

Promotion of accessibility in sports facilities

Niina Kilpelä, The Threshold Association
Aija Saari, Finnish Sports Association of Persons with Disabilities



Accessibility work of the Finnish Sports Association of Persons with Disabilities

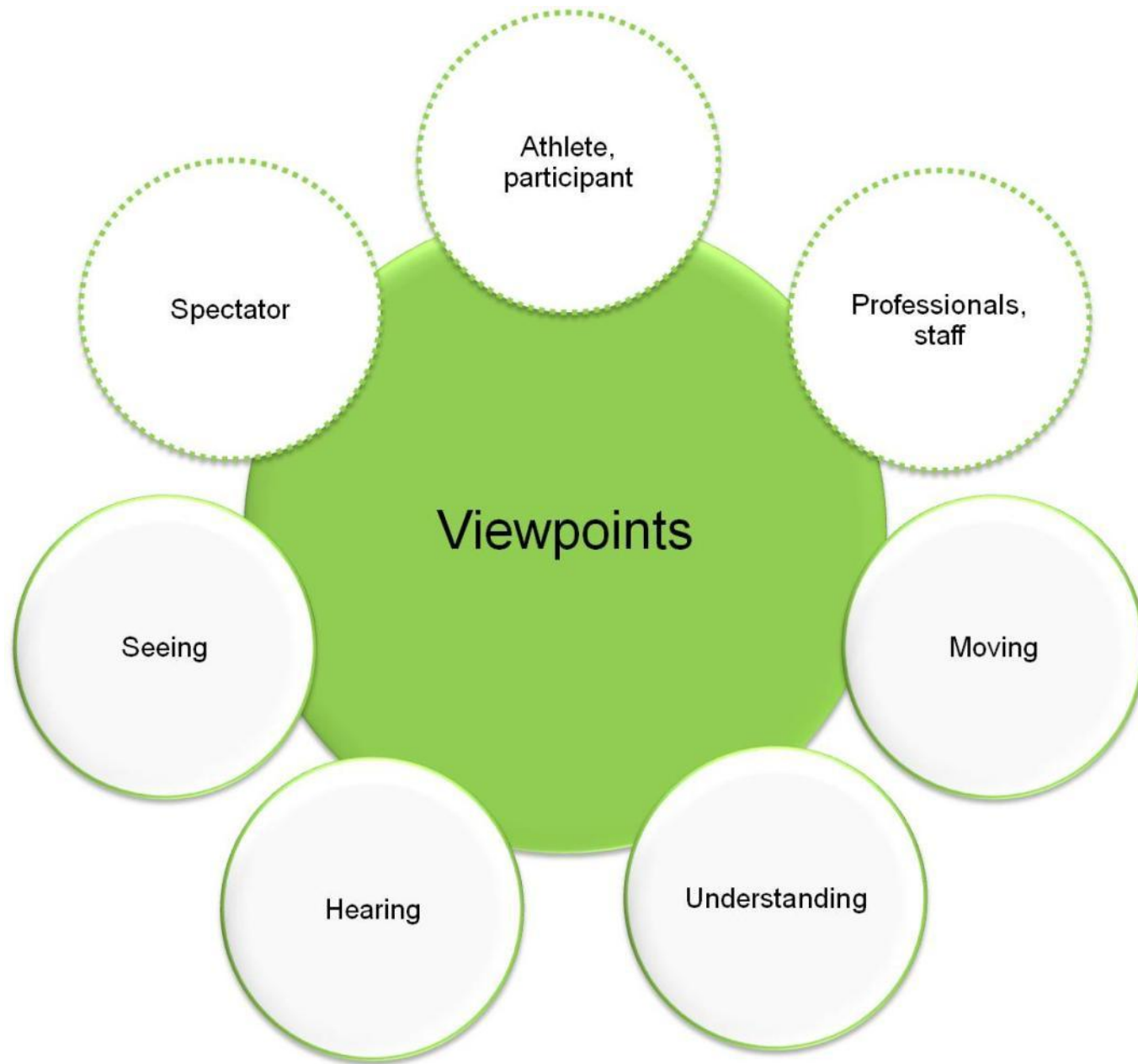
- The purposes
 1. To evaluate accessibility of sports facilities.
 2. To collect sports specific accessibility information.
 3. To develop existing accessibility information as well as accessibility audit methods in sports facilities.
- Funded by the Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture.
- Executed in co-operation with disability organizations 2009–2013.

Phase 1

- The accessibility content of sports construction guidebooks published by the Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture.
 - Analyzing 27 guidebooks, multiple constituency evaluation, 2009.
- Physical barriers experienced by the users in sports facilities
 - Internet survey, 2010.
- Physical barriers faced by disabled sport instructor
 - Further questionnaire for sports instructors, 2010.

The evaluation criterion

- The evaluation criterion with key statements was created in a meeting with representatives from different disability organizations and disability sport federations.
 - An adaptation of multiple constituency evaluation was used to create a theoretical frame for future evaluations.



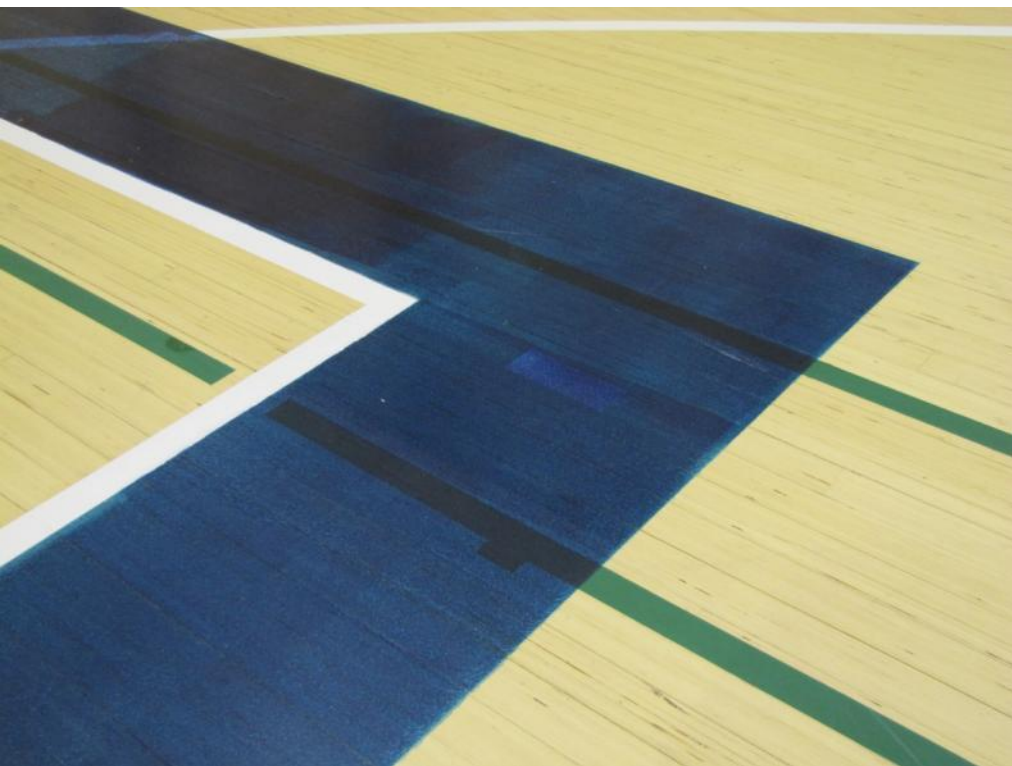
Accessibility viewpoints: moving, seeing, hearing and understanding. These intersect with the viewpoints of an athlete/participant, coach/leader/professional and spectator.

Book analysis

- The books focus on construction guidelines and instruction in sports-specific facilities.
- Most of the books referred only to national legislation and did not consider accessibility in sports-specific environments.
 - The needs of professionals with a disability, such as physical education instructors and coaches were often neglected.
- Barriers to accessibility were usually seen as a problem for athletes using a wheelchair.
 - The accessibility issues of those with sensory impairments (vision/hearing) were not addressed or information was limited.

Accessibility legislation vs.
Accessibility in sports-
specific environments





Signage, contrasts.

The location of the
accessible toilet
vs. sports hall.





User experiences

- The most used indoor sports facilities are swimming halls and spas (33 %), and gyms (29 %) and sports halls (including school gym halls) (28 %).
- The biggest group of the respondents (35 %) would rather exercise in a mainstream fitness group with able-bodied persons and not in a separate group for traditional adapted physical activity.
- The most often reported barriers within sports facilities were found to be at the entrance, toilets, dressing rooms and showers.
 - The most frequently mentioned barrier was the poor quality of indoor air.

User experiences

- There is a large variation in how people feel about the obstacles.
 - Actively exercising people are more used to overcoming obstacles whereas for beginners the same obstacles can prevent participation.
- The advance information about the accessibility of the facility is important for persons with a disability.
- Inaccessibility creates a barrier to employment and voluntary work.

Phase 2

- Updating accessibility guidelines and materials
 - Gathering data from 21 indoor disability sports, various methods, 2011.
 - Creating checklists for accessibility evaluation, 2013.
- Optimal floor materials for disability sports
 - Questionnaire for goal ball and wheelchair rugby coaches, supplemented by information from showdown, boccia and electric wheelchair hockey.
- Guidebook: Accessible indoor sports facilities
- Evaluation of the need for accessibility audits & the status of the accessibility in training centres.
 - Interviews for managers in 14 training centres & content analysis of web pages (accessibility), 2012.
 - Accessibility audits in training centres, 2013

Updating accessibility guidelines and materials

- Accessibility guidelines in indoor disability sports.
 - The sports specific accessibility guidelines for auditors were collected to complement the general audit method developed earlier by Finnish Association of People with Physical Disabilities.
- The new guidelines and checklists were tested in accessibility audits of Finnish training centers.
 - The accessibility audits of 14 training centers of sports were carried out in 2013.
- Accessibility guidebook for sports planners and architects (2013, in Finnish).
 - The focus of the book is on accessibility of basic sports facilities supplemented with disability sports information.
 - Financed by the Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture.

Conclusions

- There is a growing need for all sports premises to be accessible, not only the ones that have traditionally been used by people with disabilities.
- Restrictions in access are partly explained by old buildings not originally designed for recreational use.
 - Barriers also reflect the ignorance of designers and builders.
- Builders and developers could benefit of proper accessibility audits conducted by trained accessibility auditors.

Conclusions

- Emerge of new disability sports creates challenges for the implementation of the facilities.
 - Even the basic accessibility requirements in sports facilities are not yet known by all designers.
- There is a need for continuous updating of planning guidelines and sports specific accessibility information, as well as research which acknowledges disability sports guidelines and legislation.

Promotion of accessibility

- The promotion of accessibility is most successful when it is observed as an integral concept related to moving, seeing, hearing and understanding.
- The key elements in promotion of accessibility:
 1. based on evidence
 2. understood broadly
 3. executed in wide co-operation.

The work continues...

In the future Finnish Sports Association of Persons with Disabilities hopes to establish a European Access Sports -network to keep on development and to share the best practices at European level.

Thank you for your attention!

niina.kilpela@kynnys.fi

aija.saari@vammaisurheilu.fi

