



**visits4u Access Guide:  
Who is the customer of  
Inclusive Tourism**

## visits4u Access Guide: Who is the customer of Inclusive Tourism?

Everyone!

Everyone may have needs when they want to access your service or product. These access needs can be:

- progressive (including age-related)
- hidden or apparent
- temporary, permanent, recurrent
- not always health related (including parents with baby buggies, tourists with luggage)

The symbol that is used internationally to indicate access or disability is this:



However, across countries of the European Union, 94% of tourists with access needs do not use a wheelchair and the vast majority people's access limitations or needs are not apparent (1). There can be a broad range of needs that may be:

- physical - such as inability to walk in comfort, using a mobility aid such as walking stick or a wheelchair
- sensory - such as visual or hearing impairment
- cognitive - such as learning disability or difference, autism, memory, orientation
- mental health related

Any individual who experiences one or more of the above, will expect **not to be disadvantaged** because of their access needs.

If you take into consideration the range of different user needs when you create a service or design a product, then you will make this service or product accessible to many more customers. It is true that many people will benefit when the entrance to your building is step-free, not just wheelchair users but also someone with a baby buggy or very heavy luggage. It is also true that many customers may have access needs that

have nothing to do with ramps, for example someone who is hard of hearing or deaf, or someone who is on the autism spectrum.

The focus is not on changing or limiting the person (often referred to as: ‘Medical Model of Disability’) but on creating barrier-free environments (i.e. adopting the: ‘Social Model of Disability’).

	<b>Medical Model</b> <b>X</b>	<b>Social Model</b> <b>✓</b>
<b>Problem</b>	disabled person / person with disability	attitudes, physical barriers, inflexible policies, inappropriate procedures
<b>Solution</b>	cure the person, give institutional care	remove the barriers, update policies

Essentially it is a matter of understanding how big your market is and ensuring you offer everyone a high quality and pleasant stay at your premises.

Sometimes other symbols are also used to indicate a range of needs:



Person using a wheelchair



Person who uses a walking stick or other mobility aid



Person with sight loss / visual impairment



Person with hearing loss



Person with an assistance or guide dog



Person with a neurological condition (such as Parkinson’s, dementia, autism, dyslexia or dyspraxia)



Person with a baby buggy



Pregnant person / Expectant mother

## What can make the environment more accessible:



Ramps and smooth floor / street surfaces  
No steps. No obstructions in spaces.  
Reasonable distances between places



Ramps and smooth floor / street surfaces  
No or small steps. No obstructions in spaces.  
Reasonable distances between places  
Handrails. Seating / resting options



Visual contrast between surfaces  
Written text in large print font (paper, brochures, signs)  
Information in audio format / audio description of a space layout or an item



Good lighting (for lip reading or to see/use Sign Language)  
Low background noise and low echo  
Visual information and communication systems (fire alarm light, doorbell)  
Hearing enhancement systems (induction loop)  
Information in plain language or Sign Language



Welcoming assistance/guide dogs  
A water bowl for the assistance dog



Good lighting (for lip reading or to see/use Sign Language)  
Low background noise  
Visual information and communication systems  
Clear information and signage



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We are all unique and diverse. We all use our senses and react differently to the environment.

We usually refer to the five senses but there can be more. For instance ‘spatial’ awareness enables us to understand what is around us and how to relate to it: move around independently, get to/from a place and find information.



The list of access needs is not exhaustive.

Anyone may have one or more needs, permanently or just only on the day they are visiting you.

### **The most important aspect is attitude.**

Customers, with or without access needs, have expectations from the service you provide. Good manners and respectful language are important for everyone, and willingness to assist where possible is highly valuable. Remember that “a happy customer tells a friend; an unhappy customer tells the world!”.

Always follow these customer care tips and remind your staff to do the same:

- Don't make assumptions about what people might need, simply ask. There are ‘visible’ and ‘invisible’ disabilities.
- Offer assistance if you think someone might welcome it, but wait for them to accept before you help.
- Talk to the person directly not the person accompanying them (eg a carer / assistant or Sign Language interpreter)

- Don't ask questions about the person's condition or impairment. Focus on "How can we meet your access needs?"
- Avoid staring. If someone looks "different", focus on what they are saying, not on the way they look.
- Be patient. If someone has difficulty understanding you - perhaps because they have a learning disability or their first language is different to yours - be patient and be prepared to explain something more than once.
- When talking to a D/deaf person, ensure your face is in the light, face the person, speak clearly and naturally, and avoid covering your face with your hands.
- Always announce yourself when you meet a blind / visually impaired person. If you plan to move away, let them know. Don't leave them talking to an empty space
- When you are talking to someone with a speech impairment, focus on what is being said, don't try to guess what they want to say and don't try to finish their sentences. If you don't understand, ask them to repeat, don't pretend you have understood
- Ask a blind person if they would like to take hold of your arm and gently offer your arm. As a guide always tell them when there are steps or obstacles ahead.
- Guide dogs for blind people, hearing dogs for deaf people and other assistance dogs are working animals, not pets. Don't try to feed, pat or distract them while they work.

### Further reading:

visits4u Access Guide

[www.visits4u.eu](http://www.visits4u.eu)

- (1) Source: Design for All in Tourist Destinations - ECA 2017, Published by EuCAN - European Concept for Accessibility Network. Available online: <http://www.eca.lu/index.php/documents/eucan-documents/45-destinations-for-all-eca-2017/file>



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