

Ljubljana's inclusive urban design

Background

Ljubljana has transformed itself from a car-centric capital to one of Europe's greenest cities. The city's planning efforts place accessibility at the heart of urban renewal, with policies affecting public transport, pedestrian zones, and cultural access.

Ljubljana has made inclusion a city-wide priority for over a decade, winning a special mention at the 2012 Access City Awards, followed by a Bronze Award in 2015, a Silver Award in 2018, and another Bronze Award in 2023, for its systematic planning across public space, transport, ICT, services, and its comprehensive approach.



Key Activities

The city of Ljubljana adopted a Strategic Accessibility Plan guiding age- and disability-friendly policies. More specifically:

- Ljubljana extended its pedestrian zone significantly and introduced inclusive design features such as tactile paths, ramps, and audible crossings.
- The transportation system was also upgraded with accessible buses, Braille signage at stops, and tactile elements within vehicles. Over 96% of buses are equipped with video and audio announcements, and the city developed touch-sensitive city-centre maps.
- Most of the public toilets and all 13 accessible bridges in the city centre are completely barrier-free.
- The city launched the "Ljubljana by Wheelchair" mobile app in 2018. In addition, public cultural institutions have established accessibility protocols, and inclusivity training is provided for staff.
- Institutional support for these key activities was provided by SOAKO and SVSO, which are mayoral advisory bodies including persons with disabilities, NGOs, architects, and officials.



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Impact

Enhanced inclusivity of persons with disabilities: Transport and civic infrastructure are now more easily navigated by persons with disabilities. The public in general and residents with disabilities report increased participation in civic life and high satisfaction with transport and walkability. Public transport is free for residents with disabilities and their support persons.

Recognition: The city is consistently recognised in Europe's top accessibility rankings, receiving multiple awards for its work, including finalist placements in the Access City Awards.

Challenges & Solutions

- Redesigning historical streets required negotiation with heritage conservationists. Community panels and pilot projects facilitated shared solutions.
- Ljubljana prioritised upgrades in the city centre, while peri-urban zones still require improvements to become more inclusive and accessible.
- The initiative focusses on ongoing inclusion through pilot testing and advisory input from persons with disabilities.

Tips for Similar Projects

- Plan for inclusion from the start.
- Make inclusion part of cultural and urban branding.
- Embed accessibility across spatial planning, transport, public services, and cultural sites.
- Leverage user input to ensure real-world responsiveness.
- Use digital tools like mobile apps to provide real-time guidance.

Identified Limitations/Weaknesses

- Accessibility in older private and heritage buildings continues to be an issue that requires continued monitoring, as accessibility gaps exist.
- Only about 2% of parking spaces are designated for persons with disabilities.
- Bicycle lanes require further improvement.



Resources

- [Access City Award – Ljubljana](#)

Image Source

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