



Mediate – Methodology for Describing the Accessibility of Transport in Europe

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Deliverable Author(s): Ilenia Gheno, Nena Georgantzi

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Executive Summary

The Mediate project aims at contributing to the development of inclusive urban transport systems with better access for all citizens, by establishing a common European methodology for measuring accessibility to transport.

The involvement of the main Stakeholders is therefore of utmost importance and Mediate dedicates an entire Work Package (WP1) to the establishment, management and possible follow-up of those relevant actors. WP1 focuses on ensuring that stakeholders' involvement and their inputs are taken into account throughout the project and strengthen the competence and the effectiveness of the Consortium's activities for achieving public transport accessibility for all.

Stakeholder involvement provides experience and expertise in accessible public transport from the point of view of End Users, Public Transport Operators, Local Authorities, Industry Representatives and Experts, according to the following specific objectives:

- Involving Expert knowledge by establishing an **Expert Group** representing key stakeholders, and experts in accessibility to urban public transport.
- Involving Local Authorities and Public Transport Operators by establishing a **Working Group** of local authorities and public transport operators.
- Involving End Users by establishing an **End User Platform** to provide relevant inputs throughout the project.

With regard to the latter group, AGE Platform Europe has been in charge of working on the long-term strategy of user involvement after the Mediate project (WP1 – task 1.3).

In the framework of this action, this document aims at:

- defining a strategy plan for the long-term viability of the End User Platform with the twofold purpose of providing a resource for other EU activities and of engaging end users with different abilities in R&D projects;
- ensuring that the outcomes of the Mediate project can be further developed and driven by End Users along with industry and cities;
- underlining the actions that need to be undertaken to ensure End User Platform involvement in future research.

This document builds on the will of committing to the cause of accessibility, shared by the members of the Mediate End User Platform.

1. The End User Platform in the Mediate project

A core activity within the project is the establishment and management of an End User Platform (EUP) representing organizations of and for people with disabilities, older people and other relevant user groups facing barriers using public transport.

AGE Platform Europe is in charge of this task and has set up the End User Platform, composed of 11 end user organizations. Here again the focus on getting a wider representativeness of public transport users has been sought, on the basis of the level of expertise of the involved participant, the respect of geographic and gender balance within the Group. Different levels and kinds of disabilities have been also taken into account, in order to allow the more inclusive and broader view of users in the project.

Following the suggestions of some EUP members, gathered during the first EUP meeting, AGE has enlarged the Platform for welcoming 2 other relevant stakeholders (families and the intellectual disabilities). The agreement on the End User Group composition has been sought through a continuous interaction and update among Consortium's Partners.

Due to internal changes in some members' organization (EDF, Independent Living Institute and Age Concern England), the Platform has revised its composition several times. The final composition of the EUP, since November 2009, is presented as follows:

Figure 1: The MEDIATE End User Platform

	ORGANIZATION	COUNTRY
1	AGE Platform Europe Ilenia Gheno, Nena Georgantzi	EU-BE
2	COFACE - Confederation of Family Organizations in the European Union Martin Schmalzried	EU-BE
3	ECA - European Concept for Accessibility Fabienne Feller	EU - LU
4	EDF - European Disability Forum Maria Nyman	EU - BE
5	ENIL– European Network On Independent Living Antonio Centeno	EU - ES
6	EUB - European Union of the Blind Jill Allen-King	EU - UK
7	EUD -European Union of the Deaf Mark Wheatley, Filip Verstraete	EU -BE
8	Guide Dogs for the Blind Association Gail Stewardson	UK

9	Inclusion Europe Katrina Ward, Soufiane El Amrani	EU-BE
10	National Pensioner's Convention Peter Rayner	UK
11	UCP - Mouvement Social des Aînés Asbl André Demarque	BE

Just as the other Stakeholder Groups, the EUP members agreed and signed terms of reference that are also part of the End User Platform Activity Book.

The EUP ensures that the point of view and the needs of users are taken into account in the project activities and outcomes. Its involvement has been required both to define a common set of indicators for assessing accessibility in public transport in Europe and for the definition of a Good Practice Guide. AGE edited and currently updates the End User Platform (EUP) Activity Book that includes a presentation of the Group, its tasks and its contributions to the discussions on the indicators for accessibility and the self-assessment tool, as well as the EUP feedbacks regarding the technical site visits.

Moreover a web page in the MEDIATE web site has been dedicated to the EUP: via this link <http://www.mEDIATE-project.eu/index.php?id=30> it is possible to find a description of the Platform, its role and its contributions to the project. AGE is in charge of the web page update, technically arranged by POLIS¹. This page aims at ensuring discussion and transparency, as well as the participation of other end user organizations that may be interested in joining the works.

The acceptance of the terms of reference, the EUP commitment in presenting MEDIATE also outside the project events, the EUP webpage and its Activity Book are definite steps towards ensuring a good long term strategy.

Besides, the dissemination of MEDIATE activities and outcomes to the EUP at European, national and local level, as well as the presentation of the EUP members at European and National level in related events are also part of the tasks of the Platform. Newsletter releases, web page updates, mail dissemination and gadget dissemination (MEDIATE cotton and plastic hand bags) comply with the MEDIATE dissemination strategy, too.

¹ Further details are available in D1.4: the Webpage for the End user Platform.

2. An End User Platform beyond the Mediate project

The discussion about the medium/long-term viability of an End User Platform and its role as a permanent body for consultation includes an analysis of what the EUP can offer and what the EUP will require in terms of activities and financial resources.

These issues have been further discussed in a meeting of the End User Platform on October 14th 2010. The discussion aimed at clarifying the position of the EUP with regard to the strategy for its sustainability and to check the viability of such a Platform after the Mediate project in the longer-term, as well as to plan concrete actions for translating purposes into practice.

These topics led to a better understanding of the possible actions and concrete steps to be undertaken, as the following paragraphs explain.

2.1 The key characteristics of an End User Platform

At this stage it is possible to define what such a Platform could offer, its composition and role on the basis of what the EUP has been in the Mediate project. There will surely be room for innovating and improving once this group of stakeholders is committed to clear a purpose and responding to open calls and questions.

The list that follows presents the Platform's major points of strength and highlights on which features it could rely at the moment:

- The future EUP will be a resource comprised of European and national organizations of users to be engaged and consulted on accessibility and transport issues at European, national and local level.
- It will offer a broad geographic coverage, composed by European and national organizations that can easily and directly reach the local level in the whole European Union. Besides, thanks to its networks, the EUP can aim at involving partners and stakeholders also outside the European borders.
- The participation of a wide range of stakeholders can be secured, representing a broad coverage of functional and activity limitations and impairments, affecting different target groups.
- The involved stakeholders comprise qualified experts and professionals; their representativeness is guaranteed through organization-based participation. On the other hand, room is left for the involvement of individual end-users, as individual travellers are experts of their own needs. The EUP is set up to enable them to articulate this knowledge.
- A user-centered approach is deemed as essential methodology of the Platform's activities.
- The EUP can provide different degrees of user involvement, ranging from consultation to active cooperation on accessibility and transport issues.

- A steady commitment of the selected Platform's members will be assured through signed and agreed Terms of Reference.
- Early involvement can be guaranteed by such a Platform: a well organized structure can ensure that users are involved from the beginning and at every stage, thus maximizing the width and depth of its contribution and effectiveness, as well as consolidating its involvement in a long-term strategy (against a "one-spot action" principle).
- Working for guaranteeing accessibility: universal design principles are at the base of all organizations involved. This approach is in line with their general objectives and integrated throughout the whole work chain (from the accessibility of the communication tools, to that of the meeting sites).
- Benefits for research and mirror advantages for society. User involvement reduces the gap between research and practice. It is a way to facilitate user acceptance of outcomes and results of both research and product development. It is also a way to achieve better results, as user involvement includes marginalized groups, which are normally hard to reach.
- An open Platform: the EUP is conceived to be open and accessible to new membership, in order to embrace different views which can then find expression in this platform.

Taking these issues into account, an End User Platform will be able to include a wide variety of users representing different needs, age ranges and geographic origins, having different kind of physical and cognitive impairments as well as expertise and know-how in the field of public transport and accessibility.

2.2 The potential services of an End User Platform

Users can bring skills and abilities that complement the expertise of researchers, operators and policy-makers. An End User Platform can work on validating methodologies and testing devices, assessing the quality of tools, services and procedures; its involvement should also be foreseen within the processes of design and development as effective user participation calls for involvement from the very beginning². Therefore it is possible to draft some concrete actions where a European Platform of End Users is suited to act with different roles, e.g.:

- a pool of experts to be engaged in European and national projects with specific tasks related to user involvement issues and assessment with regard to transport accessibility and usability;
- a source for networking and dissemination: such a wide Platform will serve the scope of dissemination thanks to the possibility to contact other members at national and local level, as well as to connect its actions to wider European networks;

² AGE will release a brochure presenting an overview of advantages, barriers and methodologies of user involvement (available by January 2011, also via AGE Platform Europe's website).

- an expert group engaging with European, national and regional institutions and bodies, thus tackling the sphere of policy-making; it could respond to consultations from the European Commission and react to policy content at different levels and with different means;
- a source of information, which is in turn suitable to be consulted/involved in different contexts;

The members of the Platform agreed on the need to continue their engagement (outside the Mediate brand, but as an autonomous Platform) and to keep on working on similar issues (accessibility in public transport, also in relation to inter-modality, cooperation with public authorities and transport operators, managing the conflicting needs of different users).

The EUP further discussed the possibility to widen its fields of activities. In the frame of the Mediate project the EUP was conceived as a resource for research and development and not as a body to consult with policy and advocacy issues. The EUP now welcomes the possibility of connecting to policy discussions at European level, as well as pursuing its involvement in technical issues on accessibility.

2.3 Some basic requirements for the End User Platform

The End User Platform will be composed of dedicated representatives of different organizations cooperating on projects, researches, studies and further activities. The internal meeting held in October 2010 highlighted the common will and interest in pursuing the commitment to on accessibility. Nevertheless, the EUP members shared some basic concerns about the sustainability of the platform in the future.

Financing is a central issue for the sustainability of the Platform, affecting the discussion on its structure and composition, and the role and the level of engagement of its members. A formalized budget would help the platform structure its mandate and define its status: how it will be organized (membership included), what concrete actions will be undertaken and possible future scenarios for its activities.

Financial resources are vital for defining the involvement of the EUP members in future activities and also for its management.

The Platform members were clear about avoiding being active on a voluntary basis. Besides covering travel and accommodation needs, given their expertise and their long-term commitment, it becomes appropriate to foresee a small compensation or at the very least a *per diem* to cover related costs.

Moreover such a structure requires constant monitoring and management, which also needs to be financed.

It should also be pointed out that there are other costs linked to accessibility itself: In those situations where accessibility is still an open issue, more time is needed to look for accessible solutions; more money is needed to reach the accessible places, to catch the right flights, to take the right taxis and to pay for assistants. Last but not least, are the costs for language translation and sign language interpretation.

Given the role of the Platform in disseminating and exchanging information, all members agreed in letting the EUP be open to external contributions and to other relevant

organizations willing to become part of it. The Platform members made clear that eventually their internal experts groups could be approached in the future; the experts groups active within EDF and AGE, as well as the European Platform of Self-Advocates within INCLUSION EUROPE could be more actively involved as internal sources of expertise, if needed. Moreover the European Guide Dogs Federation has an internal unit dealing with Guide Dogs Users that works on policy issues. Depending on the future features of the EUP, this unit could also be approached.

The issue of duplication was also stressed. The End User Platform's tasks and activities should not conflict with other organizations' role. Therefore the Platform members have been asked to think about this, but so far they are not aware of other similar bodies, neither in Europe, nor at national level.

As far as the responsibilities of such a Platform are concerned, the actions carried out by the End User Platform are envisaged to be accomplished by all members and responsibility upon them should be shared among them all.

Finally, considering the way in which the Platform could reach other relevant stakeholders and present its findings and considerations, the opportunity of an on-line Platform was mentioned, as a support to more traditional channels of information and communication. However, considering the budget constraints and the extra work that this eventually would imply, this point will be further raised once the financing issue is in place

3. Opportunities identified to take forward the End User Platform

Hereby is an overview of the short-term and long-term actions that the established End User Platform could undertake in the coming months. These actions reflect an additional point of strength of the End User Platform, that is, its *versatility*. The Platform can be involved at various stages of different activities like projects, research, studies, trails, test, demonstrations, seminars, policy-making processes, etc.

Taking heed of the interest and availability of the EUP members, some proposals for action raised during the lifespan of Mediate included:

- The EUP as part of the Stakeholder Groups within a follow-up of Mediate or
- The EUP as part of the Stakeholder Groups within a new project or
- The EUP as a core actor of a dedicated project

Several activities were influential in suggesting follow-up possibilities for the Mediate project.

The exchange with the Consortium partners and the Working Group Members aimed at checking the availability for a follow-up of the Mediate project. The TRA 2010 conference (Brussels, 7-10 June 2010) helped to get a broader view on the next calls for projects that could be approached. Furthermore, a meeting with the End User Platform members was organized by AGE Platform Europe with the support of EDF and POLIS, in order to gather comments and proposals for the future actions of the Platform, especially in the longer-term. Last but not least, the dissemination of Mediate within other European contexts, projects and conferences informed interested stakeholders about the existence of the EUP, its actions and potential, thus paving the way to the long-term strategy of the Platform.

The EUP meeting on October 14th 2010 emphasized the need to ensure a future of the EUP outside the Mediate involvement and the importance of user engagement, and therefore the need for a proposal for a long-term commitment. The opportunity for such an involvement can be inferred from the European Commission's Action Plan on Urban Mobility, as described in the dedicated paragraph ("*3.2 Longer-term actions*").

3.1 Short-term actions: before end of Mediate

AGE started gathering information on relevant events and call for proposals in order to foresee future engagements of the EUP. In the short term some of the main viable ideas can be presented as follows:

- Taking part in current calls for proposals;
- Building a new project focused on the EUP;
- Pushing for a Mediate follow-up where the EUP could have a role.

Taking part in current calls for	- STAYMOBIL: research and action on transport infrastructure, public space and accessibility; integration of solutions in existing
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<p>proposal</p>	<p>geographical and socio-cultural conditions; conceptualization of a strategy for future transport and associated research needs.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - TRANS-EASE: research review; development of guidelines on how to manage the mobility of Europe's citizens into older age; establishment of a platform for the exchange of information between policy makers, researchers and end users.
<p>Writing autonomous proposals</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - EU-ACT: a set of workshops to convey feasible solutions to the problem of accessibility and safety in European transport systems, involving a wide range of stakeholders (public authorities, transport operators and end users above all), both at local and European level, in order to present concrete tools for integrating users' needs in transport planning and to set up a long-lasting dialogue among the key actors for the future of European transports. - Accessibility in public transport in the framework of intergenerational solidarity, including older people and youngsters, too. - FP7-SST-2011-RTS (deadline 12/2010) - FP7-TPT-2011- across modes (deadline 12/2010) - FP7-CSA (deadline 12/2010) - ERAnet / Road ERA net calls - DG MOVE tender (difficulties in implementing it, due to the tight deadline – July 2010)
<p>Proposals for a Mediate follow-up</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To work on a set of <u>indicators</u> entirely from the users point of view, for operators who want to meet user requirements and for information system purposes and serve as a baseline for new designs and technology. This work needs to be guided (managed) by users. - To further develop <u>fact finding</u> forms for the Mediate indicators; develop sub-indicators and scales (scoring?) and easy-to manage spreadsheets and tools for visual presentation of data. This may include a practical guide, instruction manual, on how to collect data, assessment procedures, how to utilize scales and the use of indicators. - All the detailed input to the <u>data collection questionnaire</u> may also be translated into detailed checklists on Public Transport accessibility issues. - Key issues on the need for disability awareness & universal design issues <u>in higher education, in organizations and personnel</u>

	<p><u>training etc.</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - More relevant perhaps is to further develop the <u>Self Assessment Tool</u>, to see whether it is a stand alone tool (may be used without instructions from the Mediate tools), how it may be refined, what are the barriers (challenges) to it being widely spread and used, and follow up on how it actually changes policies and practice (for each category of actors). - To develop a tool for <u>procurement monitoring</u>. - ICT collaboration and standardization for <u>improved intermodality</u>: there is a rapid development of ICT-solutions for public transport benefiting both transport providers and passengers. However, with a wide range of different initiatives not always compatible there is a need to look for solutions, standardization and guidelines to meet the needs of future passengers with a wide range of abilities, preferences and needs (How to define standards and guidelines for systems and data storage so that applications for passenger real time information and accessibility information can present the information in a similar way, regardless of mode and operator? This will facilitate a whole new set of applications to benefit the traveler. From the passenger point of view, which are accessible and good intermodal ticketing solutions?) - <u>Transport policy issues</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How can transport <u>policy</u>, in Europe, gain from the Universal Design strategy? • How can the <u>implementation</u> of accessible public transport in cities best be facilitated and monitored? Future research might build upon the outputs from Mediate (set of indicators and self-assessment tools), and address the objective of “developing appropriate quality indicators and reporting mechanisms”, by focusing on the following objectives: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ to develop a mechanism and framework for monitoring progress towards set targets relating to public transport accessibility ○ to develop means of involving end-users, (particularly, but not exclusively, disabled people), in both defining these targets, and defining what constitutes progress and success; these should be appropriate to the level of development at which the city / region / Member State finds itself, (and this might utilize the work on development levels carried out by Mediate) ○ to develop mechanisms for reporting to the public / end-
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	user on progress made, which incorporates both end-user feedback on issues to be addressed, and means of verifying what actions have been taken to respond to such feedback.
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With regard to the possibility of introducing the EUP in upcoming research projects in which AGE Platform has been invited to join, AGE is currently working in ensuring the Platform of End Users some tasks in the two new Consortia-to-be.

All these suggestions were circulated among the Partners and the EUP, as they needed to be further discussed to get a common vision on future actions. Unfortunately the lack of time has been one of the greatest limits in preventing the concrete discussion of all points among the interested partners.

3.2 Longer-term actions

For longer-term actions it has not been possible to talk about activities in a plural sense, but there is at least one very concrete proposal, coming from EDF that presented the European Commission's Action Plan on Urban Mobility (2009)³ to the EUP. This document aims at establishing a Passenger Forum at European level, working on passenger rights in urban public transport. The Action 4 of the Action Plan states:

“The Commission will moderate a dialogue with stakeholders, including organizations representing operators, authorities, employees and user groups, in order to identify EU-wide best practices and conditions for strengthening passenger rights in urban public transport. Building on sectoral initiatives and complementing the Commission’s regulatory approach, the aim is to put a set of ambitious voluntary commitments in place, including quality indicators, commitments to protect the rights of travelers and of persons with reduced mobility as well as commonly agreed complaint procedures, and reporting mechanisms.”

The EUP welcomed this proposal and agreed on working in line with Action 4. With this regard, there was unanimous consensus in approaching the European Passenger’s Federation⁴, as a relevant stakeholder. The EUP needs to pave the way to a European Platform under the aegis of the European Commission and its Action Plan.

After this first step, the EUP agreed on contacting the DG MOVE (Urban Mobility Unit), in charge of the fulfillment of the Action 4. It is important to understand if there is any room for the Platform, if the outcomes of the Passenger Forum will result in a legislative process or in projects or in other actions or policies activities.

³ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2009:0490:FIN:EN:PDF>

⁴ <http://www.epf.eu/>

Therefore a Joint letter (signed by the main organizations in Europe voicing the needs of older people and people with disability: AGE Platform Europe, EDF- the European Disability Forum and EGDF- the European Guide Dog Federation) will be addressed to the Head of the interested Unit in order to explain the EUP background and its commitment, as well as to agree on a meeting with its key representatives.

Also, the UITP- the International Association for Public Transport will be contacted to discuss whether they could be interested in the Platform's future.

The EUP could also work on the Bus Passenger Rights Regulation to be adopted soon. Therefore action needs to be undertaken as soon as possible, but it seems that time constraints will prevent from further engagement.

Lastly, the idea of participating in the consultation of the 8th Framework Programme was raised to provide the EUP with a long term vision, to emphasize the relevance of its involvement in European projects and to enable its sustainability after the projects' end. In January or February 2011 a first consultation paper for FP8 in the form of a Commission Communication to the Council and the European Parliament can be expected. Thereafter an extensive stakeholder process will follow until the summer of 2011. The Commission proposal on FP8 and its specific programs can then be expected by the end of 2011 and followed by the decision-making process in the Council and in the EU parliament)⁵. The EUP could commit to following this process and its outcomes and to lobby for its goals on user engagement in research.

In the meanwhile AGE and the EUP members will continue searching for solutions ensuring the sustainability of the platform beyond the lifetime of the Mediate project. During this time members will sustain informal contacts although lacking the necessary financial resources the EUP cannot continue its activities and meetings. Meanwhile AGE will remain the contact point both for the EUP members and external stakeholders interested in its work.

⁵ http://www.asd-europe.org/site/fileadmin/user_upload/Convention_2010/Reports/Minutes_of_Workshop_1_-_FP8.pdf

Conclusions: Ensuring the follow up

To reach the common goal of ensuring the continuity of the EUP work, it is necessary for the role of the future Platform to be defined precisely, and in so doing both its relevance and importance will become clear and active participation by its members will increase. In addition to participating in proposals for short and long-term actions, the EUP will also continue to be active in spreading the word about its existence and its role.

AGE Platform Europe will lead the involvement of the End User Platform in future projects, as well as coordinate the first phases of involvement in Action 4, the Passenger Forum, with the support of the EUP members and partners. AGE Platform Europe will also share the outcomes of these activities with the Mediate EUP members and Consortium partners. The latter will also search for other viable solutions and will work for the concrete involvement of the Platform in future activities at European level, as well as work in building relevant national contacts to serve the scope of the End User Platform.

Users have experiences, skills and abilities that complement the knowledge and expertise of researchers and policymakers. When they are involved from the outset of the development process research provides results which are relevant for users and which can be used in policymaking. Meanwhile users are given additional opportunities for social and political participation. In this manner they will not feel exploited by research and may be given the confidence to make changes in the political and research scene.

Although the European Union has previously emphasized the need for user friendly solutions in transport⁶ there are still limited resources allocated to user involvement in research and policy making. It is vital that European projects involve users and that the funding frameworks envisage meaningful user involvement at all stages of research development.

Building on the engagement that the EUP members have shown so far and consolidating such a body will mean hailing the commitment of the end users and their individual abilities both in European R&D projects and in European policy-making. It's important to spread their enthusiasm and to work towards concrete results.

Thanks to the EUP's willingness to pursue its activities, the outcomes of the Mediate project will hopefully be the basis for further development and achievements, and ensuring that the principles of universal design and user-centered approach are fully taken into account.

⁶ See for instance the Communication on the Future on Transport, adopted by the Commission on 17th June 2009