

Guideline universal design

Sheet 19: Spatial accessibility



What? ¹

“Integral accessibility is the quality of a space, environment, object, service, etc., which makes it possible for everyone to reach, access, use and understand it in an equal and independent manner.”

Why and for whom? ¹

People feel limited if the environment is not adapted to their capabilities. By paying attention to accessibility, you ensure that everyone can feel equal and equivalent when visiting a certain place. Working on integral accessibility is:

- essential for 10% of the population,
- needed for 40% of the population,
- comfortable for everyone.

Tips & Tricks ^{1, 2, 3, 4}

Accessibility of the building

- Accessibility, safety and evacuation** | Take accessibility with regard to public transport, safety and evacuation into account. Provide the fire alarm with a sound and light signal, for example, and provide sufficiently wide and obstacle-free escape routes with emergency lighting.
- Parking and drive-in zone** | Provide adapted parking and bicycle parking with reserved places, clear signage and a drive-in zone close to the entrance of the building.
- Level differences** | Respond to level differences by providing a combination of stairs, lift and/or slope.

- Route** | Ensure that everyone can enter the building via the same route.

Access and passage in the building

- Obstacles** | Avoid obstacles at the height of doors and passages and provide enough space.
- Doors** | Make sure that all doors can be opened independently by everyone.
- Lifts** | Provide lifts with sufficient closing time, space, a speech function, audio signals and an emergency telephone, among other things.

Specific spaces

- Sanitary** | Provide at least an adapted toilet with clear signage and accessibility.
- Auditorium** | Provide (several) sufficiently large and easily accessible seats.
- Student restaurant** | Make cash registers, self-service buffets and tables suitable for wheelchairs.
- Teaching and practical rooms** | Provide wide passages and avoid loose cables.
- Library and IT rooms** | Provide at least one computer with compensating software, provide some protected workspaces and ensure that all materials are accessible and accessible to everyone.
- Student services** | Make sure that reception desks have at least a lowered, wheelchair accessible zone and that there is always someone present who can offer support.
- Separate rooms** | Provide spaces where students can isolate themselves for a short while in function of, for example, medical procedures, anxiety, panic or stress.

Technical aspects

- Power outlets** | Provide sufficient sockets at different places in the room.
- Cables** | Avoid loose cables.
- Wi-Fi** | Ensure a good, fast and freely accessible Wi-Fi connection.
- Compensating software** | Provide powerful and compensating software supporting public computers.

Know more?

- Consult here the [inspirational guideline from AGION \(the Agency for Infrastructure in Education\) for integral accessibility of school buildings](#) (Dutch).
- View here [the regional urban development accessibility regulation](#) that can be followed in the case of new applications for permits for new construction or thorough renovation in Flanders (Dutch).

In practice

“ “In our building, the toilets are somewhere else on each floor. It makes more sense if they get a standard place on every floor.”

“ “On our website you can look up each room and check its accessibility. This way, students can see what is present in the classroom.”

“ “We have many breastfeeding students among our evening students. We have a space in our building with, among other things, a breastfeeding seat. You can sit in it like a cocoon.”

References

- ¹ AGION & Enter vzw (2014). Inspiratiebundel integrale toegankelijkheid van schoolgebouwen. Geraadpleegd op 25-09-2018 via https://www.agion.be/sites/default/files/images/Agion_271214_web_0.pdf
- ² Steunpunt Inclusief Hoger Onderwijs (2017). Universeel ontwerp [onuitgegeven intern document]. Gent: Steunpunt Inclusief Hoger Onderwijs
- ³ Herman, L., Berbel, M., & Touceda, M. (2018). *+School: Haal meer uit je school. 21^{ste} century skills: nieuwe competenties, nieuwe fysieke leeromgevingen? Inspiratiegids.* Brussel: Vlaams Ministerie van Onderwijs & Vorming, Vrije Universiteit Brussel en +ReseARCH Architecten.
- ⁴ Kelly, Anna M., and Padden, Lisa (2018). Toolkit for Inclusive Higher Education Institutions: From Vision to Practice. Dublin: UCD Access & Lifelong Learning