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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 Malta (MT)

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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 Malta (MT).

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 Malta (MT).

What can be expected from this report

This report gives an overview of the state of the accessibility of public transport in Malta (MT). 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 Malta (MT) 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 Malta (MT)**, 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 Accessibility of Public Transport in Malta (MT)

2.1 General Information

2.1.1 About the PTaccess interviews

Interviewer:	Name	Organisation
PTaccess National Contact Person	Dr Maria Attard	Consultant
Interview partners:	Name	Organisation
Representative of Transport Operators	Mr. Victor Spiteri, President	Public Transport Association
Representative of People with Disabilities	Joseph Camilleri	National Commission Persons with Disability (KNPD)
Representative of Governmental Authority	David Sutton, Deputy CEO	Malta Transport Authority

Table 1: Interviewer and Interview-partners in Malta

General remarks about the situation in Malta

Malta is made up of three major islands, Malta, Gozo and Comino covering an area of 316sq km. Malta (246 square km) and Gozo are both inhabited islands with a population of 400,000. Gozo has a population of approximately 25,000 inhabitants. There is one public transport network made up of 508 buses servicing the island of Malta and another network of buses servicing Gozo (78 buses). The buses in Malta operate the scheduled bus service whilst the Gozo operators carry out both private and public transport services. Other operators in the sector are listed in the national contact questionnaire.

The data collected for this report relate to the main island of Malta and its public transport network (see figure 1). Malta does not have any trains, trams or underground services. The network is fairly distributed among its local councils with all town/village centres having a direct link to the main terminus and capital city, Valletta. Currently there are efforts to reduce the pressures on Valletta bus terminus and create other interchanges outside the urban agglomeration. This is still however in its early stages.

The urban morphology of Malta is also unique in that it consists of one urban area surrounding the capital city and the Grand Harbour (see figure 1). There are very few villages that do not form part of the urban agglomeration and therefore all scheduled public transport is considered urban.

The questionnaire brought to light many deficiencies in the provision of services for disabled persons in Malta with probably the biggest issue being the provision for disabilities other than motor impairments. This was also pointed out in the instructions to the national contact person. It was evident that, particularly the Operators, were not so aware of the various disabilities under the definition of disabled person. On the other hand the project also raised awareness for the both the Operator and the Authorities on the needs for disabled in the public transport service. It is hoped that the outcomes of the project have far reaching effects not only through policy direction but also in providing experience and knowledge about what happens across Europe and, obviously, the good practice examples.

The submitted best practice examples were suggested by the interviewees. It was felt that these could not be omitted as it is evident that there is very little best practice which could be transmitted to other places.

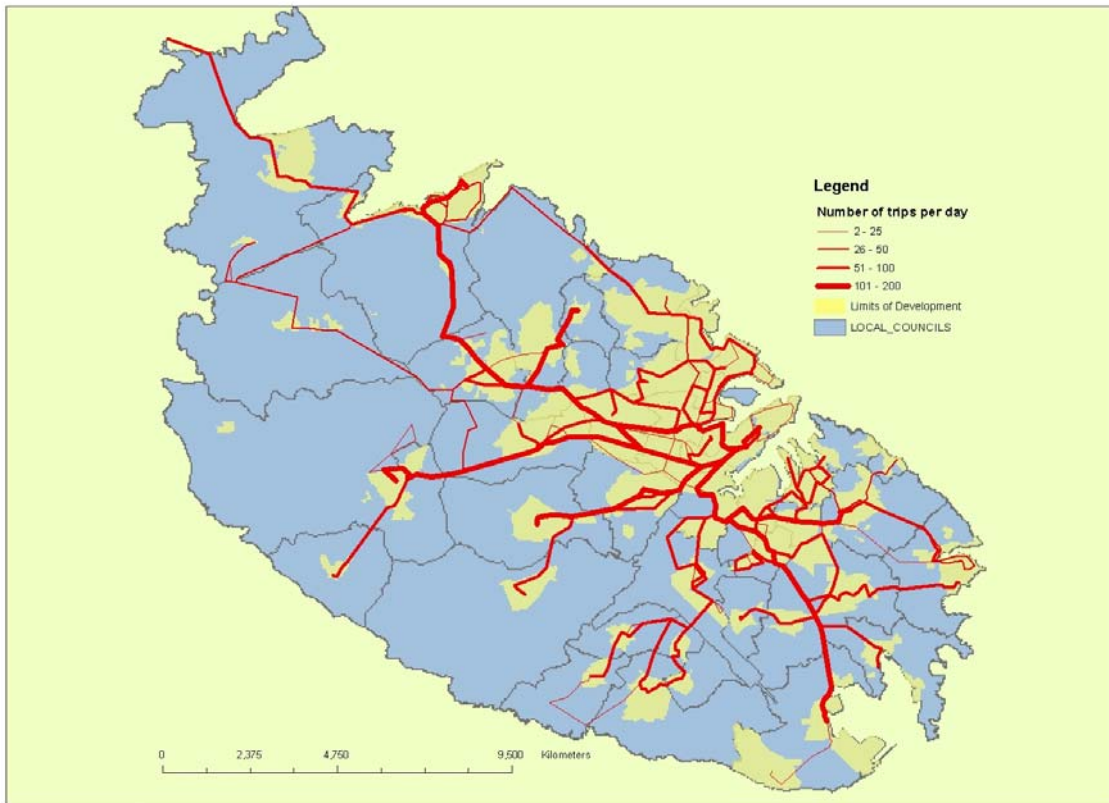


Figure 1 Malta’s public transport network (including density of trips per day per route) and the extent of the built-up area. Source: Attard, M.

The National Commission for Disabled Persons also noted the importance given to education and employment, although it felt that due importance should also be given to leisure activities and mobility in general. In Malta, like in other countries the provision of services for disabled focus mostly on education and employment, with most disabled people relying on family to provide transport. This is also a constraint on their independent mobility.

Apart from providing the information about the project to specific interested stakeholders, it is also advisable for the national contact person to further distribute the results of the project. In the case of Malta, the number of interested organisations could be far reaching and would include a number of ministries, particularly social policy and finance. Finance is especially important as the single largest barrier to the adoption/introduction of accessible public transport is funding.

2.1.2 Statistical Data from Malta

Statistical Data for Malta	
Number of inhabitants	404,039 ²
Inhabitants with disabilities	2.243 % of the total population ³
Inhabitants with motor impairments	1.321 % of the total population ⁴
Inhabitants with visual impairments	0.279 % of the total population ⁴
Inhabitants with hearing impairments	0.244 % of the total population ⁴
Inhabitants with cognitive / learning impairments	0.679 % of the total population ⁴
Inhabitants who are functional illiterates	no data available
Share of disabled people living in urban areas	data not specific ⁵
Share of disabled people at working age	43.8 % ⁶
Share of disabled people at working age who are actually working	328 ⁷

Table 2: Statistical data for Malta

² 2005 data, Source: National Statistics Office - Malta

³ Source: Population & Social Statistics Unit; This is calculated from the register at the National Commission for Persons with Disabilities for 2005

⁴ 2005 data, Source: Population & Social Statistics Unit

⁵ Data is generally assumed to be 100% urban as few live in 'remote' areas.

⁶ 2005 data, Source: Population & Social Statistics Unit; this is calculated for the persons with disability between the ages of 15-59.

⁷ Source: Population & Social Statistics Unit; this is calculated from the Unemployment register kept by the Employment and Training Corporation in 2005. If compared to the Commission's register this would be 96.4% of persons registered with a disability who is not working.

2.1.3 Legal and regulatory framework conditions in Malta

An anti-discrimination law exists in Malta. It is a national law with no other regional laws. Public Transport access is regulated under the Equal Opportunities (Persons with Disability) Act of 2000. The “National Commission for Persons with Disabilities” also published the guidelines "Access for all" (which is available online at www.knpd.org under Publications). This is a national document with reference to access of infrastructure. Transport is included but is generic in its reference.

The accessibility of public transport is not currently a mainstream topic on the political agenda in Malta. The consultation of the “National Commission for Persons with Disabilities” on public transport access is low, and usually the “National Commission for Persons with Disabilities” is not contacted before the decision is made.

No monitoring is carried out on the accessibility of public transport.

There are no special tariffs for people with disabilities in Malta.

Anti-discrimination law

There is a national anti-discrimination law in Malta: The Equal Opportunities (Persons with Disability) Act 2000. This is national law with no other regional laws. This was enacted in 2000. The law defines discrimination in the various circumstances and the sectors of employment, education, access, provision of goods, facilities or services, accommodation and exemptions. The Act also defines reasonableness in terms of modification of rules, policies and practices, the removal of any barriers (architectural, communication or transport) and in the provision of auxiliary aids or services. The Act establishes and defines the functions of the National Commission for Persons with Disability and defines the procedures for the handling of complaints, investigations and enforcement of the Act. Through this Act, the Commission may initiate investigations on acts of discrimination and take the necessary steps to assist the claimant. It may proceed to take legal action by referring the matter to the First Hall of the Civil Court.

Regulations regarding the accessibility of public transport

Public Transport access is regulated under the Equal Opportunities (Persons with Disability) Act of 2000. The law is about disability discrimination in terms of employment, education, access, provision of good, facilities or services, accommodation and exemptions. It also describes the functions of the National Commission for Persons with Disabilities and details the complaints, investigations and enforcement (under the responsibility of the Commission). Complaints are received by the Commission and then passed on to the Courts. In the case of Malta, most public transport services (buses) are not accessible due to either the vehicle or the infrastructure. However no actions have been taken by individuals for the inaccessibility of public transport.

There are specifications for the procurement of new buses which include the provision for motor impaired access. All new buses bought are to be low floor and have folding seats in the area reserved for wheelchairs. Special considerations include adequate access for persons with wheelchairs (1996). Low floor buses purchased after 2000 are to be fitted with at least one type of boarding aid (manually or automatically operated) such as a ramp or a lift (2000).

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

On all scheduled public transport bus services accessibility is regulated by the Malta Transport Authority. However a mainstream national agenda governing the provision of accessible public transport does not exist. Priority of the political agenda has been aided with the current Prime Minister being the former president of the Commission. However, the overall consultation on public transport access is low and the Commission is only contacted following the decision.

Monitoring of the accessibility of public transport

No monitoring is carried out on the accessibility of public transport.

Special fares and public transport tariffs for people with disabilities

There are no special tariffs for people with disabilities.

2.1.4 Organisational framework conditions

The Malta Transport Authority (ADT) is responsible for public transport in Malta. In Malta there is no rail-based public transport (trains, trams, undergrounds), but only public bus transport operated by private companies.

There is cooperation between the governmental authorities and disability organisations, but only in the form of consultation with the National Commission for Persons with Disabilities. The Public Transport Association works closely with the Government on the bus replacement policy as the public transport operators are forced by law to provide accessible features.

Currently few people with disabilities use public transport as buses are old with poor accessibility; Therefore it is mainly people with disabilities, who are not old enough to acquire a car driving licence, who use public transport.

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

- **Ministry for the Family and Social Solidarity and the National Commission for Persons with Disability (KNPD)**

There is no specific section dealing with social inclusion. The contact details of the Ministry are:

Palazzo Ferreria, 310 Republic Street, Valletta CMR 02, MALTA

Telephone: (+356) 2590 3100, Call Centre (SPIC): (+356) 159, Fax: (+356) 2590 3121

E-mail: info.mfss@gov.mt

Governmental authorities responsible for public transport

- **Malta Transport Authority (ADT)**

Mr. Vincent Micallef Pule, Director Public Transport, Malta Transport Authority, Sa Maison Road, Floriana

Tel: 00356 25608179, email: vincent.micallef-pule@maltatransport.com

Main transport operators and Public Transport associations

- **Public Transport Association - operators of the national scheduled bus services in Malta.**
Mr Victor Spiteri, President, email: atp@atp.com.mt; tel: 00356 21250007
- **Minibuses Cooperative - operators of minibuses (private use).**
Mr. Charles Mercieca, President, tel: 00356 21487941; email: cmercieca@maltacoop.com
- **Koptaco (Coaches Cooperative) - operators of unscheduled coach services (private use).**
Mr. Anton Muscat, President, Tel: 00356 21338667 (mail address: Koptaco Coaches, Sliema Road, Gzira, Malta)
- **White Taxi Amalgamated - operators of the white taxis**
Mr Alfred Pace, Chief Executive, tel: 00356 23696183 (mail address: 'Carriage 67', Tarxien Road, Luqa, Malta)
- **Gozo Bus Owners Association - operators of the scheduled bus services and unscheduled bus/coach services in Gozo.**
Mr. Joseph Grima, President, tel: 00356 21562688 (mail address: 2, il-Mall, George Borg Olivier Street, Victoria Gozo, Malta)

Main disability organisations

- **National Commission for Persons with Disability (KNPD)**
Mr. Joseph Camilleri, President. Tel: 21487789 email jmcamilleri@knpd.org

Organisational framework conditions for public transport in Malta

Malta does not have any trains, trams or underground services. The network is fairly distributed among its local councils with all town/village centres having a direct link to the main terminus and capital city, Valletta. Currently there are efforts to reduce the pressures on Valletta bus terminus and create other interchanges outside the urban agglomeration. However, this is still in its early stages. The buses in Malta operate the scheduled bus service whilst the Gozo operators carry out both private and public transport services.

Cooperation among stakeholders

Cooperation between the governmental authorities and disability organisations

According to the interview-partner from the Malta Transport Authority there is cooperation in the form of consultation with the National Commission for Persons with Disabilities. No monitoring collaboration is done.

According to the interview-partner from National Commission Persons with Disability (KNPD) there is no cooperation.

Cooperation between the transport operators and disability organisations

According to the interview-partner from the Public Transport Association there is very little cooperation between organisations in defining the accessibility of public transport.

According to the interview-partner from the National Commission Persons with Disability (KNPD) there is no cooperation.

Cooperation between the transport operators and governmental authorities

According to the interview-partner from the Malta Transport Authority the Operators (Public Transport Association) they work closely with Government on the bus replacement policy. However they are obliged to tackle accessibility issues as stipulated by the law (in view of the Equal Opportunities (Persons with Disability) Act).

According to the interview-partner from the Public Transport Association there is no cooperation.

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

According to the interview-partner from the Malta Transport Authority there is an order of priority (i) financial constraints; (ii) EU state aid ruling which prohibits Governments assisting operators to replace old vehicles with new, more accessible vehicles; (iii) physical environment, where in Malta old historical town/village centres do not allow for the provision of fully accessible stops in narrow streets; (iv) high demands for parking where footpaths and other road side infrastructure had to be rationalised to provide for parking spaces.

According to the interview-partner from the Public Transport Association drivers are encouraged to give priority to disabled. The main barriers to improving accessibility are the cost of infrastructure (including the purchase of more low floor buses and changes to bus stops and termini). At present the low floor buses have a manual ramp and most stops do not cater for disabled access. Cooperation with other stakeholders is minimal although the Operators are interested to learn of other countries experiences.

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

According to the interview-partner from the Malta Transport Authority there is currently ad hoc provision of accessible public transport. Only a percentage (28%) of buses are low floor and few stops guarantee independent access. This gives rise to a negative attitude of public transport services by people with disability. The Authority consults with the National Commission for Persons with Disabilities on a regular basis in the provision of transport services, e.g. in the newly implemented Park and Ride service in Floriana where a disabled transport service will be provided from the Park and Ride site to the City on a regular basis.

Public Transport Operators are not averse to introducing measures to improve accessibility. This however depends on whether the Government will fund the necessary improvements. Currently the Operators are financially dependent on the Government in order to replace the buses.

According to the interview-partner from National Commission Persons with Disability (KNPD) currently the only disabled people who use public transport are a few young people below driving age. They are mobility impaired whilst the blind/deaf are generally accompanied. Regular pressure is made to make public transport more accessible, particularly since disabled people would use public transport more if it were accessible. Coordination is required; however this is not always achieved.

In a disability survey carried out in 2003 (available online at www.knpd.org under publications), there is no distinction between the difficulties encountered when travelling by car or by bus (page 6 of part one). In another section however the principle modes of transport are specified with public transport making up only 9.1% of responses (car, adapted car and car belonging to family rate the highest, whilst not travelling is second highest). This information is not split by type of disability (page 15 of part one). 71.1% of respondents to the survey said that public transport is not accessible because steps are too high (13.3%), wheelchair use is not possible (8.6%), poor seating (0.8%), no handrails on buses (16.6%), cannot hear the bell (0.2%), other reason (0.2%) and no reason (60.3%) (Page 15 of part one). In the same survey (page 16 of part one), 15.4% of respondents stated that they received benefits for transport which included customs exemption on car (25.2%), road licence exemption

(16.2%), reserved parking space (46.7%) and blue sticker (11.8%). In another section the responses regarding accessibility were divided into different age groups (page 25 of part two). The highest percentages of persons who state that public transport is not accessible are between the ages of 31-60 (77.4%) with 9.2% between the ages of 17-30.

2.2 Accessibility of Public Transport

Pre-trip information / On-trip information: Public transport information is available in the form of leaflets, the internet and telephone. Information about accessible public transport (i.e. the provision of low floor buses along a particular route) is only available by phone. No information is currently provided at bus stops. Bus schedules are published at main bus shelters and bus stations/termini at a height which can be read by wheelchair users. No other facilities exist for people with motor, visual, hearing and cognitive/learning impairments.

Ticketing: There are no special Tariffs for people with disabilities. Tickets can be purchased from the driver (most common), from counters at bus termini and through ticketing machines (four located in the three main termini).

Stops and stations: The interviewees are not aware of any bus stop which guarantees full independent accessibility for persons with a disability.

Vehicles: 28% of the total buses currently on the scheduled bus network have been replaced to low floor. The Authority is strongly in favour of replacing all buses as the old buses are seen as a hindrance to the full accessibility of the bus service.

Safety, Reliability, and Service: All 142 low floor buses equipped to accommodate wheelchairs have safety belts and emergency buttons. However, since there is no structure by which a low floor bus passes at a certain hour or at a certain stop, the reliability of the accessibility of public transport in Malta is very low. The level of punctuality is also low.

2.2.1 Accessibility of passenger information

According to the interview-partner from the Malta Transport Authority there is generally little information available.

According to the interview-partner from the National Commission Persons with Disability (KNPD) there is little information about accessible public transport and it is not available publicly.

The Public Transport Association feels the levels of information are good. Information is available through the internet, leaflets, information at bus shelters and on information boards at termini.

Pre-trip information

According to the interview-partner from the Malta Transport Authority Public transport information is available in the form of leaflets, the internet and telephone. Information about accessible public transport (i.e. the provision of low floor buses along a particular route) is only available by phone. Currently the provision of pre-trip information is poor since information about the availability of a low floor bus is available on the day and via telephone to the main bus terminus. There is only information about the availability of a low floor bus along a particular route on the day. The information is not printed. There is no published information on accessible stops and services for people with disabilities. The level of information is therefore poor. Information about tariffs is available in printed media, website and telephone. This level of information is good. There is no information about customer services offered by public transport services. There are no other special transport services offered as part of the regular scheduled public transport (buses). Taxi services and other public transport are private services and can be provided through telephone or company websites.

According to the interview-partner from National Commission Persons with Disability (KNPD) the information about the services is available online however the specific information about 'accessible' buses is not available. Persons with a disability using buses are reported to call in at the Valletta Terminus to enquire at what time a low floor bus will pass via their stop. Overall information is available in print (leaflets), the internet, and phone and by persons calling at the main bus terminus.

According to the interview-partner from the Public Transport Association there is currently no information available on the availability of low floor buses on route. Disabled persons are required to call at the central terminus to enquire at what time a low floor bus will be available. They can also email the Association for this information.

On-trip information

According to the interview-partner from the Malta Transport Authority no information is currently provided at bus stops. Bus schedules are published at main bus shelters and bus stations/termini at a height which can be read by a person in a wheelchair. No other facilities exist for people with motor, visual, hearing and cognitive/learning impairments.

Passenger information is not available on buses, except for printed leaflets which the driver sometimes provides.

According to the interview-partner from National Commission Persons with Disability (KNPD) the information provided is sufficient since bus timetables are available in print. However bus station signs are too high. Some bus stops have timetables in print, however these may be too high for persons with motor impairments to read.

According to the interview-partner from the Public Transport Association there is no information currently available. The person with a disability has to be assisted by the driver.

2.2.2 Accessibility issues in Ticketing

According to the interview-partner from the Malta Transport Authority there are no special Tariffs for people with disabilities. Tickets can be purchased from the driver (most common), from counters at bus termini and through ticketing machines (four located in the three main termini). All four ticket vending machines are accessible by people with motor and hearing impairments. No ticket vending machine is accessible for visually impaired persons.

According to the interview-partner from the Public Transport Association there are no special tariffs. Tickets are bought either through a ticketing machine (available in the three main termini), through the counter where a desk is available and on the vehicle from the driver. The most common is via the driver with a small percentage being bought through the vending machines. There are three termini equipped with vending machines, Sliema, Bugibba and Valletta. These ticket vending machines have variable heights and are accessible by persons using a wheelchair. All ticket vending machines are accessible by people with motor and hearing impairments. However no special features are included in the vending machines to cater for persons with hearing impairments. No ticket vending machine is accessible by people with visual impairments.

2.2.3 Accessibility of stops and stations

According to the interview-partner from the Malta Transport Authority there is no information about the share of bus stops designed to guarantee full independent access. No bus stop is equipped with tactile guidance systems, loudspeakers or facilities. Most bus stops have seating facilities

According to the Public Transport Association they are not aware of any bus stop which guarantees full independent accessibility for persons with a disability.

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

According to the interview-partner from the Malta Transport Authority the Strategy follows a White Paper approved by Cabinet in 2004. The White Paper has a specific objective to provide better access for all. The Authority is also in consultation on a number of projects with the National Commission, such as the example of the Park and Ride service outside Valletta where both on-demand and regular wheelchair accessible transport will be provided. The Valletta terminus which is the largest station in Malta is being targeted for upgrading and this will include better access for people with disabilities. The general public are made aware of these developments through regular media reports.

According to the interview-partner from National Commission Persons with Disability (KNPD) there are current plans to improve the main Valletta bus terminus including the accessibility for disabled users. There is limited information publicly available about these planned developments.

According to the interview-partner from the Public Transport Association the bus services schedule is currently being revised to ensure at least one low floor bus on each service. The Valletta central terminus is being re-designed and the new designs should be more accessible to wheelchair users. The improvements are still targeted towards particular areas/aspects of the service. The general public are informed of the new developments through regular reports in the media.

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

According to the interview-partner from the Malta Transport Authority the accessibility is not adequate in most of the regions. The Government is currently developing designs for a new bus terminus in Valletta. This should be more accessible and provide easier access.

According to the interview-partner from National Commission Persons with Disability (KNPD) the accessibility is poor.

According to the interview-partner from the Public Transport Association it is very low due to the inaccessible infrastructure. In the case of vehicles, this is not guaranteed and the physical environment has not been upgraded.

2.2.4 Accessibility of vehicles

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

According to the interview-partner from the Malta Transport Authority the Government is currently developing a bus replacement policy in consultation with the EU Commission. The Government hopes there is a possibility of government co-financing in the replacement of the remaining buses to low floor accessible vehicles. The vehicles will be replaced according to the published specifications of 2000. The general public are informed of these negotiations through media reports.

According to the interview-partner from National Commission Persons with Disability (KNPD) the Government is currently looking to replace more of the old buses with new low floor 'accessible' buses. This would see a net improvement over the whole network. The vehicles are replaced following the publication of specifications in the Government gazette for low floor buses. There is, however very little information to the public about this bus replacement plan, nor the use of such buses for people with disabilities.

The Public Transport Association is currently working with the Government on a bus replacement policy which will see all old buses on the network changing to low floor/accessible buses. Currently the Association is working on improving access to low floor buses by distributing them better throughout the network. It is planned to have at least one low floor bus operating on each route. The bus replacement should abide by the law and provide accessibility for all disabilities. The general public are informed through regular reports on the media.

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

According to the interview-partner from the Malta Transport Authority, 28% of the total buses currently on the scheduled bus network have been replaced to provide low floor facilities. The Authority is strongly in favour of replacing all buses as the old buses are seen as a hindrance to the full accessibility of the bus service.

Currently there are 142 low floor buses on the network. The operations are based on day-in day-out shifts and therefore it can be estimated that 28% of the buses on the network provide barrier free boarding and alighting. The low floor buses are equipped with manual ramps, railings, non-slippery surfaces and high contrast design. They also offer space for wheelchair manoeuvrability inside the bus.

All low floor buses (28% of the bus fleet) allow for barrier free usage by having enough space for manoeuvring and storage of wheelchairs (fold out seats), priority seating, handrails and high contrast design. All equipment is regularly checked by the Authority enforcement officers to ensure functionality. There are two spaces designated for wheelchair users in each of the 142 low floor buses.

According to the interview-partner from National Commission Persons with Disability (KNPD) changes to low floor 'accessible' buses have been too sporadic. There is very little concerted effort, with the Commission receiving regular complaints on the frequency, punctuality and availability of low floor buses.

Currently the 140 low floor buses are not specific to particular routes and offer access through the help of the driver operating a manual ramp. There is no automatic access. In addition the infrastructure (high platforms, steep ramps) cause too many barriers for people with motor impairments for them to perform successful independent travel.

In low floor buses the levels of satisfaction are considered poor or sufficient, however it always depends on the driver's attitude to help the person with motor impairments to access the bus and manoeuvre around.

The Public Transport Association is aware that only 142 buses are low floor and they are currently not designated to particular services. 160 vehicles have luggage boots as well. However, overall the accessibility is still low.

142 buses are low floor (28% of total bus fleet). They operate across the whole network and are equipped with automatic doors, manual ramps, handrails and non-slip surfaces. They are regularly checked through Vehicle Roadworthiness Testing (annual). The barrier to the use of ramps is the different curb stone heights at stops, hindering level boarding. In most cases, drivers have to assist wheelchair users.

The low floor buses have accessible handrails and non-slip flooring to assist visually impaired persons to board and alight.

The low floor buses have accessible handrails and non-slip flooring to assist persons with hearing impairments to board and alight.

Accessible handrails and non-slips flooring are the only equipment available to people with cognitive/learning impairments. Assistance is required by the driver/accompanying person.

2.2.5 Safety, Reliability and Service

In Malta there were no reports of accidents involving people with disabilities in public transport (vehicles and stops/stations) in recent years.

Safety aspects

According to the interview-partner from the Malta Transport Authority all 142 low floor buses equipped to accommodate wheelchairs have safety belts and emergency buttons. All low floor buses are equipped with accessible handrails, non-slip floors and high contrast design to aid passengers with disabilities. All buses are equipped with emergency signs and doors. Bus stations/termini in Malta are not enclosed and relatively small. There are special plans for evacuating people with disabilities in the case of an emergency that require driver assistance.

According to the interview-partner from National Commission Persons with Disability (KNPD) people with disabilities do think that riding by public transport is dangerous. Some of the low floor buses have light flashes to help the deaf. There are currently 140 low floor buses out of a total of 508 buses. There are no closed bus stations in Malta. There is a main bus terminus in Valletta which is open air and information is limited to the bus services. There are special plans for evacuating people with disabilities in the case of an emergency that require driver assistance.

According to the interview-partner from the Public Transport Association there are currently 142 buses that are low floor and are accessible to wheelchair users (28% of the total fleet). These are also equipped with safety belts. The low floor buses have accessible handrails and non-slip floors however they do not have devices such as interphones. All buses are equipped with emergency doors whilst the new buses have breakable glass.

Reliability and Punctuality

According to the interview-partner from the Malta Transport Authority there is a low level of information provided. This is due to the nature of the operation (day-in, day-out) and the rostering duties which mean that no specific low floor buses are assigned to a particular route at particular times. This is considered moderate due to the short distances travelled by buses. No specific information is available on delays.

According to the interview-partner from National Commission Persons with Disability (KNPD) there is low information. Since there are not many low floor buses and the reliability of having a low floor bus running the service (which is never guaranteed) is very low. There is no structure by which a low floor bus passes at a certain hour or at a certain stop. The level of punctuality is also low.

According to the interview-partner from the Public Transport Association there is a low level of information provided. Information is accessible although reliability is still low due to the availability of low floor buses on routes. Manual ramps are operational on the low floor buses and the drivers are trained to deal with disabled passengers. Currently the schedules do not cater for on-stop information therefore delays en route are not monitored. Punctuality is calculated at the departure point.

Customer Service

According to the interview-partner from the Malta Transport Authority most of the bus termini have information desks and staff attending customer needs. Ticketing machines are found in three main sites, Valletta, Sliema and Bugibba. No luggage storage facilities are available in bus termini in Malta due to the nature of travel in Malta. No bus station/terminus offer luggage storage facilities. There is informal assistance at stations by the Operator's staff, the Authority enforcement and by the drivers themselves. Malta's termini are too small to warrant the need for motorised transport for people and luggage. The services are provided free of charge and there is no need to pre-book.

According to the interview-partner from National Commission Persons with Disability (KNPD) there is limited accessibility of customer services available generally on public transport and the poor usage of buses by persons with a disability means that the KNPD cannot establish perception levels. There is no luggage storage facilities in bus termini in Malta. Assistance varies, however the majority of drivers at the various bus termini offer assistance with boarding and alighting vehicles. There are no large stations to warrant use of motorised transport for people and their luggage. The assistance is offered for free and does not require pre-booking.

According to the interview-partner from the Public Transport Association there are three information desks and ticket vending machines in Malta. One in Sliema, Bugibba and Valletta. The ticketing machines are not accessible for the visually impaired. However assistance is provided on-board by drivers and by public transport personnel at termini. There are only three termini (not bus stations) that provide information desks. These are the main termini on the island of Malta. These are manned daily with officers from the Association and the Authority. They offer, through these officers, assistance on public transport information. Some however do not guarantee barrier free usage. Public transport operators offer assistance at termini. This is on demand personal guidance to the vehicle, help with boarding and alighting and offer information. This service is provided for free and there is no need to pre-book. The assistance is provided on site.

Staff Training

According to the interview-partner from the Malta Transport Authority all drivers of public transport vehicles are required to follow a customer care course organised by the Authority to obtain permission to drive such vehicles. Training is incorporated in the Customer Care courses offered by the Authority.

According to the interview-partner from National Commission Persons with Disability (KNPD) there are low levels of training to assist people with disabilities.

According to the interview-partner from the Public Transport Association training is not provided for specific disabilities. The Operator Licence does not require/include training in assisting disabled passengers.

2.3 Alternatives to public transport

According to the interview-partner from the Malta Transport Authority there is the disabled transport service provided by the National Commission for Persons with Disabilities. The Park and Ride service outside Valletta provides accessible shuttle transport services from the car park to the city centre. There are also the dial-a-ride services in the private sectors (taxi, minibus services).

According to the interview-partner from National Commission Persons with Disability (KNPD) there is only one type of alternative public transport offered to persons with disability. This is a door-to-door service subsidized by the Government. It is provided to disabled persons in education and employment. This obviously is discriminate to other users and for specific uses, such as entertainment and leisure. This is a regular daily service and can be booked.