

- on existing barriers in the built environment in major public buildings in the main regional centres in Slovenia;
- Preparing an Internet guide for the disabled on the accessibility of public buildings in Slovenia.

Survey of the disabled

The survey collecting information on existing barriers in Slovenia obtained a total of 181 responses from individual disabled persons and ten representative disabled organisations.

Field analysis

The investigation of existing built-environment barriers was conducted in all major centres (in accordance with the statistical region classification). The analysis included public buildings in the areas covered in the first phase of the research (transport, education and employment, healthcare, public administration, cultural institutions and leisure). In this part of the research we:

- Conducted a thorough analysis of accessibility of major public buildings;

- Created a specially designed database in which data from the field survey were stored;
- Prepared a catalogue of irregularities discovered during the survey that must be promptly remedied.

Research results

The detailed field analysis sought to discover existing barriers, prepare a catalogue of these findings and alert those responsible about the irregularities found. Accordingly, the findings from the field survey were presented in the form of a checklist to all those responsible for managing the facilities where irregularities were discovered. The checklist included a demand that the irregularities be promptly remedied.

At the end of the second phase we also designed an Internet website, which will be developed further during the third phase of the research project. In long run, the website will be continually updated with new information and various activities connected with the built environment and communication barriers.

Project financing

The project is co-financed by the Slovenia Research Agency and the Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs of the Republic of Slovenia.

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More information about this project is available at <http://dostopnost.uirs.si>



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Professional analyses in regional and spatial planning: a roundtable discussion (Ljubljana, 11 Nov. 2010)

On 11 November 2010, the Department of Geography at the Faculty of Arts, University of Ljubljana, and the Association of Slovenian Geographers organized a roundtable discussion on the role of professionals in various fields conducting research on spatial issues in regional and spatial planning. The aim of the meeting was an interdisciplinary discussion about current open issues in regional and spatial planning proce-

dures. The result of the discussion was a joint resolution on the future role of experts in regional and spatial planning, especially in preparing the professional analyses necessary for making appropriate decisions on formal planning procedures.

This meeting was dedicated to Academy Member and Professor Igor Vrišer on the occasion of his 80th birthday. He

was a leading expert, researcher and scholar in regional and spatial planning from the 1960s to the 1990s and the author of the only book on regional planning in Slovenian.

The roundtable discussion was opened by Andrej Černe, the vice dean of the University of Ljubljana's Faculty of Arts. He congratulated Vrišer on his birthday and presented his role in the development of regional and spatial planning in Slovenia. After this, he presented the goals of the meeting. Jernej Zupančič, the head of the Department of

Geography at the University of Ljubljana's Faculty of Arts, and Darko Ogrin, representing the Association of Slovenian Geographers, also welcomed the participants.

The discussion started with five presentations. Marjan Ravbar from the Association of Slovenian Geographers highlighted selected spatial planning issues. He criticised the national polycentric development policy. In his opinion, this kind of spatial policy cannot help solve contemporary spatial problems in Slovenia. He pointed to the duality of spatial and development planning systems. However, he is convinced that this duality can be surpassed by a regional management approach.

Simon Kušar from the Association of Slovenian Geographers presented the conclusions and recommendations from a similar meeting held in March 2010, organized by the Association of Slovenian Geographers:

- Environmental impact assessments of proposed investments should be supplemented by territorial impact assessments;
- Sector policies should also be evaluated through a territorial impact assessment;
- There is a need for a regional approach in spatial planning because Slovenia is characterized by marked landscape diversity;
- An integrated and complex spatial approach is needed in spatial planning;
- Regional planning should be re-established;
- Projections for future spatial needs should be taken into account while preparing new spatial plans;
- European guidelines for spatial and development planning need to be fully incorporated into national planning legislation;
- Spatial developments need to be evaluated regarding various criteria; for example, taking into account the aesthetic dimension.

Aleš Mlakar from the Slovenian Association of Landscape Architects highlighted the importance of the regional level in planning. Professional analyses at the regional level contribute to coordination between national strategic guidelines and detailed spatial planning at the local level. They should be value-oriented. In addition, they should enable weighting the various variants regarding future spatial development and serve as a framework for harmonizing various interests. Mlakar also indicated the importance of a proposal for spatial planning changes that was developed by numerous research associations, other organizations and individuals.

Andrej Pogačnik from the Town and Spatial Planning Association of Slovenia pointed out the importance of appropriate methods, techniques, concepts and good case studies because they lead to the synthesis needed for shaping spatial plans. He contributed many ideas on how regional analysis could improve knowledge of the spatial characteristics of Slovenia and its regions. Regional analysis is applicable for studying the optimal location of economic zones, creating appropriate region-based strategies for developing tourism, measuring development potentials, studying region-specific spatial patterns, assisting less-developed areas and managing river basins.

Jože Kos Grabar from the Association of Surveyors of Slovenia listed some problems in spatial planning in Slovenia such as terminological confusion. Planners face numerous theoretical and methodological obstacles when trying to combine various spatial data layers. He pointed out the importance of integrating knowledge. Collaboration between the academic sphere and spatial planners should be increasingly encouraged in the future.

The presentations by the invited speakers and later discussion led to the preparation of the following proposals for

the future development of professional analyses and the spatial and regional planning system in Slovenia:

- Integration of development and spatial planning;
- Introduction of spatial planning at the regional level;
- Publication of a dictionary (already written) of planning terminology;
- Transfer of standard and innovative planning methods and approaches into practice;
- Connecting educational and research organizations with planning companies;
- Encouraging interdisciplinary and inter-institutional cooperation in preparing the professional analyses needed for spatial and regional planning;
- Formation of new interdisciplinary research and project groups;
- Making additional efforts to increase the role of spatial issues and spatial planning in society;
- Educating politicians, public administration and citizens about the role of professional analyses and regional and spatial planning.

The roundtable supports the project "Odgovorno do prostora!" (Spatial responsibility!), which is a broader initiative by professional societies to improve the spatial and regional planning system in Slovenia.



Figure 1: Opening the roundtable discussion (photo: Matjaž Rebolj)

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