



Seminar for full accessibility

Muziekcentrum De Bijloke Gent – March 29th 2011

Report and supplements with respect to the presentations.

Introduction

Marie-Andrée Avraam, accessibility officer of the City of Gent.

Marie-Andrée Avraam welcomes all the participants. She expresses the hope that the workshop will offer the opportunity to perform networking. The exchange of knowledge, means and strategies will enhance the co-operation and will allow all the participants to grow and develop in the performance of their tasks.

During the preparation of the workshop accessibility-enhancing efforts have been made. They are listed below:

- Reserved parking place for disabled people.
- Wheelchair accessibility by means of inclined slopes.
- To involve the Minder Mobielen Centrale (Association for Disabled People) for local transport.
- Preceding mailing of accessible digital information.
- Development of an accessible presentation and invitation.
- Possibility to subscribe by telephone or digitally.
- An interpreter for Flemish Sign Language.
- A ring wire for hearing impaired people.

Finally she introduces the moderator of this workshop: Mr. Damien Kinds. In his capacity of deputy-advisor of the province of East-Flanders he is responsible for the equal opportunity department and co-founder of the East-Flemish consultancy bureau for equal opportunities and accessibility Westkans.

Opening speech

Guy Reynebeau, Deputy Mayor for welfare and health of the City of Gent.

The Deputy Mayor welcomes Mr. Herman Caulier, chairman of the taskforce for accessibility of the 'municipal advisory body for disabled people', the present partners with whom the city co-operates, the colleague-officials from different Flemish cities, communities and provinces and the Deputy Mayor of the community of Londerzeel.



The emphasis which is now put on accessibility has not always been there. From social, economic but also legal perspectives the accessibility, which initially emphasized the physical accessibility, has evolved towards a more integral accessibility.

Everybody has right to an equal life and living environment. Fortunately the boundaries between people with and without disability are fading. More and more we pursue the integral design. And when a building is being constructed we always bear in mind the diversity of the users.

The city has entered into an agreement for accessibility, a.o. through the employment of a full-time accessibility official.

Since the urban development regulation accessibility has been put into force (March 1st 2010) and the modifications as from March 31st 2011 are valid, we also have a legal obligation and framework that can be used. This way, we work as a city on social cohesion. We exclude nobody. We also assume our responsibility through the introduction of the new UN-treaty with respect to the rights of disabled people.

We must examine the accessibility in all its aspects. Both in and outside the municipality, in all areas of our services, and this for people with a disability and those who can benefit from it.

Such adaptations require time and often go very slowly. Often slower than we or our 'advisory body for disabled people' wish. And sometimes we even are wide off the mark. An important challenge is trying to change the mentality of the officials and the citizens. We still have to go a long way before we will be able to formulate, organise, construct or develop something which is automatically accessible. At the same time, we have to protect our historic buildings and make them more accessible. That asks quite a lot of efforts. And yet, it is perfectly possible to achieve this and to reach a smooth equilibrium.

It is a process of trial and error. But the most important thing is that this process is gradually reaching its cruising speed.

Gent certainly still has a lot to learn. But a number of things have already been realised and we are even able to present some of them.

In the new Municipal Museum (STA.M) a lot of attention has been paid to accessibility; as you will be able to discover this afternoon. That is exactly why we assemble the thinkers and doers of our colleague-cities and communities. And the objective is not to reach a mass of people but to gather the right people. We are here to inspire each other and to learn from each other. To hear what we should do in order to achieve our goals and what we should avoid. This way, the exchange of experiences and ideas will certainly benefit the quality and sustainability of our approach.

The City of Gent wants to stimulate the development of a network with other Flemish cities and communities and enter more profoundly into the matter. It is the very first time that a similar workshop is organised in



Flanders. Let us all realise that all those who attend this meeting are writing history.

Finally, I would like to enumerate a number of people who have paid a contribution. Mrs. Ann Maes of the Adviesbureau Toegankelijke Omgeving (ATO) (Consultancy Office for Accessible Environment) from Sint-Niklaas. For many years, ATO already is a fixed partner of our municipality. Mrs. Heleen Van Opstal of the City of Mechelen, Mr. Zeger Van Besien of the City of Antwerpen, Mrs. Anne-Marie Heytens of the City of Kortrijk and the members of the municipal advisory body for disabled people.

To conclude: this initiative originated as part of the European Interreg 2 Seas-project 'Tackling Social Exclusion'. This project is also supported by the province of East-Flanders.

Besides my appreciation for the work of the members of our 'Cell Disabled People' and the accessibility officer Marie-Andrée Avraam, I also wish to express my gratitude to two co-operators of the project, more specifically Mrs. Sabien Blondeel and Mr. Luc Van Asch. Congratulations for the fine job you did.

Presentation of the adaptations of the Flemish regulations.

Mrs. Ann Maes, Advisory Office for an Accessible Environment (npa ATO)

She gives an explanation with respect to the recently adapted Flemish regulations with respect to accessibility. The following notes are supplementary to the presentation.

The regulations fit in with the environmental planning and do not concern the finishing of the implemented works.

The new regulations apply to the bakery shop around the corner but also to large building with a rather complex structure.

Dimensions and differences in level are taken into account in the new regulations. There will be a transitional measure for these works which will be valid till 2013, also for one-family houses. However, we can ask ourselves in which degree the realisations will be controlled.

There is a difference between an adapted (as far as the measures are concerned) reserved parking place and a reserved parking place (with respect to measures and signalisation).

Questions.

When the lift has already been adapted, is it still necessary to adapt the staircase? What do when do when evacuations are required? Mr. Herman Caulier (Municipal advisory body for disabled people – Gent)

Answer:



This particularly applies to apartments. An accessible staircase has an enormous impact on a building. Hence the less strict norm. However, it is not the ideal choice. Note that an accessible staircase is required in rest homes and welfare institutions.

Is the fire department automatically involved? Mr. Marc Van Assche (community of Londerzeel)

Answer:

The fire department is involved in evacuation advices. These days, party halls are being investigated and fire safety plans are being compared. In the City of Gent the construction supervision cell always controls the execution of urban development permissions in function of the regulations. These services have already followed a short training as regards the accessibility regulations. The same exercise will also be made with the fire department cell. An interaction with all parties involved is necessary in order to avoid conflicts in view of the contradictions in certain articles in both regulations (a.o. as far as the pass-through prevention width is concerned).

Presentation of the working of the City of Mechelen

Mrs. Heleen Van Opstal, consultant for disabled people and senior citizens, City of Mechelen

The following notes are supplementary to the presentation.

In the City of Mechelen, attention to diversity is embedded in all Municipal and external services. This is a permanent exercise in which accessibility is as a reflex present in the different executing services.

Focus groups are target group specific groups of experts. They are involved when for example an adaptation of the signalisation of the new house style is required (contrasts and use of colours).

Diversity is a broader subject than ethnic, cultural minorities.

Communication is not always evident because an attractive, young and stylish design has to be obtained. Owing to this it is possible that communication gets into conflict with accessibility.

Alternation processes evoke resistance. There is need for extra training and knowledge for the different services. Mutual communication between the different services is very important.

The embedment of accessibility in the municipal tissue is a process of alternation: a process which requires time.

Questions

You talk about the creation of a positive image: in what way do you concretely deal with this issue? Mrs. Inge Van Isterdael (City of Gent)



Answer:

It is interwoven in existing cases. For example in communication: we always try to come into the picture in a positive way. In this respect, the advisory body shows good examples of for instance music education in which children with an intellectual disability can participate. There is the example of the 'Red de stoep' (Save the sidewalk) action in which the broad society is being sensitised.

In which way are the focus groups involved?

Linde Vande Woestyne (Public Social Welfare Centre Maldegem):

Answer:

The focus groups are involved in an early stage. In the case of the example of the appropriate signalisation, this was done even before a preliminary draft was made and prior to the presentation to the Board of Mayor and Deputy Mayors. A temporary design was being attached in the Town Hall and prior comments were already asked at various parties involved: it could be compared to a kind of monitoring, during which attention was paid to height, distance and letter dimensions of the design. This is followed by a practical test from the focus group and an advice of CTPA (advisory bureau accessibility of the Province of Antwerpen). The advices of the focus groups are highly complementary to those of the professionals.

In what way can one sensitize other offices?

Eva Engelbeen (Schilde)

Answer:

There are a lot of meetings. We allow for the people to follow training and make sure that hands-on experts are involved. The confrontation is larger when one hears from a blind person how things are best handled.

The City of Mechelen tries to achieve quite some objectives. How many persons are involved to achieve all this?

Answer:

The projects are currently in the hands of one person.

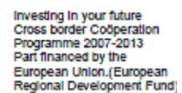
Presentation City of Antwerpen

Zeger Van Besien, diversity consultant, City of Antwerpen

The following notes are complementary to the given presentation.

In Antwerpen, the starting point is that the city is from everyone, so that everyone can enjoy life in the city.

Accessibility is an essential part of the city. During the restyling of police bureaus, a sample arrangement was made in a shed. This allowed hands-



on experts to give prior advice. These are not only people with a handicap, but also members of poverty associations (social accessibility). At the 'Park spoor Noord', we have broadly taken into consideration an extensive accessibility: we monitored the sufficient contrasts and an orientation underground, but also other aspects were examined. During the festival 'Zomer van Antwerpenen' (Summer of Antwerpen), a reflex of accessibility has been created. Every year there is still a monitoring and we are giving advice.

At the redaction of the vision note as regards integral accessibility, we strive to obtain one broad carried vision. To this end, bottlenecks are examined and we are looking for a streamlined vision in which various groups participate with the cabinets involved. One example is the Youth Department, which wants a new, challenging and inciting adventurous terrain. It will therefore not be flat everywhere, but attractive for everybody. The terrain comprises all these various elements. After the construction, there is also attention for the use: by placing all kinds of street furniture, terraces ...

Antwerpen did not make the choice to engage an Accessibility Officer. Accessibility is present as a mission for everyone involved. There is need for additional support and incentives. The bureau for diversity management is the contact point. It also gives advice, using its own knowledge and is also referring through (CTPA). Together with the parties involved, it offers basic training for designers and project leaders. This can be an adventurous track, explanations about 'Ontwerpen voor iedereen' (Design for All) or providing regulations, giving architects the task to modify a plan. Training for new staff members is also provided, for instance reception workers and police. Scenarios are drawn up with a compilation of files in connection with subjects of public domain (e.g. the exact angle of inclination). We also strive towards automatisms such as the Fire Department test. We are preparing a modification of regulations of the police code with respect to displays, street furniture and an extensive chapter about signalisation of public works. It is important to make everything compulsory and to monitor the entire process.

Questions

Following this presentation, there were no questions from the participants.

Presentation City of Kortrijk

Anne-Marie Heytens, Accessibility Officer City of Kortrijk.

The following notes are supplements to the given presentation.

Obstacle days are organised to highlight themes about accessibility. Annually, there is also an action month (even now, after the signature of the accessibility charter in 2008). There are also still perception tracks and



campaigns, to which all participants are invited, with the help of hands-on experts and professionals. All positive examples will be followed.

Meanwhile, we will discover the bottlenecks. These will not be explicitly mentioned, since they will be noted.

Since 2008, budgets and action plans are made in consultation. This is a broad exercise, bearing in mind the inclusion conviction and being aware that investment in accessibility also means investing in the future.

There is a city plan mentioning all guideways for blind people. Not all points are ideal. Sometimes, a poor construction has been performed. We are examining how to make an inventory and if possible to rearrange things. The same goes for thresholds, bus stops, accessible events with wheelchair stages, inclusive playthings, ...

In practice, the annual monitoring continues to exist. There is the external advice of for example the General Hospital Groeninghe and the frivolous films about the cinema coming from Sint Lucas Department of Higher Education.

Kortrijk boasts a highly active 'municipal advisory board for persons with a handicap'.

Questions

Who gives planning advice?

Answer:

From the network accessibility and from the nature of the handicap, there is a delegation (for instance from Licht&Liefde, possibly complemented with Sint Lucas Department of Higher Education Gent) and completed with the municipal advisory board for persons with a handicap. These instances do not provide technical advice, which is mainly provided by the Department of Facility Management.

Presentation functioning City of Gent

Marie-Andrée Avraam, Accessibility Officer City of Gent

The following notes are complementary to the given presentation.

The mandate with technical background is experienced as a success factor.

Various sensitisation campaigns are being held. There is the project with Saint-Lucas Department of Higher Education Gent, in which for the third consecutive year a cooperation project with various municipal services, the higher education and hands-on experts is carried out.

There are various actions. For large events, additional subventions are being granted if the organiser makes efforts to enhance the accessibility. Last year, the City held a study day with monuments and accessibility as theme. One of the conclusions was that the municipal services cannot be housed in inaccessible monumental buildings.



In the new KOBRA project (rearrangement of centre squares of Gent) guideways become demarcations of terraces. Here, we still need a lot of sensitisation: if it is good weather, and the terraces are expanding, the guideways disappear under it. It was necessary to have the City Guards carry out additional controls.

The accessibility scan is a quality model based on the CAF (Common Assessment Framework) model: a random indication focused on accessibility in the broad sense (also of accessibility in the field of communication and services) linked to action points.

Monitoring of tourism on the basis of plans that the tourists are receiving. The result becomes a global picture. We receive many questions to discover the city in an accessible way.

There is an evolution in the cooperation with the Department of Higher Education Gent, Saint-Lucas and the province of East Flanders around the site 'Zuid' in Gent. By involving them from the starting phase, we can take along the given suggestions while making up a design: a clear-cut surplus value.

Hopefully we will start a similar cooperation for the Dampoort site, with extension to persons with a mental handicap.

Accessibility Cell: The surplus value and overlap with other consultation instances where accessibility is bedded in, is being examined.

The Road Information System (Wegen Informatie Systeem-WIS). This is a digital global plan, where various layers are integrated, such as appropriate parkings, appropriate sanitary equipment, guideways, rattle signals, appropriate platforms for public transport ... For the time being, the system can only be consulted by municipal staff members. In future, we do hope to open up this system for civilians.

Questions

Some considerations expressed by moderator Damien Kinds.

The accessibility scan (the quality system to map the accessibility) contrasts sharply with the amateurish approach of many years ago. Everyone understands the importance of a good functioning databank where everybody can obtain his information.

He confirms the need for monitoring of education (both mapping the accessible school buildings as the way in which education becomes accessible to everyone).

It is also important to integrate the accessibility clause as part of the antidiscrimination clause for public tenders as the big stick.

The initiative of the 'bellend vlak' calls for questions:

'Bellend vlak': At the frontdoor of a café, restaurant or a service there is a special call. Push the button and an operator will place a mobile inclined plane to let you in.



Do persons with a handicap not come to the catering industry? Don't we need additional communication? Or does the 'Bellend vlak' generate stigmatisation?

Damien Kinds, moderator.

Answer:

An action in the sense of 'Kom uit je kot' may be useful for persons with a handicap. If a lot of efforts are made and are virtually not used, than this is not stimulating. It may well be that the 'Bellend vlak' generates stigmatisation, but persons with a handicap should be able to enter the premises. In this sense, the 'Bellend vlak' offers more opportunities than simply not being able to participate. A genuine exclusion seems far worse. The 'Bellend vlak' seems to be an acceptable solution.

There is the familiar bottleneck about heritage: aesthetics versus ethics. This is no simple discussion. Has the accessibility clause already been included with respect to monuments?

Answer:

The clause is mainly reserved for the descriptive quantity survey: therefore, technical and judicial aspects.

In the regulations, monuments or old heritage have not been taken into account. One articles mentions that in case of heritage, we should contact Monument Care. What is possible and what not?

Marc Van Ascche (deputy mayor in Londerzeel)

Answer:

As regards the technical aspect, if something is not feasible, the principal can ask for a derogation. If it is technically feasible, and the principal does not follow this up, than this is considered a construction offence.

Presentation of tactile scale models

Herman Caulier and Paul Vergucht, hands-on experts.

- The advantage of the scale models consists that they give a survey. The scale models which are presented are not sustainable, but they can be made sustainable. These are designs.
- It is fascinating to feel a scale model from an existing situation: it gives us an insight of how the city looks.
- The development of such scale models remains an optional subject for students: it is an intensive training with a lot of depth, but still not structurally part of the training of architecture.
- Acquiring expertise.
- Why does one build the scale models in various materials? Thus, we can find out how the execution is in reality. If everything is made in metal, for instance, there is no need for nuance.



- We remark that participants paid more interest to tactile scale models than to visual scale models. They are much more surveyable, much simpler and easier for interpretation.
- If you wish guarantees for the accessibility, than it is important that the designers can integrate the preliminary study. Hands-on experts can already have delivered their contribution on the basis of the scale model. After implementation, there can again be a check and advice expressed by hands-on experts and the municipal advisory board.
- The idea that the three Gent towers are effectively placed in a row has become obvious for hands-on experts by means of the scale model.
- Expressing a plan does not correspond to the need of hands-on experts. This method is not comparable with the use of a scale model.
- A considerable surplus value consists in adding sound and light. For instance, the auditive description of the entrance to the Town Hall, the links with public transport, ...
- Zone 30 is a kind of shared space

Practice screening of the STA.M (City Museum Gent)

Ann Maes, Advisory bureau Accessible Surroundings (ATO npo)

- It would be sensible to visualize where certain infrastructure is available. Some modifications are present but not visible, so they can therefore not be used. The inclining level at the entrance of the site is difficult to find.
- There are still quite some minor details which require our attention: the finishing touch is essential for accessibility. For instance, the thread of the portable paying device is too short, a wheel chair user can not use the device, and this was the original meaning
- It is important that staff members continue to obtain training and information and that one remains attentive in the implementation of the tasks. During the screening, we found doormats on the guideways for blind people.

Metra

Raf Schampaert, Metra

- The offer simple systems to rent or to purchase. It is easy to assemble by yourself. This can also be done by the company.
- The stairs elevator is an ideal solution for schools. One does not have students with mobility difficulties in the same buildings for all school years. This flexible solution is budget friendly. Several schools can share one device.



Presentation function Intro npo

Bart Parmentier, coordinator.

Questions

How do organisers get sensitised?

Answer:

Sensitising occurs on two levels: by the things that we do on the one hand, and on the other hand by means of information offer via the website and the (brand-new) brochure.

Succinct summary of interesting items of this study day concerning integral accessibility.

Damien Kinds, moderator.

- Embedment should best happen in all domains.
- Cooperation with all (autonomous) parts of a municipality/city.
- Embedment in the existing regulations (Fire Department, water test, police) and making the accessibility compulsory is important.
- Necessity for control (not always unwilling, not implemented and via control examination this is obvious).
- Focus groups as additional practice test for professional advice.
- Significance of recognized advisory boards, not only at the level of the city, but for instance also on provincial level.
- Encourage support policy.
- Integrated action plan, which can be comprehensively used over the city/town.
- Accessibility clause integrated in the antidiscrimination clause with public tenders
- Accessibility scan as quality instrument, accessibility is a quality requirement.
- To visualise the opening-up towards the citizens, as well as the efforts which have been made and also the different possibilities (CITY PLAN, WIS, DIGITAL INFORMATION SYSTEMS, COMMUNICATION, PROMOTION ABOUT DELIVERED EFFORTS).
- Importance of partners, for instance Intro, with proper expertise. It is not always necessary to want to reinvent the hot water by yourself.
- Additional charges versus reorganisation of the finances
- Aesthetics versus ethics: for instance in the field of communication if youngsters are the target group.
- Technical expertise as success factor.
- Necessity of sensitising, convincing and internal lobbying
- Necessity of training and formation.
- Information round is a good start (is part of integration).



- Necessity of evaluation of set-up projects and initiatives.
- Working with students (sensitisation as future professional)
- 'Kom uit je kot' (more participation, meeting the efforts of initiators, promotion and communication. For instance the efforts of Toerisme Vlaanderen: an 'all in' brochure in which accessibility has been integrated.
- The link diversity – accessibility is interesting. Disadvantage is that how larger the entire picture becomes, the blurrier it can become.
- Change gives rises to resistance: making use of change management, in which structural cooperation with hands-on experts and broader partners (we think at people in poverty – social exclusion) can help.
- External forces that can play a role. For instance the regulation as regards elevators and stairs and the difficulties arising during evacuation.
- Non evident, sometimes even contradictory advice, even emanating from proper advisory boards. Here, technical input from professionals can come up with an answer or solution.
- Integrate accessibility from the design phase.
- Many details need to be examined: importance of the uninterrupted chain of accessibility.
- The finishing touch is crucial, and this is not included in the regulations!
- Preserving awareness of staff members and formation/training of staff members: for instance the doormats which are lying on the guideways.
- Simple system of borrowing basic material, appliances, rent, preferably assemble yourself (for instance the butterfly accesses.
- There is need for survey, structure and understanding. This can be given by means of survey plans and scale models in the scope of accessibility of communication.
- Additional guarantee on accessibility by the preliminary work of students in the scope of scale models.
- Accessibility is all too often a 'one-man job'. This creates more need for intervision and networking. One needs to overcome the lack of knowledge of those who are not familiar with the theme, which makes it even more difficult.

Questions and remarks.

A plenary exchange of thought.

Can a forum be developed, thus making this study day no single fact?

Answer: This will depend amongst others from the results of the reactions of the participants. The City of Gent can assume a pioneering role in a first



phase. It is also important that smaller towns can express themselves. Today, they are less present, but we surely want to keep inviting them.

Can we cooperate with the expertise organisation and communicate this. Can the provinces support and subvent these initiatives? Can we communicate everything to external partners so that they can easily refer through and stimulate?

Networking and creating a forum will enable us to cooperate more efficiently in the field of knowledge exchange. It will improve the quality of our work.