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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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State of the Accessibility of Public Transport Systems for People with Disabilities in Latvia (LV)

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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]

Table of Contents

1	Introduction.....	4
2	Accessibility of Public Transport in Latvia (LV)	6
2.1	<i>General Information.....</i>	7
2.2	<i>Accessibility of Public Transport.....</i>	14
2.3	<i>Alternatives to public transport.....</i>	21

1 Introduction

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

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 Latvia (LV).

What can be expected from this report

This report gives an overview of the state of the accessibility of public transport in Latvia (LV). 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 Latvia (LV) 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 Latvia (LV)**, 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

In Latvia there have been four stakeholder-interviews conducted:

Interviewer:	Name	Organisation
PTaccess National Contact Person	Igor V. Kabashkin, President, Vice- Rector, Professor, Dr.hab.sc.ing.	Transport and Telecommunication Institute
Interview partners:	Name	Organisation
Representatives of Transport Operators	Galina Malahova and Igors Vilkinštens	SIA JuGaTRANS and Rīgas Satiksme
Representatives of People with Disabilities	Raimonds Smagars	Invalīdu un viņu draugu apvienība Apeirons
Representative of Governmental Authority	Andris Lubans	Road Transport Administration

Table 1: Interviewer and Interview-partners in Latvia

The chosen interview-partners are top-managers with high responsibility and competence in their organisations. The interviewer had the general impression that all these interview partners seemed to be interested in the topic of accessibility of public transport.

2.1.2 General information about public transport in Latvia

In Latvia there are more than 500 public transport operators.

City-buses / trams:

The main cities of Latvia (Riga, Daugavpils, Liepaja, Rezekne and Jurmala) have a city public transport network.

Regional-buses:

In each regional center there are the “autostations” serving regional routes. In large cities there are international coach terminals. Riga (the capital of Latvia) has the largest bus station with operation of more than 300 routes daily.

Railways:

Riga is the centre of the national railway network, and is connected with main cities of Latvia (Daugavpils, Rezekne, Liepaja) by intercity railways. In Riga part of the railway-network is used by inhabitants as an internal city public transport system. The unique railway carrier in Latvia is AS Latvijas Dzelzceļš (JSC Latvian Railway).

Underground transport (Metro) does not exist in Latvia.

Statistical data of Latvian public transport (Source: Latvian Road Transport Administration)

Number of public transport routes operated in Latvia in 2006	
Internal city routes	326
Regional routes	993
Intercity routes	374
Number of transported passengers across Latvia in 2006	
by city-buses	160.813 mio.
by city electricity transport (tram and trolleybus)	184.984 mio.
by buses of regional routes	28.328 mio.
by buses of intercity routes	19.509 mio.
by rail	27.023 mio.

2.1.3 Statistical Data from Latvia (2006)

The existing system for the collection of data in Latvia has some serious gaps, making it difficult to accurately assess the real situation of (specifically) people with learning disabilities. There is no exact data available on how many people with disabilities there are in Latvia and whether they have been assigned a designated disability group or not, because various official sources offer different data. The Ministry of Welfare issued a separate statistical report on Persons with Disabilities for the period of 1997–2003, although this data is quite general.

Statistical Data for Latvia	
Number of inhabitants (2006)	2,294,600
Inhabitants with disabilities (2003)	115,200
Inhabitants with motor impairments (2003)	7,452
Inhabitants with visual impairments (2003)	1,403
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 (2003)	About 40 % of total amount of disabled people
Share of disabled people at working age who are actually working	no data available

Table 2: Statistical data for Latvia

2.1.4 Legal and regulatory framework conditions in Latvia

In Latvia there is no antidiscrimination law at present. However, there is a “Regulation of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Latvia” that gives a timeframe for the improvement of the accessibility of public transport in Latvia.

In Latvia the general national policy in the area of public passenger service is defined in the “Basic Development Concept for year 2005-2014” which specifies requirements for accessible public transport vehicles. In Latvia there is no national policy to guarantee mobility to people with disabilities.

There is no regular general monitoring of the accessibility of public transport in Latvia. However, about once a year the road transport administration in cooperation with "Apeiron" (Association of Disabled People) and with the Association of Transport Operators conducts a sample survey for regional and long distance bus-transport.

Certain groups of disabled persons are entitled to use public transport free of charge, and the transport operators are paid by the government for the resulting loss of income.

Anti-discrimination law

There is no anti-discrimination law existing in Latvia.

Regulations regarding the accessibility of public transport

According to the interviewed representative of the governmental authority the general national policy in the area of public passenger service is defined in the “Basic Development Concept for year 2005-2014”. This “Basic Development Concept” sets requirements for vehicles, which should be accessible for people with disabilities. In a “Regulation of The Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Latvia” it is defined that:

- Interregional buses, which connect regional cities and these cities and Riga, should be available for passengers with disabilities twice a day starting from 1st January 2009, with full capacity starting from 1st January 2015.
- In the remaining long distance routes - with intensity once a day from 1st January 2015 and at full capacity from 1st January 2022.
- In the local routes - 10% until 1st January 2015 and full range from 1st January 2022.
- For city buses - 30% until 1st January 2011, and full range by 1st January 2015.
- City electric transport should be accessible for 10% until 1st January 2015, and in full range by 1st January 2022.
- For local (electrified) trains - transport should be 50% accessible by 1st January 2020 in full range by 1st January 2023.
- For long distance trains (diesels) - transport should be 50% accessible by 1st January 2018 and in full range by 1st January 2023.

The Latvian Standard EN 13816 for Transport, Logistic and Services contains specifications for public passenger transport service quality definition, targeting and measurement and accessibility issues. Furthermore there are also national regulations on construction of public transport stops.

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

According to the interviewed representative of the governmental authority, the national policy regarding the accessibility of public transport is set in the “Basic Development Concept for year 2005-2014”, which includes requirements for public transport vehicles that should be accessible for people with disabilities.

According to the interviewed representative of Rīgas Satiksme, there is no general national policy in the area of transport service for people with disabilities. All plans for the Riga urban transport development are under the jurisdiction of the City Council. Purchase of vehicles, where the interests of people with disabilities are taken into account, is part the initiative of the Rīgas Satiksme Enterprise with support of the City Council.

According to the interviewed representative of disabled people, there are no special priority programmes regarding the accessibility of public transport in Latvia.

Monitoring of the accessibility of public transport

According to the interviewed representative of disabled people, only the organisation “Invalīdu un viņu draugu apvienība Apeirons” makes recommendations for the improvement of the situation regarding the accessibility of public transport.

According to the interviewed representative of Rīgas Satiksme, there is no dedicated control available regarding the accessibility of public transport, but private observations and claims regarding barriers in public transport are considered individually.

According to the interviewed representative of the governmental authority, the road transport administration in cooperation with "Apeirons" (Association of Disabled People) and with the Association of Transport Operators annually conducts a sample survey for regional and long distance bus-transport.

Special fares and public transport tariffs for people with disabilities

According to the interviewed representative of disabled people, there is no policy to guarantee mobility for people with disabilities, i.e. there is no guaranteed transport to work, healthcare, working-place, educational institutions, etc. At a legislative level, people with disabilities of groups 1 and 2 have a right to travel for free, with the state providing grants for this.

According to the interviewed representative of transport operators, disabled people of 1 and 2 groups travel free of charge, and the operators are paid these costs by the government from special subsidies funds.

2.1.5 Organisational framework conditions

In the PTaccess-interviews no information about which governmental authorities in Latvia are responsible for anti-discrimination or social inclusion issues referring to people with disabilities could be obtained. The Latvian Ministry of Communication and the city councils' communication departments are responsible for public transport issues on national and local level respectively.

According to the interviewed representatives of transport operators and people of disabilities, there is no cooperation amongst the stakeholders (governmental authorities, transport operators, and disability organisations) regarding the improvement of the accessibility of public transport. The only exception is Riga, where there is some loose cooperation between the local urban public transport operator and the local disability organisation in Riga. The interviewed representative of the governmental authorities stated that transport operators, disability organisations and governmental authorities cooperate in developing new projects of legislation, setting quality requirements for public transport services, and organizing seminars.

Whereas people with disabilities think that the improvement of the accessibility of public transport in Latvia should be a priority issue, Latvian transport operators are not interested in accessibility issues - according to their point of view only a very small share of their (potential) customers would need accessible public transport and the necessary investments not provide benefits.

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

There is no information about which governmental authorities (on national, regional or local level) in Latvia are responsible for anti-discrimination or social inclusion issues referring to people with disabilities.

Governmental authorities responsible for public transport

- At the national level: Satiksmes ministrija (Ministry of Communications) - www.sam.gov.lv.
- At the city level: the city councils' Transport and Communications Department.

Main transport operators and Public Transport associations

- The largest urban transport operator is Joint-Stock Company Rīgas satiksme (Rīga, Kleistu iela 29, LV 1067; Tālr.: 7065400; Fakss: 7065402; info@rigassatiksme.lv)

Main disability organisations

- Invalīdu un viņu draugu apvienība Apeirons (<http://www.apeirons.lv>)

Cooperation among stakeholders

Cooperation between the governmental authorities and disability organisations

According to the interviewed representative of Rīgas Satiksme, cooperation does not exist between governmental authorities and disability organisations in defining and developing better accessibility of Public Transport.

The interviewed representative of disabled people also stated there is no cooperation at all.

According to the interviewed representative of the governmental authority, people with disabilities in Latvia are not satisfied with the level of accessibility of public transport. They lobby for better accessibility in public transport via Ministry of transport and Government. They are interested in cooperation with other stakeholders and work with them to improve the situation. According to the interviewed representative of the governmental authority, people with disabilities and governmental authorities cooperate in conducting surveys, seminars, and developing new projects of legislation.

Cooperation between the transport operators and disability organisations

The interviewed representative of disabled people states that in general the level of cooperation between transport operators and people with disabilities is very low in Latvia; however, there is cooperation between disabled people and the main urban transport operator of Riga, Rīgas satiksme.

According to the interviewed representative of public transport operators, there is no cooperation between transport operators and people with disabilities in defining and developing better accessibility of public transport.

Cooperation between the transport operators and governmental authorities

Both interviewed representatives of public transport operators state there is no cooperation between transport operators and governmental authorities in defining and developing better accessibility of public transport.

According to the interviewed representative of the governmental authority, transport operators and governmental authorities cooperate in developing new projects of legislation, setting quality requirements for public transport services, and organizing seminars.

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

According to the interviewed representative of the governmental authority, the main barrier that hinders faster improvement of the accessibility of public transport in Latvia is the lack of coherence in the work of the various structures: governmental authorities (state-region-city), transport operators, and representatives of people with disabilities.

According to the interviewed representative of the governmental authority, on the one hand public transport operators in Latvia are aware of the importance of accessible public transport, but on the other hand they are reluctant as it requires additional financing and efforts.

According to the interviewed representative of transport operators, in general Latvian transport operators have no special interest in accessibility issues. It is possible to be explained by a very small number of passengers with disabilities. Special-purpose vehicles (e.g. for transport of passengers in wheelchairs) are much more expensive than usual ones, and purchasing such vehicles is not beneficial.

According to the interviewed representative of Rīgas satiksme, accessible public transport is important, since the availability of free movement in a vehicle, on the streets and in premises will allow a person with disabilities to be a member of society.

The interviewed representative of people with disabilities states that public transport is very important for providing mobility of people with disabilities, although it is also necessary to make public buildings fully accessible.

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

According to the interviewed representative of transport operators and the interviewed representative of disabled people, people with an electric wheelchair will not use public transport to go for work, shopping, and leisure activities, whereas blind people and people with cognitive/learning impairments will probably use public transport for their everyday-trips.

According to the interviewed representative of Rīgas satiksme, people with disabilities are not likely to travel to work by public transport.

The interviewed representative of disabled people states there is no available data regarding the share of people with disabilities that use public transport. The attitudes of people with disabilities to public transport are also unknown.

2.2 Accessibility of Public Transport

Information: In Latvia printed information about the timetables of public transport services is displayed at stops/stations. This timetable-information is also (partially) available on the internet and by telephone. Information about the timetables and routes of the wheelchair-accessible buses in Riga can be retrieved by telephone for free. In most city-buses in Riga the next stop is announced acoustically and visually. In the other public transport vehicles in Latvia acoustic passenger information (e.g. announcement of the next stop) is available.

Ticketing: Some groups of disabled peoples are entitled to travel free of charge on public transport in Latvia. In Latvia there are no dedicated places (like vending machines, counters...) for purchasing a ticket. Tickets can be bought directly from the bus driver. Tickets for long-distance trains / buses and tickets for (most) regional buses can be reserved and bought via the internet.

Stops and stations: In general Latvian public transport stops and stations are not accessible for people with disabilities, and there is no strategy regarding the improvement of the accessibility of public transport stops and stations. Only in Riga are some accessible stops: in Riga about 50% of the city-bus-stops are accessible for people with disabilities and about 10% of the bus-stops are accessible for people with visual impairments.

Vehicles: In Latvia the accessibility of public transport vehicles is extremely low: In Riga most of the city-buses are accessible, but there are (almost) no other accessible public transport vehicles in operation throughout the country. In the next few years Riga is planning to start the introduction of accessible trams. However, there is not a general strategy for improvement of the accessibility of public transport vehicles.

Safety, Reliability, and Service: Apart from the majority of city-buses in Riga, which offer safety-belts and emergency buttons, public transport vehicles in Latvia offer no safety-equipment for people with disabilities. There is no accessible information in emergency cases and there are no special evacuation-plans for people with disabilities. There are no accessible customer services (like luggage storage, counters or information desks) available in Latvia. Drivers of the accessible city-buses in Riga are trained for the use of the accessibility-equipment (e.g. ramps), although generally there are no special training schemes.

2.2.1 Accessibility of passenger information

According to both the interviewed representative of disabled people and the interviewed representative of transport operators, the accessibility of public transport passenger information in Latvia is rather poor and not sufficient.

Pre-trip information

According to the interviewed representative of Rīgas Satiksme, timetable information about public transport (bus, train) is available at the stops and (partially) on the internet and on the telephone. There is no accessible information for people with visual impairments available at the stops. To find out additional information and information about the equipment of buses for people with disabilities it is necessary to use a free telephone number; but this service is available only for public transport in Riga. In Riga there are special contact telephone numbers (information is placed in mass-media) providing information about certain routes, timetables, and information about the time of the next accessible bus. There is no information available on special customer services offered by public transport operators for people with disabilities.

According to the interviewed representative of disabled people, pre-trip information (timetables) is available via telephone and internet. Pre-trip information regarding the accessibility of public transport vehicles is only available for the city buses of Riga: there is a telephone-number that can be called free of charge to receive information about the timetable of accessible buses. There is no pre-trip information on public transport tariffs and tickets, no information about special customer services for disabled passengers, and no information on special transport services (additional to public transport) available.

According to the interviewed representative of transport operators, there is a free telephone in Riga providing information about the time-schedule of buses equipped with facilities for passengers in wheel-chairs. There is no information available regarding the accessibility of public transport stops and stations, and there is no information on special customer services for disabled people.

According to the interviewed representative of the governmental authority, timetable information about public transport (bus, train) is available. To find out about the equipment of buses for people with disabilities, additional information is available using a free telephone number (such service is available only in Riga for public transport). Pre-trip information is available via internet, telephone, and information at the stops. Information for people with reduced vision is not available at the stops. Pre-trip information regarding the accessibility of stops/stations is only available for the Riga Central Railway Terminal and for the Riga International Bus Station; this information can be retrieved by using a free telephone number. Information about public transport tariffs (bus, train) is available at the stations and can also be retrieved by internet and telephone. Pre-trip information on customer services offered by public transport operators for people with disabilities is as yet not available.

On-trip information

According to the interviewed representative of transport operators, the available passenger information at stops and stations is not accessible for people with motor, visual, hearing or cognitive/learning impairments. In general in Latvian public transport vehicles there is no on-trip-passenger-information available which is accessible for people with disabilities; the only exception are city-buses: over 80% of the city-buses offer passenger information that is accessible for people with motor impairments.

According to the interviewed representative of people with disabilities, there is no passenger information at stops and stations available that is accessible for people with disabilities. In city-buses the next stop is announced acoustically and visually. In regional buses, trams, and trains there is no announcement of the next stop.

According to the interviewed representative of Rīgas satiksme, at bus stops in urban areas as well as at tram stops and train stops/stations, there is visual time-table-information available. There is no real-time information (e.g. information about delays, cancelled routes, etc.) available at public transport stops in Latvia. There is no passenger information available at public transport stops/stations that is accessible for people with visual impairments. About 85% of the city-buses provide on-trip passenger information accessible for people with motor impairments. There is no accessible on-trip passenger information in trams, regional buses, and trains.

According to the interviewed representative of the governmental authorities, at bus stops in urban areas only the approved timetable is available, there is no real-time information (regarding delays, cancelled routes, etc.) available. According to the interviewed representative of the governmental authorities, about 85% of the city-buses provide passenger information that is accessible for people with motor impairments, about 80% of the city-buses provide passenger information that is accessible for people with visual impairments, and about half of the city-buses provide passenger information that is accessible for people with hearing impairments. Very few regional buses (about 2%) provide accessible passenger information. All trams provide passenger information that is accessible for people with motor impairments and for people with visual impairments; and about one third of the trams provide passenger information that is accessible for people with hearing impairments. The majority

of trains (about 85%) provide passenger information that is accessible for people with motor impairments and for people with visual impairments; but only about 10% of the trains provide for people with hearing impairments.

2.2.2 Accessibility issues in Ticketing

The interviewed representative of transport operators states that seats in long-distance and regional buses can be booked on the website of the Riga Bus Terminal. Tickets for long-distance trains can be booked via telephone. Disabled people of 1 and 2 groups are entitled to travel by public transport free of charge. The resulting loss of revenue is paid the operator by the government from special subsidies funds. In order to be allowed to travel free of charge, disabled people must show an identity card when travelling.

There are no ticket vending machines existing in Latvia.

According to the interviewed representative of Rīgas satiksme, there are no dedicated places (like ticket machines, counters etc) for booking/buying tickets. Some transport operators offer booking via the internet or telephone. There are no ticket vending machines that are accessible for people with disabilities.

According to the interviewed representative of disabled people, there is no data available on the usual method of ticket purchase and type for people with disabilities. There are no accessible ticket vending machines. There is a special tariff for people with disabilities in public transport in Latvia: Disabled people of 1 and 2 groups have a right to travel by public transport free of charge. The state pays the operator for the loss of revenue.

According to the interviewed representative of the governmental authority, there are no dedicated places for booking of tickets (e.g. ticket machine, counter) available. Some transport operators offer booking via the internet or telephone.

2.2.3 Accessibility of stops and stations

According to the interviewed representative of disabled people, there is no strategy regarding the improvement of the accessibility of stops and stations. The level of satisfaction of people with disabilities regarding the accessibility of stops and stations is low.

According to the interviewed representative of transport operators, there exists no general strategy regarding the improvement of the accessibility of stops and stations. There are no public transport stops and stations that are accessible for people with disabilities.

According to the interviewed representative of Rīgas satiksme, in Latvia there is no concept regarding the strategy for improvement of the accessibility of public transport stops and stations. About 50% of bus-stops in urban areas are accessible for people with motor impairments, and about 10% of urban bus stops are accessible for people with visual impairments. Bus stops in rural areas, tram stops and train stops/stations are not accessible for people with disabilities.

According to the interviewed representative of the governmental authority, about half of the bus stops in urban areas are accessible for people with motor impairments, and about 10% are accessible for people with visual impairments. No bus stops in rural areas and no train stops are accessible. There exists a concept to improve the accessibility of stops and stations over the next 15 years.

2.2.4 Accessibility of vehicles

According to the interviewed representative of disabled people, in general the accessibility of public transport vehicles in Latvia is low. There is no strategy regarding the improvement of the accessibility of public transport vehicles.

The level of accessibility of the interior design of city buses in Riga for people with motor impairments is sufficient (there is one designated space for wheelchairs per city bus). The level of accessibility of the interior vehicle design of regional buses, trams, and trains is not satisfying at all for people with disabilities.

According to the interviewed representative of transport operators, in general the accessibility of public transport vehicles in Latvia is extremely low. There is no special strategy regarding the improvement of the accessibility of public transport vehicles.

More than 80% of the city-buses in Riga provide barrier-free boarding and alighting for people with motor impairments, but there are no city-buses that provide barrier-free boarding and alighting for people with visual impairments. Regional buses, trams and trains do not provide barrier-free boarding and alighting for people with disabilities.

More than 80% of the city buses in Riga are equipped with designated spaces for people in wheelchairs (one designated “wheelchair-space” per bus), and with video panels for visual passenger information. Regional buses, trams and trains do not have barrier-free interior vehicle design, and there are no designated spaces for wheelchairs in these vehicles.

According to the interviewed representative of Rīgas satiksme, in Riga 85% of the city-buses and 25% of the trolley buses are equipped with facilities for boarding and alighting of passengers in wheelchairs. In Riga, it is planned to complete the modernisation of bus and trolley-bus fleets in order to start a modernisation of trams over the next few years.

In most city-buses in Riga there are designated spaces for wheelchairs. All city-buses in Riga are equipped with a speaker set for acoustic passenger information. In some city-buses there is a ticker-screen showing the name of the next stop. There are no regional buses, trams, and trains with accessible interior vehicle design available in Latvia.

According to the interviewed representative of the governmental authority, there is a strategy for the improvement of the accessibility of public transport vehicles defined:

- Interregional buses, which connect regional cities and these cities and Riga, should be available for passengers with disabilities twice a day starting from 1st January 2009, with full capacity starting from 1st January 2015.
- In the remaining long distance routes - with intensity once a day from 1st January 2015 and at full capacity from 1st January 2022.
- In the local routes - 10% until 1st January 2015 and full range from 1st January 2022.
- For city buses - 30% until 1st January 2011, and full range by 1st January 2015.
- City electric transport should be accessible for 10% until 1st January 2015, and in full range by 1st January 2022.
- For local (electrified) trains - transport should be 50% accessible by 1st January 2020 in full range by 1st January 2023.
- For long distance trains (diesels) - transport should be 50% accessible by 1st January 2018 and in full range by 1st January 2023.

According to the interviewed representative of the governmental authority, approximately 85% of city-buses are low floor vehicles and are equipped with a signal button for disabled passengers. None of the trams or trains provide barrier-free boarding and alighting. In most (approximately 85%) city-buses there are 1-2 designated spaces for wheelchair users. All city-buses are equipped with a speaker set, and in some city-buses there is a ticker-screen with the name of the next stop. In many urban vehicles there are conductors, who may help passengers to get information; although these conductors do not pass a special training course. Very few regional buses and none of the trams or trains offer a designated space for wheelchairs.

2.2.5 Safety, Reliability and Service

Safety aspects

According to the interviewed representative of Rīgas satiksme, there have not been any accidents involving people with disabilities in public transport in Latvia over the last few years. City-buses with dedicated spaces for wheelchairs (i.e. about 85% of the city-buses) are equipped with safety equipment for wheelchair users (safety belts, emergency buttons, button to communicate with the driver).

According to the interviewed representative of transport operators, there have not been any accidents involving people with disabilities in public transport in Latvia over the last few years. In Riga approximately 80% of buses are equipped with ramps for entry and exit of passengers in wheelchairs, and there are special buttons inside and outside the bus (near the middle door) for informing the driver that a passenger in a wheelchair wants to enter or leave the bus. In these buses a designated space equipped with a safety-belt for a passenger in a wheelchair is available. All other public transport vehicles (buses, trams, trains) do not offer any safety equipment for disabled passengers. In all public transport modes (bus, tram, train) there is neither accessible information in case of an emergency, nor are there special plans regarding the evacuation of people with disabilities.

According to the interviewed representative of disabled people, there have been accidents involving people with disabilities in urban buses in Riga. The interviewed representative of disabled people states that people with disabilities in Latvia think that travelling by public transport (bus, tram, train) is dangerous. Only the specially adapted city-buses in Riga offer safety-equipments: there is a designated space for wheelchair users equipped with a seat belt, and there is a button to signal the driver in case of an emergency. In all other public transport vehicles in Latvia there is no accessible information in emergency cases, and there are no special plans for evacuating people with disabilities.

According to the interviewed representative of the governmental authority, there is no data available regarding accidents in public transport involving people with disabilities. City buses with designated spaces for wheelchairs (i.e. about 85% of the city-buses) are equipped with safety equipment for wheelchair users. In case of an emergency, information in buses and trains is given by acoustic announcement. There are no special plans for evacuating people with disabilities in an emergency.

Reliability and Punctuality

According to the interviewed representative of Rīgas satiksme, the level of reliability of the accessibility of public transport vehicles in Latvia is extremely low. Even the level of reliability of the accessibility of city-buses is assessed to be quite low, because of the infrequent use of these vehicles by people with disabilities: the drivers are trained on how to use boarding devices but have received little practice.

According to the interviewed representative of transport operators, the reliability of the accessibility of public transport vehicles and stops/stations in Latvia is extremely low: in Riga one could speak of a partial suitability of

city-buses for people with disabilities, in city-bus services of all other Latvian towns and in all other public transport modes (regional buses, trams, trains) nothing is foreseen to make the vehicles and stops/stations accessible for people with disabilities.

According to the interviewed representative of people with disabilities, the level of reliability of the accessibility of public transport vehicles and stops and stations in Latvia is extremely low. Buses in Riga are only partially suitable for the needs of disabled people, and stops in Riga are only to a certain degree accessible to people in wheelchairs. All other public transport modes in Latvia are not accessible for people with disabilities.

There is no data available regarding the punctuality of public transport services in Latvia. However, the interviewed representative of the governmental authority estimates that more than 99% of the trains, approximately 98% of the regional buses and 85% of the urban public transport vehicles (city-buses and trams) are delayed more than 5 minutes.

Customer Service

According to the interviewed representative of Rīgas satiksme, wheelchair users on city-buses in Riga may receive help from the driver. In addition there are conductors in many urban public transport vehicles, who may help passengers to get information.

According to the interviewed representative of transport operators, there are no accessible customer services (like luggage storage, counters and information desks) available in Latvia.

In general public transport operators in Latvia do not offer assistance for passengers at bus or train stations. In Riga the drivers of the specially equipped city-buses are obliged to help people in wheelchairs to enter or exit the bus (i.e. the driver installs or removes a ramp, and helps the passenger to roll the wheelchair into the bus).

According to the interviewed representative of disabled people, in general the perception of disabled people regarding the accessibility of customer services (e.g. luggage storage, counters and information desks) is poor, as these services are not adapted to the needs of disabled people.

According to the interviewed representative of governmental authorities, there are no specialised customer services for disabled people in Latvia. Passengers in wheelchairs may receive help from drivers of buses and trains and at bus and train stations.

Staff Training

According to the interviewed representative of Rīgas satiksme, all drivers working in city-buses with special equipment for people with disabilities pass a training-course on how to use this special equipment. Training is conducted by the Rīgas Satiksme Enterprise. In many urban vehicles there are conductors (who may help passengers to get information), but these conductors do not pass a special training regarding the service for passengers with disabilities.

According to the interviewed representative of transport operators, generally there is no special training for transport operators' staff regarding the service for people with disabilities. There is only one such training scheme: the bus drivers of Rīgas satiksme are trained how to use the special-purpose facilities (e.g. ramps) of the city-buses.

According to the interviewed representative of disabled people, special training schemes for public transport operators' staff (regarding the service for disabled people) only exist for the drivers of city-buses of Rīgas satiksme (especially for new staff). There is no special training regarding the service for people with disabilities for all other transport operators' staff.

According to the interviewed representative of the governmental authority, special staff training schemes are only available on city bus transport.

2.3 Alternatives to public transport

According to the interviewed representative of disabled people, in Riga there are some special taxis for people in wheelchairs.

According to the interviewed representative of Rīgas satiksme, there are several dedicated taxis for transport of people with disabilities. At present there are two dedicated buses at the Rīgas Satiksme Enterprise to transport children in wheelchairs to their schools.

According to the interviewed representative of the governmental authority, there are several dedicated taxis in Riga city, some comfortable minibuses owned by charity organisations and the Latvian Ministry of Welfare offer accessible transport services as alternatives to public transport. The Latvian Ministry of Welfare is responsible for the implementation of these services.