

Introduction to workshop B :  
Practicalities at start and end of a journey,  
including facilities for PRMs

Nine suggestions to facilitate a train journey throughout Europe  
for persons with reduced mobility

Persons with a handicap, and especially with reduced mobility, that want to make a train journey throughout Europe, meet a lot of difficulties before getting sure of assistance in all the railway stations of his journey.

Every rail company has its own rules that the passengers with a handicap have to follow to get the necessary services of the personnel.

Whoever infringes these rules may see himself abandoned, even when the station in question was well informed about the coming of the crippled passenger.

But travellers that respect the rules, may expect a lot of helpful behaviour of the railway staff, even services that were not foreseen.

**Nine suggestions** are given below to improve the reception and the assistance of handicapped passengers, not only in railway stations but also on board of the trains driving through Europe.

**1) Informing the on-the-route stations about the journey of a crippled passenger**

In the European Union and in the era of unlimited communication, it must be possible, once a journey has been determined, to inform the transfer stations and the arrival station of the presence of a passenger with limited mobility. This gives the station personnel the possibilities to act so that the person with reduced mobility loses as few time as possible. In my opinion the handicapped person should not announce his arrival more than 24 hours on beforehand.

**2) A unique phone number but a decentralised assistance**

If necessary to announce one's arrival in advance, this must be able by calling a unique central number, as it's already possible in the Netherlands. All the same this unique phone number has to give connection with the nearest staffed station to the place where the caller is living.

**3) A personal welcome**

In every station, the welcoming staff member has to know the forename and the surname of the traveller. The welcoming person should always take the initiative to present himself, this creates a link of confidence. I think it happens often in England and in the Netherlands.

#### **4) Using the loading bridge for all persons with reduced mobility**

My personal experience learned me that using the loading bridge may be very useful, not only for persons in a wheelchair, but also for persons with a visual handicap and for people with reduced mobility in general.

#### **5) A welcome centre in every railway station**

Every railway station has to be equipped with premises to welcome passengers with a handicap. The welcome centre should be easily recognisable, with two pictograms: 1 white wheelchair and 1 white cane on a black or dark blue background. These pictures are preferably presented in relief.

#### **6) A welcome centre that is easy to find**

This welcome centre needs a standard name and it should be situated nearby the entrance of the railway station. Railway stations with several entrances need as many welcome centres as there are entrances. In the second or third premises a bell is necessary, this will permit the crippled passenger to ring for assistance. And this way avoids the passenger to stray through the station building before finding the welcome centre with the necessary assistance to lead him to his train.

#### **7) An emergency telephone in every unmanned train stop**

In an unmanned train stop an emergency telephone on the platform may provide connection with the main railway station and with the train personnel. When a handicapped passenger arrives on the platform, he may push the button of his direction or of his destination. The personnel in the station of departure and in the train itself will get connected with the passenger on the platform of the unmanned train stop. When the train stops, the already informed train guard will assist the passenger to his seat.

For a better welcoming of wheelchair passengers, reinforcement of the train personnel is recommended.

#### **8) Vocal announcement of all the train stops**

All train stops must be announced in the train by voice. The train guard has to contact the blind passenger personally. If necessary he remains close to him so he may assist this passenger.

#### **9) Range of the assistance**

Clear agreements are needed about the range within assistance is given by the railway staff. Is the assistance limited to the railway station area or does it reach to the whole station square ?

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