

## ACCESSIBILITY IN OECD MEMBER COUNTRIES

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) now has 37 member countries spread across the globe, from Europe to North and South America and Asia-Oceania. Almost all of the most economically advanced countries, but also emerging countries such as Mexico, Chile and Turkey, are among them.

In the absence of recent international studies (the oldest dating from the early 2010's such as the one published by the Certu<sup>1</sup> « Accessible City » programme team in 2012) on accessibility in buildings and public spaces in eleven cities from five European countries : Sweden, the Netherlands, Belgium, the United Kingdom and Spain), only a partial approach can be conducted.

On the one hand, based on fragmentary data from certain States communicating on these issues, most often more from a tourism development perspective than from a strict approach to assessing accessibility.

On the other hand, information highlighting the European Accessible City Awards (*Accessible City Award*), awarded every year since 2011, on the occasion of the European Day of Persons with Disabilities, by the European Commission to promote initiatives aimed at improving accessibility in European cities and urban areas with more than 50,000 inhabitants and raising public awareness of the difficulties faced by people with disabilities, on the other hand, can be carried out.

Without forgetting the detailed report that States Parties to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) and its Optional Protocol adopted by the General Assembly on 13 December 2006 must regularly submit, in accordance with Article 35, paragraph 1 of the Convention, on its implementation to the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), a body of independent experts.

<sup>1</sup>Centre for studies on road networks, transport, urban planning and public construction.

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## I/ European countries

### 1.1 Scandinavian countries

**Sweden:** It is estimated that around 1 million (out of a total population of over ten million) people with disabilities aged 16 to 64 years in Sweden.

Like the other Scandinavian states, Swedish legislation is addressed to all citizens on a completely equal footing between them and does not reveal the condition of a possible physical or mental difference; thus clearly reflecting a rejection of any discriminatory attitude towards people with disabilities.

The Swedish constitution does not mention persons with disabilities, and there is no general legislation determining the rights of persons with disabilities.

Sweden did not wait to ratify in 2008 the UNCRPD to become one of the most advanced countries in the world in terms of integration of persons with disabilities, both for its legislation and for the organization of its transport, labor market and accessibility.

Developing an adapted city or adapted transport is not seen as an additional constraint, but as an obligation.

In Sweden, the policy for disability care is based on a coherent vision:

According to this conception, a disability occurs when a person encounters an environment that is inaccessible to him or her.

For the Swedes, therefore, a disability does not refer to a person's inherent abilities but rather to the relationship between a person and his or her environment.

We find here the concept adopted by the WHO<sup>2</sup> International Classification of Impairments, Disabilities, and Handicaps (ICIDH) in 1980.

Sweden has thus chosen to favour an inclusive approach.

While the country has no law establishing the rights of persons with disabilities, articles specifically concerning persons with disabilities are included in some ordinary laws, such as the Social Service Act and the Planning and Building Act.

As early as 1960, a legislative framework for accessibility was defined.

Since 1966, the Swedish Building Code has regulated the accessibility of public premises and workplaces for people with disabilities.

A 1976 decision of Parliament extended these provisions to residential housing. However, in 1999 a survey showed that less than half of the entrances to public premises had ramps and only one-fifth of commercial premises had ramps.

A law adopted in 1979 requires all means of public transport to be accessible.

Another important law is the Act concerning Support and Service for Persons with Certain Functional Impairments, known as the LSS law, which was adopted in 1993 at the instigation of the Independent Living lobby group.

This law marks a break with the Swedish political conception of universal social protection for all citizens.

The Swedish Personal Assistance Act of 1994 creates a new profession: that of personal assistant of disabled people who works on the basis of mutual agreement.

Approved by the Swedish Parliament in May 2000, the National Action Plan for disability Policy « From Patient to Citizen » emphasizes that disability policy is a citizenship matter and not just a social issue and aims to change the way able-bodied people look at their disabled fellow citizens.

This national plan encompassing transport, the built environment, the means of communications and the public environment, was implemented in 2000 and was due to end in 2010, but at that time

<sup>2</sup>World Health Organization.

and even today, not all of its objectives have been achieved, according to the Swedish Disability Rights Federation.

Law SFS<sup>3</sup> 2003:3017 - a Framework Law that sets fairly general objectives - refers to the notion of *easily removable obstacles*.

The public transport adaptation process is based on the principle that the transport offer should be designed for all user groups.

Gradually, the different types of public transport have improved their level of accessibility.

Nevertheless, some disabled people are still obliged to use specific transport, but at the same price as conventional transport, with the government having to pay the difference.

Finally, we should point out an innovation in Swedish integration policy with the existence, since 1994, of an *ombudsman* (equality mediator) for people with disabilities who ensures that the rights and interests of the disabled are respected, in particular by fighting against any discrimination they may suffer.

He or she assesses the measures taken to bring Sweden into compliance with the requirements of the UNCRPD.

In addition, he or she can inform the government on aspects for which legislation is insufficient, advise institutions and monitor their policies.

The City of Stockholm also set up an *ombudsman* for people with disabilities in 2002.

This system was supplemented by the creation, in 2006, of the creation of the Swedish agency for disability policy coordination, Handisam, a public service entirely intended to steering and coordinating disability policy and advancing accessibility in accordance with the guidelines of the aforementioned national plan, which reports directly to the Government.

Finally, the Swedish Institute for the Handicapped<sup>4</sup> should also be mentioned among the players in disability policy.

The tradition of grassroots associations, deeply rooted in Sweden, has played an important role in the evolution of disability policy.

Most Swedes belong to more than one organization or association.

Among them, the associations of disabled people, the first of which saw the light of day at the end of the 19th century, immediately after the creation of the unions.

*Anti-Handikapp* - legacy of 1968, which played a pioneering role in gradually imposing the social definition of disability used by the WHO - was successively created, followed by *Independent Living*, a movement that originated in the United States, under the impetus of Adolf Ratzka, which aims to ensure that disabled people have the same rights and opportunities as able-bodied people by enabling them to live independently through personal assistance.

At the national level, there are now more than seventy organizations - about 30 of which are grouped together in the Swedish Disability Rights Federation - representing different types of disability and 2000 local associations with around 470,000 members.

These associations receive financial support from the state, counties and municipalities.

Most of them are run by people with disabilities.

Both at the national level and at the regional and local levels, their representatives play a major role in disability policy by participating in disability think tanks.

As regards **Stockholm**: in 2001, the Swedish Parliament (*Riksdag*) set itself the goal of making this metropolis - which has been running extensive accessibility programmes since 1999 and has a deputy mayor for accessibility - the most accessible capital city in the world by 2010 with the programme entitled « Stockholm - a city for all - guidelines for creating an accessible environment ».

<sup>3</sup>Swedish Code of Statutes.

<sup>4</sup>This Institute plays an significant role in the provision of technical aids for people with disabilities.

This project, divided into around fifty chapters, does not therefore concern exclusively people with functional disabilities, but all individuals who may be confronted with some kind of accessibility problem.

Building regulations have been tightened and stricter standards have been imposed on public and private institutions.

The Stockholm model aims at adapting pedestrian crossings for people with reduced mobility or vision with audible signals that indicate when the light turns green.

The « Vision Stockholm in 2030 » programme aims to transform the Swedish capital - 30% of the central part of which is made up of water - into a world-class city accessible to all.

In addition, the first « Access City Award » given by the European Commission to encourage cities with more than 50,000 inhabitants to pursue an active accessibility policy was won in 2014 by the city of **Gothenburg**, Sweden's second largest city (over 500,000 inhabitants) and Scandinavia's leading port, whose slogan « A city for all » clearly illustrates its priority of living together and which stands out in particular for its commitment to eliminating traffic difficulties.

In Gothenburg, remarkable efforts have been made to improve access to transport, housing (priority is given to people with disabilities as soon as accessible housing is available) and employment (300 jobs are adapted each year).

Almost all places in the city are accessible.

Even the local mosque, which a few years ago installed its first mechanical ramp allowing Muslims in wheelchairs to come and pray like other worshippers.

Playgrounds, sandboxes and other parks - including the Liseberg, Scandinavia's largest theme park - have been made accessible by implementing many facilities for children in wheelchairs and play equipment in the form of a trail for visually impaired children.

Other exemplary Swedish cities:

. The city of **Lund**, one of the two oldest cities in Sweden, has succeeded in combining accessibility and heritage conservation by installing wheelchair lanes on cobbled streets.

. The city of **Boras**, a historic city of 107,000 inhabitants east of Gothenburg received, in turn, the first Access City Award for 2015 for its comprehensive plan and strategy to create, in consultation with the Disability Advisory Board, a city accessible to all.

Accessibility standards applied in built environments are more demanding than the country's legal standards.

The city provides grants to make private housing accessible and an accessibility award has been put in place to encourage the city's private businesses to improve accessibility.

Boras has established an accessibility database that lists all public buildings that meet accessibility standards. Public transit is free for the elderly and disabled people and is accompanied by a specialized mobility service that offers an unlimited number of trips. All the city's buses and bus stops are accessible to people with mobility difficulties as well as visually impaired people. The city of Boras is also committed to the creation of an intelligent transport system (ITS) that aims to make the urban environment accessible to all, regardless of their physical condition or age.

**Norway:** Like its northern neighbors, Norway considers as disabled anyone whose daily life is limited by a gap between his or her physical or mental situation and the need generated by society and the environment.

As a result, Norway has an inclusive approach and its policy is aimed at compensating for disability. The principle stated is that every citizen has the right to full participation in society and should enjoy equal rights.

This is why there is no Norwegian law strictly speaking on disability or on the fight against discrimination related to disability, but a systematic and direct consideration of the situation of

disabled people by all Laws, whatever the field (housing, education, public services, etc.) by including provisions on this subject.

Thus, the Planning and Building Act, the Social Services' Act, the Public Administration Act, the Education Act or the Kindergarten Act (Day Care Institution Act) include specific provisions in this area.

From the 1960s onwards, an inclusive policy for the integration of disabled people into society began as a reaction to the de facto « segregation » organized until then.

With the help of industry associations, the notions of user rights and participation have prevailed.

By introducing the concept of « *Universal Design* » into public space in 1997, Norway set itself the task of achieving improved accessibility for all members of society, not just groups of citizens independent of each other.

Overall, an effort has been made over the last thirty years for physical accessibility, which is still highly criticized.

For example, it would appear that the Public Administration Act, which includes provisions on access to administrative buildings and consultation with representatives of people with disabilities on decisions in this area, is not widely applied.

Likewise, the sanctions provided for in the Planning and Building Act would never be implemented. Municipalities are responsible for social services, including for persons with disabilities.

The law is vague on this subject: it only says that municipalities must provide assistance services at the appropriate level, which leaves a lot of latitude to managers and seems to generate inequalities.

Some municipalities have adopted the personal assistant system as it exists in Sweden, but in most cases the services (getting up, sleeping, hygiene) are provided by services that lack flexibility.

The places remain unevenly accessible.

But some of them stand out, especially tourist sites such as the Bryggens Museum in **Bergen**, which is very sensitive to the concept of universal accessibility (ramps make it easier to climb all three floors and special exhibitions are held for the hearing and visually impaired).

In May 2014, the Council of Europe awarded the Accessibility Award to Norway for its opera house in **Oslo** (its roof has ramps to guarantee accessibility), which underlines the importance of the citizen consultation launched prior to the construction of this building.

It should be noted that the Norwegian State Housing Bank provides loan subsidies for building accessible housing.

In the area of transport, conventional public services have improved, but to a very different degree in different counties and municipalities, forcing people with disabilities to rely sometimes on specialized transport provided by the counties.

There are national best practice rules for the development of door-to-door transport plans in each county and municipality, but in practice they are not implemented by the counties.

Nevertheless, since 2003, virtually all railway stations in Norway have been accessible to disabled people, i.e. they are equipped with elevators and ramps.

Similarly, all trains are equipped and adapted, with reserved spaces and adapted compartments and toilets.

Some buses are even equipped with level entrances, which allow immediate access to the seats, thus reducing the loading time of the buses.

Finally, people with disabilities benefit from relatively large subsidies to finance the acquisition of an adapted vehicle.

**Finland:** About 8% of Finns are disabled.

In May 2016, Finland was one of the last European Union Member States to ratify the UNCRPD.

Article 6 of the Finnish Constitution lays down the principle that no person shall, without good reason, be placed at a disadvantage solely on account of his or her disability.

Finnish Sign Language has been constitutionally recognized in Finland since August 1995.

The penal code increased penalties for discrimination on the basis of disability.

And the rights of those who use Finnish Sign Language and those who need translation and interpretation services because of their disability have been guaranteed by the Constitution and by law since August 1995.

The 1977 Law on special care for the mentally handicapped governs their situation.

National directives on land use and passenger transport, in force since 2001, allow the removal of physical barriers for the creation of a decent environment.

Each commune has a social worker responsible for services for disabled people and must organize specific services, provide the necessary support measures for their autonomy and give appropriate advice to disabled people who need it.

The services offered include transport services (and the provision of an attendant), home improvement work and the provision of a personal assistant, an employee in charge of services for the disabled (cooking, shopping, etc.).

This facilitates quick access to the desired advice and services and allows for good coordination and thus the smooth functioning of all social services.

It should also be noted that almost all stairs in public places are equipped with two rails and that most doors open either automatically with presence detectors or by pressing a button.

It should be noted that the capital, **Helsinki**, has been awarded the second Access City Award for 2015 for its accessibility plan developed in 2005, which serves as a basis for municipal accessibility strategies and policies, the very broad accessibility of its public transport (100% of metro stations and 99% of buses already comply with access standards, and work is underway to upgrade trains and streetcars) and targeting accessibility with the 2010 « Helsinki *kaikille* » (Helsinki for All) project, which defines the routes and areas of the city to be equipped with basic or special accessibility structures. This systematic and careful targeting of the structures to be improved throughout the city has resulted in the full integration of accessibility objectives into the planning, construction and maintenance operations carried out.

The examples of two cities-**Vaasa** and **Turku**- should also be highlighted.

Turku, the former capital of Finland, which took advantage of its status as European Capital of Culture (ECOC) in 2011, to renovate public buildings and roads and improve accessibility.

Vaasa (population 67,000), a coastal city in the west of the country, winner of the Access City Award 2016 with special mention for its commitment to improving the working environment for the elderly and disabled, clear and inclusive administration (city council deliberations are read aloud and interpreted in sign language) and full accessibility of its public transport.

In Finland, there are many associations whose aim is to improve the status of disabled people in society.

**Denmark:** Denmark has approximately 300,000 disabled people for a population of 5.9 million.

The Kingdom of Denmark is historically at the forefront of social progress: compulsory schooling was promulgated as early as 1814 and the right of women to vote as early as 1915.

In terms of disability, the assistance policy became a compensation policy as early as the 1970s.

The objective is accessibility for people with disabilities to the most ordinary living conditions possible and equal opportunities.

This comes directly from the Danish mentality, based on two values: well-being and egalitarianism.

Since 1975, all sectors of society have been required to adapt to disability. A real revolution thanks to which people with disabilities were no longer considered as sick people.



Denmark has become a source of inspiration for an inclusive society, particularly in the area of education, as shown by the visit of Sophie Cluzel and Jean-Michel Blanquer in March 2018.

While, unlike France, there is no general legislative framework on the accessibility of services, public facilities and means of transport - except where general legislation is insufficient to meet the needs of disabled people - there has been no general legislation on the accessibility of services, public facilities and means of transport since the early 2000s, the affirmation of a general political will to make the inclusion of people with disabilities and accessibility a national priority, within the framework of a historically rooted policy of consultation between the various partners in accessibility (Danish Council of Disabled People's Organisations Denmark (DPOD), Danish Disability Council, Inter-service Group on Disability, the Danish Parliamentary *Ombudsman*, etc.). Since the adoption in 1987 of a parliamentary resolution concerning the improvement of transport accessibility for people with disabilities, a significant effort has been undertaken in railway and bus stations, airports, access to information on transport conditions and the accessibility of public transport vehicles.

For example, bus lines serving routes of more than 100 km must offer at least once a day a vehicle capable of accommodating two wheelchairs.

In terms of built environment, as for single-family homes, all new buildings must have level access, an elevator and adapted toilets.

Since 2002, the Danish Government has been training consultants specializing in this area.

But a study carried out a few years ago indicates that the accessibility rules in the Danish building regulations are not always applied in a number of buildings.

It is to bear in mind that there is a tourist label system for accessibility.

Finally, it should be remembered that the city of **Copenhagen** won the 2016 European Prize for Urban Public Space awarded by the Barcelona Contemporary Culture Centre (CCCB) jury for its urban policy on accessibility, who considered that the model of reclaiming urban spaces aimed at making them accessible to both pedestrians and cyclists applied in the Danish capital is an example for all cities in the world.

A special mention should be made for the city of **Viborg** (40,000 inhabitants), winner of the 2019 Access City Award, which has made exceptional efforts to make its cultural heritage accessible while preserving its authenticity.

**Iceland:** Because of its very low density (3 inhabitants/km<sup>2</sup>) and its geographical specificities (Iceland has few municipalities and the rest of the country is essentially made up of large wilderness areas with volcanoes, glaciers, stone deserts, mountains, stony and rugged paths, wet plateaus covered with lichens and mosses, etc.), Iceland is confronted with a particular acuity to the challenge of accessibility.

There are recent positive signs that a paradigm shift in disability policy is accepted in Iceland, as in other Scandinavian states.

No Laws specifically prohibiting discrimination has been enacted. However, the principle of non-discrimination is deeply entrenched in the Act No. 59/1992 on the affairs of disabled people (and before that was the Act on the affairs of disabled people, No. 41/1983).

The principle of equality is guaranteed by the Constitution as amended in 1995.

And Iceland ratified the UNCRPD in 2007.

Icelandic Sign Language has also been recognized since 27 May 2011.

The Action Plan on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities adopted by the Icelandic government for 2012–2014 - extended until 2016 - illustrates the idea that disability reflects the failure of the environment to meet the needs of the disabled person.

It therefore aims to promote independent living, to fight against prejudices and social exclusion and to involve people with disabilities in decision-making processes.

But there is still a lot of work to be done regarding the movement of disabled people.

Already, just in the downtown area of the capital city, **Reykjavik**, many establishments are located in old buildings with steps or obstacles that make them difficult to access.

But its airport is very accessible.

The same observation can be made for the whole country.

## **1.2 Benelux**

**The Netherlands:** Although there is no general definition of disability in the Netherlands - each law establishing its own concept - a legislative framework for accessibility was defined as early as 1994.

Generally speaking, the Netherlands, which ratified the UNCRPD in June 2016, are often cited as an example - along with Sweden, Belgium, the United Kingdom and Spain - by French disabled people associations for their good practices.

Since 1990 - and especially since the adoption of the 2012 Building Decree - the law and regulations have required building projects to be easily adaptable to the needs of all its users and to comply with the accessibility requirements defined by this text.

In 2014, the Dutch Highway Code was amended to include accessibility requirements.

Whenever major work is planned, accessibility experts should be called upon.

Under Dutch law, 80% of public transport stations must be accessible to wheelchair users by 2019.

According to the Dutch government - but this point needs to be confirmed - almost all metro platforms and stations would be accessible to people with disabilities.

However, according to the experts, accessibility of public transport, even in cities, is often not ensured, and the use of specialized transport remains the only solution with the adoption of a private vehicle.

The cost of specialized transport and the adaptation of a personal vehicle are nevertheless compensated by the municipalities.

In **Amsterdam**, access to public buildings, public transport and parking for people with reduced mobility is considered a priority issue.

Almost all buses and subway stations are wheelchair accessible. Accessibility to trams is being improved.

In contrast, the state of the roads is more critical with the existence of many paved streets that are wheelchair-impairing.

A special mention should be made for the city of **Rotterdam** (second largest city in the Netherlands), second 2017 Access City Award, which has succeeded in integrating accessibility into all its municipal policies and in raising awareness of the specific needs of people with disabilities among its residents.

Its new central station, inaugurated in 2015, was designed and built in collaboration with accessibility experts.

And, since 2007, it has had the most accessible beach in the Netherlands.

The 2019 Access City Award was presented to the city of **Breda** for its continuous improvements that make life easier for people with disabilities. Public spaces, such as parks and stores, are accessible to everyone.

And digital technologies ensure that every citizen can get around using transport.

A survey on the conditions of people with disabilities in the Netherlands, published in December 2017, highlighted progress in compliance with the UNCRPD provisions.

**Belgium:** There are no official figures for the number of disabled people in Belgium because there has never been a national census on this criterion. However, the Walloon government has estimated that, in 2014, 6.5% of Walloons had a disability.

Under the impetus of European regulations, (federal) anti-discrimination legislation was profoundly reformed with the adoption of the Act of 25 February 2003 aimed at fighting against discrimination, known as the Malroux Law (with the introduction of the notion of reasonable accommodation and the extension of protection to a series of other criteria, including disability), which supplemented the 1981 anti-racism Law - at the time of an exclusively criminal nature - and the 1999 Act on Equal Treatment of Men and Women.

Then, with the adoption of the Law of 10 May 2007 - amended in 2009 and again in 2013 - aimed at combating certain forms of discrimination, particularly those related to disability (which repealed the previous Law of 2003 mentioned above), in application of the United Nations Convention that Belgium ratified in August 2009.

It prohibits any form of direct or indirect discrimination based on disability, for employment but also for other areas such as access to goods and services and the provision of these available to the public, social protection, etc.

However, this text does not give an official definition of disability.

Nonetheless, it includes the obligation to provide reasonable accommodation (section 21).

In terms of accessibility, the Act of 17 July 1975 on the access of persons with disabilities to buildings accessible to the public and its implementing Decree of 9 May 1977 make the only buildings open to the public that are new or undergoing major transformations subject to accessible standards.

The CRPD, in its Concluding Observations issued in October 2015, expressed concern about the lack of accessibility for persons with disabilities not being sufficiently considered a problem, the lack of clear national targets and the concentration of measures on motor disability alone.

The Belgian Government is assisted in its policy by the National High Council for Persons with Disabilities (NHCPD), which is made up of 20 members chosen for their expertise in the field of policy in favour of people with disabilities.

A policy that has its limits insofar as Belgium, a federal state, presents a very complex institutional landscape that translates into a veritable administrative labyrinth for people with disabilities.

There is indeed not one but several policies of disability and accessibility according to the three regions that have competences in matters of buildings' accessibility and that of housing, three linguistic communities (French, Flemish and German-speaking) as well as municipalities.

The federal state remains competent in particular with regard to allowances, functional rehabilitation centers and tax reductions.

- The Walloon Region has been voluntarily committed to this approach since 1994 - when it became competent in the field of integration of disabled people -, in particular with the creation in 1995 of a Walloon Agency for Quality of Life (AViQ), a public service and an instrument for implementing and driving this policy, whose disability branch has seven regional offices.

The reference text in Wallonia is the Walloon Code for territorial development (CoDT) - ex Walloon Code of Town and Country Planning, Urban Development and Heritage (CWATUP) - which considers the handicapped person to be « Any minor or adult presenting a significant limitation of his social or professional integration capacities following an alteration of his mental, sensory or physical faculties, which engenders the need for intervention by society ». Its articles 414 and 415, which constitute a chapter entitled « General regulations on buildings relating to the accessibility and use of spaces and buildings or parts of buildings open to the public or for collective use by persons with reduced mobility ».

In general, the CoDT requires that new public buildings open to the public be accessible and defines the exemptions that may be granted.

An important decree should be noted, that of the Walloon Government of 15 May 2014 relating to accessible housing, adaptable housing and adapted housing, which defines the criteria for these three types of housing.

Accessible housing is defined as housing that is easily accessible to everyone, including PRMs (Persons with Reduced Mobility), while adaptable housing is accessible housing that takes into account from the outset that everyone is likely to become a PRM one day.

And adapted accommodation is accessible accommodation that directly meets the specific needs of a PRM, allowing him or her to move around and use all his or her functions, independently.

While CoDT is relatively complete at the building level, it only partially considers road improvements for which there are only « good practices ».

In general, the sanctions provided for by the CoDT are too little applied.

Finally, the Walloon Government has decided to give a special advance to the accessibility of its websites.

- On 21 November 2006, the Government of the Brussels-Capital Region adopted a Regional Planning Regulation (RRU) comprising seven titles, one of which is devoted to the accessibility of buildings for people with reduced mobility. It applies not only to public facilities but also to new and existing buildings.

On the other hand, the state of the roads is far from exemplary for a European capital with sidewalks that are very rarely lowered, especially near the European Parliament.

The Brussels Region and the French-speaking Brussels Service for the Disabled have also implemented numerous measures to improve the transport conditions of people with reduced mobility through adapted transport and specific facilities: elevators in metro stations, equipping all metro stations with Braille maps for blind and partially sighted people, guidance systems on the ground, sound signage at pedestrian crossings, adaptation of around a hundred Brussels taxis to transport wheelchairs, etc.

A total of 51 of the 59 stations of the Brussels metro (which dates back to 1976 and is currently the only metro in Belgium) are currently adapted for the mobility of PRMs.

In **Brussels**, the Regional Mobility Commission has a section on « persons with reduced mobility » which brings together representatives of such persons.

- For the Flemish Community, the Flemish Agency for Persons with Disabilities or Vlaams Agentschap voor Personen met een Handicap (VAPH) is responsible for this competence and thus ensures the application of the Flemish Government decrees of 5 June 2009.

This organization wants to promote the participation, integration and equal opportunities of people with disabilities in all areas of social life.

The ultimate goal is to help these people lead more independent and better quality lives.

It would seem that Flanders is much more advanced than the French-speaking part of the country in terms of the rights of people with disabilities thanks to a more organized, committed and militant civil society, which does not hesitate to take legal action.

On the other hand, the certain cost of reasonable accommodation for people with disabilities is easier to finance for the larger Flemish budgets.

- For the German-speaking Community, it is the Office of the German-speaking Community for People with Disabilities that is in charge of this policy.

Finally, at the federal level, the Inter-Ministerial Conference ensures, on a permanent basis, effective collaboration between the Federal Government and regional institutions by bringing together five working groups that address specific aspects - in order to develop good regulations to fight against discrimination - and by enabling the conclusion of cooperation agreements between

regions and/or communities (for the free access of persons with disabilities to all services, centers and institutions located in the territory of the other region or community).

**Luxembourg:** Four years before the 2005 French law, Luxembourg adopted the Accessibility Act of 29 March 2001 on the accessibility of places open to the public - and its implementing text, the Grand-Ducal Regulation of 23 November 2001 implementing its articles 1 and 2 -, which stipulates that any place cited by one of these two texts must comply with the very precise technical accessibility requirements that the law determines in order to «remove urban planning and architectural barriers in physical space and thus guarantee access to all citizens ».

For all new construction and major renovation projects, these are « places open to the public » under the authority of the State, municipalities, public establishments and establishments used for social, family or therapeutic purposes that receive State support.

Exceptionally, derogations for technical, budgetary or historical reasons may be authorized by the competent minister.

Oversight of the implementation of these accessibility requirements has been assigned to the national security service in the public service.

The Law of 22 July 2008 relating to the accessibility of places open to the public to disabled persons accompanied by assistance dogs reminds us that these provisions apply to the entire built environment or to the fitting out of establishments open to the public and sets technical standards (maximum difference between two levels of less than 3 cm in terms of accessibility, etc.).

This text was completed by the Grand-Ducal Regulation of 11 and 19 December 2008.

A bill relating to the accessibility for all of places open to the public, public roads and collective residential buildings and repealing the aforementioned Law of 29 March 2001 - which aims to considerably extend the scope of the obligations of this Law by now applying to existing places open to the public, to be inspired by the concept of « *Design for all* » and to change the perception of disability by society as a whole - has just been approved by the Council of Ministers.

This text under discussion introduces minimum construction and planning rules to be respected by owners and developers, not only for all new construction projects but also for certain existing buildings and sites.

Luxembourg law seems to be particularly vigilant on new constructions that must be designed to meet the requirements of accessibility standards and does not provide for any derogatory provisions, particularly in the case of co-ownerships, unlike France.

The Luxembourg National Railway Company (CFL), in cooperation with various authorities, is striving to make public transport accessible, particularly to people with reduced mobility: railway stations and stops as well as rolling stock, trains and buses are undergoing major modifications and modernization (introduction of self-propelled and double-deck coaches).

Access to international trains and older generation CFL railcars is by means of technical aids such as ramps or mobile elevators.

As far as the network is concerned, the plan to modernize stations and stops includes the installation of ramps or elevators wherever technically feasible.

In 2012, Luxembourg published the National Action Plan for Persons with Disabilities, which includes a large number of measures: accessibility of websites, recognition of sign language, etc.

Since 2015, Luxembourg has invested 5 million euros in support services that provide punctual follow-up, on request, for disabled people living at home or in group housing.

Luxembourg ratified the UNCPRD on 13 July 2011 and the implementation of the provisions of this convention is coordinated by the Ministry of Family Affairs, Integration and the Greater Region, in the framework of an Inter-Ministerial Committee and in collaboration with civil society organizations for persons with disabilities.

The Higher Council of Persons with Disabilities, an advisory body, has the main task of giving its opinion on any draft law or regulation affecting disability.

On 15 July 2014, the Government of Luxembourg hired a sign language interpreter, in order to improve the access of deaf and hard of hearing people to government information.

The capital of the Grand Duchy, **Luxembourg**, created an Integration and Special Needs Department in 2012 to look specifically at how to improve access to public facilities and services.

People with disabilities are involved in all city access initiatives through a participatory committee.

As far as the built environment is concerned, accessibility work is carried out according to very clear specifications developed by ADAPTH, a consultancy in the accessibility of the built environment that places universal design at the heart of every project.

ADAPTH advises building companies during construction to ensure that the best access solutions are implemented.

The Luxembourg capital has developed numerous measures and infrastructures to promote safe travel for all, including: the installation of manual or electric ramps on nearly 75% of the buses managed by the city; the standard lowered floor in buses; the installation of various strips and tactile fields to guide visually impaired or blind people; and the provision of shelters for passengers at some 300 bus stops.

**1.3 France:** The figures for disability in France vary according to the definition given to this term and the source of the data. According to INSEE (National Institute of Statistics and Economic Studies), France is home to 12 million people affected by a disability, or more than 18% of the French population. Among them, 80% suffer from an invisible disability.

In 1975, the Government, fully aware of the need to make the integration of disabled people a national obligation, passed Law No. 75-534 of 30 June 1975 on the orientation of people with disabilities, which includes two articles concerning the accessibility of transport (Article 45) and that of the built environment (Article 49). But it does not provide itself with the means to achieve this.

Another important text, the Law No. 91-663 of 13 July 1991 presents various measures intended to promote the accessibility to disabled people of living premises, workplaces and establishments receiving the public.

However, it is the ambitious Law No. 2005-102 of 11 February 2005 amended for equal rights and opportunities, participation and citizenship of disabled people, known as the « disability » Law, which brings fundamental changes to meet the expectations and needs of disabled people. Its article 2 provides, for the first time in French law, a definition of disability, recognizing the responsibility of the environment and living environment in the occurrence of a disability: « constitutes a disability, within the meaning of this Law, any limitation of activity or restriction of participation in society suffered in his or her environment by a person due to a substantial, lasting or definitive impairment, of one or more physical, sensory, mental, cognitive or psychic functions, a multiple disability or a disabling health disorder ».

This Law has unquestionably brought about a change of mindset and made it possible to take a different look of disability.

It establishes a general principle of accessibility to the entire travel chain, without interruption, by setting performance obligations and deadlines to be met: by 1st January 2015 for Public Access Buildings (PABs) and 13 February 2015 for public transport.

Article 45 describes the chain of movement « which includes the built environment, roads, public space arrangements, transport systems and their intermodality ».

A strategy of accessibility for all without exclusion, allowing « access to everything for all ».

But this ambitious law has not been sufficiently followed up.

As for the existing system, it had barely 50,000 PABs available in 2015. Essonne Senator Claire-Lise Champion, in her report « Réussir 2015 » (« Succeed 2015 »), published in March 2013, based on the observation that France will not be able to meet the 2015 deadline, recommended the deployment of programmed accessibility agendas throughout the country.

At the end of the winter 2013-2014 consultation process, the Government then initiated the system of programmed accessibility agendas (Ad'AP), officially established by Article 3 of Ordinance No. 2014-1090 of 26 September 2014 relating to the accessibility of establishments open to the public, public transport, residential buildings and roads for the disabled, which allowed to continue the momentum set in motion by the 2005 Law. It is a multi-year financial planning tool for accessibility work, enabling PAB managers to commit, over a specific work schedule (up to 3 years, except in very special cases), to continuing or completing the accessibility of their establishment after 1st January 2015.

Exceptions to the accessibility of the premises are provided for in the following four regulatory cases: technical impossibility; related constraints; manifest disproportion between the improvements made by certain works and the first cost or their effects on the use of the premises; refusal by the general meeting of co-owners to make common areas accessible.

Just four years after its creation, the Ad'AP system is achieving particularly encouraging results: while less than 50,000 existing PABs had become accessible between 2005 and 2015, 690,000 had joined the system by the end of 2018, including most of the largest PABs.

Nevertheless, the fifth category of PAB managers - i.e., day-to-day, local businesses, craftsmen and the liberal professions - are still far from having fully assimilated the problem of accessibility.

The future deployment of accessibility ambassadors, young volunteers recruited as part of the civic service, as close to the field as possible, placed with communes or inter-communal bodies, should alleviate these difficulties.

At the same time, the pragmatic adjustment of regulations has made it possible to revise, simplify and make many rules more readable, without calling into question the accessibility of services.

The public accessibility register, which is available to the public, was made mandatory for ERP managers by Decree No. 2017-431 of 28 March 2017 and its Order of 19 April 2017. It communicates the level of accessibility of the services offered for which the establishment in question was designed and specifies the measures taken to enable everyone to benefit from them.

This register contains complete information on the services provided, a list of administrative and technical documents relating to accessibility and a description of training actions for personnel in charge of accessibility.

Under the terms of Law No. 2018-1021 of 23 November 2018 on changes in accommodation, planning and digital technology (ELAN), 20% of new housing in collective housing must be directly accessible, from the time of construction. The others must be « evolutive » - a concept introduced in law - or adaptable, i.e. they can be made easily accessible after simple work (by shifting, for example, the walls of the bathroom). This relaxation of accessibility standards has given rise to a certain amount of controversy on the part of disabled people's associations.

One of its implementing decrees, Decree No. 2019-305 of 11 April 2019, amending the provisions of the Building and Housing Code relating to the accessibility of residential buildings, significantly broadens the base of housing made effectively accessible by making it compulsory to install elevators in buildings of at least three floors (instead of the previous threshold of four).

In the area of public transport, under the terms of Article 7 of the aforementioned 2014 Ordinance, Transit Operating Authorities (AOTs) may voluntarily draw up transport accessibility master plans (SD'APs), which may take between 3 and 9 years depending on the transport sector: 3 years for urban transport, 6 years for interurban transport and 9 years.

In four years, particularly encouraging results have been recorded.

A clear majority of AOTs have developed their SD'APs, including all regions.

A first assessment of the achievements reveals that 51 national stations out of a total of 160 are now accessible, all perimeters combined.

As for the regions, 196 regional stations are accessible, including 100 in Ile-de-France area.

The disability policy, which has a strong interministerial character, has seen its roadmap since 2013 drawn up by the Interministerial Committee for Disability (CIH), chaired by the Prime Minister and composed of all members of the government concerned by this policy.

The French Mobility Orientation Law (LOM) of 24 December 2019 provides for several concrete advances for people with disabilities, for whom transport is all too often an obstacle course.

Accompanying persons with disabilities are now compulsorily entitled to preferential rates, up to free of charge.

Another announced change: access to paratransit services for people with disabilities is made easier with the removal of the requirement to reside in the territory concerned and to appear before a local medical commission.

Data relating to the accessibility of services and routes for disabled people and people with reduced mobility will be made public and available in open data to facilitate their travel. This data is essential to enable the emergence of mobility applications such as GPS (Personal navigation assistant) and route planners. These applications will thus be able to take into account, from end to end, the capabilities of each individual.

Accessibility for people with reduced mobility to parking spaces with electric charging stations is also guaranteed.

Finally, in rail transport, the reservation of assistance missions in stations is made easier with the introduction of a single reservation platform. The coordination of these services is guaranteed.

Among the cities to be particularly distinguished, there are:

**Lyon**, which was awarded the first prize in the 2018 edition Access City Award by the European Commission for its resolute commitment to all areas of accessibility. This project was carried out in cooperation with the member associations of the Lyon city accessibility commission and the disability representatives from the various departments. 40 million between 2016 and 2024 to make all of the establishments in France's second largest city accessible: town halls, cultural establishments, day-care centers, schools, sports facilities, parks, gardens, etc.

The implementation of specific actions, in the former capital of the Gauls, provides concrete solutions for disabled people in many areas: day care and schooling for disabled children, etc.

**In Evreux**, the prefecture of the Eure department (nearly 50,000 inhabitants) won second prize at the 2019 Access City Awards, in recognition of its efforts in all areas of daily and urban life: transport, public buildings, online services, etc. Then, a special mention for 2020 for the work it has done on invisible disabilities.

Among all the aspects that distinguish this city in particular, the « Grenelle Handicap Evreux Normandie » plan that Evreux initiated in 2014, to « make Evreux a city accessible and comfortable for all » and to go beyond legal obligations. Its teams have therefore set up working groups bringing together professionals, volunteers and citizens with the aim of developing new actions that promote the inclusion of disabled people.

**Grenoble**, which won second place in the Access City Award in 2014 after being awarded a special mention for infrastructure and public services in 2011, is clear proof of its sustainable commitment. The Alpine metropolis has a resolute policy of participation of disabled people and develops independent living by delivering about 150 constructions.

**Nantes**, which in 2013 was awarded second prize (behind Berlin) in the Access City Award, for its accessibility policy conducted continuously since 1990 in favour of disabled people, in partnership



with disabled people's associations, which has made it possible to place the accessibility and integration of disabled citizens at the heart of all public policies, whether in terms of transport, facilities, public or cultural places.

**Toulouse**, which in 2016 received the third Access City Award for its commitment to improving the lives of disabled citizens, not only in the transport sector - where the metro, streetcars and buses are 100% accessible - but also in the cultural sector where operas are sung with audio description and programmes are available in large print or Braille. She also won a special mention « Smart City » of this European award.

**Amiens**, which in March 2017 obtained the State Destination for All (DPT) - which promotes both a territory offering autonomous and accompanied tourism - for motor and visual disabilities. In drawing up the Pacte pour le Bien-vivre à Amiens (Pact for Living Well in Amiens), its Municipality wanted accessibility to be taken into account in all public policies: transport, housing, health, green spaces, children and youth, culture, etc.

**Bordeaux**, which was awarded the « Destination for All » label in July 2014 for the 2014-2017 period, and then was again labeled for a five-year period (2020-2025) for motor and mental disabilities. This city is indeed multiplying initiatives to offer a quality tourist offer to welcome all types of people and has been carrying out actions in favour of disabled people for several years. The tramways, buses and river shuttles of the public transport system are fully accessible.

#### **1.4 Germanic countries**

**Germany:** The Basic Law (the German Constitution), in Article 3(3), refers to persons with disabilities by prohibiting (since 1994) discrimination against persons with physical disabilities, but does not provide a definition of disability. The Federal Constitutional Court has not yet had to rule on the content of this term.

Similar provisions can be found in the constitutions of some *Länder* (federal states).

In Germany, the legal definition of disability is contained in Social Code - Book IX, a key piece of legislation for the disabled that came into force on 1st July 2001. It states that disabled persons are those whose « bodily functions, intellectual abilities or mental health deviate - in all likelihood for a period of more than six months - from the norm for persons of the same age whose participation in social life is thus compromised, etc. ».

Another distinction is based on the nature of the disability: physical, mental or psychic. Blind and visually impaired people, for example, have long enjoyed legal protection.

Germany ratified the UNCRPD on 26 March 2009.

From a political point of view, there is a division of competences between the federal state and the 16 *Länder*: the federal state has legislative competence and, in the area of disability policy, some political action competences.

The *Länder*, to which the German constitution confers the exercise of state powers, can take special policy measures in favour of disabled people within the framework set by federal legislation.

Germany has had a legislative arsenal in place since May 2002 with the Federal Act on Equal Opportunities for People with Disabilities (*Behindertengleichstellungsgesetz* or BGG), which officially enshrines the right to accessibility in concrete situations by guaranteeing access to all new non-military buildings, public transport and the websites of the federal authorities.

In addition, people with hearing loss and aphasia now have the right to express themselves in German sign language.

The aim of the BGG Act is to create a barrier-free living environment through negotiated target contracts.

In 2006, the General Equal Treatment Act (AGG), which transposed the EU anti-discrimination directives - and the corresponding laws at the regional level in most Länder - guarantees all Germans the right to non-discrimination.

One of Germany's strong points is the reserved spaces for vehicles of disabled people, which are strictly respected.

But the implementation of this general principle of « barrier-free access », of these voluntary legislative provisions on the accessibility of public infrastructure to people with disabilities, is very uneven between Länder.

Associations representing disabled people believe that transport infrastructure is far from being fully accessible and that much remains to be done, particularly in rural areas.

However, after the adoption of the 2002 Law, the German railway company Deutsche Bahn set up a Disability Liaison Office to coordinate activities relating to the requests of people with reduced mobility within the railway group and to exchange information with disabled people's associations.

In this context, the German company considers that better accessibility is essential for 10% of the population, necessary for about 35% and practical for all passengers.

A concrete example: in Germany, announcements concerning the side of the descent are mandatory and must be broadcast by the station managers.

The platforms are dedicated one year in advance, which is not the case in France, and this facilitates announcements for visually impaired customers in particular and all travelers in general.

The Berlin example should be highlighted. In 2013, **Berlin** won the European Commission's « Access city award » - even though it was in competition with 98 other cities for the title - thanks to its strategic and inclusive accessibility policies that cover all aspects of city life and are firmly anchored in the city's budgetary and political frameworks.

Berlin's policy is based on a comprehensive and strategic « Design for all » approach: by transforming the old city divided in two into an accessible and barrier-free environment, buildings and public spaces should be able to be « used by all, in an autonomous, simple, intuitive and comfortable way ».

Most of Berlin's monuments are *barrierefrei* (accessible to disabled people). The Mobidat database, « Living without Barriers in Berlin », which is constantly updated, provides information on leisure and culture accessible to people with reduced mobility.

This project is partly managed by people with disabilities.

Accessible shopping malls, living spaces and parks built with the needs of people with disabilities in mind have also contributed to this.

In terms of transport, out of the 173 stations of the Berlin metro network (Berliner U-Bahn)-which was inaugurated in 1902, just two years after the Paris metro system-no fewer than 106 (U5 and U55 lines, the latter of which was put into service in 2009, are now fully accessible) are now accessible to people with disabilities, i.e., equipped with an elevator or ramp for wheelchairs or strollers and a tactile floor surface for blind people.

In addition, if necessary, there are intercom systems in all stations.

BVG - the company that operates the metro, streetcar and bus networks in the Berlin metropolitan area - has committed to making all its stations accessible by 2020.

Berlin's buses are all accessible to the disabled (except for the 2018 tourist line) and almost all streetcars are also accessible.

Nuremberg, Wiesbaden, Dresden and Marburg are also model cities:

- **Nuremberg** with an excellent accessibility of its airport (wheelchair ramps, adapted elevators and toilets, telephones within easy reach, etc.), elevators at each metro station and the provision of

disabled access for politicians and decision-makers (visits to Nuremberg's transport network include the provision of eyeglasses to reduce the visibility of these decision-makers!);

- **Wiesbaden**, capital of the *Land* (state) of Hesse, which in 2016 received the second Access City Award for its ambitious policy of making the city center accessible (streets and sidewalks accessible through the gradual introduction of equipment such as tactile strips and lowered curbs, new pedestrian crossings managed by lights equipped with an audible signal), of its open spaces, parks and playgrounds and of the 230 city buses (all of which feature lowered floors, handles tactile and contrasting color as well as visual and audible signage announcing upcoming stops);

- **Dresden**, for the leverage effect of its information and communication technologies (with its interactive map and guide offering targeted information for people with disabilities).

- **Marburg**, for its long-standing commitment to accessibility, a clear strategy for the future that is long-term in nature and the exemplary integration of people with disabilities into the municipality's accessibility projects from planning to implementation.

**Switzerland:** According to various available sources, the number of people with disabilities in Switzerland can be estimated at about 1.6 million (out of a total population of just over 8.5 million). By various means, the State and civil society encourage their participation in the life of society.

Since 2000, the principles of equality and non-discrimination on the grounds of disability have been enshrined in the Federal Constitution of the Swiss Confederation. Article 8, paragraph 2, states that « no person may be discriminated against, in particular on grounds of origin, race, gender, age, language, social position, way of life, religious, ideological, or political convictions, or because of a physical, mental or psychological disability ».

And paragraph 4 of the same article states that « the law shall provide for the elimination of inequalities that affect persons with disabilities ».

The Federal Act on the Elimination of Discrimination against People with Disabilities (*LHand*) of 13 December 2002 - which came into force on 1 January 2004 - is a relatively effective instrument in terms of accessibility: Based on the premise that « there is inequality of access to a construction, installation, dwelling or public transport equipment or vehicle when such access is impossible or difficult for disabled people for reasons of architecture or vehicle design », it gives disabled people the right of access to buildings, installations, equipment, transport vehicles (access for all to public transport must be guaranteed by the end of 2023) and services intended for the public.

Article 7 of this act provides that any person who suffers an inequality in the case of the construction or renovation of a construction or installation may request, under certain conditions defined in this text, that the inequality be refrained from or eliminated.

*Lhand* guarantees a nationwide minimum standard for access to buildings with more than 50 workplaces and multi-family dwellings with more than eight dwellings.

The accessibility of buildings and facilities open to the public, residential buildings with more than 8 apartments and offices with more than 50 work stations must be guaranteed, following the implementation of a phased plan.

Moreover, this federal Act does not apply to the cantons, which fully retain their ordinary law powers in the area of construction law.

Article 2 of this Act gives a definition of a disabled person as « a person who, due to a physical, mental or psychological impairment which is likely to be permanent, finds it difficult or is unable to carry out everyday tasks, cultivate social contacts, move around, obtain an education or training, or work ».

In a report published at the end of 2015 to mark the eleventh anniversary of the *LHand*, the Federal Department of Home Affairs noted in particular the substantial progress made in public transport - around 50% of the 1,800 railway stations and stops accounting for 70% of the volume were

accessible, 9 of the 10 main Swiss stations (with the exception of Berne) had been adapted and 70% of the trains complied with the regulations.

Nearly 580 Swiss railway stations should be modernized and made more accessible (through grading) by the end of 2023 as part of the implementation of the *Lhand* law, according to a press release from the Federal Office of Transport (FOT) in December 2018. However, about 100 more stations will be converted after 2023.

The report also highlighted the significant progress made in terms of access to public buildings, with a real awareness of the players in the construction sector and a clearer improvement in terms of mobility in public spaces and buildings open to the public than for work premises or housing.

With, moreover, persistent differences between the cantons.

Several ordinances define the regulations under this law: the main ordinance aims to reduce and eliminate inequalities, and the ordinance on accommodation aims to ensure access to public transport for people with disabilities.

But Swiss voters rejected in May 2003, by 62 per cent of the vote, an initiative that would have guaranteed disabled people a right of access to all existing public buildings.

The policy on people with disabilities has gained new impetus since Switzerland ratified the UNCRPD in 2014.

In recent years, the situation of people with disabilities has improved considerably: buildings and public transport have become more accessible, but in many areas of everyday life such as housing, recreation and culture, people with disabilities are still not able to participate on an equal footing as required by the federal constitution.

A report adopted on 9 May 2018 by the Federal Council (Swiss Government) intends to remedy this, in particular through equality in the world of work with the Equality at Work program, the empowerment of people with disabilities with the Everyday Autonomy program and the intensification of measures in the field of accessible digital communication.

It is also planned to strengthen collaboration between the federal government and the cantons by establishing a regular sharing of information and experience, under the guidance of the National Dialogue on Social Policy.

A legal framework for equality also exists at the cantonal level.

In addition to *Lhand*, cantonal building legislation applies, which essentially only applies to new buildings and only affects existing buildings when new renovation or redevelopment work is planned.

This framework is sometimes the subject of laws and ordinances specifically designed to promote the inclusion of persons with disabilities, but often it is limited to one or more sections in other laws or ordinances.

In the Canton of Geneva, the Law on the Integration of People with Disabilities (LIPH) of 16 May 2003, which came into force on 1st January 2004, defines disability in its Article 2 as « any person unable to assume by himself or herself all or part of the necessities of a normal individual or social life because of a deficiency, congenital or not, of his capacities, etc. ».

The LIPH provides for the canton to encourage public or private initiatives that promote the integration of disabled persons, in particular by supporting the financing of architectural alterations to make places open to the public accessible.

Finally, it creates the cantonal referral commission, a true one-stop shop to which all requests relating to home accompaniment and reception in institutions for the disabled must be addressed.

Another Cantonal Law, the 2011 Law on the accessibility of buildings and installations, which states in Article 109 that « buildings and installations, as well as their surroundings, must be designed and fitted out in such a way as to allow access and use by all users, including those who have difficulty in finding their way, moving or communicating ».

While mobility in the city of **Geneva** and the surrounding communes has improved significantly in several areas, there are still many obstacles to be removed: unrealized sidewalk lowering, steps, installation of terraces obstructing the passage, uncontrolled parking or constraints on the sidewalk, etc.

In the rest of French-speaking Switzerland, there are numerous initiatives of varying degrees of scope, such as the creation of a digital accessibility map for the town of **Payenne**.

**Austria:** Out of a total population of 8.86 million, Austria has approximately 1.6 million people with disabilities.

The Federal Constitutional Law of 1st October 1920 provides in Article 7 that « no one may be disadvantaged because of his disability », even it does not define.

For deaf people and their relatives, Austrian Sign Language was officially recognized as a language in its own right by Article 8 of the Constitution on 1st September 2005.

Austria ratified the UNCRPD in September 2008.

The Republic (the Federation, the Länder and the municipalities) undertakes to ensure in all areas of daily life, equal treatment between people with and without disabilities.

The legislation on the equality of persons with disabilities - the Disability Act or BBG and the Federal Act for the Equality of Persons with Disabilities or BGStG - as such does not make accessibility an obligation but, because it protects against discrimination, contributes to a large extent to the elimination of barriers for persons with disabilities.

Since responsibility for disability policy is shared between the nine Länder (or federal states) and the federal state, there is no general legislation in Austria regulating disability, with the exception of the Federal Act on Equal Opportunities for People with Disabilities (BBG Act).

On the contrary, normative fragmentation characterizes disability legislation with no less than 90 federal and regional laws!

As a result, there are a large number of definitions at both the federal and territorial levels.

Building legislation, and thus the regulation of the removal of construction-related obstacles, is thus a matter for the Länder.

- In Vienna, all buildings open to the public, educational institutions, buildings housing meeting rooms, theatres or sports halls, commercial enterprises selling consumer goods, banks, churches, health and social institutions, doctors' surgeries and pharmacies must be designed and built in compliance with accessibility rules.

In addition, Vienna has committed to a phased plan to make all buildings in the city accessible to people with disabilities.

- Tyrol has similar building regulations and a phased plan to make official buildings accessible to people with disabilities.

- In Carinthia, all new public administrative facilities and offices, as well as medical practices, must be accessible.

One of the main provisions of the regulation on housing subsidies, which came into force on 1 April 2010, is the increased promotion of barrier-free architecture.

- Vorarlberg has raised awareness in this area by organizing a competition for barrier-free construction, which was followed by an awards ceremony for increased publicity.

As far as the federal government is concerned, the Federal Act on Equal Opportunities for People with Disabilities states that a tiered plan has been established to ensure accessibility and barrier-free movement within federal buildings.

In the field of transport, the Austrian Federal Law concerning the organization of local and regional public transport provides that the granting of subsidies to public transport companies or to

purchasers of public transport contracts must be increasingly linked to the consideration of the needs of people with reduced mobility and the design of vehicles adapted to them.

In **Vienna**, all stations of all metro lines (*U-Bahn*) are wheelchair accessible: all trains are low-floor at platform level, as are buses and streetcars via an adapted platform.

The former capital of the Habsburgs made, moreover, disappear its cobblestones as well as many of its curbs.

Mozart city of **Salzburg** has won the 2012 European Access City Award, for its remarkable achievements in a « historic » city, the result of a long-standing commitment and consistency in its approach, in all the key areas concerned with accessibility with the direct involvement of people with disabilities: the built environment and public spaces, transport and related infrastructure, information and communication (including new technologies), and public infrastructure and services.

## **1.5 British Isles**

**United Kingdom:** In the United Kingdom, disability is part of « social normality », according to Edouard Braine, former quadriplegic Consul General of France in London, for whom « it is better to be disabled in London than in Paris ». And the level of accessibility of its public places is significantly higher there than in France.

In 1944, in response to the needs of disabled persons from the Second World War, the first law, the Disabled Persons Employment Act (DPEA) was enacted to protect them in terms of professional integration.

With the unanimous adoption, as early as 1970, of an exemplary disability bill, the Equal Pay Act, the United Kingdom has in fact equipped itself with genuine anti-discrimination legislation protecting disabled people.

The United Kingdom is therefore several decades ahead of France in terms of accessibility.

In 1995, Great Britain also adopted a specific law, the *Disability Discrimination Act* or DDA, often cited as an example, which recognizes as « disabled » « any person with a physical or mental disorder that substantially and permanently affects his or her ability to carry out ordinary activities », aimed at combating discrimination against people with disabilities, following the example of the ADA Act adopted in the United States in 1990, on which it was based.

This text was revised and expanded in April 2005 by a law that deals with all aspects of disability and marks a step forward by providing, for the first time, a legal definition of disability.

It defines a person with a disability as « any person with a physical or mental impairment that has a significant and long-lasting negative effect (more than twelve months) on his or her ability to carry out normal daily activities ».

The DDA also extends to access to goods and services as well as buildings for people with disabilities.

The built framework had to be brought into compliance as early as 2004.

The DDA also devotes a section to transport with provisions for access standards for new trains, buses, streetcars, and cabs.

To implement the DDA, a regulatory body was created, the Disability Rights Commission (DRC).

It should be noted that British law speaks of making « *reasonable* adjustments ».

A rather fuzzy lens that has advantages as well as disadvantages.

There are advantages in allowing everyone to move forward at their own pace, in a pragmatic way, but there are also disadvantages, as the success of this policy depends largely on the willingness of the various players to make a difference.

Territorial inequalities, particularly from an economic point of view, explain the significant disparities between regions that can invest in accessibility and those whose social services are collapsing.

1. To achieve this goal, the British have relied on the concept of « social engineering »: most London buildings have amenities that make them accessible.

The application of the DDA is considered satisfactory overall - the law is effectively applied without challenge or question - although there has been some criticism from disabled people's associations.

With the Equality Act of 2010, which simplified the legislation then in force by replacing several laws (including the DDA and the Equal Pay Act of 1970) and strengthened the fight against discrimination and established the principle of accessibility of websites (where possible), a principle of equality was enshrined.

Access to the transport network has improved considerably.

With regard to the rail network, more than 6,000 new trains have been built according to modern access standards that have replaced those applied since 1998.

The Government's £370 million Access for All programme has created accessible routes through 148 stations with elevators and walkways.

For parking, the misuse of parking cards is severely punished by justice (fine of 990 pounds).

The UK Government has established an eAccessibility Forum made up of experts, professional organizations and voluntary organizations.

The goal is to ensure the design of more inclusive services for consumers and businesses.

The Forum is responsible for implementing the Cyber Accessibility Plan.

It should also be pointed out that the United Kingdom has created, as in France, a delegation for accessibility.

And, in the field, referents have been set up, both in companies and local authorities, to ensure that the issue of accessibility is taken into account.

The example of **London** is often overemphasized, even though the public transport system is now much more accessible than before to people with disabilities.

A complete renewal of the bus fleet was carried out with the replacement of old buses by modern double-decker vehicles with a low-floor system, a removable electric ramp and a space reserved to accommodate a wheelchair measuring 70 cm wide by 120 cm long maximum, with the exception of the historic double-decker buses on two lines.

Nearly all London buses, except the historic Line 15 buses, can be lowered to curb level to make boarding easier for customers with disabilities and are equipped with priority seating for people with reduced mobility and one or two reserved spaces for wheelchairs and mobility scooters.

Transport on London buses is free for wheelchair users, but accompanying persons need to buy a ticket.

The number of service dogs allowed on board is not limited, provided there is room.

The situation is much more disappointing for trains, since the Disability Discrimination Act sets the accessibility of all existing railcars at only 2020.

Nevertheless, the Docklands Light Railway (DLR) trains are accessible.

As for the 23,000 London cabs (the legendary black cabs that are not always black) - 11 cabs per 1,000 inhabitants -, they all have the possibility of modulating themselves to accommodate wheelchair users (they often have a ramp access) - Paris cabs are far from equaling these performances, and they also transport assistance dogs free of charge.

On the other hand, access to many London Underground stations - which is the oldest subway in the world since it dates back to 1863! - is by stairs and there is often a step between the platform and the train, or a difference in level.

All this can make the metro difficult to access for some disabled people.

In fact, only 66 stations (mainly the recent extensions of the Jubilee Line) out of the 270 in the British capital are fully accessible.

There are ramps to help wheelchair users get to the subway in 16 stations.

Recently, however, significant progress has been made in response to the desire of Transport for London, which is responsible for the British capital's transport system, to make the metro accessible to all.

Some London Underground stations no longer have any steps from the street to the platform and others from the street to the train.

In addition, staff working in the London Underground are regularly trained to assist people with disabilities.

The staff can help them get on the train and, if necessary, find a seat.

No prior reservation is necessary to benefit from this accompaniment.

Like Barcelona in 1992, London has also taken advantage of the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games to redevelop the city on a very large scale and adapt to the needs of people with disabilities.

But many historic buildings are difficult to adapt to disability.

Special mention should also be made of the cities of :

- . **Manchester**, the cultural capital of northern England, whose center was extensively redeveloped in the late 1990s (wide, stepless sidewalks, many stores, restaurants and bars with lowered entrances, etc.) and which is also well served in terms of accessible transport for all;

- . **Belfast**, Ulster (Northern Ireland), Access City Award 2014, for its efforts to improve accessibility to the built environment and public spaces with its Musgrave Park Therapeutic Garden, a permanent and inclusive facility that improves the quality of life and well-being of children and young people;

- . **Chester** (Northern England), which in 2017 became the first British city to receive the first Access City Award for its concrete efforts in bringing together the public sector and private companies in an outstanding way to make its historical and cultural heritage accessible and to combine the accessibility of tourist sites to all, particularly for people in wheelchairs, with the preservation of its heritage.

**Ireland:** Out of more than 5 million inhabitants, at least 100,000 are said to be disabled.

Until 1993, Ireland had no specific legislation concerning the rights of persons with disabilities.

It was the affirmation of the principle of non-discrimination that paved the way for their full integration into Irish society.

Ireland has a Disability Law, the Disability Act, which came into force in July 2005, to promote and improve the participation of people with disabilities in economic, social and cultural life.

As defined by the Act, universal design is intended to produce an environment that is accessible, understood and used, to the greatest extent possible, by all people, regardless of age, size or disability.

The term disability will be identified in the 2008-2010 *National Disability Survey* (NDS).

This text thus obliges cities and transport services to adapt their services to people with disabilities, with provisions relating to access to public buildings (Article 25), accessibility of services provided to a public body, and access to heritage sites.

However, as early as 1999, with the creation of the National Disability Authority (NDA), following the Barcelona Declaration, the Irish government established a body under the Department of Justice to advise the Irish government on disability policies and practices and to work towards making public services accessible.



In the area of public policy, the NDA establishes proposals prior to the enactment of regulations: for example, on the accessibility of sites and buildings protected as part of the architectural and urban heritage or to promote the employment of disabled workers in the public sector.

It also promotes, through annual awards, the initiatives and good practices of public services in terms of accessibility.

In the field of research, the NDA also organizes thematic seminars.

Finally, the NDA also plays an awareness-raising and information role: it publishes various documents, in particular on the design, construction and management of buildings accessible to all and on their safety and evacuation conditions.

In large cities, public transport is almost all adapted for people with disabilities.

The national bus company Bus Eireann has a number of accessible buses equipped with ramps and wheelchair spaces that make up nearly 70% of its fleet. Cabs are generally wheelchair accessible.

**Dublin** has made a major effort in terms of accessibility: some areas have been entirely returned to pedestrians (O'Connell Street and adjacent streets), the Georgian district.

The districts of the Guinness distillery, Temple Bar, The Liberties are older with high sidewalks but can be visited with a companion.

City buses are equipped with low floors and a standard size space that is comfortable enough for wheelchairs, such as those of Dublin Bus, the Greater Dublin's main public transport operator, which have a wheelchair space of up to 70 cm wide and 120 cm long.

The example of the city of **Tallaght** (Ireland's fourth largest metropolitan area) should be closely studied for the range of innovative public services aimed at improving the quality of life of its less able-bodied citizens.

Examples include recycling facilities and accessible libraries and books available in different formats for people with visual impairments.

## 1.6 Mediterranean countries

**Spain:** Nearly 12% of Spaniards (3.85 million people) suffer from a disability and nearly 20% of Spanish households are affected, according to the Spanish Committee of Representatives of Persons with Disabilities (CERMI).

The Spanish Constitution clearly takes into account the issue of integration of people with disabilities.

Its Article 9 guarantees the freedom and equality of all citizens and the groups to which they belong in political, economic, social and cultural life.

And its Article 14 sets out a principle of equality and non-discrimination.

Finally, the Constitution states, in article 49, that «the public authorities will pursue a policy of forecasting, treatment, rehabilitation and integration of the physically, sensory and psychically disabled, providing them with the special care they need and granting them special protection so that they can enjoy the rights recognized in Title I for all citizens ».

Disability is defined in Article 7 of the major Act No. 13/1982 of 7 April 1982 on Social Integration of Disabled Persons (LISMI).

It is a very comprehensive legislation that makes the public authorities responsible for urban planning and construction plans that guarantee accessibility to buildings, public passages, parks and gardens and for the adaptation of existing buildings, culminating in the adoption of Law 51/2003, of 2 December 2003, of equal opportunities, non-discrimination and universal accessibility of people with disability (LIONDAU), which placed accessibility as a national priority on a par with equal opportunities for all citizens.

Several royal decrees of application have been issued, including the one of 19 February 2010 amending the building code.

Spain, after the backwardness of the leaden years of Francoism, is today without context in Europe as a particularly advanced country in terms of legislation on disability.

In parallel with regulatory developments, in 2004 the Government launched the first National Plan for the Accessibility of Public Places, which was completed in 2012, the main instrument for implementing the LIONDAU.

Francisco de Jesus Valverde, president of the foundation managing the National Observatory of Disability (OED), said that Spaniards had « reached a collective consciousness on the need for the same rights for all and the continuous improvement of these rights » and considered that the efforts made in terms of accessibility have been important.

These efforts are all the more important as they are part of the implementation of the UNCRPD, ratified by Spain in December 2007.

As a highly regionalized state, actions in this area are most often carried out by local public authorities (in particular the 17 autonomous communities or regions and the municipalities), which are responsible for implementing the national guidelines on accessibility by setting performance objectives and technical specifications.

Some of these authorities have been developing fare policies that favour people with reduced mobility and specialized transport services for several years.

The downside of this extensive regionalization is that there are many disparities between the different autonomous communities in the social treatment of disability.

Thus, only the autonomous communities of Catalonia, Andalusia and Valencia recognize sign language.

Another area in which Spain is at the forefront is the disability movement - in particular the ONCE (Organizacion Nacional de Ciegos Espanoles - National Organization of Spanish blind people), a particularly influential national organization for blind people in Spain - which is powerful and works in close cooperation with the Spanish government.

Spain is also better and better equipped to offer accessible tourism, tourism for all.

In fact, considerable efforts are being made to adapt to the needs of people with disabilities by removing barriers, providing access to cultural and nature-based activities, and introducing regulations in the areas of transport, construction and urban planning.

Universal accessibility is becoming an important factor in Spanish tourism, especially in Catalonia and in the main tourist destinations in the world.

The island of **Tenerife**, in the Canary Islands, developed a remarkable policy of adapting its public and private tourist areas from 1957 onwards, with the arrival that year of a group of Swedish tourists with disabilities looking for a place to care for and relax, which initiated accessible tourism.

Thus, **Madrid** is one of the first cities in Spain, if not the first, to have developed a tourist offer « Accessible to all », adapted to audiences with specific needs in terms of mobility and cognitive attention.

In transport, ATENDO is a specialized RENFE (Spanish equivalent of the SNCF: France's national state-owned railway company.) personalized assistance service for disabled passengers, the elderly or those with temporary reduced mobility, providing guidance, information, and assistance in accessing and passing through stations and boarding and alighting from trains.

The staff of this department is made up of trained professionals.

Accessible transport for people with motor disabilities is effective in large cities such as Barcelona, Bilbao, San Sebastian and especially **Malaga**.

In the latter city, the design of stations and light rail trains is free of architectural barriers and calls for compliance with safety, accessibility and functionality parameters, thus facilitating access for the disabled. In addition, nearly 65% of bus stops are accessible to 100% of disabled people.

Most buses are equipped with adapted spaces, led panels with voice announcements.

Information is available in Braille or in the form of pictograms for the visually impaired.

A result that is due to about twenty consultants and experts working on accessibility in various fields such as information or mobility.

Madrid leads the way in accessibility for people with disabilities in transport with 80% of its metro being accessible and having more elevators than the New York, Paris and London subways combined!

There is a specialized cab company, Eurotaxi, in the Spanish capital, which caters for people with reduced mobility.

In **Barcelona** - a metropolis that took up the challenge in 2010 to become the most accessible city in the European Union - the main objective remains to become a coherent city that promotes quality of life and respect for diversity.

In the same year it was awarded the Access City Award, the roadway is considered particularly accessible.

It is a city that was obviously made aware of disability at an early stage.

All sidewalks are lowered and the walkways along the beaches are paved.

It is very easy to get around.

In terms of transport, most of Barcelona's buses have been adapted (they are equipped with special wheelchair access) and the complexity of an almost 100-year-old metro system does not prevent it from being an accessible mode of transport, often considered as a model for other European metropolises.

The 1992 Olympic Games gave the impetus to the implementation of a real accessibility of the city.

It is therefore logically a leading destination for adapted tourism.

In fact, since 1992, the new metro stations that are built and those that are renovated have incorporated accessibility measures: installations, voice-controlled dispensing elevators, raised routes for the visually impaired and blind, and a luminous device signalling the closing of doors.

Thus, lines 2, (the Violet line or L2 purple which is the only line to be equipped with elevators at each station) 9, 10 and 11 are fully adapted like the majority of the stations of line 1.

In all, about 80% of the stations have been upgraded: only 27 stations out of 198 are not considered fully accessible.

The machines that validate the tickets of the metro and Ferrocarrils de la Generalitat (FGC) / Catalan Government Railways - emit acoustic and visual messages to ensure that everyone can be well informed.

But despite these undeniable advances, changing from one line to another in a metro station can be a bit complicated because there are often stairs in the stations, even though it is possible to ask for assistance from the staff working in the metro.

And, in terms of prices, disabled people do not benefit from any specific advantages.

Several cab companies in Barcelona have adapted vehicles.

In terms of road accessibility, Barcelona has a historic city center that makes it easy to get around in a wheelchair because it is relatively flat, has no cobblestones and almost all of its streets are equipped with ramps.

Twelve other cities should also be mentioned in terms of accessibility:

. **Pamplona**, which since 2004, thanks to the implementation of its four-year plan for local infrastructure, including in the old town (lowering of sidewalks, buildings accessible by ramp,

playground and exercise facilities for people with reduced mobility, equipping all buses with ramps, etc.) has made its urban environment accessible.

An example of a city where public space and infrastructures have been designed to integrate people with reduced mobility into urban life;

- . **Valencia** for the access to its historical center and the accessibility of its transport (most of its metro stations are equipped with ramps or elevators and about 500 buses are equipped with access for disabled people, about 80% of the network);

- . The medieval city of **Avila**, which was awarded the first edition of the Access City Awards in 2011 for the implementation of its plan to improve the accessibility of public buildings and encourage private initiatives.

Avila was also cited as a model of accessibility at the International Congress on Tourism for All organized in Spain by the European Network for Accessible Tourism (ENAT);

- . **Bilbao** (whose urban area has 900,000 inhabitants), for its use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) for the benefit of people with disabilities (with the development of the accessible website [www.Bilbao.net](http://www.Bilbao.net) which provides information on all aspects of city life) and the overall accessibility of Bilbobus, the urban bus network;

- . **Vigo** (nearly 300,000 inhabitants), for its innovative approach to accessible architecture, with the «Vigo Vertical» project in a difficult topographical context (the city is characterized by its steep slopes which constitute a real challenge in terms of accessibility).

- . **Lugo**, in the northeast of the country, which has adopted a comprehensive and inclusive approach to disability, involving the private sector in all its initiatives.

And this city is making full use of the leverage of new information and communication technologies in the development and implementation of accessibility policies;

- . **Logrono** (capital of La Rioja), a finalist for the Access City Award 2015, for its commitment to accessibility to the built environment and public spaces with, in particular, the development of a comprehensive accessibility plan, updated regularly, which today gives priority to the construction of ramps at crossroads, the installation of podotactile slabs, and the relocation of public benches that were obstructing the roadway;

- . **Vitoria-Gasteiz** (in the Basque Country) is at the forefront of accessibility thanks to the proactive policy of its municipality: membership in December 2013 in the Network of Cities for Accessibility, accessible historic center (mechanical ramps and an elevator have been created to allow access to all), all buses equipped with automatic ramps and adaptation of sounds and displays to people with visual or hearing disabilities, 8% of cabs are adapted, i.e. more than the required legal minimum of 5%;

- . **Burgos**, 2014 Access City Award, for its public services and facilities;

- . **Santander**, for its urban projects invariably focused on accessibility and designed according to universal principles and for the quality and sustainability of the results obtained;

- . **Terrassa** (in Catalonia), for the systematic elimination of obstacles in the built environment;

- . **Arona**, in the south of the island of Tenerife (Canary Islands) and an important destination for tourists with disabilities, which in 2003 adopted an accessibility plan aimed at improving the accessibility to Las Vistas beach and transport available to this category of tourists (13 accessible cabs offering a preferential service).

**Italy:** It is estimated that there are around 2.8 million disabled people in Italy, or 4.5% of the total population.

Framework Law No. 104 of 5 February 1992 on Assistance, Social Integration and Rights of Persons with Disabilities introduces a new definition of disability, focusing on the social consequences of disability: a disabled person is a person «having a permanent or a progressive

physical, mental or sensory impairment that determines difficulties in learning, social relations and work integration, in such a way as to determine a process of social disadvantage or marginalization, etc.». (Article 3).

The main objectives of this Law are the elimination of obstacles to the participation and social, professional and educational integration of people with disabilities and the improvement of the accessibility of the different places where they live.

According to the 1996 Decree of the President of the Republic and the 1998 Ministerial Decree, an assistance service must be set up in public buildings, as long as they are not adapted to the needs of disabled people.

The normative framework for public and private buildings, public or open spaces or places of public use is currently a high priority in a proposed parliamentary regulation on a new systematic concept of accessibility from a universal design perspective.

Since 2004, the law has recognized and protected the right of all citizens to access all sources of information and related services, including the right of persons with disabilities to access the computer services of the administration and public utilities.

In the case of regional transport plans and urban infrastructure development plans, specific projects for the disabled are implemented through the conclusion of framework agreements under Article 27 of the 1990 Act. These plans establish alternative services in areas not covered by public transport.

In **Rome**, given the very old character of the city, its topography and the density of its urban traffic, for a long time accessibility could sometimes be compared to a real obstacle course.

In some areas, such as the historic center or Trastevere, in the southwest of the city, many streets and squares have cobblestones that are not always regular.

In spite of these obstacles, the Italian State, the City of Rome and private actors have adapted ancient sites to the extent possible.

Thus, the Coliseum is accessible via an elevator.

In the Italian capital, there is certainly still a lot to do with the recurring problems of unpaved sidewalks and unsuitable sanitary facilities.

While metro Line A is practically inaccessible to wheelchair users, all stations on metro Line B are accessible, except for Circo Massimo, Colosseo and Cavour stations.

The city of **Milan** (Italy's second-largest city in terms of population, with a population of around 1,350,000), on the other hand, won the 2016 European Access City Award. In addition to its exceptional and consistent efforts to make the built environment accessible and its plan to eliminate obstacles deployed in 2014, the Lombard metropolis, the country's economic capital, has also committed to projects to promote employment for people with disabilities and support their autonomy.

The Lombard metropolis has made great efforts in this regard with the 2015 Universal Exposition, which would have attracted about 200,000 disabled people.

Its building standards not only promote accessibility and functionality, but also contribute to the promotion of universal design, which aims to design products and spaces so that they can be used by as large a proportion of the population as possible. Its integrated strategic approach aims to realize the concept of « city for all ».

The bus lines that run in Milan are all wheelchair-accessible (both buses and stops) and on its 4 metro lines (plus one urban line of the suburban rail service) - the most extensive network in Italy-, 2 of them (the M3 « Yellow » and the M5 « Violet ») are fully accessible, equipped with elevators at all stations. The M1 « Red » and M2 « Green » lines have only elevators at a few stations, and wheelchair stairlifts (montascale) at a few other stations. Azienda Trasporti Milanese (ATM) / Municipal public transport company of Milan -, the public transport operator in the Milan area, uses

a « full disability inclusion » indicator to measure the accessibility of lines and routes for disabled people.

Data on the accessibility of the entire public transport infrastructure (stations, stops, etc.) is made available to the public on its website.

**Portugal:** The Portuguese term « deficient » designating disabled people is indicative of Portugal's low awareness of the needs of people with reduced mobility (there are an estimated 1 million disabled people in the country), or even of the persistence of persistent prejudices.

Article 71 of the Portuguese Constitution of 2 April 1976, which concerns citizens with disabilities, states that :

« 1. Citizens with a physical or mental disability shall fully enjoy the rights contained in the Constitution and shall be bound by the duties contained therein, except for the exercise of the rights and fulfillment of the duties that their condition prohibits them from exercising.

2. The State undertakes to carry out a national campaign of prevention and treatment for the rehabilitation and integration of citizens with disabilities and support for their families ».

The 1989 Act considers disability to be a loss or impairment, congenital or acquired, of structure or function.

Portuguese Sign Language has been recognized since 1997.

Law No. 38/2004 of 18 August 2004 on the Legal Regime for the Prevention, Adaptation, Rehabilitation and Participation of Persons with Disabilities defines the disabled person and provides that all sectoral policies must define specific measures to meet the needs of these persons.

The National Policy for Rehabilitation considers that accessibility is a strategic prerequisite for the full exercise of the rights of persons with disabilities and all persons with functional limitations throughout their lives.

Since 1977, Portugal has made the elimination of physical, architectural and communication barriers a top priority.

A consolidated law on accessibility (Decree-Law No. 163/2006 of 8 August 2006, which replaces the Decree-Law of 22 May 1997) was adopted to this effect.

Resolution No. 9/2007 of 17 January 2007, adopted by the Council of Ministers, was issued pursuant to the 2006 Decree-Law.

It adopts the National Plan for the Promotion of Accessibility (PNPA) - a structural document based on the Lisbon Strategy for the creation of means of access to physical structures and services, transport, and information and communication technologies-and takes a number of measures to ensure that people with disabilities or sensory impairments enjoy the autonomy, equal opportunities, and social participation to which they are entitled.

The law on accessibility was only adopted by Parliament after several years of review, the second phase of the National Accessibility Promotion Plan (2011-15) has still not been launched, and recent legislation on urban revitalization provides for exemptions from accessibility rules.

Concerning the roadways, the sidewalks of Portuguese cities are almost all paved with Azulejos, earthenware that does not facilitate the movement of people in wheelchairs or canes.

**Lisbon**, for example, is not a very wheelchair-friendly destination because of its seven hills, sloping neighbourhoods, steep cobblestone streets, sidewalks not lowered, and steps at the entrance to shops. Not to mention that public transport is not very well adapted to it.

Only some subway stations have elevators (when they are not out of service) but it is not easy to get on the trains in electric wheelchairs because of the large gap between the platform and the train.

Visually impaired persons may, however, travel with their dogs on a leash and muzzled.

If some bus lines are presented as accessible, there is no guarantee that you will be able to get on board.

Indeed, the retractable pallet is not very operational.

As for the tramway, only the Line 15 to Belém can be accessed but only at certain stops.

Moreover, if parking spaces are reserved for the disabled, they are in fact often occupied by able-bodied people.

Among the positive points in terms of transport, it should be noted that Lisbon airport has specific access - note that the national airline, TAP Air Portugal, provides wheelchairs at the airports as well as airplane to runway transfer chairs and vice versa - and that the Portuguese capital has adapted cabs.

Porto's metro is fully accessible to people with reduced mobility.

The example of the island city of **Funchal** should also be highlighted because, despite its difficult geographical context (very volcanic soil), it has made sure that all its beaches, tourist sites, cabs, hotels and public spaces are accessible so that its disabled inhabitants and tourists enjoy the same opportunities as able-bodied people to enjoy their vacations.

There are also two companies in Portugal - CARRIS and Frota Azul Barraqueiro- that have coaches with a capacity of 20 to 48 people in wheelchairs.

Finally, among the 850 km of Portuguese coastline, many beaches - 209 seaside, maritime and river areas - are now accessible to people with reduced mobility.

These ranges are identified by a white flag with the corresponding symbol.

## **1.7 Balkan countries**

**Greece:** Greece ratified the UNCPRD on 31 May 2012.

Although not based on a general legislative definition of disability, the Government's policy on accessibility has led to significant progress in recent years, mainly in **Athens**.

Greek buildings are becoming more and more accessible - although public buildings are still not very accessible - in accordance with the provisions of Law No. 4030/2011, under which the inclusion of accessibility features for people with disabilities in the design becomes mandatory in the new building permit system.

In terms of public transport accessibility, all stations and trains of the Athens metro have facilities to accommodate disabled people in an optimal manner. The same applies to new public transport infrastructure such as the tramway or suburban trains.

The airports of Athens, **Thessaloniki**, **Rhodes**, **Mytilene** and **Santorini** are fully accessible (assistance, etc.).

Transport is free for the blind and their guides in Athens and they benefit from a 50% discount in other cities.

However, the economic crisis and the successive austerity plans adopted by Greek governments since 2009 - which have gone so far as to abolish some aid - have clearly weakened the situation of people with disabilities, who have demonstrated on several occasions.

In July 2015, the European Disability Forum - the umbrella organization for disabled people's associations in Europe - called on the European institutions to address the particularly worrying situation of disabled and elderly people.

**Slovenia:** In Slovenia, the percentage of people with disabilities is estimated at between 12 and 13% of the population, which is slightly lower than the European average.

Slovenia, a member of the European Union since 1st May 2004, has since made great progress in the area of accessibility.

The issue of accessibility is detailed in the national guidelines on improving the accessibility of the built environment, information and communication for people with disabilities or Strategy for an Accessible Slovenia.

The Strategy has 7 core objectives and details 40 measures that are addressed in several pieces of legislation.

Another important document in the area of accessibility was the Action Programme for Persons with Disabilities 2007-2013, whose objective was to promote, protect and ensure the full and equal enjoyment of human rights by persons with disabilities and to promote respect for their dignity. Accessibility is the fundamental condition for the application of these rights and the third objective of this programme (the others refer to it more or less directly).

Accessibility is also one of the objectives of the National Housing Programme, which implements housing policy.

The Building Law regulates the conditions of construction of all types of buildings, establishes the mandatory requirements and their conditions of application concerning the characteristics of buildings, regulates inspection and supervision, determines the penalties for violation of the construction rules, etc.

Accessibility is also addressed in the Spatial Planning Act, which states that the land must be designed in such a way that people with disabilities can access and use the buildings.

In recent years, all new public buildings and other major commercial and tourist buildings have been built to meet the needs of people with disabilities.

However, the study conducted by the Social Protection Institute and the Urban Planning Institute of the Republic of Slovenia (UIRS) on the physical and traffic barriers encountered by people with disabilities showed that the practical application of laws and regulations on the removal of existing barriers and the prevention of new ones is not satisfactory.

In a large number of Slovenian cities, sidewalks have been adapted to facilitate access for people with disabilities.

There are also a growing number of cash dispensers with lower access and Braille - alphabet keyboard for people who are blind or visually impaired.

In the Slovenian capital, **Ljubljana** (more than 280,000 inhabitants), an integrated transport policy has made it possible to adapt the main station for people with disabilities. The city also has a very large number of buses with low-floor buses that announce upcoming stops by an audible signal. Free electric transport is available for all, including the disabled and seniors.

Its downtown area, free of obstacles, is mostly pedestrian (closed to motorized vehicles since 2007) and flat (lowering of curbs and introduction of tactile paving stones).

Finally, Ljubljana Castle, one of the most visited tourist attractions in Slovenia, is accessible by funicular and tourist train adapted for people with reduced mobility. As well as the zoological garden.

## **1.8 Central and Eastern European Countries**

**Poland:** After the fall of the communist regime, which hardly took into account the management of disability, Poland has undertaken, since the end of the 90s, real changes in its policies related to disability.

The situation of disabled people - Poland has the highest rate of disability in Europe with 2.4 million disabled people of working age, or about 10% of the working population, according to a recent report by the International Labour Organization (ILO) - has changed very quickly in a few years, especially since joining the European Union in 2004: Poland has gone directly from the stage



where disabled people were « hidden » to a real integration policy, without going through the « charity and assistance » box.

Their rights are enshrined in the Polish Constitution as well as in the 1997 Charter of Rights for Persons with Disabilities.

The efforts made have been recognized by the Committee on Disability and the Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt Institute, which awarded Poland the prestigious Franklin Delano Roosevelt International Disability Award in 2006.

In 2011 the Law on sign language and other means of communication was adopted, which obliges all public authorities to make sign language translators available to people with hearing loss.

Generally speaking, associations of disabled people, such as the association Integracja (Integration), actively advocate for better application of the law and invoke the French model in this regard.

In **Krakow**, the country's most touristic city, despite a generally inaccessible infrastructure, the main access points to the city (airports and train station) are equipped for people with reduced mobility, as are most of the public transport systems, whose fleet has been renewed to meet European standards.

The city of Krakow has also set up an adapted cab service with a reduced rate.

Particular attention has been paid to access to the monuments of its cultural heritage.

In **Warsaw**, buses are also adapted for wheelchair users, as are metro stations and cabs are also available.

Stations, on the other hand, are not - except for the central station - as are parts of the buildings.

In November 2019, the Polish capital has just been elected the most accessible city in Europe in the Access City Award 2020 organized by the European Commission and the European Disability Forum.

Warsaw has managed - by involving disabled people and all people with special accessibility needs - to significantly improve the overall level of accessibility in a short period of time.

A special mention must also be attributed to the city of **Poznan** (Poland's fifth largest city with 550,000 inhabitants), which won the third Access City Award 2014 for its remarkable progress in terms of accessibility to transport, housing, shops, culture, sport, tourism and employment.

Another city, **Gdynia** (with a population of just under 250,000), won the third Access City Award 2019 for its initiatives to include people with intellectual disabilities, for its policy of improving accessibility in all areas of the city, including playgrounds, beaches and sports and cultural facilities. Also worth mentioning are the efforts made to make its public transport accessible, in particular through systematic driver training that makes drivers more inclined to understand and help people with disabilities.

**Hungary:** Out of approximately 10 million inhabitants, more than 600,000 are disabled (this relatively low figure must take into account the fact that people with psychiatric disorders are not considered disabled).

Hungary, which has also been a member state of the European Union since 2004, adopted a major Act on accessibility for disabled people (on equal opportunities for disabled people) as early as 1998, known as the Act XXVI of 1998 on the Rights and Ensuring the Equal Opportunities of People with Disabilities (Disabled Persons Act), which has been amended several times since then, . Its Article 26 bases the definition of disability on an essentially medical approach. According to this Law, a person is considered to be disabled if he or she « is not in possession, to a significant extent or entirely, of his or her sensory functions - in particular sight and hearing -, locomotor or intellectual functions, or who is substantially restricted in his or her communication and is therefore permanently disadvantaged with regard to his or her active participation in the life of society ».

However, the Hungarian Government recognizes that this definition is no longer consistent with social reality.

This law, which is based on equal opportunities, provides for the removal of environmental barriers and the development of an environment that allows people with all types of disabilities to have access to all the fundamental rights recognized for all citizens and guarantees them the full exercise of their citizenship.

Finally, this text set 2005 as the deadline for the removal of obstacles in public establishments.

This means that existing facilities had to be redeveloped in such a way that they conformed to the principles defined by this law, while new constructions had to comply with these principles, failing which they would have to be refused a building permit.

However, delays in the implementation of this law led the Hungarian government to amend it several times and extended the deadline for its application to 2010 and then to 2013.

Have these postponements allowed for the effective application of this law? The Hungarian associations for Persons with Disabilities and, among them, the most important one, the National Federation of Disabled Persons' Associations (MEOSZ) have not failed to express their skepticism. They point in particular to the shortcomings in the procedure for granting building permits (which authorized the issuance of permits for non-compliant establishments) and the inaccessibility to wheelchairs of the majority of the Administration's establishments.

Other more general laws refer to environmental accessibility, the right to adapted housing, professional integration and social integration.

The first building law, amended in 1986, required public buildings to be accessible to people with disabilities, but this was not the case because builders did not take this into account.

The 1997 Building Act requires that all public buildings, streets and squares be accessible or made accessible so that people with disabilities can move around independently and safely.

In 2008, standards were defined to standardize the height of sidewalks to make them more passable by blind people.

Hungary was the first European country to ratify the UNCRPD.

A National Disability Programme has been adopted for the period 2007-2013.

Other initiatives emerged in the 80s and 90s, such as the audible traffic lights, but the majority of the improvements came after 2000.

However, the consideration given to the different families with disabilities is extremely disparate since, according to some local associations, mentally handicapped people have been subjected, in the recent past, to serious mistreatment and treatment that can be assimilated to torture!

Even outside of these extreme cases, the chances of a disabled person finding himself or herself in a humiliating situation are unfortunately numerous.

In Hungary, there is still the story of a blind man who, in 2008, was prevented from entering a supermarket with his guide dog under the pretext of respecting hygiene principles.

Fortunately, many Hungarian associations defend the rights of disabled people, the most important of which is the National Federation of Disabled Persons' Associations (MEOSZ), which has not hesitated to take legal action against establishments receiving members of the public who are reluctant to apply the aforementioned 1998 law.

The adaptation of public transport to the needs of disabled people - provided for in the above-mentioned 1998 law - has been significantly delayed.

In **Budapest**, for example, there are many obstacles to daily life, apart from the new tramways that run on the capital's busiest boulevards and a few buses that have low and palletized floors and often run at limited hours.

In the metro, only a few stations are equipped with an elevator allowing disabled people to travel throughout the network.

In addition, while many disabled people choose to have a car for lack of an alternative, parking spaces for disabled people are insufficient and are not respected: parking card fraud is widespread in Hungary.

The city of **Kaposvar** (65,000 inhabitants), located in southwestern Hungary, won the Access City Award 2016 with special mention for improving access for the elderly and disabled. The city has integrated local rail and intercity bus transport into a new, fully accessible public transport platform, recently renovated its public buildings, which now have tactile features and surfaces as well as Braille inscriptions, and made 80% of the city's art and cultural sites accessible.

**Czech Republic:** The definition of disability in Czech law suffers from its inconsistency with a large number of legislative texts which do not respect the definition contained in the United Nations Convention.

On 14 April 2004, the Czech Government adopted a resolution approving the Government Plan for Financing the National Development Plan of « Mobility for All ».

This plan focuses on the removal of barriers in transport and buildings open to the public that predate the Building Act.

As far as the built environment is concerned, the situation of existing buildings is unsatisfactory with many old buildings, especially museums and hotels, inaccessible to wheelchair users.

The situation is obviously better for recent buildings.

In rail transport, access for persons with disabilities is a component of all programmes.

In **Prague**, the mobility chain, for people in wheelchairs, is thus often broken.

There are some well done or well designed projects but, overall, the roads remain the main problem because of the many paved streets in the historic districts and the condition of the sidewalks is far from ideal.

In fact, there will often be something that will complicate or make it impossible to get around or move around: a paved street, a sidewalk that is not lowered between two accessible places, steps in a park, etc.

The accessibility of the historical monuments is quite variable.

Public transport in Prague, as in other major cities, is slowly improving in terms of accessibility: some Prague metro stations are accessible, especially the newest ones, which are equipped with elevators.

In 40 stations, orientation for blind and visually impaired people is made easier thanks to the existence of acoustic alarms placed in the underground and entrance vestibules.

Accessible buses are becoming more common and are characterized by level access, low floor and a priority area for wheelchair users.

Note the safety belts that ensure good stability to the chair and therefore make their journey safe.

Another strong point of public transport is the tramways, which make it easy to get around.

We should also mention **Olomouc**, in Moravia, which in 2005 was awarded the « Exemplary Action of a European City » award by the APAJH (Association for Disabled Adults and Youths) for its project entitled « Olomouc without Barriers », with its achievements in the field of information and communication technologies for tourism and the involvement of its local associations.

**Slovakia:** Slovak legislation does not have a unified definition of « disability ». Although Slovakia has in recent years established a legal framework dedicated to combating discrimination on the basis of disability and has appointed a commissioner for the protection of human rights of persons with disabilities.

Nils Muiznieks, the Council of Europe's Commissioner for Human Rights, stated in October 2015 that « Slovakia must take effective measures to improve the protection of persons with disabilities ».

The most important rules, principles and requirements for ensuring the accessibility of physical equipment and buildings are enshrined in Act No. 50/1976 Coll. on Spatial Planning and Building Code and Decree No. 532/2002 Z.z. on General Technical Specifications for Construction and General Technical Specifications for Buildings frequented by PRMs. Thus, from 2002, all new buildings must be accessible.

The same applies to infrastructure, telephone booths, mailboxes and ATMs.

In 2004, the law on equal treatment in certain areas and on protection against discrimination was passed, with the obligation to create reasonable accommodation.

In recent years, the needs of disabled people have been taken into account in many projects (modernization of the Zilina-Krasno nad Kysucou and Bratislava Raca- Nové Mesto railway lines).

**Lithuania:** Since ratifying the UNCRPD in 2010, Lithuania has made a number of progress. With approximately 250,000 people with disabilities, or just over 8% of the total population, Lithuania faces pressing challenges, particularly in the area of accessibility: the state is largely financing the adaptation of residential buildings and rail, road, air and sea transport have been partially adapted according to the Lithuanian government.

The UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities has strongly criticized Lithuania in 2016 for its various forms of physical (and other) inaccessibility - urging the Government to stop investing EU funds in the construction of inaccessible buildings or websites that do not allow access to persons with disabilities - and stressed that attitudes towards disability are the greatest obstacle to the implementation of the UNCRPD.

**Latvia:** Since ratifying the UNCRPD in 2009, Latvia has consistently adapted its legislation to put in place public policies that promote non-discrimination and equality for persons with disabilities.

Notable improvements over the past decade include the introduction of many disability services, capacity building of municipal social services and increased accessibility to public transport.

In Latvia, as in Lithuania, the « My Response » project helps people with disabilities to overcome the obstacles they encounter in their daily lives through the creation and testing of social services, staff training and improved accessibility.

This project has mobilized all the instruments necessary for greater social integration: more qualified specialists and adapted infrastructures, new services and information campaigns.

The project team also looked at the accessibility of social services and the degree of integration of people with disabilities into society. It focused on making their living environment more welcoming, offering additional training to employers in the sector and proposing new social services.

Latvia is, moreover, the first Baltic country to have won the 2016 Design for all Foundation Awards, received at the URBACCESS trade exhibition (focusing in particular on accessibility in the city) in Paris, for the accessibility (taking into account the specific needs of each family with a disability) of the center of Kuldīga, a charming little town of 15,000 inhabitants in the west of the country, by the architect Aivija Bārda : access ramps, adapted sidewalks, slabs laid in the streets, etc.

Another Latvian city, **Jūrmala**, a seaside resort and spa (more than 55,000 inhabitants) on the Gulf of **Rīga**, also received the third Access City Award in 2017 for its ongoing work to ensure accessibility for all.

This city carries out actions for both tourists and the local population in areas such as access to employment, transport and education.

**Estonia:** At the beginning of 2015, the proportion of people with disabilities in the total population was estimated to be around 11%, or more than 141,000 people. This proportion is constantly increasing.

Article 12 of the Estonian constitution explicitly prohibits discrimination on any grounds. A flexible and comprehensive mechanism of protection against discrimination can therefore be based on this provision.

In 2012, Estonia ratified the UNCRPD.

Estonian Sign Language is since 2007 the second official language of the country.

Legislation passed in 2001 makes accessibility mandatory.

The Estonian National Transport Development Plan 2014-2020 provides for the application of universal design principles in infrastructure with the gradual acquisition of adequate rolling stock.

In April 2005, the Accessibility Council was created, made up of members of parliament, the administration, local authorities, representatives of disabled people's associations, architects, builders, designers, etc., to propose solutions for accessible housing and public transport.

In 2012, a European Commission study indicated that the most frequent accessibility problems concerned the use of means of transport, the entrance to public buildings and street traffic.

In **Riga**, efforts have been made in several areas in recent years. While the public transport network is very developed (in the notable absence of a metro), only recent buses are accessible.

On the other hand, the new sidewalks are well laid out and the disability programme has had an impact.

**Russia:** According to official statistics, at least 13 million people with disabilities live in Russia, about 9% of the total population.

Russia starts from a distance in terms of disability policy since in 1980, the Soviet authorities organizing the Summer Olympics had then refused to host the Paralympic events, claiming that there were no disabled people in the USSR (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) at that time!

In the area of disability, the Act is the Act No. 181-FZ of 24 November 1995 on Social Protection of the Disabled is the most important, declaring that the state provides the same rights and opportunities to disabled people as to able-bodied persons.

But while Russian laws on disability are quite ambitious and rigorous in terms of access to housing and transport, they are poorly enforced because the means to enforce them are often lacking .

In 2012, Russia ratified the UNCRPD and, more generally, wanted to improve its image in this area on the eve of the 2014 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games in the Russian city of **Sochi**, whose organization helped break a taboo.

However, as part of the implementation of the convention, the Russian Government has launched a national programme in the field of accessibility (« Accessible environment, 2011-2015 »), with a budget of several billion rubles.

In particular, it aims to ensure barrier-free access to priority facilities and services for people with disabilities and reduced mobility by improving the accessibility of public spaces and transport for people with disabilities.

However, this programme has important limitations as it fails to specifically address the needs of people with intellectual or mental disabilities.

Public awareness campaigns were conducted on this occasion, such as the publication of manuals, information and reference documents and methodological guides and, most importantly, in 2013, the dissemination of advertising and informative messages to raise awareness of best practices in accessibility on several television channels, radio stations and websites.

But while the Russian government has taken high-profile measures to improve the accessibility of certain places, in terms of daily life - such as going to work or to the doctor's office - « people with disabilities are faced with a difficult task », according to André Mazzarino, a researcher on the rights of disabled people in Europe and Asia.

The priority in Russia in the field of disability is not to add new laws but simply to ensure that those already passed are properly implemented.

Human Rights Watch's report with the eloquent title, « Barriers Everywhere: Lack of Accessibility for People with Disabilities in Russia », released in September 2013, is based on more than 120 interviews with people with various types of disabilities and their families and documents the barriers that people with disabilities face daily when trying to get to government offices or workplaces, to stores, go to shops or access public transport.

This report showed that 30% of disabled children in Russia residing in state orphanages lived in conditions of violence and isolation.

The city of **Moscow** has made progress, thanks to a social development budget that is the largest of all: marked sidewalks at crossroads and crosswalks since 2010; elevators in larger buildings; ramps available at the feet of the newest buildings; an increasing number of Moscow public buildings accessible to disabled people (whether theaters, gymnasiums, swimming pools, cinemas, etc.).

However, the situation is less advanced in terms of public transport, since only 25% of Moscow's buses are adapted to accommodate wheelchair users and the capital's metro is still largely inaccessible to them. Nevertheless, the Stroguino station and those of the 12-Butovskaya line have elevators for people with reduced mobility.

And the Altoufievo and Stroguino stations also have special mobile ramps on the stairs.

The situation of the **St. Petersburg** metro is more satisfactory since all its new stations (which are mainly on the outskirts) are equipped with special elevators for people with reduced mobility and there is a special escort service - assistance of an employee to enter the metro, explanations provided on ticket purchase or travel planning - which can be booked free of charge by phone.

In the rest of the country, the situation is even less bright and improvements are still awaited.

Although Russia still has a long way to go before it becomes conducive to the movement of people with reduced mobility, it can nevertheless be considered that, thanks to the progress made, the country is now moving towards improving the daily lives of disabled people and is gradually moving away from the old Soviet vision that considered that the ideal family was based on « healthy, strong and courageous » individuals.

## **II/ Other OECD member countries**

### **2.1 North America**

**United States:** In 2010, the American authorities counted 57 million disabled people out of a population of 304 million, or nearly 19% of the population.

The United States is a leader or forerunner in disability policy, having initiated a vast deinstitutionalization and « normalization » movement in favour of people with disabilities since the 1960s.

This movement, led by people with disabilities, their associations acting as lobbies and certain politicians - including the Kennedy family - raised awareness very early on of the issue of the aging of people with disabilities.

Even before the 1960s, the United States had passed two important pieces of legislation: the Smith-Fess Act in 1920, which established a federal programme to promote the employment of Americans with physical disabilities.

In 1968, the Architectural Barriers Act was passed, requiring all buildings designed, constructed, altered or leased with federal funds to be accessible. This legislation addressed the biggest barrier to employment.

At the legislative level, the adoption, in 1973, of the Rehabilitation Act prohibiting discrimination against people with disabilities (but only for government agencies and federally contracted companies and programmes) and expanding vocational training programs was a founding act in making the built environment and transport more accessible, notably with its famous Article 504 and then, more importantly, on 26 July 1990, with the adoption by Congress of the far-reaching law on civil rights, on Americans with a disability - Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), which was promulgated by President George Bush and is designed to make American society more responsive to the 56 million people with disabilities by requiring states and local governments to ensure « equal enjoyment of goods, services and facilities in public places ».

This law, originally drafted in 1986 by the National Council on Disability, provided protections for persons with disabilities against discrimination similar to those in the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which outlawed discrimination based on race, religion, gender, and national origin.

It has been amended several times - most notably in 2008 - to broaden its scope and more effectively ensure the equal civil rights of all citizens.

With this law, « The doors are open and the barriers are coming down! » according to its proponent, Iowa Senator Tom Harkin.

The ADA has been divided into three sections: Title II is devoted to accommodation by state and local governments, while its Title III deals with public accommodation by private companies.

This Act introduces the principle of reasonable accommodation.

Included within the scope of this law are all public transport (all modes of transport must be accessible before July 2010) and premises open to the public (most of them are concerned, including restaurants, theaters, hotels, medical services, stores, libraries, etc.) and telecommunications (any discrimination against the hearing impaired is prohibited).

The ADA in fact covers extensively all aspects of daily life in which a person with a disability might encounter barriers.

The multiplication of Braille signs, for example in elevators, the presence of reserved parking spaces and the implementation of systems dedicated to the hearing impaired installed by television channels or websites are three illustrations of this.

Great efforts have been made by the construction industry to comply with the architectural standards imposed by the ADA.

The states have often adopted legislation that is more favourable to people with disabilities than the ADA, either by including in their laws disabilities excluded from the federal text (California, New York, New Jersey, Maine, etc.) or by extending the provisions of the ADA to all companies, regardless of their size (Michigan).

U.S. disability rights legislation is one of the most advanced in the world and is considered by many states to be a model of non-discrimination for persons with disabilities.

In the US, there is therefore a strong federal policy structured around the ADA Act, to which was added in 1988 the Fair Housing Amendments Act (FHAA), which imposes design and construction criteria for all multi-family homes built after March 1991.

In 1998, the United States passed an amendment to the above-mentioned 1973 Act known as « Section 508 », which deals with the accessibility of federal sites and government electronic resources to people with disabilities.

But despite these measures, Internet access remains a challenge for people with disabilities in the United States, according to the Pew Internet and American Life Project.

The disability movement has been a driving force in the rise of the federal state against the states, but the states as a whole have also been broadly supportive of the idea of federal legislation in this area.

Enforcement of the ADA in the area of transport accessibility is considered satisfactory overall, no doubt because of the high penalties incurred:

- . train and subway stations are almost all accessible by elevator and adapted stations are indicated on the bus and train maps;
- . the buses are always equipped with ramps and space for wheelchairs;
- . many stations are equipped with a talking automaton indicating the time of passage of buses and trains;
- . some cities even offer a « door-to-door » transport service, sometimes even from the suburbs.

In **New York City**, a city reputed to be one of the most accessible for people with reduced mobility, very significant progress has been made since 1990 in integrating people with physical, visual or hearing disabilities.

As far as the roadway is concerned, all sidewalks are very wide and at each intersection the sidewalks are adapted, allowing you to go down quietly to the crosswalk and back up to the opposite sidewalk.

The transport situation is contrasted there, since although the metro, which is very old (it dates back to 1904), is not sufficiently equipped to allow full accessibility of its 24 lines - nevertheless 110 stations out of 472 are fully adapted for wheelchair users with elevators (even if they may break down) as well as machines to buy one's MetroCard and doors and Braille metro maps and touch screens are made available for blind people-, buses are fully adapted to PRMs with ramps for easy access and there are a significant, albeit minority, number of cabs with ramps.

As for roads, the vast majority of sidewalks have ramps.

New York State is a leader in taking into account the aging of people with disabilities by including them in its gerontological plan « Project 2015. The future of aging in NY state » of a specific theme on the subject.

In **Los Angeles** (all 93 stations of the 6 underpass lines are accessible with elevators available in most underground stations, special wheelchair-accessible gantries and tactile surfaces covering the edges of platforms) and in **Washington** (all 91 stations are accessible), the subway maps for able-bodied people and people with motor disabilities, overlap perfectly.

In **Chicago**, the perfectly is rather mixed: while all city buses are accessible, this is not the case for about one-third of the subway stations (Chicago « L »), despite the significant efforts made since the 1980s by the Chicago Transit Authority (CTA) to provide access for all at its stations in compliance with the ADA programme.

Nevertheless, the mobility of blind people has been improved throughout the network thanks to the change in platform edge surfacing, the installation of Braille signs, and also thanks to audio announcements when the train arrives at the station to announce the color of the line.

**Canada** : According to the Council of Canadians with Disabilities (CCD), some 14 million people, or 14.3% of Canadians, report having a disability.

In Canada - which ratified the UNCRPD on 11 March 2010 - accessibility is a priority because of the belief that society owes a debt to persons with disabilities.

Canada endorsed the concept of « universal accessibility » as early as the 1980s, with the basic principle that all citizens have the right to access the same services.

The 1982 Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, which is an integral part of the Canadian Constitution, takes a different approach from the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) by putting in place a comprehensive system of protection for all groups considered to be victims of discrimination.

Section 15 (1) of the Charter prohibits « discrimination based on race, national or ethnic origin, (...) mental or physical disability ».



Legislation addressing the special needs of blind people was first introduced at the federal level with the Blind Persons Act (1951) and the Blind Persons' Rights Act (1976).

The 1977 Canadian Human Rights Act also protects all Canadians from discrimination by creating an ad hoc commission.

The Canadian Human Rights Act, passed in 1985, includes physical and mental disabilities as prohibited grounds of discrimination.

The Government of Canada's Accessibility Standard for Real Property sets out minimum standards for providing barrier-free access to federal real property in Canada and abroad. The purchase, design, construction and renovation of buildings must comply with this standard, which aims to ensure that buildings are accessible to people with physical, cognitive or sensory disabilities.

Under the 2011-2014 Investment in Affordable Housing program, investments have been made to increase the supply of affordable housing, promote self-sufficiency and security, and support the renovation of affordable housing for modest households, including those for people with disabilities. In 1996, the Canadian Transportation Act (CTA) guarantees the accessibility of public transport for persons with disabilities.

The federal institution Transport Canada establishes and monitors the policy legislative framework for an accessible transport system and manages a targeted research and development programme.

In October 1996, the Federal Task Force on Disability Issues (or « Scott Task Force ») released its report entitled « Equal Citizenship for Canadians with Disabilities: The Will to Act » which defined the role of the federal government as it applies to persons with disabilities and made recommendations in this regard.

In 2006, at the request of disability organizations, the government of Ottawa wanted to promote a general accessibility act that it felt was necessary to meet both international standards and the shortcomings in some provinces, with the federal government as the symbolic central level, but ten years later, the act had still not been introduced due to opposition from some provincial governments.

But that has finally changed with the passage of the Accessible Canada Act, the first federal legislation to make Canada a barrier-free country - Bill C-81 - now in place.

It applies as of July 2019 to the federally regulated private sector, which includes the banking, transport and telecommunications sectors, as well as to the Government of Canada, Parliament and Crown corporations.

The structures managed by the federal government (airports, airplanes, trains, banks, telecommunications, etc.) will then gradually become examples of accessibility.

This text establishes new structures and creates new positions, including :

- The Canadian Accessibility Standards Development Organization;
- An accessibility commissioner.

This text would probably not have seen the light without the mobilization of people with disabilities who, beginning in the 1970s, began to create their own organizations such as the Scarborough Recreation Club for Disabled Adults, the United Handicapped Groups of Ontario or the British Columbia Coalition of the Disabled.

The Office for Disability Issues (ODI) is the Government of Canada's focal point for advancing the full participation of persons with disabilities in Canadian society.

CCD believes that many barriers to accessibility fall under Federal jurisdiction: bank machines that are not accessible to people who are blind; airports that rely on video information screens; federal buildings and parks that are not accessible; television stations that lack captioning, etc. CCD also believes that there are many other barriers to accessibility that fall under Federal jurisdiction.

People with disabilities who feel discriminated against in terms of accessibility must go to court to win their case.

Nonetheless, disability policy in Canada has been built on a complex and sometimes conflicting federal reality (between the federal government and the provinces) resulting in a fragmentation of public policy between federal, provincial and territorial legislation.

It is therefore province by province, territory by territory, that the policy of accessibility and its results must be understood.

### **In Quebec :**

In la « Belle Province », the debate on accessibility is not new.

- In 1975, the Quebec Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms prohibits, in its Article 10, discrimination based on a handicap or the use of any means to palliate this handicap. Section 15 of the Charter specifies that a person cannot be prevented from having access to means of transport by discrimination.

- In the wake of this, the National Building Code makes it mandatory to make buildings accessible.

- In 1978, the Quebec government adopted a legislative tool that was very avant-garde at the time: the law ensuring the exercise of the rights of handicapped persons with a view to their educational, professional and social integration.

Adopted unanimously by the National Assembly, this Omnibus Bill - which amended several previous laws - concerning only the public sector, induces a real paradigm shift, which favours the recognition of human rights for all, regardless of their impairments and disabilities, rather than the protection and care advocated by previous bills.

This text is based on the following three pillars:

- . the involvement of everyone to promote the social integration of disabled people;
- . important responsibilities for partners with respect to people with disabilities;
- . the creation of the Office of Handicapped Persons of Quebec (OPHQ) playing a true cross-cutting monitoring role.

1. In 2004, this law was renamed the Act to secure handicapped persons in the exercise of their rights with a view to achieving social, school and workplace integration, which emphasizes the accountability of all public and private actors.

In June 2009, the Government of Quebec adopted the policy « Full Citizenship: For a Genuine Exercise of the Right to Equality » which aims to increase the social participation of people with disabilities (who number several hundred thousand in la « Belle Province ») over a 10 - year horizon.

Buildings subject to the National Building Code must meet the barrier-free design requirements set out in the Code, with some exceptions.

The Régie du Bâtiment du Québec<sup>5</sup> (RBQ) is working with the (OPHQ) to improve accessibility.

Finally, the Government of Quebec, through the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat, has put in place a regulation requiring institutional sites to be accessible since 2011.

In terms of transport, the accessibility of the Montreal metro leaves much to be desired since only eleven stations out of sixty-eight are equipped with elevators and eight are completely accessible to people with reduced mobility.

The lack of escalators in all directions or at all levels in some stations makes the metro difficult to access for people with disabilities. The first stations to be accessible were those built when line 2 was extended to Laval in the 2000s.

### **In Ontario :**

<sup>5</sup>Building management of Québec.

- In 2005, the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) was passed, setting a clear goal to make Ontario accessible by 2025 by establishing accessibility standards, requiring governments and organizations to report on compliance and investigating public complaints.

- Most importantly, in 2005, Ontario became the first province in Canada to enact the AODA, setting out a goal and timeline to achieve full accessibility by 2025.

The Act establishes a phased process for the development and implementation of accessibility standards in areas such as public transit, the built environment, public space design and websites.

Technical standards and guidelines for the accessibility of facilities and services have been adopted. An Accessibility Standards Advisory Council has been established to advise the Minister on matters related to the AODA.

The majority of the members of this organization are people with disabilities.

- Design of Public Spaces Standards (Accessibility Standards for the Built Environment) were adopted and added to Ontario Regulation 191/11 in December 2012.

Finally, the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) provides financial assistance, benefits, or employment assistance.

#### **In Manitoba :**

- In 2001, the Government of Manitoba released « Full Citizenship: A Manitoba Strategy on Disability » to help people with disabilities participate fully in all aspects of social life.

- Manitoba is the first Canadian province to officially recognize Sign Language.

- In 2009, the Government of Canada and the Province of Manitoba joined forces to make a joint investment of \$192 million to renovate existing affordable housing and build new ones.

- The Accessibility for Manitobans Act (AMA) was passed on 5 December 2013, resulting in the development of mandatory accessibility standards that address barriers for people with disabilities in key areas of their daily lives.

-The Accessibility Advisory Council, created in 2011, makes recommendations to the Minister responsible for persons with disabilities.

- The Government of Manitoba's second accessibility plan for 2019 and 2020 is being implemented.

#### **In Alberta :**

- The Alberta Building Code (ABC) contains provisions for barrier-free access and universal design.

- A law for the blind was passed in 2000.

- The Government of Alberta repealed mandatory safety standards for housing for persons with disabilities in April 2016.

- The Alberta Human Rights Commission offers awareness programs in the form of workshops and materials to increase understanding of the need to accommodate persons with disabilities.

- In May 2018, for the first time in its history, the Government of Alberta hired a disability advocate.

#### **In Saskatchewan :**

- In Saskatchewan, the Saskatchewan Human Rights Code guarantees persons with disabilities equal access to public services including transport and communication, facilities and services.

- In 2007, the Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission released the Guide to Accessibility Law for Saskatchewan Business and in 2013 the Government of Saskatchewan, through broad consultation, launched a comprehensive disability agenda (transport, housing availability and affordability, employment, education, etc.) with the stated goal of making Saskatchewan the most livable destination in Canada for people with disabilities.

#### **In New Brunswick :**

The 1985 New Brunswick Human Rights, often referred to as the Human Rights Code, protects individuals, including persons with disabilities, and specifically prohibits discrimination in employment, housing, services, advertising and associations.

Other legislation promoting accessibility includes the Official Languages Act and the New Brunswick Building Code Act.

#### **In Nova Scotia :**

The Human Rights Act, passed in 2010, prohibits discrimination on the basis of physical or mental disability.

But in early 2018, the Human Rights Commission found that the provincial government was slow to improve the way people with mental or physical disabilities are housed.

**Mexico:** : In 2012, according to the Director General of the National Council for the Development and Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities (CONADIS), Mexico had some 7.7 million people with disabilities, or about 6% of the population, half of whom suffer from motor impairment.

The vast majority of them live in poverty, including 1.7 million people living on an income below the minimum welfare threshold.

If for a long time disability was seen in Mexico as a divine punishment, the situation has fortunately changed since then.

Article 1 of the Mexican Constitution thus prohibits all forms of discrimination against persons with disabilities, which obliges public authorities to work toward the creation of an inclusive Mexico.

And as early as the 1980s, this country adopted a development plan that included activities for the reintegration of people with disabilities.

Then, in the 1990s, the first national programme for the welfare and development of people with disabilities was adopted.

In 2005, as in France, the first general law in favour of people with disabilities was adopted, before Mexico signed and ratified the UNCRPD in 2007.

The CONADIS was subsequently established as the entity responsible for state policy for persons with disabilities.

Following the passage in May 2011 of the General Law for the Inclusion of People with Disabilities (Ley General para la Inclusion de las Personas con Discapacidad), which provides that all policies developed by the public authorities in the field of disability must be based on equity, justice and equal opportunities, the National Program for the Development and Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities adopted for the period 2014-2018 includes virtually all the provisions of the UNCRPD.

The National System for the Development and Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities was created as a mechanism for the coordination, monitoring, and evaluation of public policies arising from this national program.

Finally, with the adoption, in 2011, of the reform of the General Tourism Act - an important economic sector in Mexico - which introduced the concept of « accessible tourism », measures have been taken to promote access to historical buildings and monuments for all, including people with physical disabilities. Infrastructure and services are therefore being modernized.

In February 2013, the Mayan Riviera beaches have been developed (in **Playa del Carmen**, the municipality has set up wheelchair ramps and also offers adapted deckchairs and life jackets).

Despite 30 years of efforts to promote the economic and social rights of persons with disabilities, significant delays and discrimination against them persisted, as did the scarcity of sidewalks.

Deaf and hard of hearing people, for example, are particularly disadvantaged since Mexican sign language interpreters have to fight to have their profession recognized at its true value.

We should not forget to mention the action of the 32 federative entities in Mexico, all of which have disability legislation. Eighteen of them have harmonized their legislation with the provisions of the aforementioned UN Convention to prohibit discrimination on the basis of disability.

## **2.2 South America**

**Chile:** 20% of the Chilean population (which includes 17.9 million inhabitants) suffer from a disability, 8% of which are severely handicapped.

Chile was one of the first countries in the world to ratify the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in July 2008.

Following the passage of a major law for people with disabilities in 1994, Chile passed a new disability law in 2010 establishing standards of equal opportunity and social inclusion for people with disabilities: Law No. 20.422 of 10 February 2010 on the « Rights of People with Disabilities in Chile ».

This text was at the origin of the creation of the Ministry of Social Development National Disability Service or Servicio Nacional de la Discapacidad (SENADIS), which replaced the former National Disability Fund or Fondo Nacional de la Discapacidad (FONADIS) created in 1994.

SENADIS' mission is to promote the right to equal opportunity for people with disabilities and accessibility, and has a budget of \$26 million for this purpose.

In 2005, the Chilean government also published the results of the first major national study on disability.

The existence of an Under-Secretariat of State for Disability, attached to the Ministry of Social Development, as well as the Presidential Advisory Commission on the Social Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities to advise the President in the analysis of disability issues (created in December 2014) should be highlighted.

The inclusion label of this national service (Sello Chile Inclusivo del SENADIS) consists of an award given to private companies and public institutions that are inclusive and accessible to people with disabilities.

The requirements for this award are: universal accessibility of buildings, universal accessibility of websites and working with people with disabilities.

However, in terms of transport, the results are still mixed: for example, 28% of the buses in **Santiago's** transport system (« Transantiago ») are not equipped with the necessary devices to guarantee their adequate use by people with reduced mobility: some buses lack platforms or ramps, reserved spaces for wheelchairs, low push-buttons, light and sound buttons, etc.

On the other hand, in the Chilean capital's metro, 77 out of 136 stations, or 71% of the network, are accessible: i.e., they are equipped with devices and infrastructures that allow use by disabled people, including elevators, podotactile guide strips for the visually impaired, Braille information on handrails and turnstiles, and sound beacons in elevators and trains.

With regard to housing, criticism is also strong since it is believed that people with disabilities are most often denied their right to housing.

This is particularly true of social housing, which is not adequate in that it does not encourage the movement of people with disabilities, both inside and outside the home.

## **2.3 Asia and Oceania**

**Japan:** There are an estimated 7.5 million people with disabilities in Japan, or 6% of the national population.

The level of accessibility in Japan is inversely proportional to the slowness with which this State ratified the UNCRPD, since it did so only on 20 January 2014, becoming the 140th country to ratify it (after many other Asian States such as China and South Korea), even though this founding text was adopted as early as December 2006 by the United Nations General Assembly and came into force in May 2008.

After the adoption of the 1949 Law for the Welfare of Physically Disabled, the 1960 Law for the Welfare of Mentally Retarded Persons and the Framework Law of Orientation No. 84 of 21 May 1970 on the Disabled (which until 1993 only concerned physically disabled people and proposed a definition of a disabled person), several major laws have been passed in the last 15 years:

- Services and Supports for Persons with Disabilities Act, which has been in force since April 2006.
- The Basic Law on Persons with Disabilities - which was amended in August 2011 - now includes in its Article 4, paragraph 2 an « obligation to make necessary and reasonable accommodations » to eliminate barriers in society.

The wording is not unambiguous, but this is the first time that a Japanese law mentions the making of reasonable accommodation.

- Also in June 2013, the Act for Eliminating Discrimination against Persons with Disabilities was adopted. The second paragraph of its Article 7 states that « an administrative organ, etc., (...) , must provide reasonable accommodation to implement the elimination of the social barrier », provided that the cost is not excessive. For those affected, this law has shortcomings due to the change of government at the time, as the returning Liberal Democratic Party reduced the initial ambitions of the text.

- Finally, the law to promote paratransit for the elderly and handicapped or the law to eliminate barriers is inspired by the concept of universal design.

Japan is one of the countries in the world that has taken the issue of access to public places for people with disabilities to heart.

Raised city maps are common and it is even possible to find directions in Braille.

As a result, the number of blind people taking public transport on the streets is particularly high in this country.

In Japan, most buildings are equipped with ramps.

Similarly, the trains are fully accessible to wheelchairs, both in width and in «elevation».

In every train - or almost - there are elevators attached to the stairs for people in wheelchairs, and to use them, it is enough to call a station agent.

Japan has retained many of the jobs of agents at station ticket counters in streetcar stations, close to the machines that issue tickets.

In transport, sound information is abundant: a synthesized voice follows the route of all trains, subways, streetcars and buses.

The same degree of sound information is found on the docks: all the information scrolling on the banners is also broadcast via loudspeakers.

There are many « tenji blocks », non-flat yellow strips with pins (tactile) to help blind or visually impaired people to better guide themselves, especially in transport areas.

The **Tokyo** metro's extensive network - operated by two private companies - takes wheelchair travel into account rather well, since 186 of its 285 stations are fully accessible.

A regulation imposing quantitative obligations for audio description in television programmes was adopted in Japan with the setting of a 10% quota for generalist channels.

At the same time, Japan has been using the vast array of new information and communication technologies to offer blind people new opportunities: in 2003, the Japanese government launched a three-year project called the « IT barrier free project », which transforms the white cane of blind people into a radio antenna.

And the QD Laser company has developed « smart glasses » capable of projecting images directly into the retina of the wearer.

Another example is the autonomous wheelchairs (just enter the desired destination in your smartphone and the wheelchair does the rest...) introduced in 2017 at Tokyo-Haneda airport, to make travel easier for disabled people.

In the run-up to the Tokyo 2020 Olympic and Paralympic Games, Japan is stepping up the momentum it has been building for several years to adapt a large part of its infrastructure and transport to people with reduced mobility. During the Games - where up to 7,000 people in wheelchairs are expected to travel every day - a blue sticker will be visible everywhere indicating perfect accessibility.

**South Korea:** Persons with disabilities are estimated by the Catholic Church to make up about 10 percent of South Korea's population, a figure much higher than that reported by the government because the National Bureau of Statistics reports that only 1.8 million persons with disabilities were registered in 2005, or 4 percent of the total population.

The Catholic Church declared in May 2017 that it wanted to end the discrimination often experienced by persons with disabilities.

The 2018 12th Paralympic Winter Game provided an opportunity to highlight the initiatives taken in favour of people with disabilities - trains to competition venues equipped with 15 wheelchair spaces as opposed to the normal 5, 46 buses and 139 minivans equipped with a wheelchair access system- in a country that has long stigmatized them.

**Turkey:** Out of a population of more than 83 million, about 7% are disabled.

Article 61 of the Constitution provides that « the state shall take measures to protect the disabled and secure their integration into community life. To achieve these aims the state shall establish the necessary organisations or facilities, or arrange for their establishment by other bodies ».

Turkey signed the UNCRPD in 2007 and ratified it in 2009.

Numerous laws on accessibility have been adopted over the past ten years, in particular Law No. 3194 Governing Urban Development and Land Use Planning amended in 2003, which establishes the obligation to meet the accessibility standards set by the Turkish Standards Institute (TSE), and the July 2013 Regulation on Monitoring and Auditing Accessibility Arrangements.

The Turkish Ministry of Family and Social Policies is planning to draw up an action plan in the near future for people with disabilities, with a view to their integration into social life.

The transport accessibility situation in the major cities (**Istanbul, Ankara, Antalya**, etc.) is rather encouraging because most public transport is fairly recent and, as a result, is often designed to meet accessibility standards.

It should be noted that in Istanbul, these are free of charge for disabled people.

In Istanbul, all stations of the six lines of the metro - which only came into service in 1989 - are equipped with escalators and elevators providing wheelchair access.

**Israel:** Israel places great importance on accessibility for people with disabilities - there are an estimated 680,000 disabled people between the ages of 21 and 65 - within its infrastructure.

The Hebrew state has a fairly broad legislative arsenal concerning the rights of disabled people in the collective space. Priority is given to the accessibility of buildings and public transport, including cabs.

In 1998, a major Law on equal rights for persons with disabilities was adopted, the Equal Rights for Persons with Disabilities Law, which focuses on information for disabled citizens (« A person with disabilities has the right to be informed about all existing public services, in a satisfactory manner

and in accordance with the circumstances » (Article 18), equality in employment (prohibition of discrimination at all stages of employment) and the accessibility of public transport (chapter V) with the obligation for the authorities to facilitate access by persons with disabilities to city buses, trains, planes and passenger liners - which has significantly changed the daily lives of the latter.

Its Section 19 B guarantees the right of persons with disabilities to access all public places and services.

A Commission for Equal Rights of Persons with Disabilities was established to oversee its implementation.

Then, the Labor, Social Welfare and Health Committee of the Knesset (the Israeli Parliament) passed a Law in February 2009 requiring that all public buildings become accessible to people with disabilities: they must include a parking lot and wheelchair access at the elevator level. This law applies to all new construction of public structures in Israel.

These must include a parking lot and wheelchair access at the stairs.

The elevators must also be adapted to the needs of disabled persons and the toilets must be made accessible to disabled people.

At the end of 2016, the Knesset adopted a new directive from the Ministry of Health obliging all as yet unequipped buildings dependent on this ministry to install access systems for people with disabilities. These are mainly hospitals, dispensaries, medical imaging centers, etc.

In 2010, the Ministry of Transport, Infrastructure & Road Safety announced that all buses will be accessible to disabled passengers starting in 2012.

Since the end of December 2014, when the law on the best adaptation of urban transport to the needs of the disabled came into force, actions have been stepped up to meet legal requirements.

One of them is « Galgalim Darom » (Wheels in the South), whose mission is to help the 67,000 disabled people in the south of the country make better use of urban transport.

In addition to a hotline, an extensive network of volunteers accompanies these people when they have to take the bus or train.

Carpooling systems are also planned.

The construction of a small town adapted to physically and mentally disabled people is planned in the Negev desert.

The Israeli Ministry of Tourism has, for its part, developed a significant number of projects for people with reduced mobility and has drawn up a 6.5 million shekel (more than 1.5 million euros) plan to facilitate access to tourist sites such as the Old City of **Jerusalem**, the **Caesarea** Amphitheater or the **Masada** fortress, near the Dead Sea, which has been fitted out for the blind or visually impaired with the inclusion of Braille indications and the possibility of feeling the objects there.

Israel's expertise in technology for disabled people is recognized: no less than 70 start-ups are working on visual disorders.

In addition, the Israel Innovation Authority (IIA) has earmarked 3 million shekels in 2017 to develop applications for people with autism spectrum disorders, the visually impaired and people in wheelchairs.

**Australia:** About 19% of Australia's population of 25.2 million has a disability or impairment, according to the Australian Bureau of Statistics on Disability, Ageing and Carers.

Australia, without a doubt, is very modern in its approach to the issue of disability and its accessibility policy is widespread, even in places that seem the most difficult to access.

Two key Laws related to persons with disabilities were passed between 1986 and 1992: the Disability Services Act in 1986 and the Disability Discrimination Act in 1992, which protects



people from discrimination on the basis of disability in employment, education, public premises, or the provision of goods and services.

Even if this principle suffers from exceptions, the most notable of which is immigration, which allows the Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs (DIMA) to legally base a refusal of entry into the country on a person's state of health.

Amended several times since then, the aforementioned law of 1992 specifies the obligations of accessibility of Web sites.

A forum was also organized in April 2003 to use the various measures taken by the six states to make homes more adaptable.

On 17 July 2008, Australia ratified the UNCRPD.

Australia has long favoured the travel of disabled people (wheelchair users, blind and hard of hearing people) and many infrastructures are adapted: all hotels are therefore required to have at least one adapted room.

In addition, the new premises must meet the minimum standards for accessibility set by the 2010 Act.

It was in 2002 that the minimum standards applicable to operators of public transport vehicles, infrastructure and premises came into force.

In addition, sidewalks, cars and some cabs are also adapted for easier access, just as standard rental vehicles can also be equipped with devices adapted to the nature of the disability.

In large cities such as **Sydney** or **Melbourne**, all trains are accessible, as are most buses and streetcars, whether for people in wheelchairs or those with visual impairments.

The difficulty often resides outside the urban areas, such as in the suburbs.

An Australian plus to highlight: the existence of a national relay service that enables people with a hearing impairment to communicate by telephone through intermediaries or a telephone line to assist people who have difficulty accessing buildings.

There are also associations such as « Travelers Aid » whose aim is to help disabled travelers by offering them, for example, an accompaniment to the airport, train station, doctor or pharmacy.

The exemplary character of the metropolis of Melbourne, arguably one of the world's most disability-friendly cities, should be highlighted: well-developed public transport system, compact city center, etc.

Overall, Australia has shown that it is an actress committed to equal rights.

**New Zealand:** According to Statistics New Zealand's definition, 660,000 New Zealanders report having a disability, representing 13.5% of the total population.

New Zealand's ambition to ensure the full participation of persons with disabilities of all ages and to improve their well-being dates back several decades.

For example, New Zealand Ambassador Don MacKay chaired the negotiations that led to the adoption of the UNCRPD in 2006. People with disabilities were part of his delegation.

Even before that date, the country was already on the path towards the integration of people with disabilities, having adopted a Disability Strategy in 2000, under which the Minister responsible for disability Issues must report annually to Parliament on progress made in this area, a strategy that is continuously updated. Another remarkable example is that in April 2006, the country was the first country in the world to recognize sign language as an official language (the third with English and Maori), which is spoken by about 25,000 people.

This status allows it to be taught in schools and some of them give courses in sign language.

As a consecration, New Zealand received in May 2008 the Franklin Delano Roosevelt International Disability Award for significant progress towards the goal of full participation of people with disabilities.

In its policy, New Zealand refers more to « disabled people » rather than « persons with disabilities ».

Thanks to this proactive policy, a real effort has been made in this country in terms of accessibility and the state of accessibility in New Zealand can be considered satisfactory overall.

The 2004 Building Act sets out detailed rules to ensure accessibility (« reasonable and adequate access ») of new buildings or those undergoing substantial redevelopment, particularly for people in wheelchairs or with impaired vision. However, there are some exceptions.

The creation of a coordination mechanism with the ministerial committee on disability issues has facilitated this process as well as the implementation of its 2014-2018 accessibility action plan, which is still underway.

The NZ Urban Design Protocol, a voluntary framework coordinated by the Ministry for the Environment, aims to ensure that cities welcome all categories of citizens and provide opportunities for people with disabilities.

Many shops and public buildings are now wheelchair accessible - more than in France, no doubt - and, in general, when a building is not accessible, it is not uncommon to find a telephone number at its entrance.

It is estimated that 90% of professional buildings are accessible.

Nevertheless, the dwellings are less accessible because New Zealanders live mostly in houses, many of which are made of wood and surrounded by a covered terrace that can be accessed by a staircase.

Museums and other tourist attractions generally have a good rate of accessibility for all kinds of disabilities.

The roads are generally in good condition and the sidewalks are accessible almost all the time.

However, in neighborhoods a little further from the city centers, the sidewalks are not necessarily arranged: there can be no boats to get on and off.

In terms of transport accessibility, regional public transport projects, developed by regional councils, must ensure that basic community activities and services are accessible.

Persons with disabilities participate in the work of regional land transport committees.

Many buses, especially the newer ones, are equipped with folding ramps, a reserved space and the driver can tilt the bus.

And audio announcements on request of the passenger are introduced.

Please note that the **Wellington** City provides « Mobility Scooters » free of charge for up to 4 hours.

All persons 18 years of age and older with mobility problems can have access to it.