

**Rock solid Foundation, the Netherlands**



**Youth  
in Action**

**“Guidance handbook on a  
healthy interaction with  
people with disabilities”**

**Raluca Oancea & Chris van Maanen**

**2013**

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# Guidance handbook on a healthy interaction with people with disabilities

## 1. Preface & Premise

### Preface..

This handbook is the result of the Training course: “Guidance handbook on a healthy interaction with people with disabilities”, a project under the frame of Youth in Action in the form of a Training Course held in the Netherlands between October 28 and November 7, 2013. Youngsters from Bulgaria, Slovenia, Poland, Czech Republic, Turkey, Italy, Netherlands and Romania did participate and contributed to this handbook.

The original idea and first design was made by Raluca Oancea from Adapto Association, Romania. She was also co-trainer in the project. Together with the organizer and main Trainer Chris van Maanen from Rock solid Foundation, the Netherlands they worked out the training and, with help of all the participants, created this guidance handbook. Everybody’s input was essential for the success of this project, also sharing the knowledge and experience in making this handbook a reality. A special thank to the support staff: Adriana Solovei (Moldova), Daniela Nemeti Baba (Romania), Anci Csatlos (Romania) for all their help in realizing the handbook and to Anže Podobnik (Slovenia) for realizing the drawings.

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## **.. & Premise**

A study made by United Nations says that around 10% of the world's population, or 650 million people live with a disability and it's considered the world's largest minority. Objectively speaking, the disability is a part of our reality, it's something that everybody normally face at least once in their life, maybe in other ones life or their selves, on a longer or shorter term, on a stronger or lighter complexity.

So, we can't say that disability, in general, is something very uncommon. Despite this, there isn't always an easy interaction with persons with different impairments, the uneasy reactions emerge not necessarily from unkindness but from lack of experience, not having a positive example, or ignorance. The exclusion "works" out both ways: first for the person with disabilities for obvious reasons but also for the other person, because he/she is retreating in his/her ignorance.

If one of the persons is young and inexperienced in this area, it would be useful to have a little help. There were ore then a few occasions that we spotted the need of having some advice on this matter, someone to break the ice or on whose example we can rely on. When there is a desire of social interaction with a person with disabilities usually only some ideas can be handy and sufficient.

Through this leaflet we don't want to replace the specialized advices, we just want to give some basic tips that can be used on certain occasions like when you meet, communicate with or want to offer your help to a person with disabilities.

In this handbook you can find a set of clear guidelines to help you to make better choices in terms of communication and interaction with people with disabilities. The Guidelines try to give some basic disability etiquette ideas, explain preferred terminology when communicating with/about people with disabilities, and offer suggestions for appropriate ways to interact and offer help to persons with disabilities. The Guidelines reflect the input from the experience of 40 persons with and without disabilities from 8 countries and some recommendations from other disability organizations from around the world.

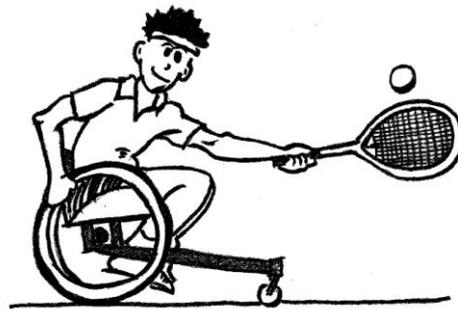
# 2. Defining disability

## 2.1 Defining disability

The definition of disability is highly contentious for several reasons. It is only in the past century that the term “disability” has been used to refer to a distinct class of people. Historically, “disability” has been used also as a synonym for “inability”; different characteristics are considered disabilities: Paraplegia, deafness, blindness, diabetes, autism, epilepsy, depression, HIV, etc. have all been classified as “disabilities”.

A disability could be defined as a consequence of a condition that limits a person to use one or more of his/her abilities such as walking, talking, seeing, hearing, reasoning or learning.

But remember that it's not always easy to tell if a person has a disability or what kind of disability he/she might have. If a person behaves odd, you should always consider the fact that they may have a disability that is not immediately obvious.



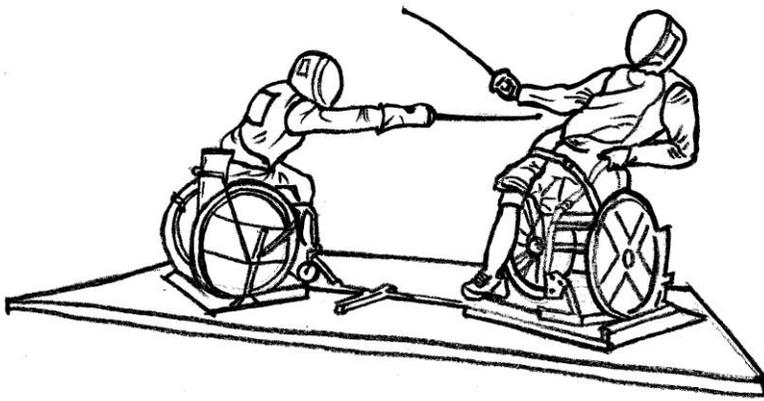
Just be yourself and let common sense and friendship break down any barriers you may encounter.

According to some people, having a disability can go further than what we consider the usual meaning of the term in general, for example:

- If you are shy to communicate or don't really know how to handle a good communication with other people;
- Having something that makes you feel uncomfortable;
- Lack of knowledge (for example, some people feel like they have a disability if they don't know the spoken language of the country/community they are visiting);
- Reduced stamina, fatigue, or tire easily (due to a variety of temporary or permanent conditions)
- Respiratory conditions (due to heart disease, asthma, emphysema, chemical or environmental sensitivities or other symptoms triggered by stress, exertion, or exposure to small amounts of dust or smoke, fragrances and fragranced products, cleaning agents, and other chemical fumes, etc.)
- Time can surpass a disability's effect (if you invest enough time in a friendship with someone with a speaking problem, you can understand each other perfectly);
- Having temporary limitations due to, but not being limited to: surgery, accidents or injuries (broken bones, amygdalitis, appendicitis, etc).

Conclusion: A broad definition of disability leaves no one behind because everybody has to surpass some limitations range in severity and duration (partial to total, temporary to permanent) at some point in their lives. So the conclusion of the group was that, at some level, “Everybody has a disability in their own way” just that in some cases the limitations are more pronounced.

## 2.2 Disability versus handicap



A disability is a condition that can be caused by genetics, an accident, disease or trauma that may limit a person's abilities like vision, hearing, speech, mobility, or cognitive function.

Some people with disabilities have one or more impairments.

A handicap is a physical or attitudinal constraint that is imposed upon a person, regardless of whether that person has a disability.

Steep ramps, stairs, no elevator in a building that has more than one floor level, narrow doorways, are just some examples of handicaps or barriers imposed upon people with disabilities who use wheelchairs.

# 3. Interaction with people with disabilities

## 3.1 Socializing

People are social beings and interaction is a daily natural process, no matter the differences between us.

Involve a person with a disability in conversations or activities, do not leave him/her out because you feel uncomfortable or you fear that he/she will feel uncomfortable. Invite him/her as you would anyone else and let it be their decision if they want to participate or not.

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## 3.2 Meeting a person with disabilities

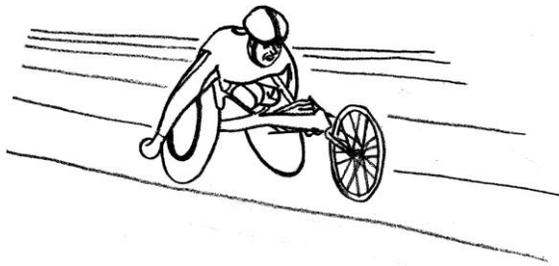
When you meet a person with a disability for the first time, greet him/her by smiling and offering a greeting gesture or spoken greets. Extend your hand to shake if that is what you normally do, if the person can't he/she will let you know. He/she will appreciate that you treat them as anyone else. For those who cannot shake hands, touch the person on the shoulder or arm to welcome and acknowledge their presence.

If you meet a blind person; identify yourself first. If you know each other or if you have met before, remind him/her the context; he/she doesn't have the visual clues to refresh his/her memory.

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## 3.3 Breaking the barriers

### 3.3.1 Environment



When you have a meeting with a person with disabilities, be sensitive when choosing the setting.

If you go out with somebody that uses a wheelchair, choose a place with ramps or elevator and make sure the doors (entrance, elevator, bathroom) are big enough for a wheelchair to fit.

A noisy or dark environment, or people talking in the same time, might make it difficult for people with a speech, hearing or vision disability to participate in a conversation.

Be aware that a person with chemical sensitivity may have a reaction to smoke, perfume, cleaning products, or other forms of toxins in the environment.

If a person who uses a wheelchair is visiting your home or office, rearrange the furniture so the wheelchair has access to areas prior to the person's arrival. Also, arrange clear paths of travel for people with visual impairments and describe surroundings, with possible obstacles. Also if someone with visual impairments is coming more often to that place don't change the furniture without telling and don't leave mess on the floor, because often they will remember very quick the place and its obstacles.

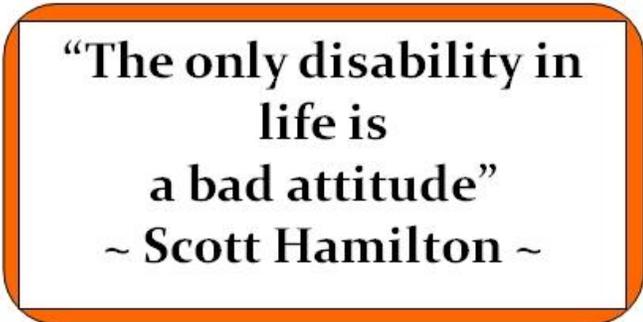
### **3.3.2 Attitude and approach**

When you meet people with various impairments, you may be apprehensive about how you should behave towards that individual. Every person is different and some will find it easy to interact and socialize with some individuals, also others will find it difficult to adjust. Always remember that a person with a disability is a person. He/she is like anyone else, except for the limitations connected to their disability. People with disabilities (and everybody else as a matter of fact) prefer that you focus on their abilities not on their limitations. Appreciate the person first. Avoid looks and words that show pity. Attitudes and behaviors are the most difficult barriers for people with disabilities to overcome.

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## **3.4 Disability etiquette**

Many people feel uncomfortable around people with disabilities, not because of the disability, but because they don't know how to behave when they are in the presence of a person with impairments. You again need to realize that a person with disabilities is exactly as any other person, as you and me. He/she has the same inner aspirations; the same fears, has the same needs as you do and also feels the same. We all strive towards similar goals. The only difference is that he/she has more or other limitations than you do.



**“The only disability in  
life is  
a bad attitude”  
~ Scott Hamilton ~**

*Etiquette* is the customary code of polite behavior in society or among members of a particular profession or group.

The rules of etiquette when dealing with people with disabilities are mostly the same as the general rules of good manners in society. Communication should come as natural as possible, but of course, there are some issues that need to be taken into consideration, especially by people with less experience and knowledge in the field, in order to avoid awkward situations, offending someone or being impolite.

Here are some general recommendations, but keep in mind that everyone is different and some rules can apply differently according to circumstances:

- One of the first rules when meeting a person with a physical disability is: don't stare!
- If you just met a person with disabilities, avoid making remarks that are intrusive or to personal. Do not ask inappropriate questions. Example: do not say "What happened to you?" or "Why can't you walk properly?"
- Refer to a person's impairment only if it is essential to the conversation, or if the person raises the topic or indicates that he/she wants to discuss it.
- When writing about a person with disability emphasize on the person's individuality, rather than his/her impairment. Never define people by their disabilities.
- Be yourself - as in any new situation, everyone will feel more comfortable if you relax.



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## 3.5 Communication

When communicating with a person with a disability, rely on your common sense. Treat others as you would like to be treated and always allow yourself to adapt to the person's individual preference. Keep in mind that you're communicating well when the other person actually understands the message you mean for him/her and vice versa.

### 3.5.1 General suggestions in communication

General suggestions when communicating with a person with disabilities:

- Communicate and behave like you would with anybody else.
- If needed, adapt communication to the people's needs.
  - Remember 4 main rules in communication: stay focused, listen carefully, try to see the other person's point of view, respond with empathy.
  - If you have difficulties in communicating with a person with disabilities, find another way and try again (for example, use drawings, a computer, etc).
- Speak directly to the person with disabilities, rather than through the assistant, the companion, attendant, or interpreter who may also be present.
- Never speak about the person as if he/she is invisible, cannot understand what is being said, or is unable to speak for him/herself.
- Do not ridicule someone because of impairment — this is oppressive behavior and should not be tolerated. At the same time, an attitude that is patronizing or shows fake enthusiasm is also demeaning.



### 3.5.2 Language

Language plays a critical role in shaping our thoughts, beliefs, and feelings. Language is a powerful tool so it should be used properly:

- Choose your words - take care not to make intrusive, offensive or inappropriate personal remarks.
- Avoid words or phrases that shape an incorrect perception on people with disabilities.
- Using the term "Normal" too much could be inappropriate as it is highly subjective, who or what is normal anyway?

### 3.5.3 Language ‘dos’ and ‘don’ts’

Here you can find a list with words that can be offensive to the persons with disabilities versus acceptable and appropriate language:

Use*	Avoid
- Person with disabilities; - Person facing challenges; - Person with different abilities,	The disabled
- Having a disability; - He/she has...(the disability);	Handicapped, suffering from... afflicted by... a victim of...
- Person with epilepsy, dyslexia;	Epileptic, dyslexic, schizophrenic
- John has a mobility impairment;	‘John is mobility impaired’
- The wheelchair user; - Person on wheelchair;	The wheelchair person
- Person with hearing impairment; - Person with hearing limitation; - Deaf people;	The deaf, deaf and dumb
- The wheelchair user; - Using a wheelchair for mobility;	Wheelchair bound, confined to a wheelchair
- Person with disabilities;	Crippled, spastic
- Person with Down syndrome;	Mongol
- Person with visual impairment; - Person with no sight, blind person; - Person with sight limitations;	The blind
- Person without any visible disability; - Person without physical disabilities; - Typical person;	Able bodied
- Person with Dyslexia or Alexia; - Person with a reading disability;	Word blind
- Person with a mental disability; - Person with learning disabilities;	Mental handicapped
- Person who has experienced emotional or mental distress; - Person with mental health disability;	Mentally ill
- Toilet for people with disabilities; - Accessible toilet;	Disabled toilet
- Person with a seizure disorder; - Little person, person with a restricted growth;	Dwarf, midget
- Never use victim!!!	A victim of... (Disability)

- Having a...	
- Person who cannot speak; - A person who has a speech disability	Tongue-tied, mute
- Parking for people with disabilities; - Reserved parking spot for person with disabilities, accessible parking;	Handicapped parking
- Busses, bathrooms for people with disabilities; - Accessible busses, bathroom, etc.	Handicapped busses, bathroom etc.
- Person with a congenital disorder; - Born with limitations;	Birth defect
- Work from home;	Homebound employment
- He/she lives with a disability	Overcame her disability
Never use these terms because they are negative and reinforce stereotypes!	Mad, crazy, bonkers, loony, subnormal, not normal, unnatural, invalid, unfortunate
* These words are acceptable at the moment but always subject to change and continuing debate	

If you cannot communicate you cannot be involved and so, you are left out. Solution: find the way to, adapt your methods.

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## 3.6 Interaction and different kind of disabilities

### 3.6.1 General suggestions

1. **Behave naturally and respectfully, as you would like to be treated**

2. **Don't assume, just ask**

Do not assume anything about a person with disabilities. Just because a person has impairment, doesn't mean that has also others (for example: a person in a wheelchair does not necessarily have a mental disability, nor is a person who is blind likely to have a hearing impairment).

If you don't know whether you are behaving appropriately or using the right language. Just ask.



3. **Eye contact** - always look directly at the person when speaking to him/her.. the same applies if is a person with disabilities.
4. **Treat people with disabilities with dignity and respect, not condescension and pity** - don't patronize or talk down to people with disabilities. Do not put people with a disability up on a pedestal or talk to them in patronizing terms as if their performing normal, everyday activities were exceptional.
5. **Encourage to express his/her opinions** - if the person is an adult, treat him/her as such and if the person is a child, listen to his ideas and encourage him/her.
6. **Use a normal tone of voice** - raising the voice causes confusion, if the person doesn't understand he/she will let you know
7. **Be sure to make public events accessible** by considering the needs of people with disabilities when planning these events. If an insurmountable barrier exists, let them know about it prior to the event.
8. **Respect the personal space of the person with disabilities.** Example: Keep a safe distance from the wheelchair, if the person is using one. Don't hang on/lean on a person's wheelchair or use it without permission. Remember that a wheelchair becomes a body extension for its user and it is extremely important for that person. The same holds true for crutches, walkers and canes.

#### Touching

Don't touch or play with a service animal, which is assisting a person with a disability, without permission. In this case the dog is not a pet, it is responsible for its owner's safety and is always working.



**cause discomfort and awkwardness.**

Do not touch a person with a disability unless there is a good reason (such as shaking hands in greeting or if the person has requested assistance). However, you may gently touch a deaf person to get his attention. Never push a person's wheelchair without his or her permission.

Please don't recoil if you meet a person with AIDS; shake his hand as you would anyone. You can't get AIDS by touching.

9. Do not try to avoid using common words or expressions containing words like "see", "walk" or "hear" around people with disabilities. **Being overly conscious of a person's disability can**

10. **Don't park in accessible parking spots, occupy seats on trains or buses**

**reserved for persons with disabilities or use accessible bathroom facilities.** What for some is a choice, for others is a necessity. (There is a nice sticker people sometimes stick to someone's car if it is parked wrong that says: if you want my parking spot, the please also take my disability ☺)

11. **Relax.** We all make mistakes. If you forget some courtesy, just offer your apology. Keep a sense of humor and a willingness to interact.

### **3.6.2 Impairment-specific interaction strategies**

Bellow you can find some indications regarding interaction with persons with specific disabilities:

#### **Mobility impairments**

When you are with a person who uses a wheelchair keep the following in mind:

\* When talking with a person in a wheelchair or of short stature for more than a few minutes, ask the person if he/she would like to move to a place where you could sit and speak at an appropriate eye level. Like this both of you will spare a stiff neck. If in doubt, ask the person for his/her preference. If not, you could sit or kneel in front of the person;



\* Avoid inappropriate gestures like patting the person with disabilities on the head, reserve this sign of affection for children;

\* Don't discourage children from asking questions of a person who uses a wheelchair about their wheelchair. Open communication usually helps overcome fearful or misleading attitudes;

\* Don't assume that using a wheelchair is a tragedy and don't classify a person who uses a wheelchair as "ill" or "sick". A well fitted wheelchair actually can be a mean of freedom that allows the user to move around independently and fully engage in life.

\* When a person who uses a wheelchair "transfers" out of the wheelchair to a chair, car, bed, etc. do not move the wheelchair out of reach. If you think it would be best to move it for some reason, ask the person who uses the wheelchair about the best option for them.

\* Speak in a normal voice to a person who uses a wheelchair, cane or crutches.

#### **Hearing disabilities**

When talking with a person who is deaf or uses a hearing aid, keep the following in mind:



\* To get the attention of a person who has a hearing disability, tap the person on the shoulder or wave your hand;

\* When talking with someone with a hearing disability, face the person while speaking and speak clearly, slowly and expressively to establish if the person can read your lips. Many

people with such impairments are able to understand the message by reading the lips of the speaker.

- \* It's preferable to let the person take the lead in establishing the communication mode, such as lip-reading, sign language, or writing notes;
- \* Those who know lip-reading will rely on facial expressions and other body language to help understand. Show consideration by facing a light source and keeping your hands and food away from your mouth when speaking. Avoid chewing gum, smoking or covering your mouth while speaking. Keep mustaches well-trimmed;
- \* There is no need to shout your words, written notes will help you better;
- \* With some people, it may help to simplify your sentences and use more facial expressions and body language;
- \* If you see that a person is wearing a hearing device, don't raise your voice unless requested.

### **Cognitive impairments**

When meeting someone with a disability that affects learning, intelligence, or brain function keep the following in mind:

- \* Keep communication simple. Try to use short sentences and rephrase comments or questions for better clarity;
- \* Focus on one topic at a time;
- \* Allow the person time to respond, ask questions, and clarify your comments;
- \* Focus on the person as he/she responds to you and pay attention to body language;
- \* If appropriate, repeat back any messages to confirm mutual understanding;
- \* If needed, reinforce information with pictures or other visual images;
- \* Limit the use of sarcasm or subtle humor.

### **Visual disabilities**

When communicating with someone with vision impairment, consider the following suggestions:

- \* Touch the person lightly on the arm or address him/her by name to gain attention when you wish to start a conversation;
- \* When first meeting a person with a visual impairment, identify yourself in order to let the person know to whom he/she is talking. Also introduce anyone else who might be present, for example: "On my left is Maria Aycard";
- \* In a group conversation, make it clear to which person you are speaking to by saying the person's name, for example: "Maria, you've been in Paris?"
- \* Speak in a normal tone of voice – usually a person with a visual impairment doesn't have a hearing one;
- \* Indicate when you move from one place to another and let it be known when the



conversation is at an end;

- \* When offering a seat to a person with a visual impairment, place the person's hand on the back or arm of the seat. It's also valid when you offer an object or you want to underline where a certain object lies to;

- \* As you enter a room with a person with visual disabilities, describe the furniture and its location, distances, etc;

- \* Be specific when describing the location of objects, for example: "There is a table four meters from you at two o'clock". Also, try to limit your gestures unless you explain them;

- \* Let the person know if you are leaving, so that he/she does not continue to talk after you have left.

### **Speech disabilities**

When meeting a person with a disability that affects speech keep the following in mind:



- \* Give your whole attention when you're discussing with a person who has difficulties speaking;

- \* Keep an encouraging attitude rather than correcting, and be patient rather than speak for the person;

- \* When talking with someone with a speaking impairment, listen carefully, with patience and try to understand the message.

Never pretend to understand or interrupt the person while speaking, trying to finish the sentence. Repeat what you heard or ask questions that require short answers, in order to check if you understood correctly. If you don't manage to understand- say so. Ask politely to repeat, to use an alternative phrase or find other ways of communication (for example written communication);

- \* Sometimes people with speech disabilities use various devices or techniques to enhance or augment speech. Be prepared to communicate with someone who uses a computer with synthesized speech or an alphabet board.

### **Hidden disabilities**

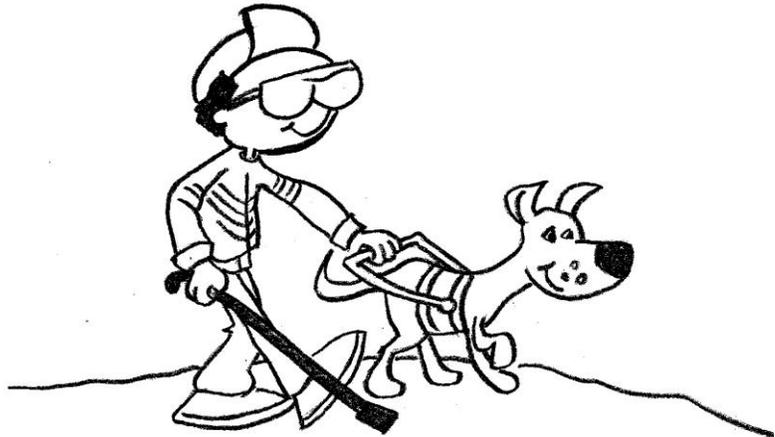
Called also invisible disabilities, a hidden impairment can hinder a person's efforts on day by day activities like going to school, working, socialize, and more. A person may have trouble following a conversation, may refuse to write or to read, may make a request that seems strange to you, or may say or do something that seems inappropriate. The person may have a hidden disability such as allergies, asthma, a learning disability, traumatic brain injury, mental retardation, or mental illness, higher sensitivity to certain smells or substances, etc. Don't make assumptions about the person or his/her disability. Be open-minded.



## 4. Persons with disabilities and help

It's better not to assume you know whether, when and what help a person with disabilities needs. Ask!

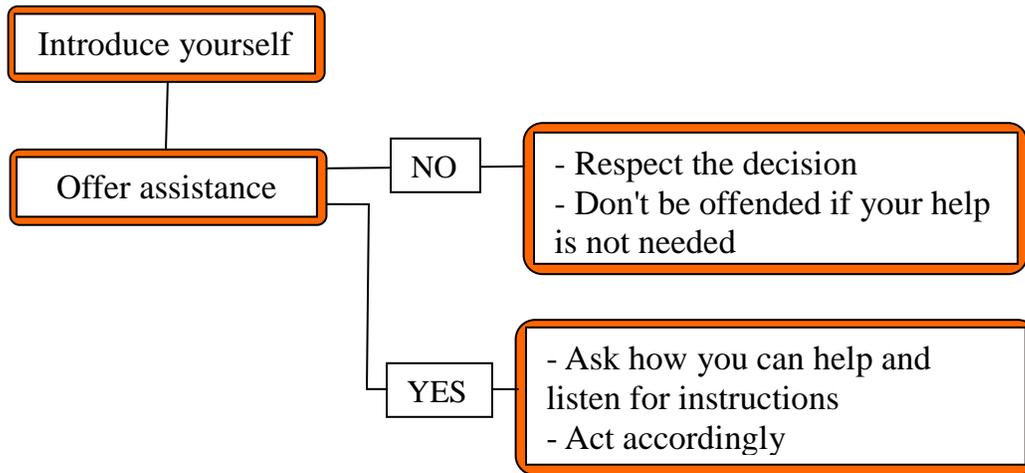
Most people with disabilities don't need help. Offer help if you think it's appropriate, but wait for the person to respond, only help if you receive the confirmation that they want it. If it's not clear how to help, ask the person to explain what you should do.



### 4.1 How to help

Consider this general tips when you want to help a person with disabilities:

- If you don't know the person introduce yourself
- Offer your help properly - offer assistance in the way that people ask and need it and not how you think it should be done
- Don't be offended if your help is not needed
- Ask how to help (in details)
- Assist persons with disabilities when necessary or requested, but do not discourage their active participation
- Don't assume a person with a disability always needs help. If you want to offer your help, first ask if it's needed. If you don't know how to help, ask how to do it.
- Sometimes, the person can feel comfortable enough to ask himself/herself for help;
- Don't offer to often your help otherwise it can become annoying;
- Always respect the person's dignity, individuality and desire for independence. If you think help may be required in a given situation, do not assist without asking first;
- Be patient when offering assistance!
- If you know a person has a visual impairment, and you think he/she might need help, don't just grab the person's arm. First, identify yourself then ask if he/she would like to take your arm. Afterwards, describe the location in specific terms, so the person will know exactly what the terrain is like, or what the barriers or parameters are.



Steps when offering help

## 4.2 Giving directions and accompanying

Bellow you can find some suggestion for giving directions or accompanying persons with different impairments:

- When assisting a person with disabilities don't take any risks, for example: running when crossing the road;
- When you are asked for directions by a person that uses a wheelchair, offer information on elements as distance and the quality of the road, weather conditions, location of ramps or possible physical obstacles(stairs, no ramps and steep hills);
- When directing a person with a visual impairment, use specifics such as "left a hundred meters" or "right ten steps";
- When asked to guide someone with a sight disability, never push or pull the person. Also, propelling the person ahead of you is dangerous. Allow him/her to take your arm, and then walk slightly ahead. Point out doors, stairs, or curbs, as you approach them;
- When accompanying or helping a person with disabilities take in consideration some extra time he/she needs to get things done or said. Let the person set the pace in walking and talking;
- If a person is using a cane, crutches or a wheelchair, take care not to get in their way or walk too close to them. This will avoid eventually accidents for both of you.

# 5. Learning More

## 5.1 Disability Access Symbols



### **The Symbol of Accessibility**

The wheelchair symbol should only be used to indicate access for individuals with limited mobility, including wheelchair users. For example, the symbol is used to indicate an accessible entrance, bathroom or that a phone is lowered for wheelchair users. Remember that a ramped entrance is not completely accessible if there are no curb cuts, and an elevator is not accessible if it can only be reached via steps.



### **Access (Other Than Print or Braille) for Individuals Who Are Blind or Have Low Vision**

This symbol indicates access for people who are blind or have low vision, best used in places such as: a guided tour, a tactile tour or a museum exhibition that may be touched. Signs and presentation materials should be produced in contrasting colors and printed clearly in a large font.



### **Audio Described Performances (at theatre)**

Audio description is a live description of the characters, their expressions, actions, costumes and the sets, which is relayed to patrons over personal headsets. This happens unobtrusively between the lines and offers patrons who cannot see the stage assistance in sharing the visual aspects of the programme. Touch tours are also sometimes available for people with visual impairments.



### **Volume Control Telephone**

This symbol indicates the location of telephones that have handsets with amplified sound and/or adjustable volume controls.



### **Audio Description for TV, Video and Film**

This service makes television, video, and film more accessible for persons who are blind or have low vision. Description of visual elements is provided by a trained Audio Descriptor through the Secondary Audio Program (SAP) of televisions and monitors equipped with stereo sound.



### **Live Audio Description**

A service for people who are blind or have low vision that makes the performing and visual arts more accessible. A trained Audio Descriptor offers live commentary or narration (via headphones and a small transmitter) consisting of concise, objective descriptions of visual elements: for example, a theater performance or a visual arts exhibition at a museum.



### **Accessible Print**

Large print is indicated by the words: “Large Print,” printed in 18 pt. or larger text. In addition to indicating that large print versions of books, pamphlets, museum guides and theater programs are available, you may use the symbol on conference or membership forms to indicate that print materials may be provided in large print. Sans serif or modified serif print with good contrast is highly recommended, and special attention should be paid to letter and word spacing.



### **Closed Captioning (CC)**

Closed Captioning (CC) (commonly known as subtitles) enables people who are deaf or hard of hearing to read a transcript of the audio portion of a video, film, exhibition or other presentation. As the video plays, text captions transcribe (although not always verbatim) speech and other relevant sounds.



### **Opened Captioning (OC)**

This symbol indicates that captions, which translate dialogue and other sounds in print, are displayed on the videotape, movie, television program or exhibit audio. Open Captioning is preferred by many, including deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals, and people whose second language is English. It also helps teach children how to read and keep sound levels to a minimum in museums and restaurants.



### **Assistive Listening Systems**

These systems transmit sound via hearing aids or head sets. They include infrared, loop and FM systems. Portable systems may be available from the same audiovisual equipment suppliers that service conferences and meetings.



### **Telephone Typewriter (TTY)**

Also known as text telephone (TT), or telecommunications device for the deaf (TDD), TTY indicates a telephone device used with the telephone (and the phone number) for communication between deaf, hard of hearing, speech-impaired and/or hearing persons.



### **The Information Symbol**

The most valuable commodity of today's society is information; to a person with a disability it is essential. For example, the symbol may be used on signage or on a floor plan to indicate the location of the information or security desk, where there is more specific information or materials concerning access accommodations and services such as "LARGE PRINT" materials, audio cassette recordings of materials, or sign interpreted tours.



### **Electric mobility scooter**

The electric mobility scooter symbol can be used to designate a parking space. If there is an electrical outlet available for recharging the vehicle, this can be indicated by combining the symbol with the symbol for a recharging point.



### **Large print** books, magazines, etc.

Large print materials must have a font size of preferably 14 pt but in any case no less than 12 pt. Font size 13–14 pt should be primarily used in materials intended for readers of all ages. If the target audience consists mostly of people who are visually impaired, the recommended font size is 16 pt.

The line spacing should be 1–4 points larger than the font size. The contrast between background and text is even more of an issue for readability than font size. Black text on a white background provides the best contrast.

The typeface should be simple and legible. Typefaces such as Arial, Georgia, Gill, Helvetica and Verdana are good. Legibility includes having clear differences between letters and other symbols. Each character should be uniquely identifiable. It must be possible to

recognize each character quickly and correctly.

Lower-case text is easier to read than upper-case text. Lower-case letters are more distinctive than upper-case letters and therefore easier to identify. Text written in all upper case, underlined or tilted is difficult to read.

Source: Finnish Federation of the Visually Impaired



### **Audio guides**

The audio guide symbol may be used at cultural venues where information on the works displayed is available for listening through earphones.



### **Listen**

The Listen symbol can be used on a website to indicate that the text can be listened to, or for instance at railway or bus stations to indicate an audio timetable or transport information service.



### **Service Dogs Welcome**

A service dog may be a guide dog, an assistance dog or a hearing dog. Service dogs are allowed to accompany their users in all service premises, but this symbol may be used to indicate that service dogs are particularly welcome. A resting place for dogs in a building may be designated by combining this with the P sign.



### **Accessible toilet**

For your information: The width of accessible toilet door is at least 85 cm. In the toilet, there must be free space 1,5 m x 1,5 m for the wheelchair to turn around. There must be 80 cm of free space at the both sides of the toilet seat.



### **Accessible lift**

For your information: The measures of accessible lift should be at least 140 cm x 110 cm. The width of the doorway 90 cm. The maximum height of the push buttons is 90-110 cm.



**Wheelchair lift, platform lift**



**Stairlift**



**Ramp**



**Accessible parking**



**Hidden disability**

## 5.2 Useful websites

[www.miusa.com](http://www.miusa.com) – an American website with information about NGOs and trainings for people with disabilities from all over the world

[www.iamsterdam.com](http://www.iamsterdam.com) – a Dutch website list with adapted public spaces

<http://niepelnosprawni.pl/> - a Polish website for people with disabilities

<http://www.makoa.org/index.htm> - disABILITY Information and Resources

<http://www.disabled-world.com/> - Disability Information

<http://www.kulttuuriakaikille.info> - a Finnish website about culture and accessibility

<http://www.bizeps.or.at/> - an Austrian website with news about the activities where people with disabilities are involved

<http://www.views.be/> - an Belgian website with news regarding persons with visual impairments (English and French)

<http://www.wheelchairnet.org> - wheelchair information

<http://www.disabili.com/> - an Italian website about all the aspects of disability and ways for persons with impairments to improve their life



## 5.3 References

For this handbook an important input of information was provided by the participants in the project.

The following sources provided also a valuable insight and good information for some facts (for example the disability symbols). They also contain a wealth of other material:

- Culture for All Service website

<http://www.kulttuuriakaikille.info/en.php?k=13241>

- Stanford University website

<http://studentaffairs.stanford.edu/oea/resources/disability-symbols>

- New York State website, Department of Health

<http://www.health.ny.gov/publications/0956/>

- Health & Disability Commissioner New Zealand

<http://www.hdc.org.nz/publications/other-publications-from-hdc/disability-resources/making-communication-easy---useful-tips-to-make-it-easy-to-communicate-effectively-with-people-with-impairments>

- Rehabilitation Engineering Research Center on Wheeled Mobility

<http://www.wheelchairnet.org>

- Victims with disabilities: Collaborative, Multidisciplinary First Response manual  
[http://www.ovc.gov/publications/infores/pdf/VwD\\_FirstResponse.pdf](http://www.ovc.gov/publications/infores/pdf/VwD_FirstResponse.pdf)
- Kailes, J., Tips for Interacting with People with Disabilities, 2011  
<http://www.cdihp.org/training/TipsforInteracting.pdf>
- How to Show Respect and Care for a Handicapped Person  
[http://www.ehow.com/how\\_6358186\\_show-respect-care-handicapped-person.html](http://www.ehow.com/how_6358186_show-respect-care-handicapped-person.html)
- Disability Etiquette Handbook made by The City of San Antonio, Texas and their Disability Advisory Committee  
<http://www.anaheim.net/images/section/202/Disability%20Etiquette.pdf>
- “People with disabilities: a better understanding” a Disability etiquette handbook made by the New York city Department of Small Business Services  
[http://www.nyc.gov/html/sbs/downloads/pdf/eo\\_wia/WIA\\_Disability\\_Etiquette\\_Handbook.pdf](http://www.nyc.gov/html/sbs/downloads/pdf/eo_wia/WIA_Disability_Etiquette_Handbook.pdf)

All the following persons assisted on the Guidance handbook:

- Netherlands Bas van Maanen
- Bulgaria Zoya Chavdarova
- Bulgaria Elina Raynova
- Bulgaria Leylya Myumyun
- Bulgaria Bilyana Yoveva
- Netherlands Kati Csatlos
- Netherlands Daan Roorda
- Netherlands Nicole Hatangimbabazi
- Romania Mara Cristiana Traistaru
- Romania Luminita Traistaru
- Romania Gabriela Pavaluca
- Romania Dumitrel Stoica
- Romania Cristian Chiriac
- Romania Raluca Oancea

Slovenia	Besim Pepaj
Slovenia	Anže Podobnik
Slovenia	Marja Koren
Slovenia	Mija Pungeršič
Slovenia	Matej Bratuša
Poland	Karolina Fijałkowska
Poland	Marianna Mendyk
Poland	Magdalena Jarolin
Turkey	Zeliha Eldem
Turkey	Zehra ERGÜLER
Turkey	Songül YURTDAS
Italy	Alice Spisni
Italy	Mara Biondi
Italy	Giuliana Puccia
Czech	Markéta Jarková
Czech	Miroslava Kvapilová
Czech	Zuzana Širmerová
Czech	Soňa Klemková
Czech	Marek Mäsiar
Netherlands	Niels van Maanen
Netherlands	Adriana Solovei
Netherlands	Daniela Nemeti Baba
Netherlands	Anci Csatlos
Netherlands	Chris van Maanen