Decision Support Tools and Policy Initiatives in Support of a Universal Design of Buildings

The POLIS project and our experiences so far

3rd POLIS WORKSHOP
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POLIS objectives

- **R&D focus**
  - To **develop** an innovative and detailed methodology for an exhaustive auditing the accessibility of the built environment, also extendable to the broader urban space
  - To **package** the methodology in a software tool, a decision support system, making it thus usable in a friendly way

- **Policy build up focus**
  - To work towards the development of new enabling policy instruments, at the national levels but also potentially at an EU level

- **Dissemination focus**
  - To **develop and publish** a POLIS publication, highlighting the use of the methods and tools in 5 buildings across the EU
  - To **disseminate** the results to diverse audiences (EU and member state authorities, designers, engineers, product developers, etc.) by means of workshops and conferences
The development of the **Building Accessibility Metrics (BAM) methodology** has been completed and published in international magazines.

The development of a **Decision Support System**, i.e., a software, web-enabled tool, using the BAM methodology to assist designers and building managers to carry out accessibility audits is now close to completion.
Building accessibility is a very important social issue and should be treated primarily as such.

There are however cases where promoting accessibility can also lead to significant business opportunities.
Policy- National level

Strategy

- To bring together and co-ordinate all stakeholder entities that are taking initiatives in the area of accessibility
  - From the disability movement
  - From the tourism industry
  - From the state and local authorities
  - From the building service industry
  - From other business (publishers, etc.)
Policy National level
Initiatives

With the participation of representatives from the tourism industry, the disability movement, chambers of commerce, the press, authorities, research and academia, businesses etc. in order to debate "What is the roadmap to setting up credible and market oriented accessibility certification services and schemes in the tourism industry?"
What are the possible approaches?

Further Regulation?
- Costly
- Low levels of enforcement
- Fragmentation of member state approaches
- No EU level action possible

A financial self sustainability of Universal Design?
- Costs can be modeled in very detailed ways both for new designs as well as refurbishment processes
- Benefits however remain vague and not easily amenable to quantification
- In many cases clever design may really pay off
- Overall there is little evidence that accessibility is a cost-free exercise
Policy build-up focus (EU level)

- POLIS is now investigating the potential of the so called voluntary approaches

- What is a voluntary approach?
  - **Agreements arranged and pursued by the industry itself**, in search of more flexible and financially viable paths to respond to emerging society needs
  - There **exists a large experience** in working out voluntary approaches in environment related issues
  - Voluntary approaches **may be adopted at a national level** (e.g. Danish agreement scheme on industrial energy efficiency)
  - Voluntary approaches **may also be designed at a international level** (e.g. EMAS, ISO 14000)
  - As agreements **always include a commitment of over-compliance to regulation**
Policy build-up focus (EU level)

- **Key elements** of a EU wide voluntary approach for accessibility
  
  - **Regulation and VA as a policy mix**: VA would exceed as an objective framework the provisions of the current regulatory schemes.
  
  - **Embedded flexibility and innovation**: Firms would be allowed to flexibly opt for cost-effective accessibility interventions. Here is where POLIS-like tools are particularly relevant.
  
  - **Third party monitoring**: A potential VA should be monitored by third and independent parties. **The involvement of the organizations of the disability community** in this monitoring process would be highly important.

- **Open issues**
  
  - **Management oriented or label based scheme?** (Management may be more dynamic- labels more static)
  
  - **Building accessibility or building sustainability scope?** (Markets may respond more positively to a broader building standard rather than one related to accessibility alone)
Dissemination focus

- Production of a paper and electronic publication, whereby 5 buildings across the EU will be exhaustively audited by means of the BAM methodology and included as help case studies in the POLIS DSS.

- Organization of four POLIS workshops (LU, PL, UK, IL, GR) and a conference (BE).
On behalf of POLIS

Thank you all for your participation in this experience and idea sharing workshop!!