

# Guideline universal design

## Sheet 19: Spatial accessibility



### What? <sup>1</sup>

“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? <sup>1</sup>

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 <sup>1, 2, 3, 4</sup>

#### 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

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