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The new planning regulation on accessibility **By Fien Vanden Abeele**

The presentation consists of a survey of association Enter, a brief summary of the concept and importance of accessibility and it finally explains the new regulation.

Vzw Enter, a Flemish expertise centre for accessibility, informs, raise awareness, supports, collaborates, inspires, ... They seek for accessibility for everyone in all public spaces. They also want to create opportunities to improve living and seek an integrated approach to accessibility. They offered technical support to the government in the development of the new Flemish urban accessibility regulation.

What is accessibility?

Accessibility is more than centimetres only. It's not only physical accessibility. Accessibility is the keyword about operating within society: use of good communication, clear information, customer service, logical building structures, services, good signage, usable size, adequate utilization ... This concept applies to all of us, not only to persons with disabilities. If you look around, there are very few perfect people (average shoe size and height, without glasses or lenses ...). The diversity in the population is no problem as long as we look at it as added value. These differences between people lead to solutions. The bases of eligibility are: - accessibility - accessible - usability. This applies both to public buildings, living spaces and public spaces such as squares... 10% of the population has a disability, and accessibility to them is a prerequisite to participate in social life. But everyone benefits from accessibility. Accessibility is no longer just a matter of goodwill, but has become a basic right. Everyone has the right to make use of services, to enter buildings, to use transport.

Accessibility and Universal Design.

Universal design is a design strategy where access is guaranteed. Accessibility is the objective, universal design the means. Universal design is based on seven basic principles:

- Useful for everyone
- Flexible in use
- Simple and intuitive
- Understandable information
- Margin of error
- Limited effort
- Effort and appropriate utilization



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It's more efficient and cheaper to thialso was on hand to think about your design and accessibility principles apply more efficient and cheaper than later to make the necessary adjustments so as to meet the basic rules.

Why accessibility?

Requirements for a social evolution.

Users are becoming more empowered and emancipated. There are more complaints and there is a growing demand for solutions. This should be taken into account. Not only are the users aiming this. The transition to a more inclusive approach, where social exclusion is challenged, raises new questions and needs for accessibility.

Respond to new trends.

The demographic evolution teaches us that the population will become older, so there will be more problems of accessibility. Design for all will be the solution to cope with this demographic change.

Tighter regulation and enforcement.

There is already a need to complete the basic: think of intensives, labelling ... –

Economic profit.

When your plans and designs are based on future needs, you avoid retrofitting witch costs more.

Flemish Planning Regulation

The regulation is fully accessible on www.toegankelijkgebouw.be.

On the power point presentation you will find the relevant statistics and graphics.

The new regulation came about through collaboration between Equal Opportunities in Flanders and Spatial Planning.

Structure of the legislation

I Definitions (Article 1)

II Scope

- Application of the regulation or not? (Article 2)
- Determine the scope (Art. 3 to 6)
- Determining the additional scope (Art. 7 to 10)

III Standard Provisions:

- General aspects (Art. 11 to 13)
- Walkways (Article 14 to 17)



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- Level Differences (Articles 18 to 21)
- Entrances and doorways (Articles 22 to 26)
- Parking (Art. 27)
- Fixed furnishings (Articles 28 and 29)
- Custom character of structures (Art. 30 to 32)
- Derogation and guidance (art. 33 to 35)
- IV Amending and transitional provisions (Articles 36 to 41)

Scope of the regulation

How to use the new regulation.

Step 1 – Should I test?

The regulation applies to:

- Public buildings
- Works (new construction, reconstruction, renovation or expansion)
- For which planning permission is required.
- * With few exceptions (Article 2.2) but NOT for existing buildings or areas where no work is provided.

Step 2 - What is the scope?

If following are the conditions, the next step in determining the scope from Article 2, 3, 4 or 5 will be:

What type of building do I have?

Purpose or primary function: public function / tourism or accommodation / housing (multi-family, group housing ...)

What is the size of the building?

Public area / range of accommodation / number of residential units

Step 3 - Which parts should I focus on?

The next step is to determine the additional scope (Article 6-10).

Step 4 - What are the accessibility criteria?

The final step is to apply the standard rules (Art 11 -35).

Points of interest:

- Only if a (construction) element occurs and if there is work to be done.
- The standards are part of the conditions for obtaining a permit.
- Sizes are always minimum sizes.
- The most important thing is the difference between shell sizes and finishing.



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What are the standards?

There are seven themes:

- General elements (Art 11-13)
- Walkways (Article 14 -17)
- Level differences (Art 18-21)
- Entrances and doorways (Art 22-26)
- Parking (Art 27)
- Fixed furnishings (art 28-29)
- Adapted character of structures (Art 30-32)
- Deviation and advice (Art 33-35)

Sizes within a general framework:

The sizes are attuned to an average user. The most critical is the wheelchair user.

Example Standards:

- Walkways
 - o ensure free passage (at least 150 cm after finishing).
 - o Run is always flat, and wet in outdoor environment slope areas as possible.
 - o Undisturbed use guarantee.

Level Differences (small thresholds, steps, stairs, ramps and lifts)

- o Outside Area:
 - 2 inch max difference allowed
 - from 2 to 18 cm: minimum slope as provided
 - more than 18 cm: combinations
- o Indoor Environment:
 - of 0-18 cm: minimum slope as provided
 - more than 18 cm: combinations

Parking (adapted and reserved)

- o Minimum size in function of parking type (transverse, down and diagonally).
- o Location of parking.
- o Max allowed slope.
- o Signage.

Deviations

An exemption can only be granted by the authorization provider provided a reasoned request by the applicant where:

- Local conditions or specific requirements technical questions other construction.
- Using a special new techniques equivalent to ensure accessibility.



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Providers may include the advice of approved body by the Flemish government.

Advice Required

Counseling is mandatory for buildings where:

- Use or exploitation by government and / or on behalf of the government and a standard deviation of rules is requested.
- All buildings for which the total public area > 7500 m².

Here is the advice to add to the application for planning permission.

Monuments

If the building falls under Article 2, 2.3, there is a balance needed between the demands of accessibility and to maintain heritage value.

Amending and transitional provision.

- Entry into force: the regulation enters into force for applications filed as of March 1, 2010.
- Existing regulations and provincial planning existing municipal planning regulations cease to have effect upon entry into force of this decision.

Success factors of building accessibility

"A chain is as weak as its strongest link" This means that an item is accessible through all stages of the process should be included. Integration from the start pays off!

- Cooperation and multidisciplinary nature ensures the Converting wishes and needs within a realistic framework, and ensures attention and solutions outside the physical aspect of accessibility (communication, information).

Advice and practical tools

- Brochure
- Manual www.toegankelijkgebouw.be
- Quickscan and digital checklist on www.toegankelijkheidgebouw.be
- File Support tailored to the various provincial accessibility consultancies.
- Useful websites:
www.entervzw.be
www.toevla.be
www.meegroeiwonen.info
www.dezilversleutel.be



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