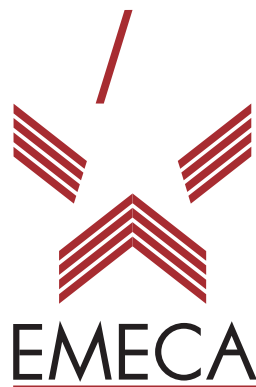


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Ease of access – ease of success



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Foreword



Marc Granier, Chief Executive Officer of the Paris-Nord Villepinte and Le Bourget exhibition centres, is President of EMECA

Dear Readers,

Businesses not only need to invest increasingly in research and innovation as the best means to enhance their competitiveness, but also play their part regarding socially responsible behaviour. This also holds true for the trade fair sector. We are a service sector, relying heavily on an infrastructure that hosts nearly 390,000 exhibitors and 43.6 million visitors per year. All of them need the best possible conditions while accessing, leaving or staying at our fairgrounds – conditions that need to be enhanced, as demographic shifts create aging populations throughout Europe.

In this context, EMECA as a European-based industry association has commissioned a study on “accessibility of the main European trade fair sites” in view of the European Year of Equal Opportunities for All 2007. It goes without saying that by enabling disabled people to visit our exhibition centre and to enjoy their stay in the best possible way, we will enhance environment and infrastructure for all our partners, exhibitors and visitors alike. For them – and for us – ease of access means ease of success.

All around Europe fairgrounds have been newly built or refurbished over the past, giving EMECA members and other organizers ample opportunity to learn from others. Having established the necessary infrastructure to host events, let us focus on that extra bit of quality that brings more service and success to our partners, and to all of us.

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a large, stylized 'M' followed by a horizontal line and a loop.

Marc Granier

EMECA – history and aims

Of the 45 exhibition companies in the world with more than 100,000 m² of display space, 34 are located in Europe. 19 are members of the European Major Exhibition Centres Association EMECA, founded in 1992. The 19 EMECA members organize some 1,200 exhibitions a year with around 390,000 exhibitors and 43.6 million visitors. According to their own estimates, the exhibiting companies generate a turnover of some 800 billion euros through exhibitions. A KMPG study shows that the economic effects initiated by exhibitions at the EMECA venues amount to around 16 billion euros and secure over 360,000 jobs in Europe.

EMECA aims to bring together European major exhibition centres with a strong investment profile and an international dimension. EMECA strives to improve the quality and availability of technical and commercial information on fairs and exhibitions in Europe and also promotes the exchange of ideas and experience in managing exhibition centres and researches the scope for harmonising technical regulations on a consistent European basis.

Learn more about EMECA at www.emeca.com.

Accessibility – the study

A team of researchers from different European universities was commissioned by EMECA to study the accessibility to trade fair districts and sites from the viewpoint of disabled or disadvantaged users in accordance with European policies of planning and design for all. The disciplines involved are architecture, urban planning and design.

The objective of this study is to give state-of-the-art information on the accessibility of EMECA venues, and to draw up design guidelines and parameters. These include infrastructure as well as architectural access and barriers, taking urban planning, building design and movement on a human body scale into account. The variety of disabled populations has been taken into consideration – and the same goes for sensory and symbolic perception of the trade fair environment.

The results of this study will contribute considerably to creating awareness and improving the quality of European exhibition centres. This again will have an economic dimension, namely as a competition factor within the European trade fair industry – but also as an argument to remain the number one region in the world for exhibitions. This position is based on traditionally high EMECA standards of service and quality of exhibition centres in comparison with other regions in the world.

Study conduct – university partners

Background research for the study has been undertaken both via testing questionnaires and on-site visits by testing teams. Processing and analysing the results led to a range of guidelines and best practices as described on the following pages.

Giovanna Fossa, one of the study's two scientific coordinators, is full professor of town and regional planning at the Milan Politecnico. The "Politecnico di Milano" was founded in 1863 by scholars and influential Milan business families as "Istituto Tecnico Superiore". Renamed in 1937, it has grown until today to host about 40,000 students. The Polytechnic is considered one of Europe's leading universities with regards to Engineering, Architecture, and Design.

For more information, please visit www.polimi.it.

Co-author Michèle Pezzagno is assistant professor in town and regional planning at the University of Brescia. The University of Brescia (Università degli Studi di Brescia) was founded in 1982 and is branched in four faculties, hosting about 14,000 students altogether.

To learn more about the University of Brescia, please go to www.unibs.it.

Design for all – access for all

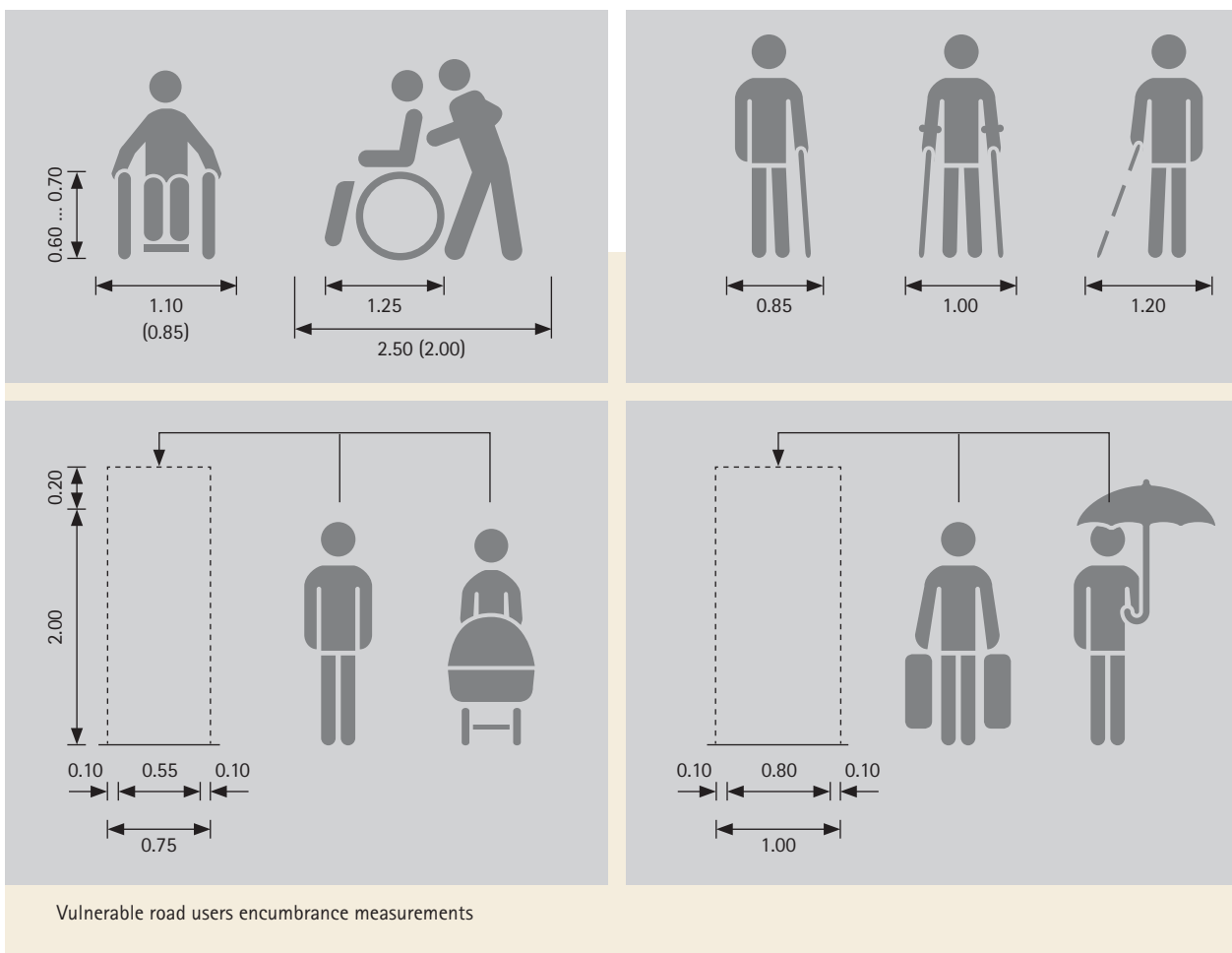
Soon after its establishment in 1993, the European Institute for Design and Disability (EIDD) developed the mission statement: "Enhancing the quality of life through Design for All".

Design for All aims to enable all people to have equal opportunities to participate in every aspect of society. To achieve this, the built environment, everyday objects, services, culture and information – in short, everything that is designed and made by people to be used by people – must be accessible, convenient for everyone in society to use and responsive to evolving human diversity. The practice of Design for All makes conscious use of the analysis of human needs and aspirations and requires the involvement of end users at every stage in the design process. (Excerpt from the EIDD Stockholm Declaration, May 9, 2004)

Taken to the world of fairgrounds, design for all means equal design and access for all visitors, regardless of age and ability. The leading European exhibition centres strive to support the needs of every single visitor by both infrastructure and personal assistance, thus balancing personal weaknesses while boosting personal strengths at the same time.

Aiming at the weakest – to help all

With regard to the design of fairgrounds, the visitors' point of view is crucial to EMECA. Trade shows and congresses, events and conventions all need more than mere exhibition space to become places of joint use where people come together, make business and exchange experience and information. All furnishing, all actions taken must therefore focus on the most handicapped and weakest visitor. Only in following this dictum we will maximise the chance for everyone to enjoy a hassle-free, satisfactory and successful exhibition.



The study undertaken on behalf of EMECA sheds light on the following research goals:

- Guaranteeing access to vulnerable users, thereby improving accessibility for all users
- Pursuing and enhancing the autonomy of individual users in visiting fairs
- Improving visitors' reception, comfort and safety
- Enhancing the continuity in the connection between the fair's collective space and the public spaces in the urban fabric
- Allowing for good access to exhibitions from urban public and international transport systems (stations and airports)

Guidelines for accessible exhibition centres

Outside access

- Easy accessibility from public transport stations to the fair venues
- Overall accessibility to public transport from stations and airports to the exhibition centre (or, alternatively, availability of public shuttle busses for disabled and vulnerable users on request)

Inside access

- Signals for reserved accesses and shortcuts leading to disabled-friendly services
- Complimentary wheelchairs available at the fairs' reception (both for manual and electrical operation)
- Accessible and guarded wardrobes and luggage deposits, both at the entrance of the fair and at individual halls
- Use of European key for access to the handicapped restrooms and its distribution at all entrances when buying the ticket (upon request)
- Accessibility and suitable provision (frequency and location) of facilities (in particular seating, tables, drinking fountains, snack vending machines, information panels) at the distribution points, in the halls and in individual booths
- Accessibility of all accessory services on the fairgrounds (bars, restaurants, conference rooms, business rooms, secretarial offices, ATMs, etc., and – obviously – restrooms)
- Avoidance of architectural micro-barriers installed during set-up

Online information

- Dedicated website designed for disabled and vulnerable users
- Barrier-free access to the website (graphics, colours, and sound)
- Availability of printed material (leaflets, maps, etc.) including specific information for vulnerable users

Weakest points: outside the venue

The study gives evidence that most accessibility problems occur outside the exhibition centre. Physical barriers (like highways or vast parking areas), lengthy walkways without clear signage and facilities keep visitors from coming to exhibitions. To help them overcome obstacles,

- Public transport to/from venues, or shuttle bus systems need to be installed
- Walkways should be designed to the needs of impaired or disabled people with great energy consumption (benches, water fountains)
- Walking distances should be reduced to max. 5–10 minute distances, which equals 300 m at 4 km/h walking speed
- Information on the pedestrian environment should be at hand, especially for pedestrians with cognitive and sensory impairments



The walkway should be dimensioned according to the pedestrian traffic flow



Contrast coloured accessible walkways to the main gate



Arcades, shelf, ledge



Adequate pedestrian lighting



Drinking fountains (wheelchair accessible)



Benches



Sidewalk extension



Pedestrian right of way through raised crossing



Tactile surface treatment when using ramps for i.e. wheelchairs

Learn from one another

As the following examples will underline, most of the major European exhibition centres have already taken action alongside the mentioned guidelines. Solutions in general and detail, the authors of the study consider these best practices that can – and should – easily be adapted and put to use by other exhibition venues.



"Accompanying" visitors throughout their itinerary (visual and touch signals, easily readable by all; accessible info-points and well-informed staff at the main junctions)



Signalling reserved accesses and shortcuts leading to disabled-friendly services



Complimentary wheelchairs available at the exhibitions reception (both manually and electrically operated)

Accessible and guarded wardrobes and luggage deposits, both at the entrance of the exhibition and at individual halls

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Learn from one another.



Accessibility and suitable provision (frequency and location) of furniture (in particular, seating, tables, drinking fountains, snack vending machines, info panels) at the distribution points, in the halls and in individual booths



Using the European key for access to the handicapped restrooms and its distribution at the entrance when buying the ticket (upon request)



Accessibility of all accessory services in the fair grounds (bars, restaurants, conference rooms, business rooms, secretarial offices, ATMs, etc. and – obviously – restrooms)

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Accessibility for all to booths also by means of ramps allowing vulnerable users to approach products on display



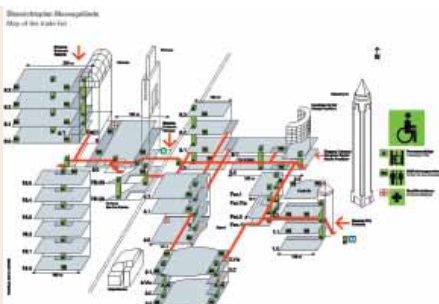
Avoidance of architectural micro-barriers installed during setup (floor cables, packaging material, installation equipment)



Dedicated website designed for the disabled and vulnerable users



Disabled access to the website (graphics, colours and sound)



Availability of printed material (leaflets, maps, etc) including specific information for the vulnerable users

EMECA members



Barcelona	Fira de Barcelona
Basel	Swiss Exhibition (Basel) Swiss Exhibition (Zürich)
Birmingham	The National Exhibition Centre
Bologna	BolognaFiere
Brussels	Brussels Expo
Frankfurt	Messe Frankfurt
Geneva	Geneva PALEXPO
Hanover	Deutsche Messe AG
Lisbon	Feira Internacional de Lisboa
Lyon	Eurexpo-Parc des Expositions de Lyon
Madrid	IFEMA, Feria de Madrid
Milan	Fiera Milano (City) Fiera Milano
Nuremberg	NürnbergMesse
Paris	Paris Expo Paris-Nord Villepinte Exhibition & Convention Centre
Rimini	Rimini Fiera
Utrecht	Royal Dutch Jaarbeurs
Valencia	Feria Valencia
Verona	Fiera di Verona

www.emeca.com



EMECA Headquarters
EMECA Secretary
c/o Parc d'expositions de
PARIS-NORD Villepinte
BP 68004
95970 ROISSY CDG
France
Phone: +33 1 48 63 30 94
+33 1 48 63 34 80
Fax: +33 1 48 63 30 90

EMECA Brussels
c/o Messe Frankfurt EU Office
Rue de l'Amazone 2
1050 BRUSSELS
Belgium
Phone: +32 2 53 57 258
Fax: +32 2 53 49 696