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

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State of the Accessibility of Public Transport Systems for People with Disabilities in Finland (FI)

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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

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 Finland (FI).

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

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

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

How this report has been made

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

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

What can be expected from this report

This report gives an overview of the state of the accessibility of public transport in Finland (FI). 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

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

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 Finland (FI) that is not too biased.

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

How to use this report

People, who are interested to get **more (detailed) information on the accessibility of public transport in Finland (FI)**, 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	Päivi Haapalainen	University of Vaasa
Interview partners:	Name	Organisation
Representatives of Transport Operators	Pekka Aalto	Finnish Public Transport Association
Representatives of People with Disabilities	Harri Leivo	The Finnish Association of People with Mobility Disabilities
Representative of Governmental Authority	Mrs. Irja Vesanen-Nikitin, Mr. Topi Siren	The Ministry of Transport and Communications

Table 1: Interviewer and Interview-partners in Finland

Municipalities arrange transport services for severely handicapped people to enable them to get to work, study, run errands, to take part in the community and for recreation. Such services are arranged for people whose disability prevents them from using public transport. If necessary a helper is provided to accompany the client.

In addition to transport to and from work or a place of study, clients are entitled to a minimum of 18 trips a month within their own or a neighbouring municipality. Transport is arranged mainly by taxi, though group transport arrangements and transport to services are increasing. The fare costs of transport services are the same as for public transport. (Source: Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, <http://www.stm.fi/Resource.phx/eng/subjt/socwe/disab/transport.htx>)

According to research conducted by the Pellervo Economic Research Institute (www.ptt.fi) there are about 300,000 working age disabled people in Finland. About 20% of them have a permanent job. One third of them would like to work and about 40% of them consider that working is very important also for the disabled. The three most important things helping them to work would be computers and other technical aids, accessible work places and transport services.

2.1.2 Statistical Data from Finland

Statistical Data for Finland	
Number of inhabitants	5,276,955 ²
Inhabitants with disabilities	233,400 ³
Inhabitants with motor impairments	54,000 ⁴
Inhabitants with visual impairments	80,000 ⁵
Inhabitants with hearing impairments	9,000 ⁶
Inhabitants with cognitive / learning impairments	30,000-50,000 ⁷
Inhabitants who are functional illiterates	no data available
Share of disabled people living in urban areas	64% ⁸
Share of disabled people at working age	86% ⁹
Share of disabled people at working age who are actually working	no data available

Table 2: Statistical data for Finland

² Source: Statistics Finland, http://www.tilastokeskus.fi/index_en.html

³ Source: The social insurance institution of Finland, <http://www.kela.fi/in/internet/english.nsf>
Number of people getting different support for disabled people paid by the social insurance institution of Finland, KELA. There is not accurate statistics about the number of people with different disabilities so all the numbers are estimates

⁴ Source: STAKES (National Development and Research Centre for Welfare and Health), Report 6/2006, <http://www.stakes.fi/EN/index.htm>

⁵ Source: STAKES, Report 6/2006

⁶ Source: STAKES, Report 6/2006

⁷ Source: STAKES, Report 6/2006
30000 are using the special services for people with this type of disabilities but it is estimated that the total number is larger because all of these people don't have a diagnosis

⁸ Source: Statistics Finland
Percentage of Finnish people in general living in urban areas

⁹ Source: STAKES, Report 6/2006
Estimate of how many handicapped people or people with long term illnesses could work if the circumstances were different

2.1.3 Legal and regulatory framework conditions in Finland

In Finland a Non-Discrimination Act has been enacted in 2004, and there exists an ombudsman and advisory board (Ministry of Social Affairs and Health) for discrimination victims.

There is no specific law for accessible public transport but in some other laws there are some parts dealing with the issue. There is no general national standard for Public Transport, however, there are some guiding documents e.g. stops in urban areas and the national train company has some own standards.

There is a law that requires the municipalities to guarantee mobility for people with disabilities. In order to comply with this law municipalities provide for people with disabilities a certain amount of trips per month by taxi in the price of normal transport.

The accessibility of public transport is a mainstream topic on the political agenda: accessibility of public transport is even mentioned in the governmental program. There is no regular monitoring of the accessibility of public transport on national level.

There is a Non-Discrimination Act (21/2004) in Finland. The purpose of this Act is to foster and safeguard equality and enhance the protection provided by law to those who have been discriminated against in cases of discrimination that fall under the scope of this Act. For more information about the act see (in English): <http://www.finlex.fi/fi/laki/kaannokset/2004/en20040021.pdf>

There is also an ombudsman and advisory board (Ministry of Social Affairs and Health) for discrimination victims.

Regulations regarding the accessibility of public transport

According to the Ministry of Transport and Communications, there is no specific law for accessible public transport but in some other laws there are some parts dealing with the issue (e.g. in the law about the special services for the disabled). There is no general national standard for public transport, however, there are some guiding documents e.g. stops in urban areas and the national train company has some own standards.

According to the Finnish Association of People with Mobility Disabilities the accessibility strategy is based on the antidiscrimination issues of the constitutional law.

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

According to the Ministry of Transport and Communications, the accessibility of public transport is a mainstream topic on the political agenda. It is mentioned even in the governmental program.

According to the Finnish Association of People with Mobility Disabilities it is considering of how much the state supports public transport.

Monitoring of the accessibility of public transport

According to the Ministry of Transport and Communications the monitoring of the accessibility of public transport is not regularly done on a national level. The last nationwide monitoring was conducted in 2001 (for strategy development).

Also the Finnish Association of People with Mobility Disabilities assigned that there is no centralized monitoring although disability associations do check ups every now and then.

Special fares and public transport tariffs for people with disabilities

The interview-partner from the Ministry of Transport and Communications stated that there is a law that requires the municipalities to guarantee the mobility of people with disabilities. There are certain services provided e.g. a certain amount of trips per month by taxi in the price of normal transport.

The Finnish Association of People with Mobility Disabilities noted that the transport services are most commonly used. 18 return trips are provided monthly with trips to health care. The disabled may have the same tariff as the pensioned depending on the level of their disability. It is based on the statement of doctors and KELA.

The Finnish Public Transport Association announced that there are several different categories of ticketing depending on the seriousness of the disability. A person with a motor impairment or a blind person can have an assistant travelling free of charge. The loss of revenue is not compensated to the operator.

2.1.4 Organisational framework conditions

In Finland the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, and the Ministry of Labour are dealing with anti-discrimination and social inclusion issues relating to people with disabilities. The Ministry of Transport and Communication is responsible for public transport in Finland.

There is good cooperation amongst the stakeholders (public authorities, transport operators, and people with disabilities) in Finland with this cooperation typically occurring within projects.

Attitude of the stakeholders regarding the importance of accessibility of public transport: In the opinion of the Ministry of Transport and Communications, more resources are needed to improve and monitor the accessibility of public transport. In the opinion of the Finnish Public Transport Association the accessibility issue is nowadays considered to be a fixed part of investing in new busses and others. The public transport solutions in urban areas are good today, however in country site the investments (e.g. new stops) are usually considered to be too high.

The interviewed representative of the governmental authority meant that when the service is getting better, the demand will grow. According to the interviewed representative of disabled people, the attitude of people with disabilities depends on the mode of transport: many disabled people use underground or urban buses, while long distance buses or some of the trains are not accessible and therefore not used by people with disabilities. The interviewed representative of people with disabilities stated that most disabled people in Finland use the special transport services, and only about 50% of the disabled people (it depends on the level of disability) use public transport. The interviewed representative of the Finnish Public Transport Association thinks that the support system for people with disabilities in Finland is so good (tax benefits for getting a car for a wheelchair user, free use of special transport services) that it is not likely for people with disabilities to use public transport for any of their trips.

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

- **Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, and Ministry of Labour**
(see <http://www.stm.fi/Resource.phx/eng/subjt/socwe/disab/index.htm>), Sari Loijas, sari.loijas@stm.fi, +358 9 16074313

Central and local governmental authorities, independent bodies and societies governed by law, individual actors when discharging public administrative functions and non-incorporated state enterprises (says the law)

Governmental authorities responsible for public transport

- **The Ministry of Transport and Communications**
Officials in county and municipal level
Nyberg Mikael, Director of transport services unit, mikael.nyberg@mintc.fi, +358 9 160 28474

Main transport operators and Public Transport associations

- **Finnish Public Transport Association**
Unioninkatu 22, 00130 Helsinki, Tel.: + 358 9 2289 9510
- **Finnair (most flights within Finland)**
<http://www.finnairgroup.com/en/index.html>, Tietotie 11 A,
FI-01053 FINNAIR, Tel.: +358 9 81 881
- **VR Group (long distance / local trains)**
<http://www.vrgroup.fi/index.html>, P.O.Box 488,
FI-00101 Helsinki, Tel.: +358 307 10
- **Helsinki City Transport (trams and undergrounds)**
http://www.hel.fi/wps/portal/HKL_en/?WCM_GLOBAL_CONTEXT=/en/Helsinki+City+transport/,
P.O.Box 1400, 00099 Helsingin kaupunki, Tel: +358 9 310 1071
- **YTV (regional busses in the capital city area)**
http://www.ytv.fi/ENG/about_ytv/frontpage.htm, P.O.Box 521
FIN - 00520 Helsinki, Tel.: 358 - 9 - 156 11, email: ytv@ytv.fi
- **Helsinki City busses (local busses in Helsinki)**
Viilarintie 5, 00880 Helsinki, Tel.: +358 9477 4750
- Long distance busses and busses in other cities are operated by numerous smaller companies
- **Linja-autoliitto (Finnish Bus Association)**
Lauttasaarentie 8, 00200 HELSINKI, Tel.: +358 9 682 701

Main disability organisations

- **Finnish Association of People with Mobility Disabilities**
<http://www.invalidiliitto.fi/portal/en>, Kumpulantie 1 A, 00520 HELSINKI, tel +358 9 613 191, fmd@invalidiliitto.fi, 34000 members
- **Association of Societies for Persons with Mental Disabilities**
<http://www.kvtl.fi/sivu/english>, Pinninkatu 51, 33100 TAMPERE, tel. +358 3 240 3111, kvtl@kvtl.fi, over 200 member associations
- **The Finnish Association of Deaf**
<http://www.kl-deaf.fi/en-GB/>, P.O Box 57, FIN-04001 HELSINKI, kuurojenliitto@kl-deaf.fi, +358 9 58031
- **The Finnish Central Association of the Visually Handicapped**
<http://www.nkl.fi/yleista/english.htm>, P.O. Box 30, 00030 Iiris, tel. +358 9 396041, nkl@nkl.fi, about 14000 members

For a list of all the (smaller) associations see: <http://www.vane.to/jarjestot.html>

Cooperation among stakeholders

Cooperation between the governmental authorities and disability organisations

The Ministry of Transport and Communications stated that there is a good level of cooperation, typically within different projects.

According to the Finnish Association of People with Mobility Disabilities, there are also some projects to increase the accessibility (e.g. ELSA).

Cooperation between the transport operators and disability organisations

The Finnish Association of People with Mobility Disabilities said that in defining and developing there is cooperation. Many transport operators are quite keen for development although they are not so keen on monitoring and assessment.

The Finnish Public Transport Association supposed that there is moderate co-operation, mainly built around different projects, e.g. Elsa-project.

Cooperation between the transport operators and governmental authorities

According to the Ministry of Transport and Communications there is a good level of cooperation, typically within different projects

The Finnish Association of People with Mobility Disabilities stated that there is moderate co-operation, mainly built around different projects, e.g. Elsa.

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

In the opinion of the Ministry of Transport and Communications, more resources are needed. Knowledge about accessibility of public transport is important.

In the opinion of the Finnish Public Transport Association the accessibility issue is nowadays considered to be a fixed part of investing in new busses and others. The technique has developed and the prices are not too high anymore. The solutions in city areas are reasonably good today, in country site the investments (e.g. new stops) are usually considered to be too high.

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

The Ministry of Transport and Communications meant that when the service improves, demand will grow. Air traffic is very good, the train sector and busses in urban areas are getting better all the time. The long distance busses are a problem. In the opinion of the Ministry of Transport and Communications it is very unlikely to bring children to kindergarten/school/leisure activities by public transport.

According to the Finnish Association of People with Mobility Disabilities the attitude of people with disabilities depends a lot on the mode of the transport, many people use underground, long distance busses are hopeless, some of trains are good, some worse.

In relation to transport service there is a tendency to take more than one person at the same time (used to be private taxi), which has made people more critical.

People with disabilities prefer technical assistance because that makes them feel more independent. Most of them use the transport service. About 50% use other public transport (for some it is important to use transport independently), but it depends on the level of disability.

In the opinion of the Finnish Association of People with Mobility Disabilities the provision of accessible public transport would maybe help a little disabled people to find a job. Some (but not for all) people with an electric wheelchair are more likely to use public transport.

The Finnish Public Transport Association thinks that the support system in Finland is so good (tax benefits for getting a car for a wheelchair users, free use of private car or taxi with driver and so on) that it is not likely for people with disabilities to use public transport for anything. Maybe in very few cases (but not very likely) it could help disabled people to find a job if the public transport is accessible for them.

2.2 Accessibility of Public Transport

Pre-trip information: Information regarding routes, timetables, tariffs, etc. is available via telephone, print products, and the internet (e.g. there is a very good timetable planner on www.matka.fi). Information regarding the accessibility of public transport stations, stops, vehicles, and services is not easily obtainable. Pre-trip information depends on the type of transport: e.g. in Helsinki low-floor city-buses are marked in the timetables and a list of new (accessible) bus stops is under construction.

On-trip information: Visual information regarding timetables and routes is provided at all urban stops and stations. There is typically no passenger information available at bus-stops in rural areas. In public transport vehicles (buses, trams, undergrounds, trains) on-trip passenger information is typically announced acoustically and visually, but sometimes information about e.g. the next stop is only shown visually on the information board. Unexpected events / emergency information are acoustically announced by the driver.

Ticketing: Public transport tickets can be bought at ticket machines, counters, in the vehicle itself, on-line and via mobile phone. Some ticket vending machines are low enough for e.g. wheelchair users, but the ticket vending machines are not accessible for people with visual impairments.

The tariffs for people with disabilities depend on the operator. There are several different fare reductions available depending on the disability, e.g. a person with motor impairment or a blind person can have an assistant travelling free of charge. The loss of revenue is not compensated to the operator.

Stops and stations: The accessibility of public transport stops and stations in Finland varies a lot: e.g. all new stops and stations in urban areas are accessible for people with motor impairments and visual impairments, but e.g. older train stations may be problematic. There is an accessibility strategy of the Ministry of Transport and Communication: according to this strategy all the new stations/stops and all renovated stations/stops are made accessible, and all stops and stations in urban areas will be made accessible – the ones with the most traffic have priority.

Vehicles: In Finland the accessibility of public transport vehicles in larger cities is seen as a natural part of service. The accessibility of public transport vehicles in urban areas is quite good; there are only relatively few older buses and trams in operation that are not accessible. New local and long-distance trains do have accessible interior design. In rural areas (almost) all public transport vehicles are not accessible.

Safety, reliability, and service: In general people with disabilities are quite satisfied with the safety equipment in public transport. However, people with hearing impairments and blind people have problems in exceptional situations (changes of routes, dangerous situations, etc.).

In Finland the reliability of the accessibility of vehicles and stops/stations is very high: if the vehicle or station/stop is accessible in the first place, then the reliability is fairly high since uncertain technical solutions are not used and public transport is monitored and maintained regularly. Public transport is usually quite punctual in Finland, except city-buses that are quite often delayed due to congestion.

Customer services: Approximately one third of the train stations in Finland (i.e. those which are staffed) allow passengers to get help with e.g. transport of their luggage, finding the right train, boarding the train,... In large bus and train stations there are luggage storage boxes at different heights, which are accessible for e.g. wheelchair-users, but not accessible for blind people. Counters are usually too high for wheelchair-users, but in some new stations there are lower counters accessible for wheelchair-users. There are typically no hearing aids in the stations.

Staff training: For public transport operators' staff there are usually no special trainings regarding the needs of people with disabilities. Only train staff receive one day of training regarding the needs of people with disabilities.

2.2.1 Accessibility of passenger information

Pre-trip information

According to the Ministry of Transport and Communications there is a very good timetable planner on www.matka.fi. The information regarding the accessibility of public transport stations, stops, vehicles and services has limited availability. Pre-trip information of public transport tariffs and tickets are available via telephone, internet, print products, personal services or prints on the wall in the stations. The offer of pre-trip information on customer services offered by public transport operators for people with disabilities depends on the operator. VR (trains) and Finnair (flights) provide this information well. Typically the information on special transport services is acquired via Kela or social services.

The Finnish Association of People with Mobility Disabilities assigned also that there is travel planning information and a route planner available via telephone, internet and print products. In some cases there is also the ability to get information over the personal services on the stations. The pre trip information depends on the type of transport. City buses e.g. in Helsinki with low floors are marked in timetables (printed form, internet, phone, stops). Information can be requested by phone in other cases. Tariff and ticket information can be requested by phone, internet, stops (e.g. trams and local traffic busses, underground and local trains), internet, personal service in the station. In the opinion of the interview partner, the pre-trip information on customer services offered by public transport operators for people with disabilities is poor. It could be interrogated by phone (e.g. trains). The typical information on special transport services is personal service (social workers, doctors etc.)

The Finnish Public Transport Association stated that there are timetables for all modes of transport, in the capital city area there is an excellent route planner, route maps and so on. The information is accessible via telephone, internet, and information counter in stations, printed. The level is excellent. The information about low floor busses is attached to timetables (and it can be obtained in different forms). The list of new (accessible) bus stops is under construction. Information about stations and services can be obtained via internet. Also some other information can be obtained by telephone. The level is sufficient but there is also some information that cannot be obtained yet. The information about tariffs and tickets is accessible via telephone, the internet, information counters in stations, printed. The level is excellent. Few customer services are provided in local transport. Some information that is related to stations and trains can be obtained via the internet. The telephone would be the safest choice if something specialist was required. The interviewee does not know if there is pre-trip information on special transport services available.

On-trip information:

Visual information regarding timetables and routes is provided at all urban stops and stations (at some stations there is visual real-time information about the waiting times for the next buses available). The height, where this information is displayed at, may be a problem for wheelchair users. There is little accessible information for people with visual impairments provided at stops and stations; only in train stations there are some verbal announcements. Most on-trip information is displayed in visual form, and therefore it is mostly accessible for people with hearing impairments. There is typically no passenger information available at bus stops in rural areas.

In public transport vehicles (buses, trams, undergrounds, trains) on-trip passenger information is typically announced acoustically and visually, but sometimes information about e.g. the next stop is only shown visually on the information board. The information boards for visual information are situated so that wheelchair users can also see the information. Unexpected events / emergency information are acoustically announced by the driver.

2.2.2 Accessibility issues in Ticketing

According to the Ministry of Transport and Communications, the tariffs for people with disabilities depend on the operator. There have been guidelines provided for building new travel centres (combining train and bus stations), accessibility has been taken into account in several ways, there is also some information about accessibility of buying tickets.

According to the Finnish Association of People with Mobility Disabilities, disabled people may have the same tariff as the pensioned depending on the level of their disability. It is based on the statement of doctors and KELA. The public transport ticket vending machines are accessible for all people with hearing impairments, but not for many visual impaired people. For wheel chair users the accessibility is very low.

The interview partner of the Finnish Public Transport Association stated that there are several different categories depending on the seriousness of the disability. A person with a motor impairment or a blind person can have an assistant travelling free of charge. The loss of revenue is not compensated to the operator. The tickets can be bought over the ticket machine, counter, in the vehicle itself, on-line and via mobile phone. Some ticket vending machines are low enough for e.g. wheelchair users and the machines are accessible for all people with hearing impairments.

2.2.3 Accessibility of stops and stations

The Ministry of Transport and Communications said that the company that takes care of the train stations has produced a map of the situation and improvements needed (2003/2004). Within the Elsa project one bus line was developed to provide full accessibility and act as an example of best practice.

The interview partner from the Finnish Association of People with Mobility Disabilities stated that there are generally not very many complaints about the accessibility of stops and stations by people with motor impairments. However, in the train station of Tampere, there are elevators to the platforms but they are usually locked, so one must first find a person with key. There is an accessibility strategy of the Ministry of Transport and Communication according to which all the new stations and stops are made (so they are accessible for the different groups). The accessibility of public transport stops and stations varies a lot: all the new stops and stations are accessible although older train stations may be problematic.

According to the Finnish Public Transport Association there are ramps, enough space for wheelchairs, tactile guidance systems and often a few seats. There is no service at bus stops. In new bus terminals the services are fully accessible. The bus stops in urban areas are accessible for many of the people with motor impairments and visual impairments and for most of the people with hearing impairments. The strategy is to turn all the stops and stations in urban areas accessible (especially for people with motor impairments). The ones with the most traffic are a priority. All the new stops and stations built / renovated are accessible for most people. In urban areas like Helsinki the transformation is pretty fast.

2.2.4 Accessibility of vehicles

According to the Ministry of Transport and Communications, the number of low floor buses is increasing in urban areas all the time, the local traffic trains also. Long distance trains and buses are worse. In urban areas the number of low floor buses and raised stops are increasing all the time. In the city buses there is a reserved place for a maximum of one (maybe two) wheelchair(s). In the regional buses there is no space foreseen for wheelchairs. In some new trams the situation about barrier-free interior design is better. Undergrounds are very good in barrier-free interior design; several of them are designed for wheel chair users. The barrier-free interior design of the new local trains and long-distance trains is also very good.

The Finnish Association of People with Mobility Disabilities stated that long distance buses are a problem. Otherwise the accessibility of new vehicles is a norm. Also some old trams are modified so that one part of the tram is with low floor. The accessibility of vehicles in larger cities is seen as a natural part of service. There are also separate service lines that are very good. However, in the countryside the situation is worse. Boarding / alighting to the underground should be possible for all the groups. Long distance buses have several steps that may be a problem (typically very low stops also). Train, buses and trams vary, some are good (new ones), some may create problems. Also stops can vary. The accessible interior design for long distance buses and old trams are problematic, others should be possible. The answer of the interview-partner about the number of designated “spaces” for wheelchairs is identical to the answer of the governmental authority.

According to the Finnish Public Transport Association, the development in the urban area is fast and there are strict rules in the tendering system regarding the design of vehicles. All the new vehicles acquired are accessible. In the rural areas the most of the vehicles are older and also the new ones are often not accessible.

2.2.5 Safety, Reliability and Service

Safety aspects

The interview-partner of the Ministry of Transport and Communications and the Finnish Public Transport Association have never heard of accidents involving people with disabilities in public transport.

According to the Finnish Association of People with Mobility Disabilities, some blind people have fallen onto the rails of the underground (luckily with no serious consequences). As a consequence the marking on the LAITURI has been changed; it used to be only with colour, now it can be noticed also with the stick. Another incident involved a person in a wheelchair who was in the elevator when the train started to move (not known if changes have been made). Generally people with disabilities do not think that travelling by public transport is dangerous (however, the safety belts are often broken). The level of satisfaction of wheelchair-users with the special safety equipments for them is generally good. Complaints are rare. The estimation of the level of satisfaction of disabled people with the general safety equipment is generally good. However, blind people and people with hearing impairments have problems in exceptional situations (changes of routes, dangerous situations, etc.). In emergencies there is an acoustic announcement. In new local trams and new long-distance trains there are also information boards.

According to the Ministry of Transport and Communications, there are emergency call buttons in local trains and long-distance trains. In emergencies there is typically an acoustic announcement. The level of reliability of the accessibility of vehicles and stops/stations is very high.

According to the Finnish Public Transport Association, there are safety belts in over 50% of the city buses. Nearly all have designated areas for wheelchairs. There are special seats for handicapped people near the driver / doors with stop-signs that can be pushed without getting up in some buses. In regional buses and trams there are almost no safety equipments for wheelchair users. In some new trams there may be safety belts and in all the new trams there are designated areas for wheelchairs. There are very few new trams operating due to several problems with the new trams. There are designated areas for wheelchairs in all undergrounds. In 30% of the local trains, safety equipment (also for wheelchair users) is available (designated areas, emergency buttons, toilets for wheelchair users, electrical socket near the area, hand rails and emergency buttons in toilets). 70% of the trains have special service cars for wheelchair users (emergency buttons, toilets for wheelchair users, electrical socket near the area etc). In all the vehicles / stations there are acoustic announcements by drivers / staff. In some stations there may also be information on information boards. There are general evacuations plans and the staff is trained in the case of an emergency. The interviewee does not know if disabled people are considered in the emergency plans.

Reliability and Punctuality

The Ministry of Transport and Communications assessed the level of reliability of the accessibility of vehicles and stops/stations very high. Also the Finnish Association of People with Mobility Disabilities meant that the level is very high in general. The public transport modes are monitored and maintained regularly.

The Finnish Public Transport Association stated that, if the vehicle or station is accessible in the first place, then the reliability is fairly high, uncertain technical solutions are not used. At the moment the share of delayed services in city buses is unfortunately quite high. In regional buses the share is quite moderate and in undergrounds it is less than 1% (0.3 – 0.5%). 97.5% of local trains and 90% of long-distance trains are on time.

Customer Service

In the opinion of the Ministry of Transport and Communications the situation in large stations (bus and train) is good, although apart from the large stations the accessibility of customer services is not very good. In underground stations there is no accessible luggage storage and no counters and information desks at all. The train company offers assistance at the stations (at least in those stations where there are personnel), although other stations can probably not provide this service.

According to the Finnish Association of People with Mobility Disabilities the accessibility of customer services depends on the service. Room for luggage is usually in different heights, but service desks are typically high, there is not an aid for people with hearing impairments. In some places there are already ticketing machines in different heights. There are lockers typically at different heights (where there is luggage storage at all) but sometimes the only available may be in difficult places. A totally blind person would need someone to assist with luggage storage at stations. For people with hearing impairments there should be no problems at all for this group. The counters are typically too high for a wheelchair user (no counters at all in underground stations), for people with visual impairments it might be a problem to find a counter. There are typically no hearing aids in the stations. In some train stations public transport operators offer assistance, not often at bus stations and at underground stations not at all.

According to the Finnish Public Transport Association all the new or renovated facilities support accessibility but in old ones the situation is worse. In those cases where there are staff at the station/stop, people with disabilities should always be able to receive assistance. In bus stations usually there is personal whom you can give your luggage to (when the station is "open") and in those cases the service is accessible for everyone. In underground stations and train stations in urban areas there is no luggage storage. In new train stations in rural areas there can be e.g. lower counters accessible for wheel chair users. Often there are staff who can be contacted to request information. Typically (in 51 train stations in rural areas of all 139) there are personal that you can give your luggage to (when the station is "open") and in those cases the service is accessible for everyone. In

new bus stations there can be e.g. lower counters to help wheel chair users. Often there are staff one can contact to get the information. In the underground stations there are no counters and information desks (information boards on the wall). In 51 train stations of all 139 (long distance trains) one can get assistance e.g. for luggage transport or getting into a train (and the staff in the train can always help). Getting assistance from country site bus stations is not so easy because the opening hours are often not very long. There is no service in the underground stations.

Staff Training

According to the Ministry of Transport and Communications within Elsa project a training material was created, although it is not known how many use it.

The interview-partner of the Finnish Association of People with Mobility Disabilities stated that the information from the Elsa project is not used everywhere.

According to the Finnish Public Transport Association there is typically no special training regarding the people with disabilities. In the training of the staff in trains there is one day used for needs of disabilities. Some organizations for people with disabilities have been involved.

2.3 Alternatives to public transport

In Finland there is a law that requires the municipalities to guarantee the mobility for people with disabilities. Therefore there are certain services provided by the municipalities, e.g. people with disabilities are entitled to get a certain amount of trips per month by taxi in the price of normal transport. There are also some special service lines in both urban and rural areas that are specifically for those that cannot so easily use normal public transport: In city areas the service buses follow a certain route (small exceptions can be made); in rural areas the bus / taxi picks you up from your home. (This service has to be ordered in advance, usually the day before the journey).

According to the Ministry of Transport and Communications there are special services (usually by taxi, nowadays more than one person may be taken at the same time), there are service lines (especially in cities) and there are hailed-shared taxis (especially in country side).

According to the Finnish Association of People with Mobility Disabilities there are some special service lines in both urban and rural areas that are specially meant for those that cannot so easily use normal transport. In city areas the service buses follow a certain route (small exceptions can be made); in rural areas the bus / taxi picks you up from your home (has to be ordered in advance, usually the day before the journey). For disabled people there is also a special transport service, typically by taxi for the price of normal transport. However, the number of journeys is restricted and it is only for those suffering serious disabilities.