

Laws and plans for accessibility of public buildings in Italy.

Author: Isabella Tiziana Steffan,
Arch. Eur/Erg (certified professional European Ergonomist)

Organisation: Studio di Progettazione & Ricerca - Via G.C. Procaccini, 69 - 20154 Milano, Italia
- Tel/fax ++39 02 33609708 e-mail: info@studiosteffan.it

1 THE ITALIAN LEGISLATION FRAMEWORK: STRENGTHNESS AND WEAKNESS

From the second part of the 60's on the European cultural approach, but also the Italian one, moved from the idea of Design for special needs (special products conceived for special users) and the idea of an Architectural Barriers Free Design (focused on removing existing barriers) to a more holistic concept of design such as "Inclusive Design", "Universal Design" and "Design for All".

Unlike in Anglo-Saxon and Scandinavian countries, in Italy, in the 50's and 60's architectural barrier free design and accessibility was not a widespread matter. The first approach was taken in 1965 when two associations in Rome organised an international conference in Stresa (on Lake Maggiore) considering "architectural barriers"¹ as the main topic of discussion. Since then the field of architectural design attentive to the handicapped features in Italy a wide legislation whose range of application is based on a double classification: building utilisation and type of intervention (new buildings or different interventions in already existing ones). Some cases there is a difficult interpretation of these regulations, as the national ones have different prescriptions from the regional ones on the same topic: finally jurisprudence had clarified that the prescription that guarantees the best accessibility must be followed. The interpretation of these laws is not always easy: jurisprudence states that in case laws issued by central government and by regions deal with different technical matters on the same topic the most severe law must be followed in order to guarantee accessibility.

In Italy the first technical legislation about architectural barrier free design in public buildings (residential ones) was issued in 1967; then the circular 4809/1968, with technical requirements relating to social buildings and external installations such as car parks and pedestrian only areas.

This only became binding in 1971, with law 118/1971, and the regulations for its implementation in D.P.R. 384/1978, which, in addition to requirements on accessibility of public buildings and those open to the public, also included several requirements for public transport.

D.P.R. 384/78 (replaced by DPR 503/96) was a legislative cornerstone in the area of public buildings and spaces and those open to the public, even though it was ignored for many years by operators and public administrations. Eight years later, **Law 41/1986** stated that all newly constructed buildings or existing buildings due for renovation were to be made accessible and that no government contributions or subsidies for performing the works would be granted if they did not comply with current regulations on accessibility. This law, which was basically financial, also stated that all public administrations had to draw up a municipal plan of identification of architectural barriers in existing public buildings, in order to eliminate them: the so-called P.E.B.A (Plans for Elimination of Architectural Barriers). However, no details were provided on the methods of drawing up said plans.

¹ At the conference in Stresa there were delegates from many European countries and from U.S., Chile, India. Selwyn Goldsmith from U.K. described his work: his handbook "Designing for the Disabled" RIBA, Technical Information Service, London, 1963, was a reference to the most sensitive Italian designers for a long time.

This requirement is reiterated in various subsequent laws, since these plans were not prepared by the municipal authorities within the required times, perhaps partly because no sanctions were contemplated in the case of failure to do so. Only Law 104/92 contemplates administrative and criminal sanctions and fines (from around Euro 5,000 to 25.000) in the case of new works lacking the accessibility requisites required for public buildings.

In addition to dealing with public and private means of transport, **art. 24 of Law 104/1992** also governs building aspects and requires supplementing of these plans to guarantee accessibility of public walkways and pedestrian crossings as well, including with acoustic traffic lights for the blind and signs installed in a manner not to impede crossing. A regional law (38/89 of Emilia Romagna) already required drafting of Town Traffic Plans in 1989 and, for this purpose, included financial subsidies for the municipalities.

Also important are Law 13/1989, which extends the field of application to both private and public residential buildings, and the decree implementing it, DM 236/1989, which, with DPR 503/1996, is now the reference point at state level for all public places.

National law 13 in 1989 introduced conceptual innovations at legislative level, which have now become part of the common language of planners: accessibility, visitability, adaptability, which defines three levels of usability.

The purpose is that of activating a planning process which gradually leads to full usability of the building, in order to increase everyone's quality of life.²

The requisite of adaptability (accessibility deferred over time) is only required for private residential buildings³, since public buildings or those open to the public are required to have a greater degree of usability: immediate for new constructions and in an extremely short space of time for existing buildings.

In consideration of the fact that there is no culture of widespread accessibility in Italy, the weak points of the regulations include, in particular:

- a lack of accessible planning criteria incorporated into general building regulations (they are currently aimed at specific intended uses and specifically linked with weak user bands);
- the limited possibility for municipal administrations to conduct checks (they relate only to the planned architectural parts, without verifying correct compliance with the construction details, type of furnishing, installation of tactile or acoustic signs);
- the lack of technical requirements on signs for improving orientation of people with visual or cognitive disabilities, particularly in the case of danger and fire.⁴

Although guaranteeing accessibility should mean improving the quality of life for everyone, (Fig.1) it nonetheless seems that several construction elements of architecture, such as ramps, for example, have been introduced only to assist accessibility for those with motor disabilities. On the other hand, it may be noted that, in major architectural installations, moving around is a decisive factor for the conception and understanding of them (cf. the Le Corbusier architectural promenade).

² By accessibility, the law means the complete use of the built environment immediately: this means external spaces and the common spaces in all projects. By visitability, the law means the possibility to access the living areas and at least one bathroom in each building unit (in the home, this would enable a disabled friend to come and visit me, so it means doors and routes). By adaptability, or postponed accessibility, the law means the possibility to change the space at a low cost - which involves making suitable advance provision, also technically - to make it accessible throughout if the need arises in future.

³ About residential buildings, see "Italian case study. Legal aspects", by I. Steffan, symposium "The adaptable house". Hasselt, Belgium, 6-7 December 1996.

⁴ According to recent studies, we need a new requirement to evaluate the usability by people with cognitive or sensorial disabilities: so called environmental communicativeness, which may be defined, by analogy with accessibility, as " the quality making a spatial element or typological unit perceptible to everyone and, in particular to people with sensorial or cognitive impairments". Together with accessibility, comfort and safety, it has been used to verify four tourist itineraries in Florence: see the guide available also in English <http://www.comune.fi.it/viverefirenze/itinerari.html>.



FIG.1 MOCA, BARCELONA

2 PLANS FOR THE ELIMINATION OF THE ARCHITECTURAL BARRIERS: METODOLOGY AND CRITERIA.

From the region of Emilia Romagna, where its **regional law 38/1989** has also led to drafting of numerous town plans, as a result of national law 104/1992, many PEBA have been developed with similar methodologies, including in the Veneto, Lombardy and Tuscany regions.

These are preliminary projects, developed with the technical operators of the municipal authorities and with local associations, managed with a computer program which determines priority in intervention; the final projects are usually drafted subsequently by the municipal authorities.

In general, the PEBA start with analysis of the most common obstacles to movement and orientation inside buildings, which are considered in relation to urban spaces, infrastructures and transport, and require:

- analysis of municipal situations through processing of the data possessed by the administration on places of social interest and production, places open to the public, public car parks and existing barriers in the building and within the territory;
- collection of personal details on weak individuals, possible preferential routes, both for vehicles and pedestrians, location of the building and the route within the territory and with regard to town plans;
- analysis of the buildings and routes, with detailed census of architectural and location barriers found (including inadequate crossings, broken paving, obstacles, etc.).

In the case of a small number of buildings (such as for the Saronno PEBA), the planning solutions are processed with personalised sketches; in the case of a larger number of buildings (such as for the Brescia PEBA, for which 4,000 intervention proposals were prepared for 150 public buildings), standard sketches are prepared.

Strict compliance with regulations is not generally implemented in the criteria adopted for making buildings more accessible, but rather the most appropriate and necessary interventions

are identified, trying to choose practical and cost-effective solutions, with the aim of making all parts of public buildings accessible, with as much autonomy as possible.

Planning of the computer program includes, for each building, road or route, a summary sheet of analysis of its characteristics, the proposed interventions, their costs and priorities (modifiable on the basis of intervening variables), a check sheet on the interventions carried out and a check on the state of implementation of the plan. The administration can manage the plan, on the basis of three criteria: financial restrictions, schedule, type of intervention.

3 PLANS FOR THE ELIMINATION OF THE ARCHITECTURAL BARRIERS: SOME EXAMPLES.

It has emerged from the years of experience of these plans that the most critical topics are access to the building, horizontal routes (mostly doors which are too narrow), vertical routes (stairs, absent or inadequate lift), toilets.

In 1996, for Saronno, Studio Steffan-ADR analysed 30 buildings with various functions (18 schools, 7 social and leisure centres, 1 health centre, 1 library, 1 theatre, 1 sports complex, the municipal building) and all the city routes.

As example we describe a scholastic centre: the *Legnani* gymnasium, with three buildings.

TROVA

PRIORITY

ANNULLA

ESCI

PIANO DI ELIMINAZIONE DELLE B.A. NEGLI EDIFICI - ANALISI

Destinazione d'uso

- Asilo nido ☐ SI ☒ NO
- Scuola materna ☐ SI ☒ NO
- Scuola elementare ☐ SI ☒ NO
- Scuola media inf. ☐ SI ☒ NO
- Scuola media sup. Unian. ☐ SI ☒ NO
- Scuola media sup. Contr. ☐ SI ☒ NO
- Scuola media sup. Tecn. ☐ SI ☒ NO
- Centro formaz. prof. ☐ SI ☒ NO
- Uff. pubbl. statale ☐ SI ☒ NO
- Uff. pubbl. regionale ☐ SI ☒ NO
- Uff. pubbl. provinciale ☐ SI ☒ NO
- Uff. pubbl. comunale ☐ SI ☒ NO
- Azienda municipalizzata ☐ SI ☒ NO
- Chiesa ☐ SI ☒ NO
- Castello ☐ SI ☒ NO
- Ufficio postale ☐ SI ☒ NO
- Istituto di credito ☐ SI ☒ NO
- Poliambulatorio ☐ SI ☒ NO
- Ospedale ☐ SI ☒ NO
- Dayhospital ☐ SI ☒ NO
- U.S.L. ☐ SI ☒ NO
- Casa protetta, R.S.A. ☐ SI ☒ NO
- Centro sociale anziani ☐ SI ☒ NO
- Centro handicap ☐ SI ☒ NO
- Centro sportivo ☐ SI ☒ NO
- Centro culturale ☐ SI ☒ NO
- Museo, pinacoteca ☐ SI ☒ NO
- Teatro, cinema, teatro ☐ SI ☒ NO
- Albergo, hotel, pens. ☐ SI ☒ NO
- Ristor., pizz., birreria ☐ SI ☒ NO
- Esercizio commerciale ☐ SI ☒ NO
- Attrezz. fieristica ☐ SI ☒ NO
- Pubblica sicurezza ☐ SI ☒ NO
- Sede giudiziaria ☐ SI ☒ NO
- Stazione aut. ferr. ☐ SI ☒ NO
- Vari rivoli al pubbl. ☐ SI ☒ NO
- Luogo turistico ☐ SI ☒ NO

Nome edificio

LICEO CLASSICO "S.M. Legnani"

via Carso

Presenza di utenti

- Motori ☐ SI ☒ NO
- Sensoriali ☐ SI ☒ NO
- Psichici ☐ SI ☒ NO
- Pluripatologie ☐ SI ☒ NO
- Lievi ☐ SI ☒ NO

Frequenza

- Bassa ☐ SI ☒ NO
- Media ☐ SI ☒ NO
- Alta ☐ SI ☒ NO
- Nessuna ☐ SI ☒ NO

Concentraz. funzioni

- Bassa ☐ SI ☒ NO
- Media ☐ SI ☒ NO
- Alta ☐ SI ☒ NO
- Nessuna ☐ SI ☒ NO

Collocaz. ambientale

- Centro storico ☐ SI ☒ NO
- Area urbana ☐ SI ☒ NO
- Periferia ☐ SI ☒ NO

Condizione ambientale

STRADA CON TRAFFICO VEICOLARE/PEDONALE

- Scasso ☐ SI ☒ NO
- Medio ☐ SI ☒ NO
- Alto ☐ SI ☒ NO

Edificio storico

☐ SI ☒ NO

Interesse turistico

- Basso ☐ SI ☒ NO
- Medio ☐ SI ☒ NO
- Alto ☐ SI ☒ NO
- Nessuno ☐ SI ☒ NO

Costo totale degli interventi proposti

Minimo	da 0 a 10.000.000	<input type="radio"/> SI <input checked="" type="radio"/> NO
Contenuto	da 10 a 50.000.000	<input type="radio"/> SI <input checked="" type="radio"/> NO
Medio	da 50 a 100.000.000	<input type="radio"/> SI <input checked="" type="radio"/> NO
Alto	oltre 100.000.000	<input type="radio"/> SI <input checked="" type="radio"/> NO

Variable temporale

Lavori previsti entro i primi 12 mesi dalla consegna del piano ☐ SI ☒ NO

Interventi previsti

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> parcheggio <input type="radio"/> SI <input checked="" type="radio"/> NO segnalatica est. <input type="radio"/> SI <input checked="" type="radio"/> NO segnalatica int. <input type="radio"/> SI <input checked="" type="radio"/> NO percorso est. <input type="radio"/> SI <input checked="" type="radio"/> NO percorso int. <input type="radio"/> SI <input checked="" type="radio"/> NO pavimentaz. est. <input type="radio"/> SI <input checked="" type="radio"/> NO pavimentaz. int. <input type="radio"/> SI <input checked="" type="radio"/> NO pendolina <input type="radio"/> SI <input checked="" type="radio"/> NO rampa fissa est. <input type="radio"/> SI <input checked="" type="radio"/> NO rampa fissa int. <input type="radio"/> SI <input checked="" type="radio"/> NO montascale est. <input type="radio"/> SI <input checked="" type="radio"/> NO 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> montascale int. <input type="radio"/> SI <input checked="" type="radio"/> NO corrimano est. <input type="radio"/> SI <input checked="" type="radio"/> NO corrimano int. <input type="radio"/> SI <input checked="" type="radio"/> NO ascensore est. <input type="radio"/> SI <input checked="" type="radio"/> NO ascensore int. <input type="radio"/> SI <input checked="" type="radio"/> NO accesso princ. <input type="radio"/> SI <input checked="" type="radio"/> NO accesso second. <input type="radio"/> SI <input checked="" type="radio"/> NO soglie, zerbini <input type="radio"/> SI <input checked="" type="radio"/> NO ausili est. <input type="radio"/> SI <input checked="" type="radio"/> NO mod.vano ascens. <input type="radio"/> SI <input checked="" type="radio"/> NO mod.cabina ascens. <input type="radio"/> SI <input checked="" type="radio"/> NO 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> mod.comandi ascens. <input type="radio"/> SI <input checked="" type="radio"/> NO mod.telai porte <input type="radio"/> SI <input checked="" type="radio"/> NO adeguam. serv. igienici <input type="radio"/> SI <input checked="" type="radio"/> NO costruz. serv. igienici <input type="radio"/> SI <input checked="" type="radio"/> NO mod.strutt.invariate <input type="radio"/> SI <input checked="" type="radio"/> NO inserim. stalli <input type="radio"/> SI <input checked="" type="radio"/> NO adeguam. aredi <input type="radio"/> SI <input checked="" type="radio"/> NO
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Criteri assoggettati a correttivi

- Edificio o ambienti di proprietà ☐ SI ☒ NO
- Edificio o ambienti dati in uso o gestione ☐ SI ☒ NO
- Completamento interventi già avviati ☐ SI ☒ NO
- Avvio di nuovo progetto ☐ SI ☒ NO

CALCOLO DELLA PRIORITA'

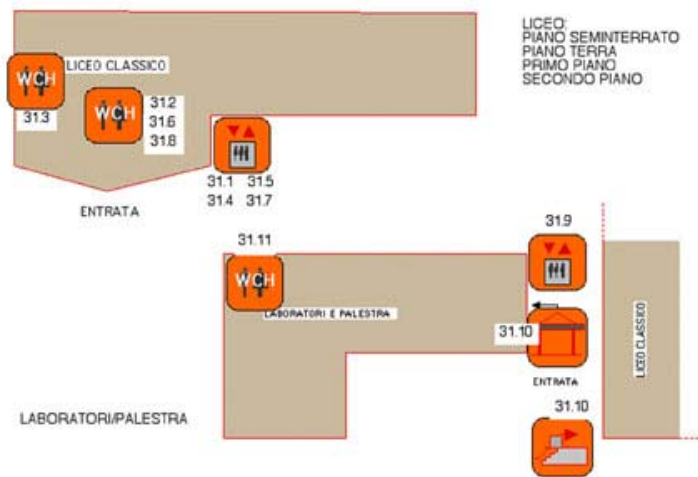
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PRIORITA' FINALE 34718

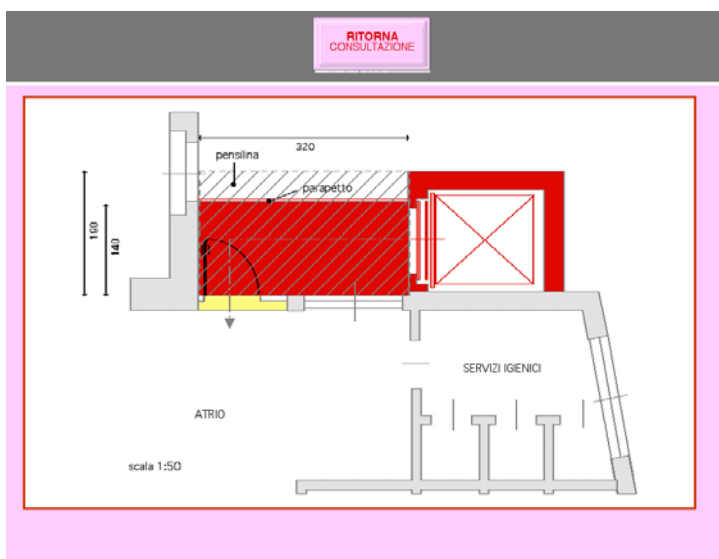
aggiornato al 10/10/95

(Fig 2) Saronno PEBA summary sheet:

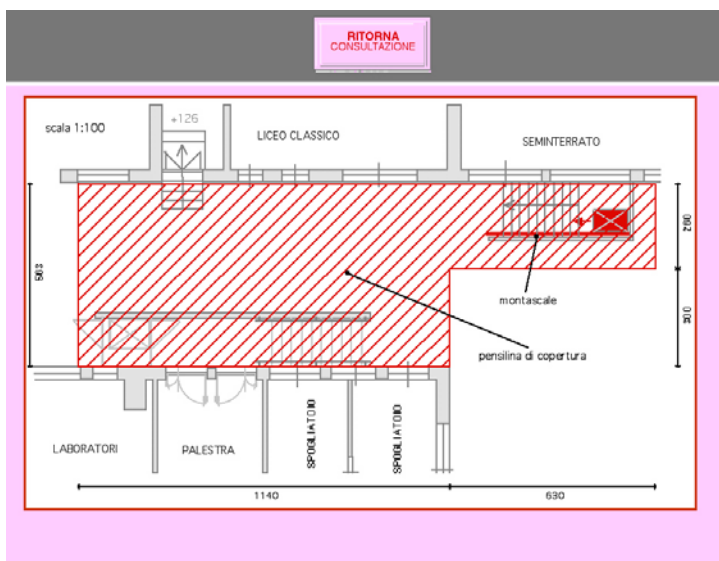
building type, location compared with areas of collective interest and accessibility of the routes with regard to the presence of car parks and local traffic, labour costs, priority of intervention



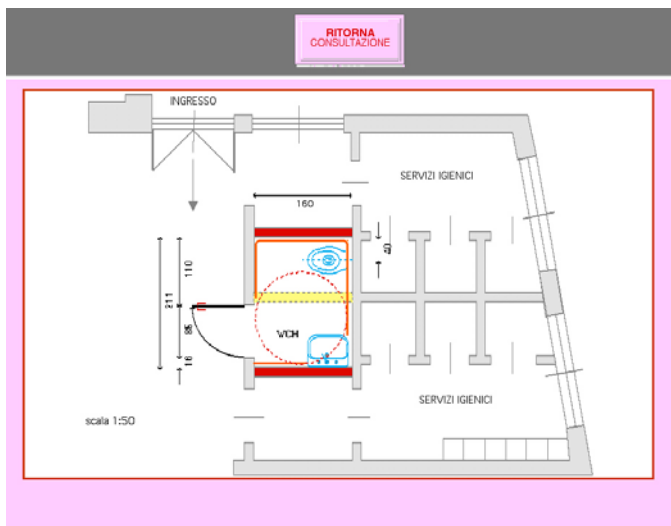
(Fig 3) Saronno PEBA summary sheet: card indicating location of interventions



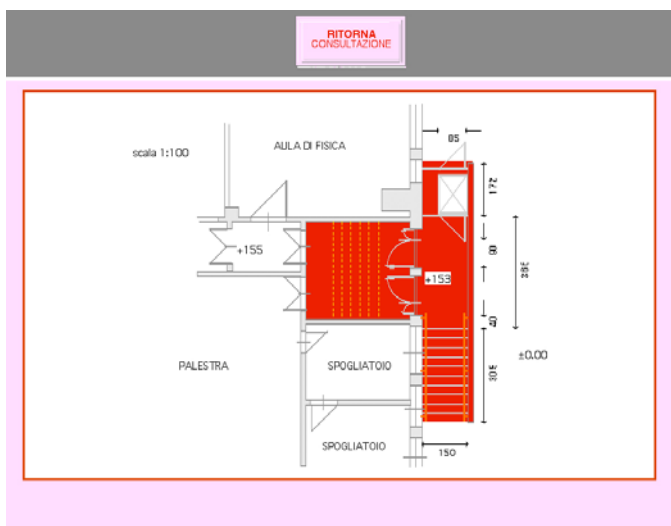
(Fig 4) Saronno PEBA project diagrams: the 4 floors must be connected by an access lift realising exit platform to higher floors



(Fig 5) Saronno PEBA project diagrams: the main gymnasium building and the gym building must be connected by a service stairs



(Fig 6) Saronno PEBA project diagrams: one bathroom for each floor must be accessible



(Fig 7) Saronno PEBA project diagrams: a raising platform must be installed and the stairs must be redesigned to connect the external area to the gym building

After 10 years, the planned work had been performed in almost all the buildings, by the municipal technical office.



(Fig 8) realisations in the *Bascapè* secondary school realisations in Saronno: the service stairs has been removed and an external access lift connect the 3 floors of a secondary school



(Fig 9) *Bascapè* secondary school in

Saronno: the exit to higher floors is a safe area in case of fire



(Fig 10) the leisure centre realisations in

Saronno: the public gallery is connected to the swimming pool floor of the leisure centre by a new lift

After preparation of the plan, several priority interventions were planned by external architects and immediately carried out, such as turning the main road into a pedestrian only area, where it was attempted to reduce the differences in level between the road and entrances into the shops along the route.



(Fig 11) Saronno: the other side of the upper street is connected by a subway and a new pedestrian route



(Fig 12) another example in public buildings: lift and signals for orientation of blind and low vision people in D.U.C. – Parma, Region Emilia Romagna. Photo courtesy of Studio ADR



(Fig.13) another example in public buildings: this toilette interior design is good for a wide range of customers in Sporting – Trento, Region Trentino. Photo courtesy of Studio ADR

The cases of application and development of a Plan include the PEBA of the Venice municipality (by Studio Maurizio), which assigned priority to intervention on a section of a long cycling and pedestrian route linking two roads (carried out in 2003).

The area concerned, which runs along the bank of the river close to a park, was in a state of relative abandonment and was not accessible to a large part of the local population, despite having a strategic role as a link between parts of the city. The section is strategic, because it acts as a link between the car park and the hospital, passing over two bridges, in safety.



(Fig.14-15) realisations: the Venice PEBA, Via Olimpia. Photo courtesy of Studio Maurizio.



4 CONCLUSION

It is undeniably important that each public building be linked by a protected and accessible network, so extension of the PEBA to public routes is an important element of the legislative framework.

The regulations could be a valid means of support for achieving greater social inclusion and usability of the environment by everyone: in Italy, the technical regulations have gradually led to a kind of planning revolution, which has forced all planners to take into consideration the minimum requisites of usability required by law, even though a genuine culture of accessibility for everyone cannot be found in the regulations to which all planners refer on a daily basis. Accessibility of public buildings is a complex topic, which falls within a wider problem, including requirements of usability, safety and mobility of users, especially weaker ones; mobility of weak users is a problem which has been of strategic importance at international level for many years now: considering the pedestrian as the main player on the urban stage and therefore planning the city on the basis of this.

Planning solutions should take into consideration the larger number of different requirements, even though it is not always possible to provide comprehensive responses to all the diversities; that is why these solutions should, in any case, be divided in terms of compatibility of users in interaction with the environment and guaranteeing them possible alternative choices.

The buildings should be easily recognisable and not provide further elements of disorientation or potential danger. The routes should be designed to be easily used by weak pedestrians, people with limitations and difficulty in mobility, but also those with different degrees of perception and orientation, such as old people, children, occasional users and foreigners. For example, in 2001, CERTU started a program of VILLE ACCESSIBLE À TOUS, aware of the complexity of satisfying all the different requirements of citizens-users, and of how geographic, physical and social accessibility is a subject which falls within various policies (e.g. town-planning, transport, services).

In its 2002-04 program, it intends to promote a culture of accessibility which is based on a global approach, dealing with the various players in the city, to develop transversal actions and avoid favouring certain aspects of accessibility over others, introducing the concept of "urban ergonomics".

All public administrations should understand the importance of making their cities accessible for all, starting with planning, first through preparation of programmatic plans not only for public buildings, but also for pedestrian routes, then with progressive continuation of works and constant maintenance of attention to detail.