowing the disabled people to get secured.

The situation of the vehicles that operate regional services in Spain is quite different. According to ALSA, the regional buses are usually not so well equipped. Many of them do not even have spaces for wheelchairs, or other technical equipment. These are the coach type of bus that has further limitations of space and cannot be easily adapted. From the 4,720 regional bus lines only a few vehicles are prepared for the access of disabled people in wheelchairs through ramps or elevation platforms. The adaptation on this type of buses has more serious technical difficulties. In the medium and long distance trips the passengers have to keep seated and the luggage must be transported in the lower part of the vehicle; this forces them to have an elevated bus design with several stairs. The accessibility is resolved by an elevated platform, but this system cannot be easily implemented in all types of buses, therefore such platforms are not very widely extended. In 2003, the Ministry of Promotion publicised a list of the operators that had accessible vehicles for disabled users in wheelchairs. The obligations of the transport operators have not been accepted in the same degree by all the companies. Some considered them very strict and blame them for the low profitability of the companies. Others think that it is necessary to regulate and stimulate new design approaches and guarantee the passenger's rights. In all cases not many of the companies are willing to face the high costs of adapting the vehicles. This is one of the main barriers hindering accessibility of the bus fleets.

Only a few of the interurban buses are prepared for the access of disabled people for example using wheelchairs. They usually have to use external ramps that add costs to the maintenance and operation at stations. Not all the bus types can adapt this ramp. As a result of these economic and operative difficulties the elevating platforms are sporadic in this mode and there are not any plans to change this situation. This situation forces the need to revise the approaches and possible technologies for the design and operation of buses and coaches in relation to the platform-vehicle access, the interior design and the space for luggage storage.

Interurban buses operating through the country are not adapted with elevating ramps in the great majority. The adaptation of these vehicles has serious technical difficulties. In medium and long distance trips, the passengers have to keep seated and the luggage must be stored in the compartments underneath. Therefore the design of the bus has to be in two levels and there are stairs to access the bus that complicate the entrance to wheelchairs. This could be solved with an elevating platform, but this mechanism cannot be installed in all types of buses, so in most cases this measure has not been implemented. Only 21 % of the interurban bus lines are adapted.

Urban and interurban buses must reserve at least two seats for disabled persons. The technical specifications are: folding seats with seat belts, located next to the entrance and clearly signalled and with a non slip floor in all transport vehicles. Persons of reduced mobility will be able to get off the buses through the front door. The doors of the vehicles will be equipped with automatic security mechanisms in case of trapping when closing and with reserved spaces with seat belt mechanisms for passengers in wheelchairs. The change of gears will count with the necessary technical mechanisms to eliminate sharp and abrupt accelerations. For example, in the region of Madrid, there is a total of 646 accessible urban buses acquired in the last 4 years. In this region, 38% of the interurban bus fleet is adapted.

#### Trams:

The only tram line in Spain that used to have good accessibility conditions for disabled users is the Valencia line, both in the stops and the vehicles. It allows wheelchairs in the interior of the vehicles. The new tram lines just opened in Madrid are also fully accessible to disabled users.

Trams and light rails are being implemented in Spain at the moment. Therefore, the vehicles purchased have incorporated the newest technologies and accessibility measures for disabled users. These vehicles tend to have a common platform. In the interior the prevailing tendency goes towards the ergonomics and mobility along the vehicles. Low floors give access to the vehicles from the street. Since the trams are divided in modules, that can be easily extracted, substituted and repaired. The maintenance, out of order times and operational costs benefit from this fact. Bilbao, Barcelona, Alicante and Valencia have incorporated the latest models.

#### Underground:

The underground system is only accessible in the new stations of Bilbao and the extensions of the subway networks of Madrid, Barcelona and Valencia. All these contain measures for disabled users to access in wheelchairs and in some minor degree for other disabilities. The vehicles have not implemented specific measures, only the one in Bilbao is fully accessible. The intercom systems installed in some underground stations are not accessible for disabled persons in wheelchairs (given the height where they are located), they are not accessible to people with hearing impairments either. For example, in the Madrid region, there are currently 71 stations (from a total of 237 stations counted in 2006) that are equipped with lifts to facilitate the accessibility of halls and subway platforms from ground-level, and also facilitate transfers among stations.

Only the new subway trains have been adapted and secured 2 spaces for wheelchairs in one of the convoys.

#### Local and long-distance trains:

The accessibility level varies in the railway system depending on the company / operator (RENFE, FEVE) or even depending on the business units in which RENFE is structured, or in the different lines of the networks. All the new trains will have low floor access. The need to adapt the trains currently in operation is being discussed. The ADIF-IMSERSO Agreement plans an investment of 7.4 Mio €. The objective is to have unique criteria for

platform heights and to purchase local and medium distance trains with total accessibility capabilities. The high speed lines use special auxiliary platforms and provide customer attention services.<sup>14</sup>

The new CIVIA Platform for local (Cercanias) trains from RENFE counts with a low floor access in one of the vehicles to allow disabled and baby cars to enter into the train. The trains have a digital communication system that enables the passenger to communicate with the drivers or control centres and the possibility to show video images in the interior of the vehicles. They also have digital audio systems with automatic volume controller and security cameras. Only 9% of local trains are adapted. It is expected that by 2010, 50% of the trains will be adapted. The current local trains have not been adapted concerning the spaces for wheelchairs.

At present, only 35% of the long distance trains (115 trains) are adapted. Between 2010 and 2011 a total of 189 trains will be adapted. A total of 66% of the medium distance trains have a designated space for wheelchairs, and only 35% of those have adapted toilettes

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## 2.2.5 Safety, Reliability and Service

### Safety aspects

The Transport Authority of Madrid stated that there are not many cases of accidents of disabled people in public transport. This is due to the fact that the use of public transport is very limited.

Some local and regional buses as well as long distance trains are equipped with security belts to hold wheelchairs. This is not the case in the underground systems.

All vehicles (underground, local, regional and long distance trains, trams, and local and regional buses) are equipped at least with non-slippery floors, accessible stop-buttons and safety belts.

Information on emergencies is available through acoustic channels in all transport modes. Visual announcements are only available in some modes, and are more likely to be available in stations rather than the vehicles.

Metro and EMT (Underground and Bus operator in Madrid) have Internal evacuation Handbooks, but they are not public documents; therefore there is no specific information available, although these operators assure that there are action protocols to be followed in case of emergency.

CERMI noted that in spite of incidences, in some cases there are not so much accidents, but impossibility of disabled people to use a transport mode, nothing seems to have changed in the last few years. A famous case is that of a boy in the outskirts of Madrid who was denied the access to an interurban bus because the access-ramp could only be activated from the outside of the bus, and the driver could not leave his position to get off and activate the access ramp. These types of incidences are very common every day.

In the opinion of CERMI, people with disabilities think that riding by bus is dangerous because of the occasional aggressive manoeuvring of the drivers and because they feel they will not have enough time to get off in their stop/station. Riding by tram is less dangerous than for other transport modes; as this is a mode that is only recently operating in Spain again, the new tram lines are accessible in a higher degree than other transport modes. Riding by underground and local train seems to be also dangerous, because the underground is crowded and access is not always available. Not all stations have elevators. The vehicles do not have defined places and

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<sup>14</sup> Source: Ministry of Promotion, March 2007. Follow up Commission. Framework Programme of Collaboration MFOM – CERMI

security mechanisms for wheelchairs, etc. Long-distance trains are maybe one of the safest vehicles, although access is not always possible, barriers are existing in the vehicles and stations.

The users of wheelchairs are widely disappointed and unsatisfied with the safety equipments of vehicles in all transport modes. In most cases there are no safety equipments at all. The emergency buttons are not always at an accessible height, and communication with the driver is not possible for people with some types of disabilities.

New tram lines are adapted and have easy access conditions and safety equipment. Some long distance trains have already been adapted and have a couple of spaces with safety equipment reserved for wheelchairs. All other modes of transport have no special safety equipments for wheelchair users.

In emergencies, the information channels are usually voice announcements or, if the vehicles have information screens, visual announcements.

Accessible information in the interior of the vehicles for visually impaired people is not present. For hearing impaired people, there is no accessible information either. In some cases there are small screens but this is only in the newest vehicles.

At the stations there are also voice announcements and screens for hearing impaired people.

The interchanges and bigger bus and train stations have evacuation plans that include the instructions to be implemented in order to help disabled people. This is not the case for small stations, underground stations, or rural and some regional train stations.

ALSA did not have any data on the number of buses equipped with safety equipment. Currently only some regional bus concessions have started to allocate reserved spaces for wheelchairs, so the number is very limited.

The general safety equipment for passengers with disabilities are very low.

The information channels in case of emergency are the same as for the rest of the users, screens for hearing disabled people in the buses, voice announcements for visual disabled people. No special arrangements are in place..

### Reliability and Punctuality

According to the Transport Authority of Madrid, the level of reliability of the accessibility of vehicles and stops/stations is low for regional buses and undergrounds. For city buses and local trains it is moderate and for trams and long-distance trains it is high. Reliability of accessibility in train stations is low, since only a few stations are equipped with elevators; accessibility to buses is also low, because, as previously mentioned, not all the buses of the fleets are equipped with low floors or ramps; in some cases, the drivers do not allow the access to disabled persons and users have to wait up to an hour and a half for the right bus to arrive. Accessibility to regional buses is low because they are not equipped with ramps or low floors, they still have stairs to access the vehicles. RENFE, the train operator facilitates access to the long-distance, regional and local trains to disabled persons whenever it is possible to offer the service. Regional trains have low floor access. In the AVE (high speed) trains, in the economy class there is one seat reserved for disabled users travelling with their own wheelchair.

The Transport Authority of Madrid and CERMI stated that 80% of the city and regional buses, 10% of trams, undergrounds and long-distance trains and 50% of the local trains arrive with a delay of less than 5 minutes.

According to CERMI there is a low reliability of technical equipment in vehicles. In many cases the ramps are not functioning. When they work, in some cases they cannot be opened because of cars illegally parked in bus stops or because the drivers cannot activate the buttons. In trams the reliability is medium to high, in

underground stations it is medium, in train stations in urban areas low to medium and in all other vehicles and stations it is low.

ALSA stated that the reliability of the accessibility in urban and regional buses is low because in many cases, the drivers may not open the ramp due to problems like illegally parked private vehicles on the bus stops or because the drivers are unable to open the non-automatic ramp, having to abandon their seat. In regional buses the type of ramps are very complicated equipments that require high maintenance costs.

According to ALSA, the operator has in general very little information about the level of punctuality for most of their lines. Only in those buses equipped with SAE (Exploitation Assistance System) they are able to know at some degree the punctuality level. No specific information was provided by the operator.

### Customer Service

According to the Transport Authority of Madrid, the accessibility of customer services is in general poor. Only 60% of the stations have personalised assistance. In 3 of every 4 stations the glass that separates the counter allows an acceptable communication and lip reading.

Luggage storage in underground stations and rural train stations is not available. Local train stations do not have luggage storage facilities. They are not designed to guarantee barrier free usage. In most cases there are not even elevators.

Counters and information desks for underground and train stations do not guarantee barrier free usage, as they are usually too high.

For example for railway services, RENFE provides assistance in stations of the local, regional, medium distance and long distance services. The request for assistance may only be done by telephone (+34 902 24 05 05). As explained below, these services have to be pre-booked 48 hours in advance and at the moment are available in 100 stations throughout the country at no cost.

There is no assistance offered at local bus stations and metro stations to disabled persons.

RENFE, the Spanish railway operator provides automatic assistance reservation to passengers who have acquired a ticket for a specific disabled space at least 48 hours in advance for long distance trips. In any other cases (when the travellers has purchased a non-disabled specific seat), the passenger must file an assistance request at least 48 hours in advance. This can be done via telephone. The access to all local, medium distance and long distance trains is also limited to disabled persons with some type of autonomy. Those users without autonomy would need to be accompanied by other adult. Those trains that only provide seats in business class are charged a tourist ticket class fare. RENFE's web site provides a guide of railway services available for disabled persons with mobility difficulties. This guide includes a list of the accessible stations that provide assistance to disabled people.

In medium distance and local trains the traveller must inform RENFE of the need for personal assistance at least 48 hours in advance, and be present in the designated place at the platform at least 30 minutes before departure. Some platforms have designated train access zones for disabled people. The offer of seats in local trains is limited to the number of seats available by train. If the user has not informed ADIF or RENFE 48 hours in advanced, it is not guaranteed the provision of this service.

CERMI stated that according to a survey conducted by the CERMI in 2002, 35% of the surveyed persons have felt discriminated when accessing public transport, not only due to physical barriers but also due to attitudes and communication problems.

In the stations it is necessary to have staff that would help up and down the stairs, if there are no lifts. No assistance with the luggage or other special service is available. Only airports have this kind of services.

Only in train stations, in some services, like the AVE or long distance services, RENFE, the Spanish rail operator offers assistance if the service is requested 24 hours in advance.

According to ALSA the accessibility of customer services that are available are not specifically oriented to disabled people. There are no barrier free luggage storage facilities available in underground stations. Bus stations are not equipped with barrier free information counters for any disabilities. The drivers may assist if necessary but it is always dependant on the driver itself as they are not obliged to provide assistance.

### Staff Training

According to the Transport Authority of Madrid public transport operators and administrations are not totally aware of the importance of accessibility to improve quality of service. In some cases this has been partially understood, they are making progress in renovating the fleet but have not understood that this must be complemented with a refined behaviour towards the user and especially towards the disabled users. In order to modify the behaviour of public transport operators staff appropriate training is needed. There are not specific training actions for staff of the transport sector. The driving test of professional staff does not include driver behaviour or the communication tools needed to assist disabled people. There are some continuing education courses for the transport sector but the accessibility topic is not included. Only 3% of staff have some knowledge of sign language.

In the opinion of the interview-partner of CERMI, a special training programme should be in place for all transport modes. The transport operators should train their staff in how to communicate in sign language or make available Braille language. They should also be trained to assist disabled people. Only in some cases, long distance train services offer special assistance to disabled people. These services have to be requested 24 hours before travelling. This is one of the few exceptions.

No specific training programmes are available for drivers and staff in any transport mode. They are not able to communicate with some disabled people and most of them would not know how to deal with a person with special needs.

According to ALSA, training courses are offered on the use of the ramps, a very costly tool that all drivers must know. They are also trained on the use of the SAE systems. No other specific training on Braille or signal language is given.

### 2.3 Alternatives to public transport

Alternatives to public transport: The services available as an alternative to accessible public transport are usually taxis, whose high costs make it undesirable for disabled people to use them on a regular basis. However, especially in rural areas the situation is even worse, since there are almost no accessible public transport available and there is also a lack of accessible taxis and in many villages there are not even taxis. According to the Law 8/1993 of Accessibility of public transport, municipalities should provide for a special vehicle or a special adapted taxi, which will cover all needs of people with disabilities, but in spite of this law, in the small villages disabled people depend upon relatives and family to move them around. Only some regions are implementing on-demand services, based on shared taxis and on-demand services financed by the local and regional governments. However this competence is held by the regional governments and therefore each region has different approaches.

According to the Transport Authority of Madrid, the general situation is bad given the lack of adapted transport services for disabled people in most rural areas. Scarce regular lines are adapted. The most common transport modes are regional buses that are generally not adapted either. These areas also lack adapted taxis, in many villages there are not even taxis. The subsidies are low and do not cover the high costs of these trips. The rail systems have also serious accessibility problems. There are no protocols to deal with disabled persons in the transport sector. Some regions are implementing on demand services, based on shared taxis and on demand services financed by the local and regional governments. This competence is held by the regional governments, and therefore each region has different approaches. In some regions ambulances are available for medical services. Disabled people depend entirely on themselves or their families to travel.<sup>15</sup>

CERMI stated that according to the Law 8/1993 of Accessibility of public transport, in those municipalities where it is regulatory determined, there will be a special vehicle or a special adapted taxi, which will cover all needs of mobility of disabled people. In spite of what this law enacts, the reality is that in the rural environment, the situation of disabled people in rural areas is even worse than in the cities. In small villages, disabled people depend upon relatives and family for travel. The services available are usually taxis, whose high costs make it undesirable for disabled people to use them on a regular basis.

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<sup>15</sup> The dissability in the rural environment. Study promoted by Caja Madrid. March 2006