Accessibility = Possibility

Summary

Accessibility = Possibility

This report was developed by implementing NordPlus Adult 2023 project „Accessibility = Possibility", No. NPAD-2023/1 0005

Nevertheless, while all Partnership countries ratified the United Nations Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and have their regulations regarding construction, buildings, and accessible environment, the situation in the building environment remains not as good as it could be.

It is noticed that businesses, the public sector, architects, and designers are keen to create an accessible environment that fits all society's needs (universal design). Everyone will experience changing needs and demands of their surroundings at some point in their life. Universal design breaks with the notion that users with special needs must have separate solutions. Instead, the value-based design concept aims to create solutions that, as a starting point, works for all people despite different abilities. This project have been started with the aim to explore ways and models for adult learning which support practical work with Universal Design.
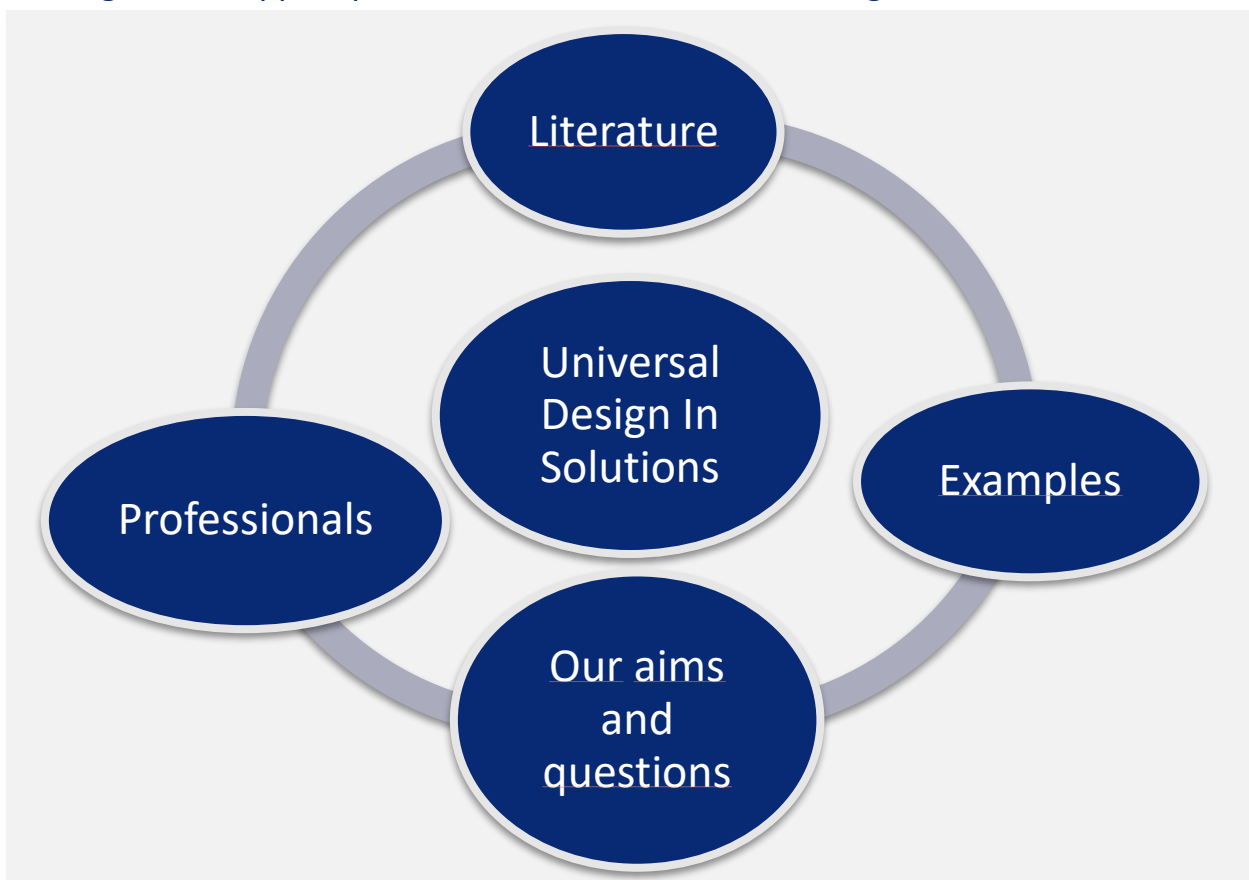
Accessibility = Possibility and
Universal Design = Participation Cases analyzis

UD in different areas

Project partners decided to explore ways to find cases of universal design because we expected collaborative work with cases could be helpful for our collaborative learning processes and help us to:

1. understand and show what universal design can be in practice,

2. understand how universal design can be developed and implemented into practice and,

3. communicate and use findings from 1 and 2 in our future work with different types of universal design e.g. in adult learning.

Figure 1 Accessibility, Usability and Universal Design

Accessibility, Usability and Universal Design: ingredients that are part of a whole

Universal Design

Usability

Accessibility

- Equity and Equality
- Non-stigmatization
- Intersectionality

- Effectiveness
- Efficiency
- Satisfaction

- Access

Conditions for Participation
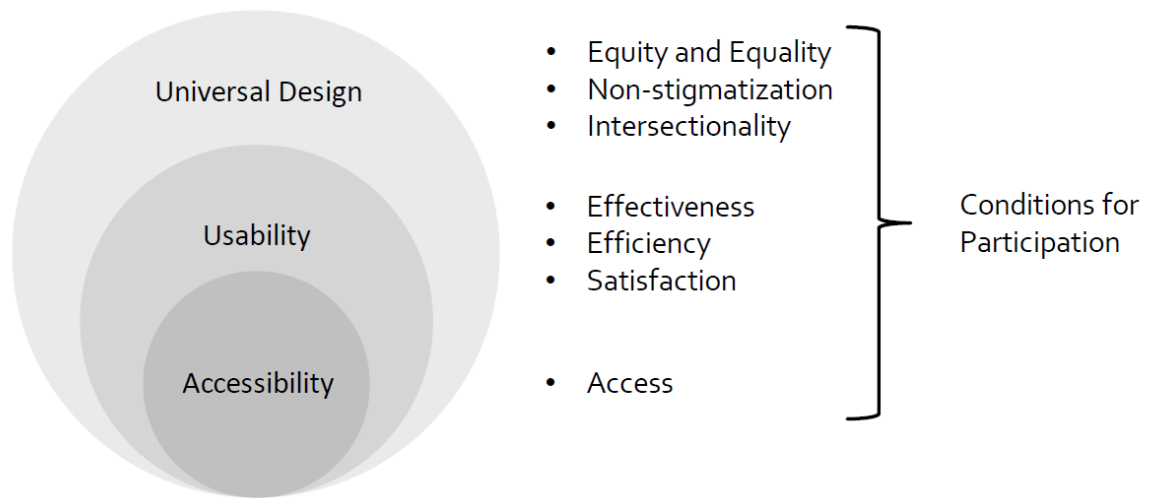
(Hedvall, Ståhl and Iwarsson, 2022)

We started to brainstorm and share our thoughts and knowledge about a variety of different types of cases. Surprisingly we experienced that it was very difficult to find and define one case for our purpose. We, the four partners, are involved in many different tasks dealing with universal design and are working with them from different perspectives with different purposes. Beside that we were challenged when we tried to operate the concept of Universal Design, which was hard to distinguish from accessibility.

We discussed many potential cases: 1) Awareness campaigns/communication, 2) Short and long UD-courses for different professions for example bus drivers, 3) hotels, 4) mobile communication, 5) implementation of digital EU-directives, 6) Universal design for learning, 7) crisis preparedness, 8) implementation of building regulations, 9) and many more.

We realized that it wasn't helpful for our work to continue our search for one or two mutual cases in the project.

We found out that it would be more useful for our purpose and the project if each partner shared different cases or examples from their different types of work with accessibility and universal design.

To make this work we decided that each partner should make and share a short PowerPoint presentation of examples they find most interesting and relevant for the project from their perspective. The chosen cases and examples are presented in figure 2.

Table 1 Cases and examples from the four partner countries

Country	Cases
Denmark	Universal Design for Learning
Estonia	Universal Design in Museums
Latvia	Assistive technology for students with hearing impairment
Latvia	Access to art and culture for persons with visual impairments
Latvia	Competence and Awareness Raising
Lithuania	Consulting Center on Environment Accessibility

The freer format for choosing cases and examples to share experiences and knowledge between the partners worked much better. The cases where real, relevant and didn't all have universal design as the focus, but where all relevant and served to shows relations between accessibility and universal design. We decided to ask the following questions to address the perspectives for universal design within the cases and examples. The questions are related to our draft model which is supposed to qualify our work with universal design.

Figure 2 Draft model in the making
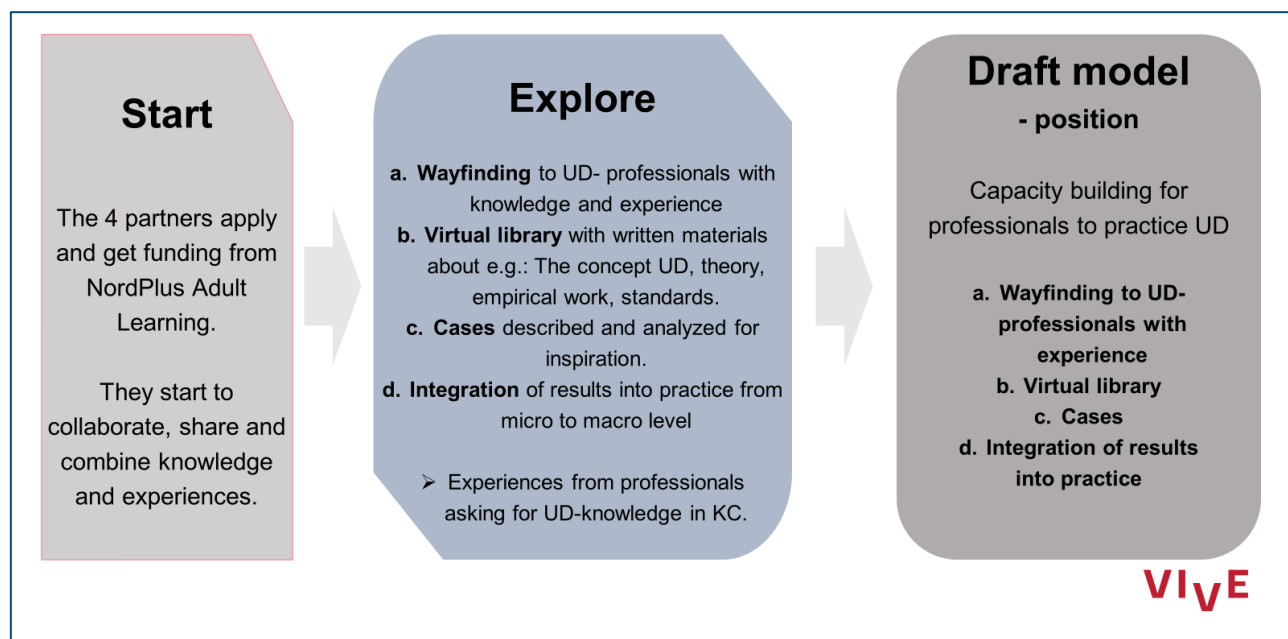
Table 2 Questions to our selected cases and examples

I.	**What are the main questions about Universal Design in the cases and examples?**
II.	**Is it relevant to search for professionals with special universal design competences?**
III.	**Is it relevant to search for literature and written materials with special knowledge and experiences about universal design?**

IV.	Is it relevant to identify comparable cases and examples from other places and countries to inspire our work?
V.	Do we gain new knowledge and experiences to be communicated and used by professionals working with universal design?

The Danish case - Universal Design for Learning

I: Main questions

• How can UD and UDL help providing increased participation in learning and social activities in higher education?

• What are the needs of employes and students in higher education regarding increased participation for student with disabilities in learning and social activities?

• Which tools and methods can help implementing UD and UDL principles in everyday practice in higher education?

II: Professionals

Information has been gathered from professionals with competences in inclusive education in higher education and interest in developing a UDL practice as well as from users (educators and leaders from higher educational institutions and students):

- Workshop and interviews with expert group including experts in inclusive education and stakeholders

- Interviews with professionals from University Education Centres

- Workshop and survey amongst higher education leaders, educators and support section

- Interviews with higher education students with and without disabilities

- NordPlus project, both participants and external speakers

III: Literature

Information has also been gathered through a literature search primarily aiming to identifying national and international practice-oriented methods and tools that can strengthen inclusive learning environments and translate principles of UD / UDL into practice. It has also identified national knowledge about the need to strengthen inclusive learning environments. Literature has been gathered through:

- Research databases

- Searching websites from central knowledge institutions and higher education institutions

- Links and ideas from professionals

- Google and snowballing

IV: Comparision

Identifying comparable cases and examples is the main aim of the literature search and important in gathering information from professionals. Internationally there are several comparable toolboxes that can be of inspiration in a Danish setting, and there are also relevant tools spread out different places in Denmark, that are gathered in the project. Gathering and choosing relevant tools as inspiration for developing a toolbox relevant and usable in Danish higher education is a central part of the project.

V: Results

The aim of the project is to develop and test a toolbox that can help implementing UD and UDL principles in everyday practice and strengthen inclusive study environments in higher education.

The Estonia case – Universal Design in Museums

We can talk about universal design in Estonia since the beginning of the 2000-s greatly influenced by the Nordic example.

Since year 2002, Estonia has been regulating accessibility to new public buildings or buildings that are being fully renovated public buildings. Gradually, also heritage protected buildings, which often museum buildings are, are made accessible step-by-step and collections designed in a way that is for different user groups.

During 2016-2017 Estonia conducted a pilot project mapping the readiness of culture venues and museums to host visitors holding EU disability card. However, the conception of producing an accessible exhibition from scratch is still new to many.
Big towns versus rural areas
Museums which have been promoting universal design, are mostly located in bigger towns. Rural museums are not yet.
Some museums are joined into a foundation or a group – as example West-Estonian Museums Foundation (having made improvements for visitors at the Haapsalu espicoal castle museum) and Virumaa Museums (have made efforts to improve visitors experience).
In some cases, universal design approach has been used, but not fully implemented, being due to financial or other shortcomings. However, a few best practice examples can be highlighted.

Estonian Maritime Museum Fat Margaret branch

Fat Margaret is Tallinn city wall defense tower, built early 16th century. The tower was reconstructed from 1978-1981 to house the Maritime Museum. Exhibition was unchanged since that time and both the venue and content needed thorough renewal. The process started in 2017, involving user groups as blind, deaf, mobility impaired people. Estonian Chamber of People with Disabilities was coordinating the user involvement and the compromises with Tallinn Culture & Sports Department (at that time Department of Cultural Heritage) to introduce universal design solutions to both the venue and exhibition. The new visitors experience was opened at the end of 2019.

The Estonian Maritime Museum has a newly opened (2024) exhibition efforts were made to use universal design principles for all and their past experience as a bases to develop a better concept and provide for all target groups, i.e Estonian sign-language interpretation and subtitles for audio materials.

Estonian Museum of Arts

Estonian Museum of Arts is having 5 branches. In 2015 a mapping exercise was conducted to find out the shortcomings and make proposals for universal design solutions. Users' perspective was provided by Estonian Chamber of People with Disabilities. A mapping report was put together.

Kadriorg Palace branch

You can take the elevator to the main floor of Kadrioru Castle (main hall, permanent exhibition) and to the ground side wing of the 3rd floor (changing exhibitions). The elevator can accommodate a wheelchair-bound visitor with an attendant. Accessibility features are being offered; however universal design concept has not been developed.

View of the Kadriorg palace housing foreign art exhibition of the Estonian Museum of Art

KUMU – Estonian Museum of Art

KUMU offers texts for arriving and navigating inside and outside the building for the visually impaired as well as people with mobility issues. The Kumu Art Museum has many series, activities and support materials for visitors with special needs. Kumu is a visitor-friendly environment both for groups, who can order a special program, for example people with hearing impairments can have a guided tour.

Park entrance of the KUMU featuring Estonian art.
The Estonian Museum of Art also comprises Adamson-Eric museum, Mikkeli museum and Niguliste Museum (St.Nicholas Church).

Niguliste Museum-s (St.Nicholas Church) efforts for universal design

St. Nicholas Museum is in an old church building and is home to Estonia's most valuable medieval and early modern art collection. The museum at the from with museum´s director has a vision, that valuable cultural heritage must be accessible and open to everyone and therefore they do their best to ensure that visitors with special needs have a good and safe experience in the museum.
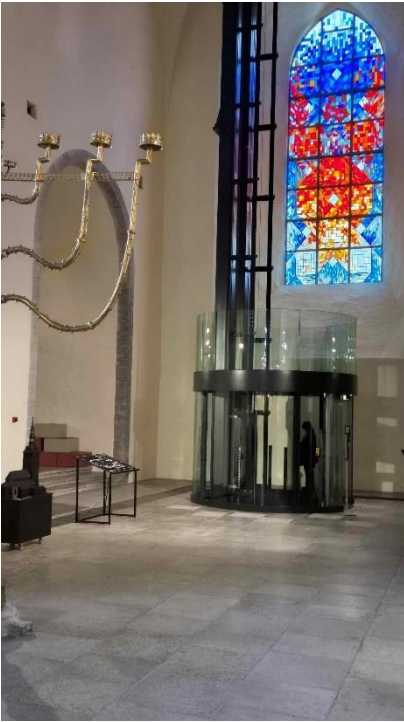
Niguliste Church has got an elevator bringing visitors to the tower. A mock-up of the church is made in bronze and available for blind visitors to touch. Entrance to the main floor of the church is however not yet solved in a universally designed manner, requiring special solutions each time a visitor with mobility impairment would like to enter.

Estonian Health Museum

The Estonian Health Museum set itself the goal of making the museum environment more accessible to many different people. Estonian Health Museum´s accessibility audit was carried out by experts from EPIK and the target groups themselves, carried out with four main disability groups (visual, hearing, mobility and intellectual) in 2020. Since then this old town building is far moe accessible than ever. The programme "Museum Accelerator" funded by the Heritage Protection Board was used and concept was developed "User-Centered Health Museum" where they analysed the expectations and obstacles related to museum visits of the most sensitive target groups - children and people with special needs.

Outside the capital: Estonian National Museum

The new Estonian National Museum building at Raadi did take into consideration Universal design approach. Consultations with users took place even if not all the suggestions were taken into consideration. The museum building is vast, unfortunately the aren´t many resting areas or benches with armrests. Auditorium for lectures does not have seating in the middle of the hall, which would be appropriate for a modern venue. The museum reopened in the new building in 2016.

Narva museum Hermann castle

As a result of the reconstruction works of the Narva fortress which started in January 2018, a fully restored convention building was opened in June 2020 with a new permanent exhibition that focuses on the history of the fortress itself, from the arrival of the first Danes to the banks of the Narva river to the present day. Visitors can access the east wing on the river side, which was previously closed, and the gallery running

along the ridge of the wall of the convention building, two elevators in the stairwells facilitate movement in the fortress.

Inside of castle courtyard, entrance is made accessible, the path leading to it is not.
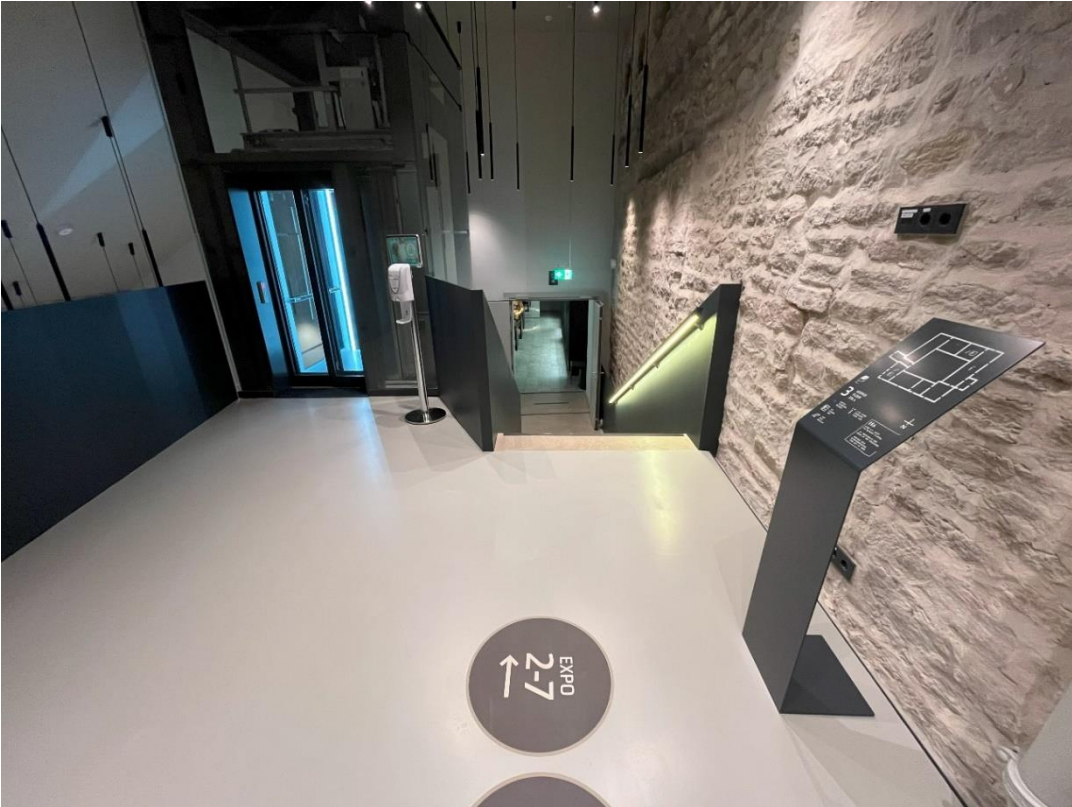
Inside the castle universal design efforts have been made

Haapsalu episcopal castle

Saaremaa Museum Kuressaare castle

Kuressaare castle has started changed towards Universal design. Museum webpage is explaining how people with reduced mobility can enter the area and at the moment only the ground floor of the castle, where museum shop and temporary exhibitions are located. Elevators have been built but are not yet in use, as the upper floors renovation is not yet completed.

Further afield towards holistic approach

Public buildings accessibility legislation will be updated and more instructions on how to assure accessibility will be developed (2025)
Databases and information available online will be improved especially when organizations make accessibility audit and are therefore advised on using audio description and description maps for the visually impaired.
Understanding that heritage is best preserved when in use and in use for all different users is also a known concept for the Consumer Protection and Technical Regulatory Authority who supervises the fulfilment of minimum accessibility requirements. In addition, the position is covered by an official with a higher education in interior architecture and extensive knowledge of universal design, including the requirements and needs of contrast, tactile communication and the physical environment in general.

Conclusions

Accessibility is often not a well-known concept in Estonia. However, museums are a leading group of organizations together with the Ministry of Culture that are making efforts to consider a wider audience, including people with disabilities. We have good examples that could serve as an example in the future and from which to develop further.

Currently, the approach and awareness of universal design among planners, architects and designers is still low. Sometimes accessible solutions even disappear in design, due to the

lack of knowledge on the purpose of universal design and in the want to make something unordinary and beautiful.

At the same time, we state that the curricula do not include the topics of people with disabilities or the approach to accessibility. For example, now, the curriculum of only one optional subject in the Estonian Academy of Arts focuses on accessibility, but speaking to the lecturer, the need and requirement is actually much greater in reality. This means that subjects dealing with accessibility topics and, consequently, universal design solutions need to be integrated into the curricula of various universities, and practical training.

The Latvian case - Competence and Awareness Raising

I: Main questions

• What tools and methods are most effective in promoting awareness?
• How can a better understanding and knowledge of the specific needs of people with hearing, visual, mobility and mental disabilities create a more inclusive society?
• How important is the same understanding in terminology (accessibility, access, universal design) in promoting awareness?

II: Professionals

The rights and basic principles set forth in the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, including Article 8 " Awareness-raising" are to be implemented horizontally by:
• line ministries and sectors responsible for implementing the UN Convention (health, education, employment, public transport, culture, digital services etc.)
• other participating institutions responsible for the gradual implementation of the obligations set forth in the UN Convention

At the same time, an inclusive society cannot be built by policy makers alone, so to achieve the goals other social actors should be involved:

- municipalities and social services providers
- non -governmental organizations
- schools and information centers
- banking and financial service providers
- mobile phone operators
- healthcare professionals
- universities etc.

III: Literature

First, it should be noted that the understanding on disability has changed radically in the last ten years. It was the Convention, as the first special human rights document in the field of disability, that determined that a person with a disability is not a passive, segregated part of society, but a full-fledged and normal part of society, with abilities and a full-fledged place in the overall spectrum of society. Therefore, the UN Convention itself is the first source that provides a framework for a common understanding of such a awareness raising structure that is consistent with the contemporary biopsychosocial model of disability. However we use the written literature, webinars, seminars and lectures, information campaigns, guidlines and workshops.

IV: Compare

For the better result it is important to compere experiences and to exchange the knowledge – from a human perspective (involving non-governmental organizations and centers), also effectively use the advantages provided by colleagues from other countries, from literature, from project partners, inspiring campaigns that have already been carried out by others.

V: Results

Latvian approach to raising awareness:

(1)   Self-assessment tool for assessing accessibility - as a regular assessment tool to measure the usability of objects for people with different types of functioning impairments:

-       Ministry of Welfare organized and coordinated the performance of accessibility self-assessment in state and local government buildings, including public transport infrastructure structure

-       Before the self-assessment, seminars were provided for the training of the institution's specialists

-       In 2020 672 buildings of state administration institutions and 1516 buildings of local government institutions were evaluated according to the same criteria

-       The self-assessment will be repeated on the first half of 2026, compared to the results of the previous assessment

-       https://www.lm.gov.lv/lv/vides-un-informacijas-pieklustamibas-pasnovertejums

(2)   Information Campaigns, for example

«Step into someone' else shoes»

https://youtu.be/ed73Sva0wvg?si=L8mp6gQ3IKzhSBZZ

«A person, not a diagnosis»

https://youtu.be/uza7cKm7gUE?si=Toxdq2YyqajASbSK

(3)   Recommendations for creating an accessible environment

https://youtu.be/_Anfkt56rX8?si=vJMMsRkEXvZlTiOo

(4)   Methodological guidelines:

https://www.lm.gov.lv/lv/horizontalais-princips-vienlidziba-ieklausana-nediskriminacija-un-pamattiesibu-ieverosana

(5)   Transposition of European Accessibility act

•   Working group of Ministries, Consumer Rights Protection Centre, Transport Agencies

•   Webinars with economic operators + social partners

•   Consultations with National Disability Council

•   New Law on Accessibility of Products and Services

•   We concluded that awareness rising should be seen through practical tools - self assessment tools for evaluating accessibility level, guidelines, public campaigns etc.

•   To achieve the goals, set in Article 8 of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities - teamwork is essential.

•   It is not so crucial what tools or terminology social actors use - all are useful in achieving the goal, if we think about the common goal - universal design that includes everyone.

•   Cross-sectoral involvement and support is essential; teamwork has a strength.

•   Regular interventions and outcome measurements, which are carried out periodically, are essential in the true measurement of results.

The Lithuania case - Consulting Center on Environment Accessibility

I: Main questions

The main questions for Consulting Center experts are directly related with accessibility. Lithuanian society still equalize Universal Design and Accessibility as well. The questions related physical environment could be sorted in several different field's areas:

-Juridical consultations were held on the adaptation of cultural heritage objects, the interpretation of ISO ir Construction Technical Regulations (CTR), on the installation of parking spaces, on the installation of lifts and elevators, on the drawing up of official letter templates.

-Advisory services on practical aspects and architectural solutions to ensure the accessibility of physical infrastructure for persons with reduced mobility - consultations were held on the adaptation of the environment in accordance with CTR and ISO standards, horizontal and vertical adaptation of the environment for people with disabilities, appeals are made by architects who work with state and municipal institutions, property bank, banks, etc. for the installation of ramps outside and inside the object, on the installation of vertical lifts, on the status of special structures, carry out reassessments after the adaptation.

-Advisory services on practical aspects of ensuring the accessibility of physical infrastructure for visually impaired persons and architectural solutions - consultations were made on the tactile, both inside and outside the object. On the marking and guide tracks. On the marking of roads and their application. On the marking of glass doors. Due to the proper application of underground passages. State and municipal authorities, private businesses apply.

In regards of informational accessibility there were provided consultations focused on the adaptation of websites for visually impaired persons, consultations focused on writing in easy-to-read language.

Additionally Consulting Center provide easy-to-read text validation by checking it with target groups, mainly with persons with intellectual disability.
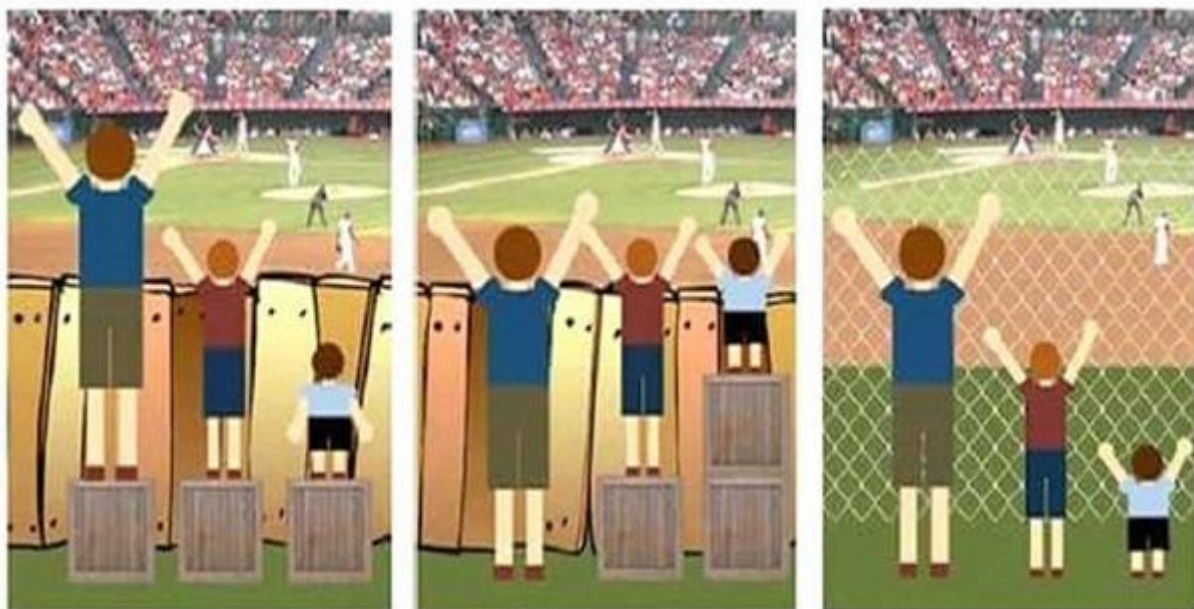
Equality, Equity and eliminating the gaps

II: Professionals

Consulting Center has 3 staff members who advise on the preparation of information in a language that is easily understood, conduct trainings on the availability of information flowed by institutions on the Internet and in writing, and provide advice and training on universal design issues. Also checks projects for compliance with the principles of universal design.
The Centre also uses services of several (5) experts under service contracts. This is a 1 lawyer - providing information on the legal aspects of ensuring the accessibility of the environment to all, as well as 2 architects who advise on the accessibility of the environment to persons with reduced mobility and to the blind and partially sighted. Also, two experts provide advice on the accessibility of institutions' websites and the writing of texts in an easily understandable language.
There is a formed group of persons with intellectual disabilities who check the written text in an easily understandable language and confirm that the text is understandable.

III: Literature

The activities of Consulting Center are based on the constant search for new information. Specialists of the Consultation Center are well-versed in the latest literature and science-based evidence related to Universal Design in various areas of life. Since the Consultation Center is usually the final stop where people are looking for answers to their questions or solutions related to the principles of universal design, the specialists of the consultation center are constantly using and looking for the latest knowledge related to their field. For example, an expert in an easy-to-understand

language delves into not only the philological aspects of easy-to-understand language, but also the psychological aspects of individuals with intellectual disabilities, how they perceive and understand information. The architect delves into issues related to the adaptation of the living environment and design to persons with intellectual or psychosocial disabilities.

The most literature is using:

HARMONISED EUROPEAN STANDARD EN 301 549 V3.2.1 (2021-03) Accessibility requirements for ICT products and services.

INTERNATIONAL STANDARD ISO 21542 Building construction — Accessibility and usability of the built environment.

EUROPEAN STANDARD EN 17161 Design for All - Accessibility following a Design for All approach in products, goods and services - Extending the range of users.

EUROPEAN STANDARD EN 17210:2021 Accessibility and usability of the built environment – Functional requirements

IV: Compare

The activity model is selected intuitively through the development of natural circumstances, monitoring the flow and nature of requests. There are also similarities with the consultation centers of some Nordic countries, which provide advice on specific issues and provide training to expand the circle of persons with specific knowledge, for example. Bevica foundation, the Danish Agency For Digital Government, Nota, Danish Ministry of Culture subordinate institution, library and center of expertise providing and lending printed texts in digital formats that are accessible to people with reading difficulties (Denmark), Invalidiliitto (Finnish National Association of People with Physical Disability), South Finnish Regional State Administrative Agency Internet Accessibility Monitoring Unit, "Celia" Finnish library for people who have problems in reading printed text (Finland), Swedish National Agency for Special Education and Schools, Swedish Agency for Participation, Swedish Agency for Accessible Media (Sweden), DigDir (Norwegian Digitization Agency). The difference is that those institutions specialize in different fields, whereas Lithuanian Consulting Center aims to provide holistic view and provide consultation and training in both – physical and informational areas.

Very similar to Lithuanian model could be European Commission project Accessible EU (https://accessible-eu-centre.ec.europa.eu/index_en) where experts from different countries provide consultations in different areas according to their expertise.

V: Results   Every day, when receiving various questions, the specialists of the Consultation Center do not always immediately find answers to them. Often, they must go deeper, look for specific literature related to the question to give the right answer.

Also, a lot of additional knowledge, especially related to the organization of the activities of the Consultation Center, the accessibility of cultural heritage and universal design in education, was acquired by the specialists of the Consultation Center during the implementation of the Project "Accessibility = Possibility", during the study visits.

Consulting Center Model

Consulting and advices

The topic of "Accessibility = Possibility" can be examined from various perspectives, exploring the importance of accessibility in society and across various aspects of life. Accessibility not only reflects a legal requirement or social responsibility but also opens opportunities for individuals with diverse abilities and needs to fully participate in society.

Firstly, let's define the concept of "accessibility." Accessibility means the opportunity for everyone, including people with disabilities or different abilities, to access physical environments, services, information, or technologies without any barriers or discrimination. Accessibility encompasses not only physical access but also intellectual, social, and technological access.

The second important aspect is "possibility". Possibility describes people's ability to utilize their potential and available resources, regardless of life circumstances or

barriers. Accessibility is crucial in this context because it ensures that people have the necessary conditions to benefit from the possibilities provided by society.

So, a key question is how accessibility promotes possibilities. For example, an accessible building with a lift and ramp access provides people with mobility disabilities the possibility to use the building, attend job interviews, or participate in public events. An accessible website using easy-to-read fonts and content provides people with visual impairments the possibility to access information or purchase goods online.

It's also important to note that accessibility should not be limited to technical or physical environments. It also has a social aspect, as it is essential to ensure the inclusion and participation of all individuals in societal activities. This includes access to education, culture, healthcare services, as well as openness to social events and community activities for various groups.

Ultimately, to effectively implement the principle of "accessibility = possibility" it's important for society, businesses, governments, and institutions to work together to ensure the full participation and opportunities for all individuals. This entails not only fulfilling legal obligations but also promoting cultural change and raising societal awareness about the importance of accessibility for everyone.

Nevertheless, while all Partnership countries ratified the United Nations Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and have their regulations regarding construction, buildings, and accessible environment, the situation in the building environment remains not as good as it could be.

It is noticed that businesses, the public sector, architects, and designers are keen to create an accessible environment that fits all society's needs (universal design).

Operating models of possible consulting center

In management consulting practices, three operating modes can be identified: creativity, experience and procedure-based practices. These operating modes differ along several dimensions: the types of the work system, client relationships,

management effort and external network relationships. By elaborating conceptually, the different operating modes it becomes possible to deduct some propositions of the contrasting ways in which network relations are built to and linked with the different operating modes. The framework and propositions can be used as a baseline in detecting anomalies in fieldwork contexts and for making g sense of the ways in which capabilities are mobilized to the different aspects of the work system.

TABLE 1. Operating modes in management consultant practice by Lilja and Pulfeltt.

	Efficiency	Experience	Creativity
Prime purpose	Profits	Constant competence and business development	Intellectual challenges and increased reputation
Knowledge base	Turning established knowledge into action programs	Up-dating framework based knowledge and expanding experiences	Renewing knowledge by combining best practices with leading edge research
Marketing	Strong investment in specialized marketing	Marketing based on the reputation of assignments	Marketing based on the personality and reputation of exceptional knowledge base
Assignment delivery	Executing standardized procedures	Customized implementation of concepts and experiences	Solving unstructured problems with highly skilled clients

Public sector consulting can significantly contribute to the public good when it aligns with government values and focuses on building capabilities within the public service. The consultancy should deliver innovative solutions and leave the government better equipped to continue the work. This approach helps the public service balance innovation with its core responsibilities.

When organizing a consultation center in a state institution, it is important to consider the specifics of the public sector, various regulations and procedures, and ensure transparent and efficient operations.

Consulting Center. III models by Dan Schmitz:

Expert:

The consultant offers some information or service that the client is both requesting and unable to provide for himself.

There are important assumptions in this model. Has the client correctly identified his own needs? Has he considered the consequences of expert data collection and recommendation on organizational change?

Is there one reality about your organization that can be objectively studied and rendered useful to the client?

This model puts great power into the hands of the consultant.

Doctor-Patient:

The consultant is brought into the organization to diagnose a problem and administer remedial treatment.

There are important assumptions in this model, too. Fundamentally, it assumes an outsider can enter your organization, diagnose a problem, and issue effective remedy. This model places even more power and dependence into a consultant's (i.e., doctor's) hands.

Process Consultation:

The consultant endeavors to increase the client's capacity to learn so that it can fix its own problems, today, and in the future.

It is a philosophy and practice built on the idea that problems are solved more effectively and sustainably if the organization itself is at the core of both diagnostic and remedial efforts.

This model keeps both responsibility and control with the client.

Consulting Center. Main stages:

1. Set goals and mission: Define the goals and mission of the Consulting Center based on the needs and strategies of the Consulting Center.

2.   Identify the areas in which you will provide consultation: Identify specific areas or subject areas where Consulting Center will provide support:
create structure and processes, create an operational structure that defines the functions, responsibilities, and procedures of the Consulting Center . Determine how customer inquiries will be handled, how consultations will be provided, and how documentation will be handled.

3.   Allocate the required resources: determine how many and what profile of personnel you will need to provide consultations and assess the need for technology, including IT infrastructure, to ensure an effective consulting delivery infrastructure.

4.   Create customer service processes: determine how customers can contact the Help Desk (e.g., directly, by email, by phone, or via a website). develop a system for customer service and inquiry tracking to ensure efficient and structured work.

5.   Training and development: organize training and development programs for your staff so that they are better equipped to do their jobs and provide high-quality advice.

6.   Evaluation and improvement: implement systems to evaluate call center performance and customer service effectiveness. Periodically evaluate your performance and look for ways to improve the help desk and customer service.

7.   Legal and security issues: pay attention to all legislation, requirements and security policies that apply in the public sector, including data protection and confidentiality.

8.   Communication and publicity: inform customers about the services and availability of your Consultating Center. Create communication channels to reach and inform customers about the Consultating Center.

9.   Cooperation with other institutions: look for opportunities to partner with other public or private organizations that can provide additional resources or expertise.

Consulting center target operating model methodology

Contact Center Target Operating Model Framework
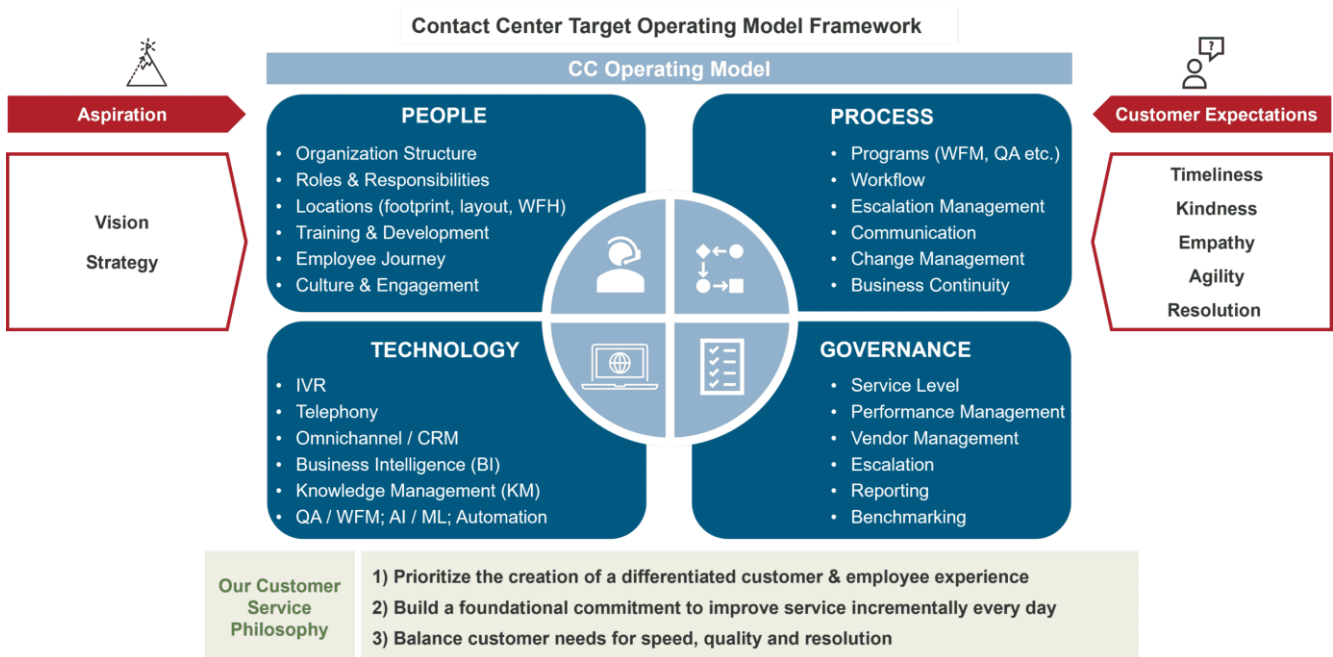
People:

- Talent Strategy: Based on this methodology, the organization implements a plan to attract, hire, and retain highly skilled contact center employees.

- Onboarding Structure: A structure is developed to ensure employees are trained to provide a consistent customer experience.

- Employee Engagement System: A system is established to promote employee engagement and motivation.

- Succession Planning Initiative: Plans are implemented to ensure future leadership.

- Leadership Development and Training Programs: Leadership development, training, and individual coaching programs are established.

- Culture Initiatives: Recommended culture initiatives that align with the company's culture.

- Change Management and Adoption Methodology: Methodology established for managing change and adaptation within the contact center.

- Customized Human Resources Practices: Customized human resources practices tailored to contact center needs.

Processes:

- Consulting Center Facility and Location Planning: Structure developed for designing and managing contact center operations.

- KPI Scorecard: KPI scorecard created to measure contact center performance.

- Shared Services Platform Implementation: Implementation of a shared services platform.

- Workforce Management Processes Implementation: Implementation of workforce management processes.

- Quality Assurance Implementation: Implementation of quality assurance processes.

- Project Management Framework: Project management framework established.

- Business Continuity and Disaster Recovery Plan Development: Business continuity and disaster recovery plans developed.

- Continuous Improvement Methodology: Continuous improvement methodology developed.

Technology:

- Technology Needs Assessment: Assessment of contact center technology needs.

- Integration with Existing Company Technology and Automation Infrastructure: Integration with existing company technology and automation infrastructure.

- Technology Implementation: Implementation of various technologies such as IVR, telephony, email management, artificial intelligence, speech analytics, CRM, outbound dialer, live chat and chatbots, in-app messaging for social media, integrated desktop environment, and single sign-on.

- Best Practices Sharing: Sharing of best practices for using and maintaining contact center technologies.

Governance:

- Definition of Consulting Center role within the Organization: definition of the Consulting center's role within the organization.

- Setting objectives for the Consulting Center: setting objectives for the contact center.

- Sharing of strategic plan with employees: sharing of the strategic plan with employees to help them understand how their work in the contact center contributes to the organization's larger strategies.

This analysis summarizes a framework that helps organizations effectively optimize Consulting Center operations, leveraging people, processes, technology, and governance. It's a comprehensive methodology that aims to achieve higher levels of customer service and organizational efficiency.

Common pitfalls and critical success factors for Overview on Centers of Excellence (COEs) Pitfalls and potential solutions as organizations embark on this journey, they face obstacles during the establishment, operation & optimization stages. Without the right experts and their professional guidance, organizations are more likely to experience several pitfalls. With Deloitte's global experts on your side, such pitfalls could be safely surpassed, and knowledge can be transferred to your team every step of the way. To build and sustain an effective COE, focus must be shed on a set of critical aspects from design through to operation and optimization. Leveraging our repeat experiences, our experts were able to identify these critical success factors.

Pitfalls and potential solutions

- COE viewed as "Bureaucratic Auditors" - Tailored communication to COE benefits should be in-place

- COE does not understand business needs - Flexibility in methodology to fit the business needs and building a collaborative culture across the organization
- COE Suffer from Insufficient Funding - A financial sustainability plan should be
- developed to ensure organizational longevity through ongoing funding
- COE increase redundancies - An integration framework that clarifies roles and responsibilities with other offices in the organization
- COEs with ineffective resource management - Articulating COE strategy with clear goals and guiding principles, and detailed KPIs to measure performance regularly
- Discontinuity in measuring the performance in COEs - Attracting, recruiting, retaining and empowering professionals COE Suffer from Insufficient Funding

Critical success factors

Have a well-defined vision - A clear and well-defined vision must be articulated for the COE with a clear relationship to its role in enabling the implementation of the overarching strategy and its enablement to achieving the set strategic objectives

Competence and talent - The COE should focus on attracting an retaining talent within its structure and highlight the importance of competency expertise and skill development as a driver of success

Independent and holistic team - Improves independent view of all business units' performance; The team has comprehensive understanding of entity's operation, embrace transparency and impartial to all entity's units while considering innovation opportunities

Leadership commitment - Executive support must be extended to enable COE to establish itself, build its own capabilities and commence producing outputs, achieving short- and medium-term outcomes and achieving the primary long-term impact

Well-defined operating model and governance - The operating model must be clearly outlined and properly integrating all the COE's efforts in collaboration with all involved internal and external stakeholders to achieve the set objectives

Delivery partnership - The COE's role as an enabler is highly dependent on establishing inter-entity and cross government effective partnerships to produce tangible results across all the dimensions of focus for the COE

Customer focus - The customer (internal or external) should always be at the center of every program, tool or outcome produced through the collaborative efforts of the COE and the business

Adequate funding - Adequate funding is key to enable the COE to perform its role as an enabler. Funding is critical to programs introduced by the COE and the programs and initiatives resulting from its day-today operations

To build and sustain an effective COE, focus must be shed on a set of critical aspects from design through to operation and optimization

Operator

The Operator role is focused on enterprise efficiency and driving bottom-line impact. These efficiencies can be found in reducing administrative transaction costs or enhancing operational decision support. The COE will play the role of the designer and executor of the change into the business.

Enhancer

The Enhancer role is tasked with improving enterprise competitiveness and cost optimization, as well as optimizing service delivery. These types of COEs can take the form of integrated business services, analytics services, or application development. The COE will be the role of an educator and catalyst for change.

Leader

The Leader role focuses on enterprise-wide transformation through strategic contribution and alignment of various initiatives to drive business impact. The Center will drive innovation at the business level and uncover new strategic capabilities, markets, products, and/or business models to enable growth of the business.

The expert mode

The expert model dates to the start of academic inter-est in the area of consultancy work and was pre-eminent in the consulting literature from the late 1950s until the

mid-1980s (Fincham & Clark, 2002). It is associated with the assumption that professional action consists of solving concrete client problems with the help of scientific theories and techniques (Moore, 1970; Schon, 1983, p. 21). Consultants are seen as experts who have access to the knowledge base of a particular practice area and can develop solutions to problems within that area. This knowledge is not available, or at least not entirely, to a layperson, i.e. a client, which implies that consultants as experts possess an interpretive monopoly in their respective knowledge and practice areas (Mintzberg, 1983; Stehr, 1994). This privileged interpretive position enables consultants to ''correctly'' decide upon clients' needs and to develop effective problem solutions. Thus, the general, abstract consulting knowledge of the consultant has been regarded by the proponents of the expert model as superior to the specific, context-dependent knowledge of the client (O'Farrell & Moffat, 1991). This implies an analogical power relation between both parties in the consulting process. As Gallessich (1982, p. 381) states, 'Consultants, like other specialists, occupy positions of relative power, as they are often the sole authorities on certain technical problems and their implications.'' The role of the client is reduced to that of being an information supplier during problem diagnosis, without being actively involved in the creative part of the actual problem-solving process. The role of the consultants is to adapt their abstract, general knowledge to the specific client situation to generate an adequate problem solution.

ISO 20700

The ISO 20700, published for the first time in 2017, aims to address the challenges around quality assurance by establishing standards for principles and three phases - contracting, execution, and closure (ISO, 2017). It was collaboratively developed to allow all stakeholders, including clients, the opportunity to share their views to create a new layer of credibility and confidence (ISO, 2012; Naden, 2016) to the profession by enhancing understanding of client's needs and providing more

predictable results - improving quality, professionalism, and ethical behavior during assignments.

ISO 20700 does not require certification and is not a 'quality guarantee'; however, it does provide a benchmark for quality and performance (International Council of Management Consulting Institutes (ICMCI), 2021 and Ennsfellner, 2019). The standard is internationally recognized but does permit consulting bodies in different countries to develop their own ethical guidelines. This pragmatism recognizes that although uniformity is ideal for technical standards it is not always pragmatic for management standards (Leporo, 2011). Although useful to all MC's, the standard is arguably most valuable to smaller consultancies and helps assure clients that they are following an ISO standard framework for mutually beneficial effective results.

The International Council of Management Consulting Institutes (ICMCI) is an international membership organization with a purpose of 'raising standards in the profession of management consultancy'. Providing a Code of Professional Conduct, it outlines 'ethical and acceptable conduct in a way that upholds those values and ensures the high ethical and conduct expectations of the profession', (ICMCI, 2021) seeking commitment that consultancies 'behave in a way that is fair, reasonable and ethical', guiding members towards the right course of action (ICMCI, 2021). The ICMCI provides the Certified Management Consultant (CMC) qualification which acts as a global standard of proficiency, demonstrating ability and commitment towards high consulting standards, and is recognized in over sixty countries, which is "similar in scope and reliability to Chartered Professional Accountants" (ICMCI, 2021 and Ennsfellner, 2019).

The Management Consultancies Association (MCA) states its members reflect "the highest standards and quality in consulting". In 2017 it launched a 'Consulting Excellence scheme' as 'a hallmark of trust and quality' that commits its members to promoting high standards of ethical behavior (MCA, 2016). Professional associations provide consultants with sets of guidelines and standards; however, they serve only as a framework and often carry no obligation (Lester, 2014). In the absence

of regulation and uniformity of standards and, subsequently, QA, the client-consultant relationship is often established through skills competencies (Hodges, 2017) and a 'leap of faith' (Nikolova et al., 2015). It is often indirect signals that lead clients to seek consultant firms, whether that be trust, brand, or experience.

The activities of the Consulting center in Lithuania

The Consultation Center operates within the Agency for the Protection of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities under the Ministry of Social Security and Labour of the Republic of Lithuania (hereinafter referred to as the Agency), and can provide free consultations on the following issues:

- legal aspects of ensuring the accessibility of physical infrastructure for persons with disabilities.
- practical aspects and architectural solutions for ensuring the accessibility of physical infrastructure for persons with mobility impairments.
- practical aspects and architectural solutions for ensuring the accessibility of physical infrastructure for persons with visual impairments.
- ensuring the accessibility of information for persons with visual impairments.
- providing information in easily understandable language for persons with intellectual disabilities.

Consulting center where a team of professional experts, if necessary, considering the requirements of laws and other legal acts related to the activity, provides free consultations on issues of accessibility of the physical and information environment.

GENERAL INFORMATION

1. In the implementation of the 2021-2030 development program manager of the Ministry of Social Security and Labor of the Republic of Lithuania, the development program of an environment suitable for disabled people in all areas of life, progress measure no. 09-005-02-06-01 "Ensure the accessibility of physical infrastructure for the disabled" description, approved in 2022 February 4 By order of the Minister of Social

Security and Labor no. A1-76 "Regarding the 2021-2030 development program manager of the Ministry of Social Security and Labor of the Republic of Lithuania, the development program for the development of an environment suitable for disabled people in all areas of life, measure of progress no. 09-005-02-06-01 "Ensure the accessibility of physical infrastructure for the disabled" description approval" (hereinafter referred to as the "Measure of Progress") activity 4 "Educate the public in order to ensure the accessibility of physical infrastructure for the disabled" (hereinafter - activity 4) is organized by expert consulting services on the practical aspects of ensuring the accessibility of physical infrastructure for persons with mobility disabilities and architectural solutions (hereinafter referred to as Expert Services).

2. The procurement is carried out to provide comprehensive and specific practical advice on the accessibility of physical infrastructure for persons with mobility disabilities.

Expert	Expert consultation services on practical aspects and architectural solutions to ensure accessibility of physical infrastructure for persons with mobility impairments	Expert consultation services on practical aspects and architectural solutions to ensure accessibility of physical infrastructure for persons with visual impairments	On the legal aspects of expert consultation services for ensuring accessibility of physical infrastructure for persons with disabilities	Expert consultation services on producing information in easy to read language Description of services provided	Review of text written in easy to read language with the target group
Object	The object is expert consulting services on the practical aspects and architectural solutions of ensuring physical infrastructure accessibility for persons with mobility disabilities.	Object – Expert consultation services on practical aspects and architectural solutions to ensure accessibility of physical infrastructure for persons with visual impairments.	Object – Expert consultation services on the legal aspects of ensuring accessibility of physical infrastructure for persons with disabilities.	Object – Expert consultation services on the legal aspects of ensuring accessibility of physical infrastructure for persons with disabilities.	Verification of texts written in easy to read language for clarity and accessibility to individuals with intellectual disabilities, and coordination of verification with the target group (individuals with intellectual disabilities).
Goal	Goal – To provide the necessary specific competencies to individuals involved in building design, architecture, urban planning, as well as to	Goal – Providing necessary specific competencies to individuals involved in building design, architecture, urban planning, as well as	Goal – To provide the necessary specific competencies to individuals involved in building design, architecture, urban planning, as well as	Goal – To provide the necessary specific competencies to individuals involved in building design, architecture, urban planning, as well as	To ensure that texts prepared in easy to read language by entities providing public services are clear and understandable to the target group—

	specialists in municipal health, social affairs, education, culture, sports, transportation, and territorial planning, to the procuring organization, the Ministry of Social Security and Labour, and other stakeholders, regarding ensuring accessibility of physical infrastructure and (or) application of universal design.	specialists in municipal health, social affairs, education, culture, sports, transportation, and territorial planning, to the procuring organization, the Ministry of Social Security and Labour, and other stakeholders, regarding ensuring accessibility of physical infrastructure and/or application of universal design.	specialists in municipal health, social affairs, education, culture, sports, transportation, and territorial planning, to the procuring organization, the Ministry of Social Security and Labour, and other interested parties, regarding ensuring accessibility of physical infrastructure and/or application of universal design.	specialists in municipal health, social affairs, education, culture, sports, transportation, and territorial planning, to the procuring organization, the Ministry of Social Security and Labour, and other interested parties, regarding ensuring accessibility of physical infrastructure and/or application of universal design.	individuals with intellectual disabilities—and to provide recommendations (if necessary) for improving these texts.
Target groups for expert services	Target groups for expert services - individuals involved in building design, architecture, urban planning, as well as specialists in municipal health, social affairs, education, culture, sports, transportation, and territorial planning, the procuring organization, the Ministry of Social Security and Labour,	Target groups of Legal Expert services – persons associated with building design, architecture, urban planning, as well as specialists in municipal health, social affairs, education, culture, sports, transportation, and territorial planning; the procuring organization; the Ministry of Social	Target groups for legal services – Individuals associated with building design, architecture, urban planning, municipal health, social affairs, education, culture, sports, transportation, territorial planning specialists, the procuring organization, the Ministry of Social Security and Labour,	Target groups for legal services – Individuals associated with building design, architecture, urban planning, municipal health, social affairs, education, culture, sports, transportation, territorial planning specialists, the procuring organization, the Ministry of Social Security and Labour,	Direct - inspector (or team of inspectors) - Individuals with intellectual disabilities and a coordinator working with an easy to read language verifier (or team of verifiers) and providing consultations to specialists from state and municipal institutions, public agencies, private

	and other interested persons.	Security and Labour; and other interested persons.	and other interested parties	and other interested parties.	institutions providing information to the public, the Ministry of Social Security and Labour, and other interested parties for improving their texts written in easy to read language. Indirect - Individuals involved in public information provision, specialists from state and municipal institutions, public agencies, private institutions providing information to the public, the Ministry of Social Security and Labour, and other interested parties.

Results of the Consulting center in 2024

Description of the current situation, provision of services, and results regarding legal aspects of consultation services ensuring accessibility of physical infrastructure for persons with disabilities.	15 hrs
Consultation services on practical aspects and architectural solutions to ensure accessibility of physical infrastructure for persons with mobility impairments.	88,05 hrs
Consultation services on practical aspects and architectural solutions to ensure accessibility of physical infrastructure for persons with visual impairments.	93,41 hrs
Consultation services for ensuring accessibility of information for persons with disabilities (Easy to read language).	66 pages
Consultation services on practical aspects and solutions to ensure accessibility of information infrastructure and information for persons with visual impairments.	478,2 hrs
Verification of text written in easy-to-read language with the target group	649 pages

Consultations are providing at the expense of the state budget and are free of charge for clients. Business and public sector entities are consulted.

Consultations are providing when an entity submits a written request via email to kc@anta.lt and describes the nature of their inquiry. Depending on the situation, the request is forwarded to an expert in the relevant field, and consultations are conducted online or on-site. Consultations are provided for specific objects or comprehensively for the entire environmental adaptation (physical and informational).

Author's personal copy:

1. University of Technology Sydney, School of Management, PO Box 123, Broadway, Sydney, NSW 2007, Australia

2. Leuphana University of Lu¨neburg, Otto Group Chair of Strategic Management, Scharnhorststraße 1, D-21335 Lu¨neburg, Germany

3. Henkel AG & Co. KGaA, Henkelstrasse 67, D-40191 Du¨sseldorf, Germay

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7.ISO (2017) Guidelines for management consultancy services. Available at: https://www.iso.org/obp/ui/#iso:std:iso:20700:ed-1:v1:en (Accessed: 21 March 2022).

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https://www.intelligentmanagement.ws/can-a-standard-stimulate-innovation-or-stifle-

it-standard-of-innovation-part-4-of-5/ (Accessed: 22 March 2022). Lester, S. (2014).

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Available at:

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/263720874_Professional_standards_compe

tence_and_capability [Accessed 29 Mar. 2022].

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guide to delivering value. London: Kogan Page.

Overview on accessibility experts

During the Project implementation, partners developed a list of experts and social partners who are competent and could consult in the relevance of Universal Design implementation in our environment (physical or informational) or in accessibility matters.

Experts

Estonia

1.   Estonian Chamber of People with Disabilities

Ms. Mari Puuram, accessibility advisor

E-mail: mari.puuram@epikoda.ee

Phone: +372 661 6629

2.   Competence center for Structural Funds at Ministry of Economy and

Communication

Ms. Liivi Pehk, head of unit

E-mail: liivi.pehk@mkm.ee

Phone: +372 5915 1169

3. Accessibility expertise provider Ligipääsuke – Member of Access EU competence center

Mr. Jakob Rosin

E-mail: info@ligipaasuke.ee

4. Accessibility Forum NGO

Mr. Jüri Järve

E-mail: info@ligipaastevus.ee

Phone: +372 501 0127

5. State Real Estate Company

Mr. Tarmo Mändmets

E-mail: tarmo.mandmets@rkas.ee

Phone: +372 501 2944

6. Consumer Protection and Technical Regulatory Authority

Ms. Käthriin Lilp

E-mail: kathriin.lilp@ttja.ee

Phone: +372 667 2062

7. Tallinn City Municipality

Mr. Jako Stein

E-mail: jako.stein@tallinnlv.ee

Phone: +372 5269077

8. Estonian Academy of Arts

Mr. Daniel Kotsjuba

E-mail: daniel.kotsjuba@artun.ee

Phone: +372 626 7301

9. ITS Estonia Collaboration network of smart mobility and logistics

Ms. Lili Kuusk

E-mail: lili.kuusk@itl.ee

Phone: +372 58542008

Latvia

1.   Association of disabled people and their friends "Apeirons"

Website: www.apeirons.lv

Phone: +371 22 025 922

2.   Latvian Umbrella body for disability organisations "Sustento"

E-mail: sustento@sustento.lv

Phone: +371 67 590 437

3.   Society of the blind persons in Liepāja

Website: Redzigaismu.lv

Phone: +371 63 431 535

4.   Latvian Association of the Blind persons

E-mail: info@lnbiedriba.lv

Phone: +371 67532607; +371 26123107

5.   Latvian Association of the Deaf

E-mail: lns@lns.lv

Phone: +371 67 470 444

Lithuania

1.   Agency of the Rights of Person with Disabilities Consulting Center

Consultations on the physical and information environment issues.

Mrs. Sandra Buklienė

E-mail: kc@anta.lt

2.   Lithuanian Disability Forum

Consultations on physical and information environment issues.

Mrs. Simona Aginskaitė

E-mail: info@lnf.lt

Phone: +370 678 13333

3.   Accessible EU expert on accessible tourism Ginta Žemaitaitytė

E-mail: ginta.zemaitaityte@gmail.com

Phone: +370 5 2691308

4. The Lithuanian Union of the Blind and Visually Impaired

Mr. Vilmantas Balčikonis

E-mail: centras@lass.lt

Phone: +370 5 2624866

5. Lithuanian Union of Deaf

Ms. Vaida Lukošiūtė

E-mail: centras@lkd.lt

Phone: +370 5 261 5593

6. Lithuanian Paraplegic Association

Consultation on practical and legal issues on physical environment accessibility.

Mr. Egidijus Grigonis

E-mail: info@lpa.lt

Phone: +370 612 17923

7. Lithuanian Audiosensory Library

Consultation on accessible e-books.

Mrs. Inga Davidonienė

E-mail: info@labiblioteka.lt

Phone: +370 666 85 307

Denmark

1. The Danish Disability Counsel: https://dch.dk/english

E-mail: dch@dch.dk

Phone: +45 33 11 10 44

2. Danish Authority of Social Services and Housing: https://sbst.dk/om-os/about-the-danish-authority-of-social-services-and-housing

E-mail: info@sbst.dk

Phone: +45 72 42 37 00

3. Access Denmark: https://accessdenmark.com/

E-mail: info@godadgang.dk

Phone: +45 51 34 35 96

4.   The Danish Institute for Human Rights

https://www.humanrights.dk/soeg?s=disability

E-mail: info@humanrights.dk

Phone: +45 3269 8888

Strategy for accessibility in Danish:

https://menneskeret.dk/files/media/dokumenter/om_os/tilgaengelighedsstrategi_201

4_dk.pdf

5.   Disabled People's Organizations Denmark: https://handicap.dk/about

E-mail: info@handicap.dk

Phone: +45 36 75 17 93

6.   Building codes for accessibility: https://bygningsreglementet.dk/Tekniske-

bestemmelser/02/Vejledninger/Vejledning-til-brugerbegreb/300

E-mail: info@sbst.dk

Phone: +45 72 42 37 00

7.   The Universal Design Hub, Bevica Foundation.

Link: https://en.universaldesignhub.dk/

8.   Rumsans, Institut for Byggeri, By og Miljø, Aalborg Universitet.

Link: https://www.rumsans.dk/interviews

9.   Videnscenter om handicap

Link: https://videnomhandicap.dk/om-os/

10.   VIVE – The Danish Centre for Social Science Research

Link: https://www.vive.dk/en/about-vive/

Universal Design articles library

During the Project, partners selected mostly important on their viewpoint articles, published in Partnership countries. The list of articles was published on the www.stasis.lt . www.stasis..lt is Informational System for buildings owners or managers for self-assessment with the aim to be informed how their buildings meet universal design principles.

The library is published on the section "Methodological information" and is accessible for public on the site: https://www.stasis.lt/lt/metodine-informacija?per_page=9&page=1

Virtual Library

Co. Photos are taken by partners, open sources of internet and Microsoft.