

The participation of Boverket in the Universal Design 2014 conference

Abstract

Boverket is the Swedish authority responsible for the national legislation on physical planning and building, as well as for accessibility in the built environment. The purpose of the conference participation is to create interaction and dialogue between the conference participants on issues regarding the similarities and differences in accessibility legislation and its applications.

Boverket proposes to begin with a brief lecture on Sweden's work on accessibility. The lecture is followed by a workshop that aims to highlight interesting examples of how to work with accessibility to create a good life and living environment for all people.

About Boverket

The Swedish National Board of Housing, Building and Planning – Boverket – is a central government authority. (www.boverket.se) Boverket is administered by the Ministry of Health and Social Affairs. Boverket is the authority for the use of land, water and nature resources; the town and country planning; building construction and management of the built environment; and administration of related public subsidies.

Accessibility has a long tradition in Sweden and in the work of Boverket on planning and construction has a very important role. In 1966, requirements on accessibility to public spaces for persons with reduced mobility were introduced. In 1977, the requirements were further extended to include permanent housing and persons with impaired orientation capacity.

Disability policy in Sweden

One fifth of Sweden's population has some form of disability. It may involve physical disabilities, visual or

hearing impairments, disabilities due to mental illness, or dyslexia. Improving the physical accessibility is one of the central objectives of disability policy in Sweden. According to national legislation, persons with impaired mobility or orientation capacity must be able to access buildings, structures, sites, public spaces and areas for facilities other than buildings and be able to use them.

UN Convention

The Government of Sweden decided in 2007 to sign the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. In 2008 the government decided to ratify the Convention, which came into force in January 2009. Since both EU and Sweden have ratified the Convention, it acts as a guiding principle for the disability policy. Sweden is legally bound by the provisions of the Convention, and the Convention is implemented in legislation and the public sector. The articles of the Convention contain the measures necessary to ensure that people with disabilities can exercise their rights.

The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities is a common basis for all countries that have signed or ratified it, but there are differences in how different countries apply and interpret the requirements of the Convention. All countries of the world have not signed or ratified the UN Convention, nevertheless the accessibility issues still can be of great importance in terms of accessibility in new construction, alterations and improvements to the existing environment.

The participation of Boverket in the UD 2014

Boverket proposes a lecture that is followed by a workshop.

Lecture (15 min + 5 min for questions)

- Brief introduction to how Sweden works with issues of accessibility, background and current work.
- How Sweden interprets the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and how it is implemented in national legislation.
- Examples of buildings and built environments in Sweden illustrating the rules for accessibility regarding:
 - new construction (for example: housing, public buildings and public places)
 - modification of existing building (for example: change of use, alteration, extension)
 - retroactive accessibility requirements in existing environments (for example: easily eliminated obstacles, HIN 3)

Workshop

The workshop aims to create a picture of how the conference participants work with accessibility in order to create and enforce rights for individuals with disabilities. What differences and similarities are there? What experiences can be shared and what can the participating countries learn from each other's different ways to work with accessibility?

Boverket plans to put together a mini-study with a number of questions on how accessibility work is conducted in each country. These will focus on regulations for new construction as well as how the work

exerted to improve accessibility in the existing environment. The questions will be sent to the notified participants in April. Boverket will then process the responses to highlight a number of interesting issues, and show the similarities and differences in the legislation. Boverket hopes this will identify some interesting examples of how different countries have solved the accessibility of new and existing environments. Boverket also intends to invite some of the participating countries to present accessibility work from their respective countries in the workshop.

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