



***CAP4Access e-Newsletter No. 1, September 2014***

## **Collectively improving accessibility in European cities through online mapping**

**Dear Readers,**

Europe needs to become more accessible. Far too often buildings and places cannot easily be reached or entered by people whose ability to walk is temporarily or permanently limited. This affects millions of people in Europe, whether they be wheelchair users, senior citizens with walking aids or even parents with pushchairs.

The CAP4Access project (<http://www.CAP4Access.eu>) wants to address these issues by making use of and developing a wide range of tools and methods to gather data about barriers in the physical environment. Online maps based on OpenStreetMap (a free, "wiki world map") are a central element of our project to make barriers visible and to raise awareness for this important topic. The European Commission is cofunding this project from 2014 to 2016 in its seventh Framework Programme. It is one of several initiatives promoted in the field of collective awareness platforms (CAPS). To learn more about CAPS see the [CAPS website](#) of the European Commission.

We need to develop these tools with help from the people meant to be supported: the mobility impaired. Therefore we will interact with the local communities at our four pilot sites in Elche (Spain), Heidelberg (Germany), London (UK), and Vienna (Austria). We would also like to hear comments, suggestions or ideas from anyone interested in this project. There is a special website for interaction with user communities at <http://www.MyAccessible.EU>.

With this newsletter we would like to introduce you to CAP4Access and give you an overview of our activities in the first months of the project.

The CAP4Access Team

# An introduction to CAP4Access

## What we do and what we want to achieve

Online maps are a very good resource for finding accessible places and routes. With the addition of comments, photos and other relevant data these maps can be an even more valuable source of information for the mobility impaired. These may be wheelchair users, seniors with walking aids, parents with pushchairs or frail patients. Simply put anyone whose walking ability is permanently or temporarily limited.

Anyone can contribute to crowdsourced online maps by collecting, entering and validating information. Online maps can also be tools for raising awareness and for working together to remove existing barriers. New data sources, such as open data from the public sector, can contribute substantially to unlocking the vast potential of online accessibility mapping. The objective of CAP4Access is to develop and pilot-test methods and tools for collectively gathering and sharing information about the accessibility of public spaces. Our tasks are:

- Documentation, annotation and discussion of places and routes with regard to their accessibility.
- Visualising the data in ways which are intuitive and highly attractive for target users.
- Route planning and navigation support facilitated for mobility impaired persons.
- Creating awareness and preparing effective measures for eliminating barriers.

Our four test sites are in Vienna (Austria), London (United Kingdom), Elche (Spain) and Heidelberg (Germany).

## Technology - ICT for accessibility

CAP4Access will develop several technological applications that will concentrate on the following areas:

- Innovative and highly intuitive **user interfaces** for collective tagging of barriers to accessibility, including the option to describe and discuss barriers and to collectively develop means for tackling them.
- Identification of **Public Sector Information (PSI)** and also private information about the built environment for integration into online accessibility maps.
- Push forward the development of **online routing and navigation** for people with limited mobility using the crowdsourcing approach.
- We will build applications for **participatory sensing** with mobile end devices (i.e. smartphones) to improve data quality about accessibility of the built environment, including road and surface conditions, gradients etc.

Our applications will be based on OpenStreetMap, the "free wiki world map". We will make best use of established practice, in particular [Wheelmap](#). All newly developed

tools will be available for interested parties - such as city administrations - as open software under the GNU Lesser General Public License (LGPL).

## **MyAccessible.EU - our initiative to engage with target groups**

MyAccessible.EU expands the project with a community engagement platform. It will create awareness for accessibility issues and implement effective measures for eliminating barriers. A [Blog](#), a [Facebook](#) and a [Twitter](#) account under the umbrella of MyAccessible.EU facilitate and document the project's interaction with our target groups. These are:

- People with mobility impairments
- Policy-makers and public administrators
- Grassroot and non-profit organisations
- Spatial planners and facility managers
- Owners of shops, restaurants and hotels
- The general public

## **Project team**

The project team consists of an interdisciplinary and international group of experts from the following institutions:

- [empirica Gesellschaft für Kommunikations- und Technologieforschung mbH](#) (Bonn, Germany)
- [Elche City Council](#) (Spain)
- [Fraunhofer Institute for Intelligent Analysis & Information Systems](#) (Sankt Augustin, Germany)
- [MappingForChange](#) (London, United Kingdom)
- [Polibienestar Research Institute, University of Valencia](#) (Spain)
- [Sozialhelden e.V.](#) (Berlin, Germany)
- [University College London, Accessibility Research Group](#) (United Kingdom)
- [University of Heidelberg, GIScience Research Group](#) (Germany)
- [Zentrum für Soziale Innovation](#) (Vienna, Austria)

## News

### Our first video is online

ZSI, our partner organisation in Vienna, produced a video introducing the project CAP4Access and MyAccessible.EU, respectively. The video gives an overview of what the project is all about, what we are planning to do and who is involved. ZSI had a fun and insightful day recording the video in Vienna. The goal was to take a closer look at accessibility barriers in Vienna as well as to talk to some passers-by about the kind of barriers they encounter in their daily lives. The video also contains some footage from La Skarozzata, the wheelchair walk in Bologna that is further mentioned below in this newsletter.

Follow this link to [view the video](#).

A [version with Spanish subtitles](#) is also available.

### Tell us about your experiences with accessibility!

Join the conversation about barriers to accessibility in European cities on our blog and post your stories and impressions. We are keen to hear about experiences with accessibility in your daily life, be they good or bad. Tell us about your most positive or your most negative experience with accessibility and let us know how these experiences affected you. We would love to hear your opinions on how to improve accessibility. Based on your input we will develop recommendations for eliminating existing barriers.

[Write a blog comment](#) or send an e-mail to [info\[at\]myaccessible\[dot\]eu](mailto:info[at]myaccessible[dot]eu)

### Mapping party in Bologna (Italy)

On the 24th of May 2014, Bologna witnessed a special event aimed at raising awareness for wheelchair accessibility. The annual La Skarozzata, a wheelchair "walk" through the historic city centre, was joined by CAP4Access partner Sozialhelden. They seized the opportunity to introduce [Wheelmap.org](#), the online map for wheelchair accessible places, and the CAP4Access project to the more than 150 participants of the event.

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