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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**

Title of Report:

## **State of the Accessibility of Public Transport Systems for People with Disabilities in Greece (GR)**

**Status: final**

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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 Greece (GR).

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 Greece (GR).

### 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 Greece (GR). 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 Greece (GR) 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 Greece (GR)**, 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	Avraam Karagiannidis	Aristotle University Thessaloniki (AUn), Laboratory of Heat Transfer and Environmental Engineering
Interview partners:	Name	Organisation
Representatives of Transport Operators	Mrs. Tavoulari	Athens Urban Transport Organisation – OASA S.A.
Representatives of People with Disabilities	Mr. Papagianakis	Thessaloniki’s Urban Transport Authority (SASTh)
Representative of Governmental Authority	Mrs. Politi	Hellenic Ministry of Transport and Communication

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

In the frame of the interviews in Greece various disability organisations were contacted to act as an interview-partner. The most important disability organisation in Greece - the Hellenic delegation of the European disability Forum ([www.disability.gr](http://www.disability.gr)) was contacted as well as a social enterprise called “Iliachtida” (staffed by people with disabilities) and “ILPAP S.A.”. All 3 organisations showed initial interest in the aims of PTaccess, but then did not respond to AUn.

AUn therefore interviewed Mr. Papagianakis who works at “Thessaloniki’s Urban Transport Authority” (SASTH, [www.sasth.gr](http://www.sasth.gr)), in the department responsible for the accessibility of public transport for people with disability. Although this is not directly a disability organisation AUn can secure that from its experience Mr. Papagianakis constitutes the most appropriate person to answer the questionnaire for people with disabilities and to fill the gap between disability organisation and accessibility of this social group in public transport.

## 2.1.2 Statistical Data from Greece

Statistical Data for Greece	
Number of inhabitants	10,964,020 <sup>2</sup>
Inhabitants with disabilities	9.3% of the total population <sup>3</sup>
Inhabitants with motor impairments	No data available
Inhabitants with visual impairments	No data available
Inhabitants with hearing impairments	No data available
Inhabitants with cognitive / learning impairments	No data available
Inhabitants who are functional illiterates	No data available
Share of disabled people living in urban areas	No data available
Share of disabled people at working age	No data available
Share of disabled people at working age who are actually working	No data available

Table 2: Statistical data for Greece

## 2.1.3 Legal and regulatory framework conditions in Greece

An anti-discrimination law is implemented on national level in Greece. Accessibility of public transport for people with disabilities is a mainstream topic on the political agenda - a number of activities have already been conducted, and the improvement is still ongoing. Monitoring of the accessibility of public transport is undertaken at the national level. There are special (reduced) tariffs for people with a degree of disability of over 67%.

### Anti-discrimination law

There is an anti-discrimination law existing in Greece. This is implemented on national level. The law is available at [www.disabled.gr/gr-arts/0guide01.html](http://www.disabled.gr/gr-arts/0guide01.html) (available only in Greek).

### Regulations regarding the accessibility of public transport

According to the interviewed person of the Ministry of Transport and Communications there are many laws for accessibility which refer to the agenda of various ministries. The latest law of The Ministry of Transport and Communication is the P.D. 221/05 concerning parking cards for people with disabilities.

<sup>2</sup> Source: General Secretariat of National Statistics

<sup>3</sup> In the last national popularity registration conducted by the Statistical Service of Greece in 2001, people with disabilities were not included. In Greece, according to the same estimate, people with disabilities represented 9.3% of the total population, which is the smallest proportion among the other EU countries for which these data have been compiled.

The interviewed person of the Ministry of Transport and Communication also states that there are general national standards for all public transport modes in fact for the vehicles and the stops and stations.

According to the interviewed person from SASTh (Thessaloniki's Urban Transport Authority) there are national accessibility standards for buildings and the urban space which are set by the Hellenic Ministry of Environment, Spatial Planning and Public Works. National standards for urban transport vehicles are set by the Hellenic Ministry of Transport and Communications.

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

According to Thessaloniki's Urban Transport Authority (SASTh) the accessibility of public transport is an important issue. Since 2002 there are tangible activities.

According to the governmental authority the interviewed person states that accessibility of public transport is a mainstream topic on the agenda of the Ministry of Transport and Communications.

#### Monitoring of the accessibility of public transport

The interview-partner of the Hellenic government states that monitoring of the accessibility of public transport is done on national level.

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

According to the interview-partner of the Hellenic government there are special tariffs for people with disabilities. Disabled people are allowed to use trams for free in Athens

The interviewed-partner of the public transport operator “Athens Urban Transport Organisation – OASA S.A.” also states that there are special tariffs for people with disabilities. He says that only people with a degree of disability of over 67% and with a low income get free tickets for public transport. To trams all people with disabilities have free access.

### **2.1.4 Organisational framework conditions**

The responsibility for public transport in Greece lies within the Hellenic Ministry of Transport and Communication. There are several public transport operators in Greece: for long-distance trains there is one national operator, as well as for the regional buses. Each city has its own operator for city buses. Tram and metro do only exist in the city of Athens and each of the aforementioned modes of transport have different operator.

All interview-partners state that the cooperation between the three stakeholder-groups is on a good level. Cooperation occurs especially within keeping the level of the existing services as well as in improving the accessibility with the help of new technologies.

Disabled people do realise that there has already been made a lot of effort towards accessible public transport, but there are still a lot of things which have to be done to actually provide accessibility.

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

- **Hellenic Ministry of Health**
- **Hellenic Ministry of Transport and Communication**

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## Governmental authorities responsible for public transport

- **Hellenic Ministry of Transport and Communication**

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## Main transport operators and Public Transport associations

- **Athens Urban Transport Organisation**  
includes the Tram S.A. and the Metro S.A.  
Phone: 0030210-8200881
- **Thessaloniki Urban Transport Organisation**

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## Main disability organisations

- **Disabled Hellas**  
Phone: 00302310-211915; [www.disabled.gr](http://www.disabled.gr)
- **Hellenic Federation of people with disabilities**  
Phone: 0030210-9949837; [www.esaea.gr](http://www.esaea.gr)

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## Cooperation among stakeholders

### Cooperation between the governmental authorities and disability organisations

The interview partner from the Hellenic government states that there is cooperation between governmental authorities and people with disabilities in defining and developing better accessibility of Public Transport.

### Cooperation between the transport operators and disability organisations

According to the interviewed person representing public transport operators there is cooperation between public transport operators and people with disabilities in the framework of keeping the existent services and providing / improving new technologies and services (e.g. telematics in vehicles, new ramps, etc.).

### Cooperation between the transport operators and governmental authorities

From the point of view of the Hellenic government, there is cooperation between transport operators and governmental authorities in defining and developing better accessibility of public transport.

The representative of public transport operators states that there is the same extent of cooperation as between transport operators and disability organisations: transport operators and governmental authorities cooperate in the framework of keeping the existent services and providing / improving new technologies and services (e.g. telematics in vehicles, new ramps, etc.).

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

According to the interviewed person of Athens Urban Transport Organisation accessible public transport is a priority issue and is included in the political agenda.

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

The interviewed person of the public transport operator states that a lot of people with disabilities use public transport for going to work, as attendance in the work is perceived as very important for living a “normal live”. They will also use public transport for visiting friends, go for shopping or go to leisure facilities, if public transport provides appropriate safety conditions.

From the point of view of the interviewed person of the Hellenic Ministry disabled people realise that there were efforts towards accessible public transport but there are still things which has to be done. He furthermore states that public transport operators try to evaluate the disabled people’s attitudes but they have to overcome several obstacles.

## 2.2 Accessibility of Public Transport

**Pre-trip information:** Information on timetables and routes of the various public transport modes are available via telephone, internet and via print products. For information regarding the accessibility of public transport stations, stops, vehicles and services the main information channels are telephone and internet, however according to one interviewee this information is not sufficient.

**On-trip information:** The accessibility of on-trip information depends on the used mode of public transport: city buses (especially in Athens and Thessalonica), trams and undergrounds (stops/stations and vehicles) do have equipment for oral and/or visual announcements. Regional buses provide the least degree of accessible information.

**Ticketing:** Tickets can be bought at counters at the station, ticket offices in the city, from kiosks, in some shopping centres and from ticket machines in the buses. However, ticket machines and counters do not provide accessible design for people with disabilities.

**Stops and stations:** The interview partners had difficulties to estimate the average share of accessible stops and stations. They think that tram stops, underground stations and train stations in urban areas are mostly accessible; bus stations (especially in rural areas) are not accessible at all.

**Vehicles:** City buses, trams, undergrounds and local trains are equipped with non-slippery floors, automatic doors, low-floors and high platforms and generally offer all necessary services regarding the accessibility. The interior of these vehicles provide a lot of space for manoeuvring and storing wheelchairs. All city buses, trams, undergrounds and local trains do have priority seats. However, people with cognitive/learning impairments should be accompanied in city buses, trams, undergrounds and local trains. Regional buses and long distance trains are not accessible at all: neither when boarding/alighting nor in the vehicle itself.

**Safety, Reliability, and Service:** The interviewed persons do not know very much about safety and reliability issues. The public transport personnel are trained in the interaction with people with disabilities and do get special training in the form of workshops and staff members experience disability by simulation. However, it happens that drivers do not know how to operate ramps etc.

### 2.2.1 Accessibility of passenger information

The interviewed person of the Hellenic government believes that many things have to be done to improve the accessibility of public transport passenger information.

In the point of view of the interviewed person of Thessaloniki's Urban Transport Authority (SASTh) the public transport passenger information in Greece is rather good.

#### Pre-trip information

According to the Hellenic Ministry of Transport and Communication timetables and routes of the various public transport modes are available via telephone, internet and via print products. For information regarding the accessibility of public transport stations, stops, vehicles and services the main information channels are telephone and internet. Information on tariffs and tickets is also mainly obtained by telephone and internet. Information regarding customer services (e.g. accompanying service, luggage transport service, etc.) is provided via telephone, internet and also via print products.

The interviewed person from Thessaloniki's Urban Transport Authority (SASTh) states that accessible travel planning information is offered by phone and via internet. However, pre-trip information regarding the accessibility of public transport stations, stops, vehicles and services is not sufficient. There is no accessible pre-trip information on customer services offered by public transport operators for people with disabilities. The assessment of pre-trip information on public transport tariffs and tickets is good and the information regarding special transport services for people with disabilities is excellent.

The representative from the interviewed public transport operator states that the accessibility of pre-trip information depends on the mode of public transport: Generally trams, local trains (urban trains) and undergrounds provide good / excellent pre-trip information on timetables, routes, etc. For those modes of public transport (tram, underground, local train) pre-trip information is also given on the accessibility of stops and stations, vehicles and also customer services. However, there is no pre-trip information on the accessibility of stops, stations vehicles and customer services for buses and long distance trains. He states that there is pre-trip information regarding tariffs and tickets provided via telephone, print products and internet. The level of accessibility of this information can in his point of view be assessed as sufficient.

#### On-trip information

The interviewed person from the Hellenic Ministry of Transport and Communication states that it is very difficult to estimate the average share of accessible bus stops in urban and rural areas and the average share of trains stops and stations in both rural and urban areas; there are no statistics or surveys from which conclusion can be drawn. However, according to the interviewed person all tram stops and underground stations are accessible for people with motor, visual, hearing or cognitive/learning impairments.

According to the interview-partner from public transport operators there are no official statistical data regarding the accessibility of passenger information at bus stops available. However, there are some bus stops in urban areas which are now equipped with telematic features and which provide acoustic announcements. All tram stops offer accessible passenger information for almost all categories of impairments. The underground stations and train stations in urban areas are also equipped with features offering accessible passenger information for almost all categories of impairments. Passenger information regarding unexpected incidents is provided via monitors. The equipment of tram stops, underground stations and train stations in urban areas are in general rather accessible: they are equipped with light signals, acoustic announcements, non-slippery floors and accessible counters for people with motor or hearing impairments.

The interviewed person from the Hellenic Ministry of Transport and Communication states that he cannot make an estimation of the accessibility of passenger information in city buses, regional buses and trains. In his opinion the passenger information provided in trams and in undergrounds is accessible for all passengers.

According to the interviewed person from the public transport operator "Athens Urban Transport Organisation" city bus information is provided by acoustic announcements and monitors. In these city buses the offered services are assessed with a high level and the information is in real-time. As the information is presented visually and orally a lot of people should be reached. However, it is not secured that people with cognitive/learning impairments do also receive the information via those channels. In regional buses no information is electronically given. Whether information is provided to people with disabilities is dependent on the driver. In trams oral announcements of the next stops are provided: unexpected incidents and emergency issues are announced via monitor. All underground vehicles as well as all local trains provide passenger information via monitors and oral announcements: announcement of the next stop, unexpected incidents and emergency issues.

## 2.2.2 Accessibility issues in Ticketing

According to the Hellenic Ministry of Transport and Communication tickets can be bought at ticket machines and counters. In his opinion these are the most common means of obtaining tickets. He cannot estimate what share of ticket machines is accessible for people with disabilities.

The interviewed person from Thessaloniki's Urban Transport Authority (SASTh) states that tickets can be bought at ticket offices in the city, from kiosks, in some shopping centres and from ticket machines in the buses. He states that ticket machines and counters are not special designed for people with disabilities.

The public transport operator "Athens Urban Transport Organisation (OASA) estimates that people with disabilities usually buy their tickets at counters.

## 2.2.3 Accessibility of stops and stations

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

According to the interview-partner from the Hellenic Ministry of Transport and Communication many things for improving the accessibility of stops and stations have already been completed although there is further work to be done. He states that a general strategy is to improve the accessibility of stops and stations as much as possible.

The interviewed person from Athens Urban Transport Organisation states that there are a lot of stops and stations that are not accessible for people with disabilities, especially in small towns. In cities, especially in Athens, there are some stops and stations that provide access for people with disabilities. A point that the interviewed person thinks is necessary to mention is that for people with cognitive/learning impairments no stop or station is accessible.

It is not planned to make all stops and stations of the public transport system accessible (immediately). The main criteria for which stops will be improved are the number of passengers on the various public transport lines. Information about the current state and the planned activities towards improved accessibility of stops and stations will be given by print products and via internet.

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

The interview partner from the Hellenic Ministry of Transport and Communication cannot estimate what share of bus stops nor what share of train stations (both in urban and rural areas) are accessible. However, he assumes that all tram stops and all underground stations are accessible.

According to the Athens Urban Transport Organisation only a few bus stops in urban areas are accessible for people with disabilities, however he cannot define the types of disability the stops are accessible. Bus stops in rural areas are not accessible at all. On the other hand, all tram stops, underground stations and train stations in urban areas are accessible for people with disabilities, but people with learning/cognitive impairments should be accompanied. Only very few train stations in rural areas are accessible for people with disabilities.

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## 2.2.4 Accessibility of vehicles

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

The interview partner of the Athens Urban Transport Organisation states that a great effort regarding the accessibility of city buses has been undertaken. Trams, undergrounds and local/urban trains have all the necessary services for securing accessibility for people with disabilities. He also states that there has been concerted effort to make certain lines accessible. It is planned to improve some of the vehicles within the next years. The main criteria for improvement of accessibility is the number of passengers. Passengers again will be informed about the current state and the planned developments regarding the accessibility of vehicles by print media and via the internet. He furthermore states, that there are no cases in Greece where public transport is accessible but the use of this transport by people with disabilities is not permitted. However, it happens that drivers of the city buses do not know how to operate the ramps of the city buses.

The interview-partner of Hellenic Ministry of Transport and Communication thinks that the accessibility of public transport is in general in a good situation but there are many things which still have to be done. He states that they try to have as many accessible public transport vehicles as possible and they try to improve the reliability of the accessibility equipments. He also states that there are no cases in Greece where public transport is accessible but the use of this transport by people with disabilities is not allowed, but a lot of disabled people do not know about accessible public transport and therefore do not use it.

### Actual state of the accessibility of the public transport vehicles in Greece

According to the Athens Urban Transport Organisation the city buses (in Athens and Thessalonica) guarantee safe boarding and alighting for all categories of people with disabilities (not including people with cognitive/learning impairments; these people should be accompanied). City buses, trams, undergrounds and local trains are equipped with non-slippery floors, automatic doors, low-floors and high platforms and generally offer all necessary services regarding the accessibility. The interior of these vehicles provide a lot of space for manoeuvring and storing wheelchairs. All city buses, trams, undergrounds and local trains have priority seats. However, people with cognitive/learning impairments should be accompanied in city buses, trams, undergrounds and local trains. Regional buses and long distance trains are not accessible: neither when boarding/alighting nor in the vehicle itself.

The interviewed person from the Hellenic Ministry of Transport and Communication states that all trams and undergrounds have accessible interior designs for people with motor impairments, visual impairments, hearing impairments or cognitive/learning impairments. For buses and trains he can not estimate the average share of accessible vehicles.

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## 2.2.5 Safety, Reliability and Service

### Safety aspects

The interviewed person from the Hellenic Ministry of Transport and Communication does not have any information concerning safety aspects for people with disabilities in public transport but that accessible information is provided in emergencies in all modes of transport.

### Reliability and Punctuality

According to the interviewed person representing public transport operators it happens that drivers of the city buses do not know how to operate the ramps of the city buses.

The interviewed person from the Hellenic Ministry of Transport and Communication does not have information about the reliability and punctuality of public transport services.

### Customer Service

The interviewed person from the Hellenic Ministry states that public transport operators offer assistance at stations. They receive special training for this.

The interviewed person from Athens Urban Transport Organisation states that customer service (like ticketing machines, etc.) is generally at a good level. In Greece the system of luggage storage is not really common; therefore this is not an important topic for accessibility. The existing situation is improving continuously. He states that all bus stations (especially in Athens), underground stations and train stations (only in Athens) provide accessible counters and information desks staffed by trained personnel regarding the various needs of people with disabilities. However, people with cognitive/learning disabilities in his opinion should be accompanied. Whether public transport operators offer assistance at the stations depending on the kind of impairment and on the staff on duty. In most cases the personnel accompany people with disabilities and help them to board/alight the vehicle or to carry their luggage.

### Staff Training

According to the interview-partner from the Hellenic Ministry of Transport and Communication in 2004 a great effort in the training of public transport operators was offered. It is anticipated that this effort will continue.

According to the interviewed person from the public transport operator in Athens there are special training schemes for the staff of public transport operators. These training schemes are seminars and workshops organised by the labour union of public transport. New staff are always trained on issues of accessible public transport and interaction with people with disabilities. In some cases staff members experience disability by simulation. This training scheme is practiced for all modes of public transport.

### **2.3 Alternatives to public transport**

According to the interviewed person from Thessaloniki's Urban Transport Authority (SASTh) the municipality of Thessalonica provides a special service with a token (symbolic) subscription fee for Thessalonica citizens (in total 3 vehicles). Furthermore there are private white taxis (2 vehicles) and single initiatives (1 vehicle in the municipality of Kalamaria) or special unions (e.g. for autistic children).

The representative of the Hellenic Ministry states that there are special taxis for people with disabilities.