

To

Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

HOW SCANDIC HOTELS WORKS WITH DISABILITY QUESTIONS TO INCLUDE EVERYONE

The Scandinavian hotel chain Scandic focuses on accessibility by making improvements that can benefit everyone. The hotels-for-all-concept is about implementing technological and functional solutions in the hotel rooms, meeting rooms, restaurants and service area. In 2009, Scandic became the first hotel chain to launch complete fact sheets about both the hotels that are accessible, and the ones that may have challenges for lead users on their website.

In Europe over 50 million people are disabled, but their possibility to stay at hotels is reduced due to limited access. Scandic sees accessibility as an obvious factor, which also is highly profitable by attracting more guests.

Hotel guest with disabilities and disability organizations are the lead user that was involved in this project. Some of the user insights came also from the hotel chains board and team members by placing them in the situation of lead users with reduced ability.

In 2003 the hotel chain engaged Magnus Berglund as Disability Ambassador. His first task was to hire several wheelchairs for the head office. For two hours each in three months everyone got to see life from the perspective of a wheelchair. Berglund says that being in a wheelchair is just one of many disabilities, but it is an excellent way to get people discussing the issues.

Berglund and the team members in cooperation with lead user guests and several disability organizations developed a minimum standard for the hotels as a 93 point checklist. 77 of the points are compulsory for every Scandic hotel, and all points are included when new hotels are built. The list will be extended with more check points in 2010.

To learn the hotel standards all hotel employees are given accessibility training in service and attitude, and discuss what they can do in their own department to make it accessible, may it be placing the coffee cups within reach of everyone or understanding how a hearing loop works.

By seeing the world from a wheelchair, staff members discovered useful insight to the needs of lead users such as: How on earth do I close the door of the disabled toilet without a handrail on the inside of the door? Does the mirror need to be so high up? How do I reach the coffee cups on the breakfast buffet? And one person started thinking about how her mother, who has reduced hearing, would be woken up by the fire alarm at a hotel – the reason behind the Scandic vibrating alarm clock being developed, an alarm that also serves as a complement to the fire alarm.

The design process is a continuous long-term plan of developing existing hotels, building new rooms and training staff members in terms of accessibility for all.

- Height-adjustable bed
- Telephone on the bedside table (along with a remote control)
- The bed is a little higher than in other rooms (at least 55 cm)
- There is a space of at least 80 cm around the bed
- The door width for the room and bathroom is at least 80 cm

- A vibrating alarm clock and fire alarm is available on request (and clearly signed at the reception desk)
- Hooks at different heights, can be reached from a wheelchair
- Alarm
- Mirror at a suitable height for wheelchair users too
- Handrail on the inside of the door, under the door knob, so that closing it is easy from a wheelchair
- Hand towels reachable from a wheelchair
- No or low threshold
- Single-grip mixer tap or automatic tap
- Wash basin height min 78 cm, so a wheelchair will fit under it. Naturally the hook, soap and hand towels are also easy to reach
- Toilet paper holder on the armrest

- There is a hearing loop available for meeting rooms
- The doors are at least 80 cm wide, so that guests can get through with a wheelchair crutches or a walking frame
- There is at least one meeting room with no carpets
- The stage is accessible for wheelchair users
- Low thresholds
- The telephones can be reached from a wheelchair