

Improving Access to Taxis: Meeting the needs of disabled and older people

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Europe today

- There are some 50 million disabled people in the European Union:
 - About 20% of adults have some form of long term disability
 - 70% of them have difficulty walking and/or climbing stairs
 - 41% have a hearing loss. 24% have a vision loss
- One in four households has a disabled resident.
- Disabled people travel one third less than non-disabled people.
- The population balance is shifting.

The link between age and disability



- There is a strong correlation between age and disability;
- Two thirds of disabled people are elderly;
- Over half the population aged over 75 has a disability.

The Issue



- Taxis are an ideal form of transport for many disabled and older people;
- Taxis are plentiful in many areas..
- They provide a door to door service on demand;
- There is good communication with the driver;
- BUT.....

There are very few wheelchair accessible taxis in Europe

Country	wheelchair accessible	Country	wheelchair accessible
Belgium	5%	Netherlands	20%
Denmark	Not known	Norway	10%
Finland	15%	Portugal	Not known
France	Not known	Spain	2.15%
Germany	1.3%	Sweden	10%
Ireland	7.4%	UK	52%

Why so few?



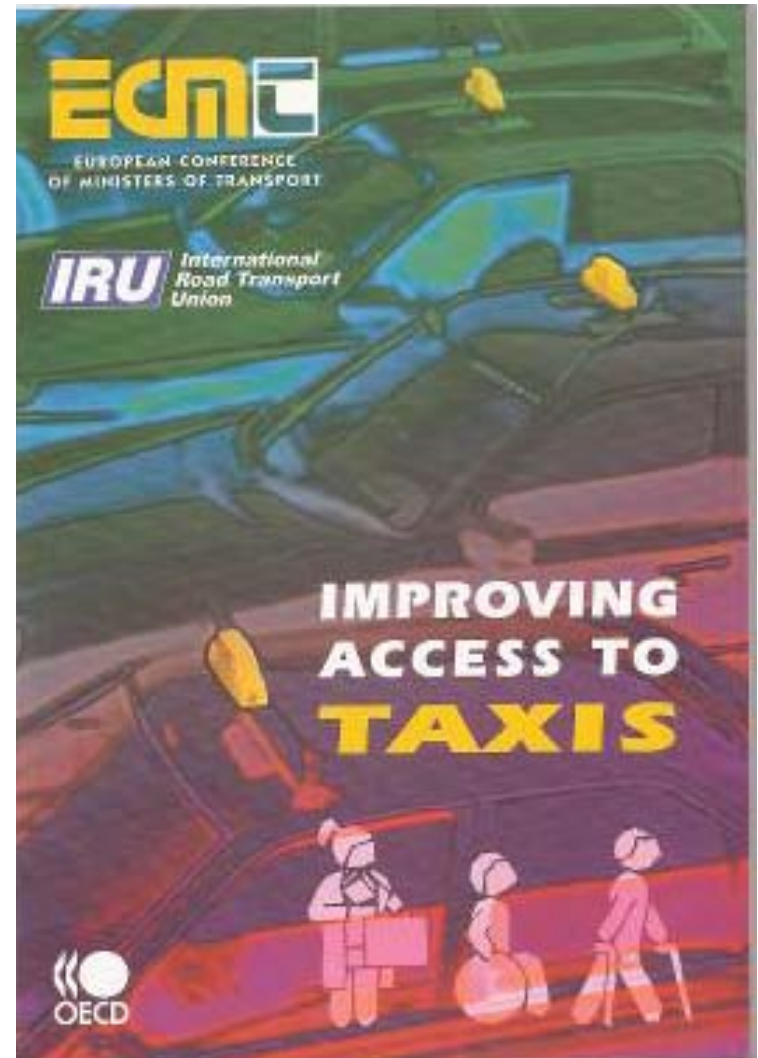
- They are regarded as specialist services for disabled people;
- The costs are high;
- The vehicles are seen as less versatile;
- There is strong opposition from the taxi trade in many countries.

Who pays?

- Some places subsidise the cost of accessible taxis through grants to the operator, e.g. Brussels;
- Some subsidise the user, e.g. Spain, Norway, Sweden; London;
- Others use the licensing system as an incentive e.g. Greece, Ireland..



The Report “Improving Access to Taxis”



Objective

- To identify what needs to be done to make taxis accessible to more people.



Key Recommendations

- Vehicles must be acceptable to the taxi trade;
- This has implications for:
 - Design and appearance of the vehicle;
 - Capital and running costs;
- The majority of disabled users should have improved access;
- Guidance should be given on vehicle design;
- Development of new vehicles takes time. A long term approach is needed.

Recommendations Vehicle Design

Two level approach with minimum standards

Type 1: Wheelchair Accessible
Taxis:

Wheelchair users travelling in
their chair.



Recommendations – Vehicle Design

Type 1- **Wheelchair accessible vehicles**

- Recommended dimensions based on ergonomic data on wheelchair users;
- Engineering and design constraints of currently available vehicles mean compromise in short to medium term;
- Longer term goal is to achieve optimum dimensions without compromising efficiency and suitability of vehicle.



Recommendations – Vehicle Design

Type 1- Wheelchair accessible vehicles

- Key design factors include:
 - Ramp gradient;
 - Floor height;
 - Doorway width;
 - Headroom inside vehicle;
 - Manoeuvring space inside vehicle.



Recommendations Vehicle Design

Type 2: **Standard Taxis:**

- Saloons, estate or multi-purpose vehicles with minor modifications;
- Wheelchair stowed in boot of vehicle;
- Design features to improve ease and comfort for disabled people.



Recommendations Vehicle Design

Type 2: Standard Taxis

- Key design features include:
 - Swivel seats;
 - Grab handles;
 - Retractable steps;
 - Colour contrast;
 - Good lighting.



Recommendations

Striking the Balance

- The right balance between Type 1 and Type 2 vehicles will vary by area and will depend on:
 - Structure of local taxi trade;
 - Proportion of on-street hailing;
 - Availability of other accessible public transport;
 - Population profile of the area;
- For these reasons the decision should be taken at local level.

Recommendations Finance and Licensing

Ways to encourage more accessible taxis include:

- Regulating to require accessibility and/or giving financial incentives to encourage it;
- Reducing duties and taxes on accessible vehicles;
- Reviewing the price of taxi licences;
- Giving user-side subsidies;
- Giving contract incentives.



Recommendations

Infrastructure



- Taxis need to be able to pick up and set down in accessible places;
- Taxi ranks should include sheltered seating and good lighting and information.

Conclusions

Authorities should:

- promote the introduction over time of requirements that meet the accessibility specifications;
- develop action plans for taxis to meet the minimum requirements. Transition periods are essential!
- examine financial incentives for the taxi sector.

Conclusions

Vehicle manufacturers should:

- Take account of the design parameters when they develop new vehicles that will be used as taxis.

Vehicle converters should:

- Continue to work on ways to make vehicles more easily usable for disabled people.

Conclusions

Taxi operators should:

- Train their staff to understand the needs of disabled and older passengers;
- Involve disabled people when setting up training programmes.

Conclusions

- The taxi can play a major part in meeting the needs of a growing older and disabled population; But..
- Unless the taxi trade takes note of these issues, a major commercial opportunity will be lost.

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