

Persons with Reduced Mobility (PRM)

What is PRM?

The overall aim for the European Union is to progressively eliminate all identified barriers to accessibility by a coordinated effort. Therefore, the goal of the set of legislative acts related to Persons with Reduced Mobility (PRM) is to ensure the option of traveling by public transport to those passengers that have a reduced mobility (disabled, elderly or otherwise), so that they can have equal access to travel as passengers with unrestricted mobility. Related to railway systems, at European level this legislation is the Regulation (EU) 1300/2014 on the Technical Specifications for Interoperability relating to the accessibility of the Union's rail system for persons with disabilities and persons with reduced mobility (TSI PRM) which applies to infrastructure, operation and traffic management, telematics applications and rolling stock where accessibility of persons with disabilities and persons with reduced mobility is necessary.

Why rail Infrastructure Managers are involved?

The PRM TSI applies to all the public areas or stations dedicated to the transport of passengers, which in some countries, the whole station or parts of it, are managed by the respective IMs. It enhances the accessibility for persons with reduced mobility in the stations and describes essential requirements to be met by the specifications for PRM. The relevant rail infrastructure (e.g. in stations) covered by the TSI comprises:

- i) access: parking, routes, doors, floors, passenger track level crossings at stations;
- ii) visuals and information: transparent obstacles, lighting, visual & spoken info;
- iii) platforms: width, edges, ends;
- iv) facilities: toilets; furniture, ticketing, info desks and customer assistance points;
- v) transport: boarding aids stored on platforms, operating rules.

The Opportunities of PRM

- Accessibility does not only serve people with reduced mobility, but in many cases making travelling more straightforward and convenient which provides benefits to all passengers,
- Therefore, accessibility requirement could and should not be seen as “special requirements” in a regulation addressed only to railway and only for people with disabilities or people with reduced mobility. A regulation for accessibility should be addressed as part of a universal design/design for all process;
- Increasing accessibility to and within the railway system could lead to increased passengers using rail transport and therefore increase the demand for rail services as well as contribute to a more open and accessible society as a whole;
- As an ultimate goal, better accessibility for all can eventually contribute to the modal shift towards rail.

The Challenges of PRM requirements

- There is a need for the consideration of balanced technical requirements in order to avoid excessive costs which may reduce the quality of services and rail competitiveness.
- Different interpretation of the requirements in the regulation between EIM members and Notified Bodies, The interpretation discussions often end in sector discussions which is inefficient and time-consuming. Even though the PRM requirements are not particularly complicated or technical, their interpretation still causes great difficulties.

EIM in action

- ☞ EIM advocates the accessibility of persons with disabilities to rail infrastructures via EIM's PRM Working Group. The speakers of the EIM PRM WG were regularly attending ERA's Working Party meetings during the revision of TSI PRM;
- ☞ EIM is a member of the “European Commission TSI Advisory Body”, a Commission Expert Group dealing with the PRM TSI. EIM speakers ensure a fair balance between accessibility, financial impact, operations and human resources requirements.