Public Transportation - Accessibility for All

Results in Brief

One step up for rail accessibility

New recommendations and a prototype for a system to help vulnerable groups access railway wagons promise to improve the quality of rail transport.

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Accessibility, safety and comfort in public transport have become priorities in the European transport sector, ensuring the well-being of passengers and streamlining the travel experience on a unified continent. As rail wagons are built to last, often for over 40 years, manufacturers and rail authorities have a challenging time rendering vehicles more accessible to people with special needs.

With the aim of furthering rail accessibility, the EU-funded project 'Public transportation - Accessibility for all' (PUBTRANS4ALL) developed a prototype vehicle-based boarding assistance system (BAS) for old and new rail wagons. A consortium that comprised public transport operators, researchers, manufacturers and users documented the best accessibility devices and outlined best practices to use and operate them.

Special focus was placed on wagons that espouse the standards of the Union internationale des chemins (UIC) or International Union of Railways, the French-led worldwide rail transport industry body. UIC wagons represent the majority of those operating in Europe and targeting them would facilitate retrofitting of the new device in older wagons. Also noteworthy is the participation of many stakeholders in the project from eastern Europe, where accessibility in transport is not always perceived as a challenge or a priority.

The main outcome of the project is a set of recommendations, best practices and proposals on elaborating a system, such as a lifting mechanism and/or ramp, which will assist passengers in boarding trains. These features will provide appreciable support, not only to the physically challenged, but also those with oversized luggage, the elderly and travellers with baby carriages.

A prototype device has already been built in Bulgaria, setting the stage for exploitation of the technology on a large scale. In parallel, a strong dissemination plan has been implemented to inform stakeholders and users about progress and innovations in this direction. If this technology is introduced into the rail sector it will alleviate strain on the rail system and enhance the travel experience for all passengers.

Project Information

PUBTRANS4ALL

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