



**visits4u Case Studies:
Barrier Free Public Spaces
Rotterdam, Netherlands**

Public spaces



Rotterdam, the Netherlands

Title: Creating barrier free public spaces

Description

Rotterdam It is a relatively young city, having been extensively rebuilt after the last war. Rotterdam sees itself as a city “made for and by its inhabitants.” It is the Netherlands’ second largest city and principal sea port with a population of 610,000, people about 30,000 of whom have indicated to have a disability. Tourism is an ever increasing industry in Rotterdam. It is the 2nd most tourist-visited city in the Netherlands after Amsterdam.

Accessibility is embedded in all Rotterdam’s mainstream policies. For its ambition on all levels and its focus on helping people live supported lives in their homes and across the city, Rotterdam won second prize in this year’s access City award by the European Commission.

Becoming inclusive:

1. Description

Holland's most modern city began as a fishing village in the 13th century. It was developing into an industrial and trading power when German bombers destroyed the city centre and harbour in 1940. However, Rotterdam's unique architecture now brings many visitors to cycle around this urbane, cosmopolitan city. Old Dutch-style houses can still be found in historic

Delfshaven, from where the pilgrims set sail in 1620. Cultural offerings ranging from the summer carnival to classical music can compete with those of Amsterdam.

Accessibility (both physical and social) and inclusivity are high on the political agenda of the city and are embedded in policy and implementation at all levels. The city has worked to make its beaches, sports facilities and public spaces in general more accessible.

2. Description of steps taken, changes and progress

- **Public spaces**

Guidelines for the outdoor space were drawn up in 2014 to improve accessibility and were created jointly through dialogues between the municipality and stakeholders. These include height differences of no more than 2 cm in walking routes, unevenness no greater than 3 cm, clearance of at least 180 cm and at least one accessible parking space out of every 200 within 50 m of the main entrance of public buildings. Also in 2014, the Standard for road design was modified to reflect accessibility requirements. Whenever major works are planned, accessibility experts are involved to ensure that the proposal meets the needs and wishes of disabled people.



Access problems can be reported by phone, Internet or using an app called Better Outdoors. Under the “rapid repair” scheme, the city will put right within 24 hours urgent complaints that affect access.

Since 2007, Rotterdam has had the most accessible beach in the Netherlands with free beach wheelchairs and walking aids, accessible toilets and a wheelchair friendly path to the high water mark.

In 2016, the city published a vision document for games, sports, exercise and meeting places in which accessibility and an inclusive society play a central role.

- **Moving around the city**

Rotterdam has a large public transport network. Under Dutch law, 80% of all public transport stops must be accessible to wheelchair users by 2019. Rotterdam had already exceeded this figure by 2015 and by 2018 almost all stops will be accessible.

Public transport stops also feature audio information for people with vision impairments as well as audio tours of busy places.



There is also a policy that discarded bicycles are removed to keep pedestrian walkways clear.

The new central railway station, which was opened in 2015, was designed and built with input from accessibility experts.

Throughout the city a neighborhood bus service, run by volunteers, provides a service for everyone aged 55 and over to promote senior citizen participation in mainstream society. By 2017 all these buses will be wheelchair accessible.

Those citizens unable to use public transport can use an on-demand taxi service provided by accessible people carriers. There are currently around 21,000 regular users.

- **Creating an inclusive society**

To help those in need of support, fourteen advisory kiosks and front line care teams enable people to understand what support they are entitled to receive from the municipality and to organize the help they need including, for example, providing mobility scooters or installing doorstep ramps.

There is also significant investment in making sports and leisure facilities accessible to disabled people both as participants and as spectators. These include facilities for blind people to enjoy both football (at the Feynoord

soccer club) and tennis. There is also an inclusive play area at the Maritime Museum and a mobility scooter route in the Botanical Gardens.

- **Information for all**

A new demand driven website is being developed in close co-operation with the people of Rotterdam and will be ready in 2017. For those who cannot access the internet, including many older people, information and advice is also available by phone and face to face in city shops and at advice kiosks.

Neighborhood guides are produced in hard copy with practical tips on issues such as travel and housing and information about activities in the city. Volunteers are being trained to help with a wide range of information about assistance, care and activities.

Municipal sports consultants provide information about sports options to enable disabled people to participate in activities of their choosing.

3. Main stakeholders / actors

- Network of expert advisers
- Wide Council
- Neighborhood Rules

Results and Impact

The city's more positive image contributed partly to Rotterdam's increasing popularity.

Rotterdam, declared 'Best in Travel City 2016' by Lonely Planet, saw a continued growth of tourist numbers. The city attracted well over 1 million hotel guests who together accounted for more than 1.6 million reservations, as preliminary figures show.

Rotterdam is also in demand as a city to live in for (young) expats and entrepreneurs. In 2016, nearly 1,000 knowledge migrants were assisted by the Rotterdam Expat Centre.

Rotterdam's growing popularity in the Netherlands also impacts on the property market. In 2016, 24% more homes were sold than the year before and house prices rose by 7%.

Rotterdam continues to rise in the worldwide ranking of congress cities. The continued growth of congresses to the city ensures that Rotterdam now holds the 52nd place worldwide, five places higher than the previous year as shown by the annual statistics of the ICCA (International Congress & Convention Association). Rotterdam also climbed three places in the

European ranking to the 32nd position. In 2016 the city hosted 49 international association congresses (congresses organised by the scientific and association branches). Because of this, Rotterdam managed to hold its position as the second congress city of the Netherlands, after capital city Amsterdam, for the tenth consecutive year.

Rotterdam met Second place in 2017 at the Access City Award, the European prize for making cities more accessible to people with disabilities and older people.

Lessons learnt

The city of Rotterdam is firmly committed to the concept of co-creation with its citizens, including those with disabilities, at the centre of decision making on the city's plans and developments.

Rotterdam listens to its inhabitants through a variety of channels as well as using a large network of expert advisers through schemes such as the Wide Council and Neighbourhood Rules which enable people to determine priorities at local level.

Regular monitoring of satisfaction levels indicates that disabled and older people in the city are increasingly content both with physical improvements and with the way in which they are being involved in decision making.

Further information

<http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=1170&videoId=2772>

<https://nltimes.nl/2016/09/07/rotterdam-increasingly-popular-tourists-now-netherlands-2nd-tourist-city>

<https://en.rotterdampartners.nl>

<https://en.rotterdampartners.nl/nl/assets/File/Press%20release%20-%20Rotterdam%20rises%205%20places%20in%20the%20worldwide%20ranking%20of%20congress%20cities.pdf>

European Commission, "Access city award 2017 Examples of best practice in making EU cities more accessible", **EU PUBLICATIONS 2017**, ISBN 978-92-79-65975-1, ISSN 2363-0116



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