

COUNCIL OF EUROPE

COMMITTEE OF MINISTERS

Resolution ResAP(2001)1 on the introduction of the principles of universal design into the curricula of all occupations working on the built environment

*(Adopted by the Committee of Ministers
on 15 February 2001,
at the 742nd meeting of the Ministers Deputies)*

The Committee of Ministers, in its composition restricted to the Representatives of Austria, Belgium, Cyprus, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom, member states of the Partial Agreement in the Social and Public Health Field,

Recalling Resolution (59) 23 of 16 November 1959, concerning the extension of the activities of the Council of Europe in the social and cultural fields;

Having regard to Resolution (96) 35 of 2 October 1996, whereby it revised the structures of the Partial Agreement and resolved to continue, on the basis of revised rules replacing those set out in Resolution (59) 23, the activities hitherto carried out and developed by virtue of that resolution; these being in particular aimed at:

- a.* raising the level of health protection of consumers in its widest sense, including a constant contribution to harmonising – in the field of products having a direct or indirect impact on the human food chain as well as in the field of pesticides, pharmaceuticals and cosmetics, legislation, regulations and practice governing, on the one hand, quality, efficiency and safety controls for products; and, on the other hand, the safe use of toxic or noxious products;
- b.* integrating people with disabilities into the community; defining – and contributing to the implementation at European level – of a model of coherent policy for people with disabilities, which takes account simultaneously of the principles of full citizenship and independent living; contributing to the elimination of barriers to integration, whatever their nature, whether psychological, educational, family-related, cultural, social, professional, financial or architectural.

Considering that the aim of the Council of Europe is to achieve a greater unity between its members for the purpose of facilitating their economic and social progress;

Bearing in mind the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, and in particular the freedom of movement (Article 2 of

Protocol No. 4);

Bearing in mind the principles embodied in the revised European Social Charter, namely the right of persons with disabilities to independence, social integration and participation in the life of the community, in particular through measures aiming to overcome barriers to communication and mobility and enabling access to transport, housing, cultural activities and leisure (Article 15, paragraph 3);

Bearing in mind Recommendation No. R (86) 18 on the “European Charter on Sport for all: disabled persons”;

Bearing in mind Recommendation No. R (92) 6 on a coherent policy for people with disabilities;

Bearing in mind Recommendation 1185 (1992) of the Parliamentary Assembly on rehabilitation policies for the disabled;

Bearing in mind Recommendation N° R (98) 3 on access to higher education;

Bearing in mind the United Nations Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities;

Having regard to the Council Directive 85/384/EEC of 10 June 1985 on the mutual recognition of diplomas, certificates and other evidence of formal qualifications in architecture, including measures to facilitate the effective exercise of the right of establishment and freedom to provide services;

Having regard to the Resolution of the Council of the European Union and of the representatives of the governments of the member states meeting within the Council of 20 December 1996 on equality of opportunity for people with disabilities;

Having regard to the European Concept for Accessibility, March 1996, elaborated by the Central Co-ordinating Commission for the Promotion of Accessibility (CCPT);

Having regard to the Barcelona Declaration: The City and the Disabled of 24 March 1995, signed by 150 European cities following the Congress on The City and the Disabled, Barcelona, 23 and 24 March 1995;

Considering that the aim of the Council of Europe can be pursued, *inter alia*, by the adoption of common legislation and practice conducive to the creation of a society for all;

Considering that failure to promote the rights of citizens with disabilities and ensure equality of opportunities is a violation of human dignity;

Considering that equal opportunities for members of all groups in society can contribute to securing democracy and social cohesion;

Emphasising the almost total lack of compulsory training programmes with a

universal design dimension for all occupations working on the built environment;

Acknowledging the work carried out in the field of accessibility policies by the Council of Europe's Committee on the Rehabilitation and Integration of People with disabilities and its subordinate body, the Committee of Experts on the Training of Personnel other than Health Care Personnel concerned with Rehabilitation (Architects and Town Planners), and considering the urgent need for such training;

Convinced that universal design and accessibility have a key role to play in the promotion of human rights and fundamental freedoms and should therefore be incorporated into all levels of the education and training programmes of all occupations working on the built environment,

Recommends that the governments of the member states of the Partial Agreement in the Social and Public Health Field, having due regard to their specific constitutional structures, and national, regional or local circumstances, as well as education systems:

a. when formulating national policy, take into account the principles of universal design and measures to improve accessibility, in the widest sense of the term, as set out in the appendix to this resolution in so far as they concern curricula and other matters of education, training and awareness-raising for which governments are directly responsible according to the allocation of responsibilities in each country;

b. take such steps as they consider appropriate towards the application of the principles and measures contained in the appendix in fields where these are not the direct responsibility of governments, but where public authorities have a certain power or play a role;

c. promote implementation of these measures by universities and institutions responsible for higher and further education, as well as vocational training;

d. ensure the widest possible dissemination of this resolution among all interested parties, particularly those concerned with education and training, as well as the users.

Appendix to Resolution ResAP(2001)1

1. General principles

The right of all individuals, including persons with disabilities, to full participation in the life of the community involves the right to access to and use and understanding of the built environment.

It is the responsibility and duty of society, and in particular of all occupations working on the built environment, to make it universally accessible to everyone, including persons with disabilities.

A coherent and global policy in favour of people with disabilities or who are in

danger of acquiring them should aim at, *inter alia*, guaranteeing full citizenship, equality of opportunity, independent living and active participation in all areas of community life.

To implement this policy states should take steps to, *inter alia*, avoid and remove, wherever possible, all obstacles in the built environment and to improve the information of all policy makers and other stakeholders whose decisions concerning the manmade environment affect the quality of life of people with disabilities.

Such policy includes the education and training of key players in this process.

Through a co-ordinated set of measures introducing the concept of universal design into the curricula of all occupations working on the built environment, people of all ages, sizes and abilities should be enabled to have as much mobility and access to buildings, as well as means of transport, as possible, so that they can play a full role in society and take part in economic, social, cultural, leisure, and recreational activities.

2. *Definitions*

“Universal design” is a strategy, which aims to make the design and composition of different environments and products accessible and understandable to, as well as usable by, everyone, to the greatest extent in the most independent and natural manner possible, without the need for adaptation or specialised design solutions.

The intent of the universal design concept is to simplify life for everyone by making the built environment, products, and communications equally accessible, usable and understandable at little or no extra cost. The universal design concept promotes a shift to more emphasis on user-centred design by following a holistic approach and aiming to accommodate the needs of people of all ages, sizes and abilities, including the changes that people experience over their lifespan. Consequently, universal design is a concept that extends beyond the issues of mere accessibility of buildings for people with disabilities and should become an integrated part of architecture, design and planning of the environment.

For the purpose of this resolution the terms “integral accessibility”, “design for all” and “inclusive design” are understood to have the same meaning as the term “universal design”, which is used in this text.

The term “everyone” means that no difference will be imposed by the environment upon individuals regardless of their age, size or other physical features, abilities or disabilities.

The term “independent” means the ability to act without having to rely on outside help, thus avoiding dependency.

The term “natural” stresses the integral aspect of the definition. It implies that provisions for access and usability are perceived as normal.

The term “built environment” means all buildings, traffic provisions and places or

spaces open to the public.

3. *Aims, objectives, and strategies*

To ensure equal chances of participation in economic, social, cultural, leisure and recreational activities, everyone of whatever age, size and ability must be able to access, use and understand any part of the environment as independently and as equally as possible.

Education and training of all occupations working on the built environment should be inspired by the principles of universal design.

For the purpose of taking early action to promote a coherent policy to improve accessibility, the concept of universal design should be an integral and compulsory part of the mainstream initial training of all occupations working on the built environment, at all levels and in all sectors.

Adequate further training should be made available for active professionals, such as architects, engineers, designers and town planners. Their attendance should be strongly encouraged.

Curricula should be developed with the co-operation of users, including organisations of and for people with disabilities.

The concept of universal design should be brought into focus for other professions working with the built environment, such as regional planners, property developers, estate agents, landscape architects and landscape gardeners, as well as interior designers. It should also be brought to the attention of users, customers and clients, including organisations and bodies representing them.

Awareness of the difficulties people with disabilities encounter in the built environment should be raised as early as possible.

Education, training and awareness-raising should provide everyone dealing with the built environment with the necessary understanding, knowledge, skills and values to instil new attitudes and behaviour towards achieving a built environment that is universally accessible.

4. *Higher education*

Curricula of architects, engineers, designers, and town planners at under-graduate and post-graduate level should develop the following skills:

- that of perceiving the relationship between human beings and their constructural creations and between the latter and their environment,
- that of understanding the need to accord constructural creations and space in compliance with human needs,
- that of mastering problem-solving techniques in order to increase the usability of

all their constructural creations, taking into account human diversity.

Public authorities, educational institutions, the bodies for the professions concerned and the organisations representing those professions should review education and training in architecture, engineering, design, and town planning in order to ensure that it enshrines the universal design concept as an integral part, including appropriate examinations on the subject.

Moreover, they should take steps to ensure that continuing education based on the universal design concept be organised, encouraged and followed by architects, engineers, designers, and town planners.

Governments may examine appropriate ways of creating incentives, such as student grants, scholarships and awards, to stimulate such innovation in design that will lead to the creation of environments and products that incorporate universal design principles.

5. Further education and vocational training

Universal design issues should be included in all types and levels of education influencing our physical environment. Achieving a universally designed environment requires competence and skills in all parts of the production and construction process. Since architects and engineers are not involved in all building projects, as many are carried out by craftsmen, such as bricklayers, carpenters, plumbers, and electricians, the initial vocational training of all professions concerned should include universal design principles.

The new inclusive perspectives of universal design should become a compulsory part of the education and training for everyone working on the built environment.

Governments may examine appropriate ways of creating incentives, such as prizes, to stimulate practical solutions to design questions that incorporate universal design principles.

6. Teaching methods and materials

Education and training should take an interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary approach, covering all disciplines relevant to the built environment. Linkages to other courses should offset the problem of isolating the subject in the curriculum.

Learners of all ages should be given the possibility to personally experience the difficulties encountered by people with disabilities in the environment, using appropriate interactive, participatory and collaborative methods, such as field trips, on-site observations, case studies, direct and personal contact with people with disabilities and people across the age span, as well as simulation of certain impairments.

Theoretical and cognitive-intellectual learning should be complemented by practical and emotional learning.

The perception of “normality” and “difference” should be studied; stereotypes and prejudices should be examined.

Teaching and learning through projects should be encouraged and developed. A real-life supervised project could be an appropriate completion of a training period.

Positive attitudes towards people with disabilities should be created as early as possible to overcome psychological barriers to their active participation and to lay the foundations for the removal of physical barriers.

The new curricula should be accompanied by appropriate teaching methods and materials adapted to the various educational needs, paying particular attention to audio-visual material and new technologies, notably information technology and computer-based training and simulations.

Every member state should appoint or set up a governmental body, promote the creation of a professional centre of expertise or use other bodies with competence to disseminate information and documentation as well as to give advice, assistance and support.

7. Training of trainers

Since the awareness of lecturers, teachers and trainers is crucial to all action in this field, basic and further training in the concepts of universal design should be provided to those who are required to implement provisions under chapters 4 to 6, as well as this one.

Staff development programmes to raise awareness and support universal design issues should be encouraged, as should full staff involvement in the development and delivery of universal design strategies.

Special attention should also be paid to the training of non-teaching staff, such as school heads and administrators.

8. User participation

Curricula should be developed with the co-operation of users across the age span, including people with disabilities. Curriculum developers should draw on their expertise. They should be considered as a source of information, first-hand experience and professional competence. User participation should take place as early as possible.

9. Evaluating teaching effectiveness

Since the effectiveness of teaching measures cannot be determined without systematic analysis, the degree of success of each measure should be considered and emerging problems identified.

Institutional evaluation of teaching effectiveness should be seen as an integral part of curriculum development or revision and as a key professional tool for

management and planning.

10. International exchange of information and good practice

Member states should exchange information and research findings on the strategy of universal design and the standards of accessibility achieved.

Governments should promote and/or facilitate co-operation across borders and foster contacts between professionals in this field. These activities should include co-operation between universities and other educational or training institutions, the exchange of lecturers, teachers and trainers, as well as study visits of teaching staff and students/trainees.

The bodies referred to in chapter 6, paragraph 8, should be called upon to communicate with corresponding bodies and institutions in other states.

An international exchange of good practice should be developed to illustrate the major themes of the resolution with practical examples in some detail, making the best possible use of new information technologies, such as the Internet.

The examples, although set in specific contexts, should be sufficiently transferable to demonstrate that solutions and good practice can be shared. They should inspire creative imitation in the spirit of the resolution.

The examples should include action by the member states to revise curricula of the different educational institutions and to enhance the work of the bodies referred to in chapter 6, paragraph 8. It should also include action by the different educational and training institutions as well as professional and vocational groups.