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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 Sweden (SE)

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## PTaccess – Public Transport Systems' Accessibility for people with disabilities in Europe

One specific area, for which there is still a lack of EU level data, is the accessibility of public transport for people with disabilities and its impact on their employment and social integration prospects.

The European project 'PTaccess' offers the chance to fill this gap in knowledge and obtain information on the current state of accessibility of urban and rural public transport systems in 25 EU member states. For each member state PTaccess analyses the state of accessibility of public transport from the point of view of national disabled organisations, national transport operators, and governmental authorities. For regions where public transport is not accessible PTaccess identifies and analyses applied alternative transport solutions (WP1).

PTaccess also identifies and analyses good practices and innovation in making public transport accessible, and enhances the scientific base of policy by providing a sound assessment of the costs and benefits of making public transport accessible (WP2).

Furthermore PTaccess deepens the understanding of the transport-related contexts of social exclusion of disabled people, and draws conclusions about the effects that accessible public transport has on the employment and social inclusion prospects for disabled people. (WP3).

The PTaccess-project runs from the 1st of February 2007 until the 31st of January 2009.

More information about PTaccess can be found on the project's website: [www.ptaccess.eu](http://www.ptaccess.eu)

The PTaccess consortium:

- FGM AMOR (Austria)
- Independent Living Institute ILI (Sweden)
- TU Dresden, Lehrstuhl für Verkehrsökologie (Germany)
- JMP Consultants Limited (United Kingdom)

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

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## 1 Introduction

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

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

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

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

### How this report has been made

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In order to obtain actual information on the current state of accessibility of urban and rural public transport systems in Europe, the PTaccess team has directly contacted and interviewed national experts within 25<sup>1</sup> EU member states. In each of these 25 member states a representative of a national disabled organisation, a representative of national transport operators, and a representative of a governmental authority have been interviewed and asked to provide their point of view regarding the accessibility of public transport in their country. In order to obtain comparable interview results in each of these countries, interview guidelines and questionnaires have been prepared by the PTaccess consortium. The interviews (at least three per country) have been conducted personally by “national contact persons” in their national language.

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

### What can be expected from this report

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This report gives an overview of the state of the accessibility of public transport in Sweden (SE). However, this report does not provide only “official” data and information, since in most countries such data and information does not exist. Instead the report provides spotlights on the current situation regarding the accessibility of public transport from the subjective, but informed, point of view of people with disabilities, transport operators and

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

governmental authorities. Since each interview-partner brought in her/his subjective viewpoint, it must not be expected to get an objective overview of the situation in the country. However, by asking different experts (representing three important stakeholder groups) about their point of view, and by taking into account the viewpoints of all these concerned stakeholder-groups the authors of this report hope to be able to draw a picture of the situation regarding the accessibility of public transport for people with disabilities in Sweden (SE) that is not too biased.

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

### How to use this report

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People, who are interested to get **more (detailed) information on the accessibility of public transport in Sweden (SE)**, 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

<b>Interviewer:</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Organisation</b>
PTaccess National Contact Person	Adolf Ratzka	Independent Living Institut
<b>Interview partners:</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Organisation</b>
Representatives of Transport Operators	Lasse Annerberg	Swedish Public Transport Association, SLTF (Svenska Lokaltrafikföreningen)
Representatives of People with Disabilities	Stefan Åkerberg	HSD (the Swedish umbrella organisation which is represented in European disability Forum)
Representative of Governmental Authority	Ken Gammalgård	HANDISAM national authority for coordination of national disability policy

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

## 2.1.2 Statistical Data from Sweden

Statistical Data for Sweden	
Number of inhabitants	9,000,000 <sup>2</sup>
Inhabitants with disabilities	20% of the total population <sup>3</sup>
Inhabitants with motor impairments	460,000 of the population between 16-84 years <sup>4</sup>
Inhabitants with visual impairments	115,000 of the population between 16-84 years <sup>5</sup>
Inhabitants with hearing impairments	140,000 in population between 16-84 <sup>6</sup>
Inhabitants with cognitive / learning impairments	No data available
Inhabitants who are functional illiterates	No data available
Share of disabled people living in urban areas	No data available
Share of disabled people at working age	No data available
Share of disabled people at working age who are actually working	57% of people with "reduced ability to work due to a disability" which may not be the same group as the one above <sup>7</sup>

Table 2: Statistical data for Sweden

## 2.1.3 Legal and regulatory framework conditions in Sweden

There is an anti-discrimination law existing in Sweden, which covers the areas employment, higher education and commerce.

Accessibility of public transport is not a mainstream topic on the political agenda. He states that the general public are not aware of a lack of accessibility. The representative from the governmental authority states that accessibility of public transport is a proclaimed goal but the legislative record is poor.

### Anti-discrimination law

<sup>2</sup> Source: Statistiska Centralbyrå SCB ULF, periodic census with items on disability

<sup>3</sup> Source: Central Statistical Office in Poland. National Census 2002. There are no more recent data available as this figure is collected only within the national census.

<sup>4</sup> Statistiska Centralbyrå SCB ULF

<sup>5</sup> Statistiska Centralbyrå SCB 1997

<sup>6</sup> Statistiska Centralbyrå SCB 1997

<sup>7</sup> The working age population has 77% labour market participation rate. Source for these figures: SCB, Funktionshindrades situation på arbetsmarknaden - 4: de kvartalet 2002. Statistiska centralbyrån 2003.

In Sweden an anti-discrimination law does exist which covers the areas employment, higher education and commerce. In the area employment the law was enacted 1999 and in the area of higher education 2001. The act Prohibiting Discrimination came into force in 2003, extending protection against discrimination from working life and higher education to certain other areas, in line with the framework Directive. Thus the prohibition of discrimination related to ethnic origin, religion or other belief, sexual orientation or disability now applies to areas such as: labour market programmes; starting or running a business; occupational activity; membership of, participation in and benefits from organisations of workers or employers or professional organisations; and goods, services and housing.

#### Regulations regarding the accessibility of public transport

The interview-partner representing the governmental authority states that in 1979 the Law on Disability Access and Public Transport (Lag (1979:558) om handikappanpassad kollektivtrafik) was passed, and this is still part of the agenda. The law prescribed all public transport in the country to be accessible by 1990 - without issuing an operational definition of accessibility. When the regulations including the definition came out several years later, they were so watered down that 2-3 steps at the entrance of a train passed as accessible. The regulations give many and generous exceptions to exemption from the requirement of accessibility on grounds of economics and the level of technology.

Other legislation consists of the incorporation of EU directives such as the Buses & Coaches Directive (which was ignored until the last possible moment), and upcoming TCI regulations for railways which has not had an impact yet on Sweden. There is also an EU directive for boat traffic issued in 2005. Regarding railway stations Banverket (state agency in charge of rail transport) issued binding standards which also cover how information is to be handled.

According to the interviewed person representing disability organisations most current improvements are an outgrowth of EU measures (like the EU buses and coaches directive).

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

According to HSO, accessibility of public transport is not a mainstream topic on the political agenda. He states that the public are not aware of a lack of accessibility and assumes that the government has taken care of everything and does not understand why this is a problem for a large number of people; inaccessibility is considered as a problem for the individual and not as society's responsibility. The Swedish disability movement varies in its interest in this issue. The result is uneven access throughout the country.

The new state agency HANDISAM has been charged with the task of developing a set of indicators that would facilitate monitoring public procurement results in this sector. Accessibility features are not priority criteria in the procurement process, "they are to be used if possible". The government's action plan issued in 2000 included the goal of completely accessible transport systems throughout the country by the year 2010 (which the public hailed and which experts laughed at because 10 years would have never been enough). Last June Banverket (state agency in charge of rail transport) reformulated the goal. Now "prioritized transport nets" are to be made accessible for persons with physical disabilities (people with other disabilities have to wait). "Prioritized nets" refer to important central transport nodes.

The representative from the governmental authority states that accessibility of public transport is a proclaimed goal but the legislative record is poor.

#### Monitoring of the accessibility of public transport

According to the interview-partner from the governmental authority the national state authority HANDISAM requires 14 state agencies responsible for their respective sector (housing, transport, education etc) to compile indicators which are to measure disabled peoples' participation in a given sector. This effort was discontinued after a few years for methodological difficulties as the sample of interviewees was not randomized and, therefore, the results not representative for the population of disabled people.

The interview-partner representing disabled people states that on paper it is the respective sector agency's responsibility but no results are spread. Thus, it is unclear whether and in what form monitoring occurs.

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

According to the interview-partner from HSO as well as to the interviewed public transport association there are no special tariffs for people with disabilities. The rebates that exist are for retired (including early retired) people.

### 2.1.4 Organisational framework conditions

According to the interviewees there is cooperation between the various stakeholders concerning the definition and improvement of accessibility of public transport systems. The degree of cooperation varies, but in general all the stakeholders are happy with the situation.

According to the interviewed disability organisation, people with disabilities rather try to get a car and drive themselves than use public transport. He also states, that people with disabilities prefer technical assistance to human assistance, which may be part of the Swedish culture - not to have to "bother other people". In general, many disability organisations would fight harder to keep the special transport services than for accessible public transport.

Concerning the attitudes of public transport operators regarding accessible public transport it is believed the operators only move towards accessibility if they have to.

However, it is perceived accessible public transport definitely has an impact on disabled peoples' freedom of movement, social skills and social contacts.

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

- **Office of the Disability Ombudsman, HO at central state level.** Assists individuals to take their claims to court in legal areas where anti-discrimination legislation exists: employment, at the university, in commerce. Inaccessibility not yet classified as discrimination.
- **Local Governments.** National Board of Health and Welfare supervises and monitors, Peter Brusén in charge of disability unit, 'peter.brusen@socialstyrelsen.se, '075-247 30 00

#### Governmental authorities responsible for public transport

- **Swedish Road Association** The SRA has been commissioned by the Swedish Government with the overall sectoral responsibility for the road transport system. This involves issues relating to environmental impact, road safety, accessibility, transport quality, regional development and gender equality. Its responsibility also includes intelligent transport systems, public transport, adaptations for

disabled persons, commercial traffic, applied research and development and demonstration activities in the road transport system. Contact Einar Tufvesson, [einar.tufvesson@vv.se](mailto:einar.tufvesson@vv.se).

- **Banverket** Banverket has overall responsibility for the rail transport system in Sweden. This sectoral responsibility covers not only conventional railways but also underground railways and lightrail systems. Banverket leads and follows developments in the rail sector and assists the Government and Parliament on issues that concern the entire rail transport system. Within the framework of its sectoral responsibility, Banverket shall be coordinating, supportive and driving in relation to the other parties concerned. contact Karin Malmqvist +46 243 44 66 87

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## Main transport operators and Public Transport associations

- **Swedish Public Transport Association (SLTF)** Lasse Annerberg [www.slutf.se](http://www.slutf.se) +46 8 7880865

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## Main disability organisations

- **The Swedish Disability Federation** consisting of 43 member organizations with a total of 500 000 members altogether. [www.hso.se](http://www.hso.se) Contact: Stefan Eklund Åkerberg tel: 08-546 40 422 [stefan.akerberg@hso.se](mailto:stefan.akerberg@hso.se).

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## Cooperation among stakeholders

### Cooperation between the governmental authorities and disability organisations

The interviewed person representing people with disabilities states that all sector authorities have formal consultation meetings with organisations of disabled people (not the authority responsible for public transport by sea). He assesses the level of cooperation as moderate; however the cooperation with Banverket (rail transport) is very good.

### Cooperation between the transport operators and disability organisations

According to the interviewed public transport operator the level of cooperation between public transport operators and disability organisations is high: each regional transport operator has its consultation body which includes representatives from various disability associations.

### Cooperation between the transport operators and governmental authorities

According to the interview-partner representing the public transport operators the level of cooperation between transport operators and governmental authorities in defining and developing better accessibility of public transport is high.

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

According to the representative of governmental authorities the main barriers that hinder faster improvement of the accessibility of public transport are that improvements are seen only from the angle of additional costs (which in his point of view is often exaggerated and always one-sided).

The interviewed-partner of the Swedish Public Transport Association states that the regional transport authorities support the government's aim of having accessible public transport by 2010. They also have an economic incentive, since accessible public transport will reduce costs for special door-to-door transport services which

they, by law, are also responsible for. Barriers are not only lack of accessible vehicles but also knowledge and attitude at the driver level. Representatives of disabled people's organisations (DPO) are part of the consulting process. Interest in examples of good practice is limited.

According to the interviewed disability organisation people with disabilities would prefer to get a car and drive themselves than using public transport. Those people with disabilities who are not able to drive a car use special and segregated transport services. He also states, that people with disabilities prefer technical assistance to human assistance, which may be part of the Swedish culture - *not to have to "bother other people"*.

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

According to Handisam the level of consciousness, the interest and the technical understanding of people with disabilities regarding public transport vary greatly. In general, many disability organisations would fight harder to keep special transport services than for accessible public transport.

Concerning the attitudes of public transport operators in relation to accessible public transport he states that the operators typically only move towards accessibility if they have to. Transport authorities have not learned/wanted to use the procurement toll effectively. Only in recent years, when one accounting unit has been made responsible for both public transport and special transport economical consideration has there been an incentive for accessible transport.

The representative of governmental authorities states that accessible public transport definitely has an impact on disabled peoples' freedom of movement, social skills, social contacts and on the public's perception of people with a disability.

According to the interview-partner representing people with disabilities accessible public transport would be a move towards more equal opportunities for people with disabilities.

## 2.2 Accessibility of Public Transport

**Pre-trip information:** There is pre-trip information available via telephone and internet, however pre-trip information is in need of improvement.

**On-trip information:** There are announcements of the next stops in the various public transport vehicles. There is very little information about the accessibility of on-trip information.

**Ticketing:** There are no special tariffs for people with disabilities. The rebates that exist are only for retired people.

**Stops and stations:** There is very little information about the accessibility of stops and stations. In general the stops and stations in the city centres are more accessible than stops at the periphery or in rural areas.

**Vehicles:** The strategy is that all public transport should be barrierfree by 2010. A lot of buses and trams are already low-floor vehicles and also do provide ramps. However, some drivers do not use the kneeling function of their vehicle, or even refuse disabled people to enter the vehicle, as they fear a personal responsibility in the case of an accident.

**Safety, Reliability, and Service:** Accidents have occurred involving people with disabilities – especially with people with visual impairments and wheelchair users. In regional buses safety belts are mandatory and there are in most vehicles there are designated spaces for wheelchair users and seats for people with reduced mobility. The Swedish Railway offers services for people with disabilities, but requires a 24 hour notice period.. Nearly half of the country's bus drivers have special training certificates which include training with respect to needs of people with disabilities.

### 2.2.1 Accessibility of passenger information

According to the interviewed person representing public transport operators the aim for the future is to have all relevant information on the web. However, at the moment there is very little information on the internet; information is given by phone, but this information often is not updated fast enough.

#### Pre-trip information

According to the interviewed public transport operator pre-trip information on timetables, tariffs and tickets is only given by telephone. Some information is given on the internet, but the telephone is more reliable. There is no real trip planning application yet available, but it is under construction. In the Gothenburg region bus schedules show accessible stops and vehicles, however this information is not regularly updated.

#### On-trip information

There is no information about the average share of stops and stations that provide accessible passenger information.

The interview partner from the Swedish Public Transport Association states that about half of the buses provide automatic announcements of the next bus stop. Furthermore, all trams but only a third of trains are equipped with loudspeakers announcing the next stop (according to the FRIDA database<sup>8</sup>).

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### 2.2.2 Accessibility issues in Ticketing

According to the interviewed person representing people with disabilities and the interviewed person representing public transport operators there are no special tariffs for people with disabilities. The rebates that exist are only for retired people (including early retirement).

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### 2.2.3 Accessibility of stops and stations

The interview-partner from the National Public Transport Association states that there is no information about the number of accessible stops and stations. In general the strategy regarding the improvement in accessibility of stops and stations is to start with the development of the stops and stations in the city centres.

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### 2.2.4 Accessibility of vehicles

According to the interviewed person from the Swedish Public Transport Association the strategy is to ensure all public transport is “accessible” by 2010.

He states that in the areas of Gothenburg and Malmö, the access to trams and buses has been denied to wheelchair users by the drivers. This was because of the drivers’ misunderstanding of apprehension about their personal responsibility in the event of an accident.

In his opinion, although there are low-floor buses with kneeling function, the kneeling function of the buses is rarely used as drivers do not want to get too close to the curb in order not to damage the tyres. He states that the bus drivers would need more training.

The FRIDA database (<http://www.frida.port.se/hemsidan/default.cfm>) gives the following numbers for equipment and features of vehicles improving their accessibility:

Buses: 52% low-floor, 6.3% do have lifts, 43% of buses do provide ramps. In 73% of buses there is a designated space for wheelchair users; in 90% there are designated spaces for people with reduced mobility.

Trams: 46% low floor; lift in 0.8%; 11% if trams are equipped with rams, 50% do provide designated spaces for wheelchairs and 100% designated spaces for people with reduced mobility.

Trains: 70% of trains are equipped with ramps, 81% of the trains do provide designated wheelchair spaces, 95% do provide designated spaces for people with reduced mobility.

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<sup>8</sup> <http://www.frida.port.se/hemsidan/default.cfm>

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## 2.2.5 Safety, Reliability and Service

### Safety aspects

The interview-partner representing public transport operators states that accidents involving people with disabilities in underground stations have occurred: in the last 20 years about 15 people with visual impairments had fallen down on to the rails and got injured, at least one died. There were also accidents involving wheelchair users whose front wheels had dropped in the gap between the underground vehicle and the platform. They got caught in the closing door and were hauled along by the moving subway.

According to the interviewed representative of public transport operators safety belts are mandatory in regional buses (FRIDA database<sup>9</sup>). He states that in emergency cases there is “only pretty poor information” accessible for people with disabilities.

### Reliability and Punctuality

The interview-partner from the Swedish Public Transport Association states that the kneeling function of low-floor buses is rarely used by the drivers, as they do not want to damage the tyres. In winter it is difficult to keep the bus stops free from snow and ice. Many drivers believe that they are personally responsible for the safety of disabled passengers. It happened that drivers refused the entry to the bus for wheelchair users, as they feared that they would be personally responsible if an accident happened. However, drivers are supposed (by the rules of the public transport companies) to assist passengers with disabilities.

### Customer Service

According to the interviewed representative of the Swedish Public Transport Association the customer service is rather poor and only sporadically available. The national railway (SJ) offers services for people with disabilities but requires a 24 hour notice period.

### Staff Training

The interviewed person representing public transport operators states that 44% of the country’s bus drivers are certified. This certificate includes training with respect to special needs of people with disabilities and the interaction with disabled people.

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<sup>9</sup> FRIDA database <http://www.frida.port.se/hemsidan/default.cfm>

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

According to the representative of governmental authorities there are special on demand services (paratransit services) for people with disabilities. Local governments have to provide them (by law).

The interview-partner representing people with disabilities states that there are special transport services for people with disabilities. Furthermore the adaptations of private cars (for those who can drive and can afford to have a car) are fully paid by the state government.