



BIAP recommendation n° 06/6 : Accessibility of public buildings/facilities and transport systems to hearing-impaired individuals

Hearing-impaired individuals frequently find themselves at a disadvantage when they need to access buildings or facilities open to the public or use public transport systems.

On the one hand, most of such spaces are still not fitted with the equipment and means which would help people suffering from hearing impairments to communicate. On the other hand, the staff very rarely has received any information about how to deal with such people.

The present recommendation aims at inviting public authorities, local communities and private companies to examine the situation and fit out public spaces and transport systems with the necessary equipment and devices, so as to allow full access to hearing-impaired individuals.

The International Bureau for Audiophonology has produced a catalogue of systems and devices which it believes are best adapted to helping people suffering from hearing impairments to communicate in public spaces. The devices which appear in the catalogue (see annexed document) are taken from the more complete list presented under BIAP Recommendation n°06/4, entitled " Devices aimed at enhancing the communication capacity of hearing-impaired individuals ".

It also recommends that staff members who are in contact with the public, in such spaces and transport systems, be trained about how to deal with hearing-impaired individuals. If necessary, these should have the possibility of calling upon a person trained in using modes of communication developed for deaf persons.

ANNEX TO RECOMMENDATION 06/6

1. General practical recommendations

1.1. The difficulties faced by people suffering from hearing impairments are extremely diversified; they may range from simple discomfort to complete deafness. This variability is due to the type and seriousness of the hearing impairment, the moment it appeared and the efficiency of the prosthetic devices and care provided to the individual in order to " educate " him/her.

1.2. The polymorphism of the disorder means that numerous processes and palliative means can be used to alleviate the difficulties faced by the individual.

1.2.1. When the privileged means of communication is based on hearing, sounds, and particularly speech, must be perceived by the individual in the best possible acoustical conditions, whether or not the person is wearing a hearing aid. It is thus recommended to reduce environmental noises as much as possible and to limit the reverberation of sounds on walls and partitions. Messages should be clear and intelligible. On the other hand, persons talking to hearing-impaired individuals should face their interlocutor, be close to and look at the person, speak distinctly, in a natural way and without hurry. When possible, speech shall be transmitted by means of a system which ensures that the voice stands out against ambient noise:

-transmission by radio or infrared waves.

-transmission by magnetic induction

(BIAP recommendation n°6/4-3)

1.2.2. When the privileged means of communication is not based on hearing, other devices, based on extra- auditory and sensory substitution, must be used (BIAP Recommendation 06/4-4-2). Any information transmitted acoustically should also be made available by means of an optical information system. If necessary, the intervention of an interpreter using sign language may prove useful.

2. Proposals for the fitting-out of buildings and public transport systems, with the view to better welcome people suffering from hearing impairments

2.1. Administration and public services

When talking over an open counter, a magnetic field should be created so as to guarantee full confidentiality to individuals using a device fitted with an induction pick-up coil (BIAP Recommendation n° 06/4-3-1-2). When people are separated by a glass partition, the same device should be installed, together with an intercom and sound amplifier, for hearing-impaired persons who do not use any hearing aid or a device not fitted with an induction pick-up coil. Other complementary means should also be installed, such as static, luminous or scrolling displays, as well as pictograms and arrowing. Exchanging written messages may be necessary in order to communicate with people suffering from severe hearing impairments who do not practice lip-reading. An interpreter using sign language may be needed. For certain official procedures, he or she will have to be a sworn interpreter. The quality of lighting has to be optimal, in order to facilitate the task of persons who practice lip-reading.

2.2. Theatres, cinemas, meeting rooms and religious facilities.

Taking into account the venue and type of performance, numerous devices and means can be used in order to help people suffering from hearing impairments:

- magnetic loops
- radio or infrared transmitters
- visual displays of text in theatres
- simultaneous transcription on screen
- sign language translation

2.3. Education centers and schools

The following devices and means can be used:

- magnetic loops
- radio or infrared transmitters
- simultaneous transcription on screen
- sign language translation
- note-taking

2.4. Museums and historical monuments

Can be used:

- documents, available in the various halls
- recorded commentaries, possibly transmitted by infrared or radio waves
- specific guided visits, possibly with infrared/radio transmission or an interpreter using sign language

2.5. Public transport systems

2.5.1. Train and metro stations

2.5.1.1. Counters

- automatic ticketing machines are recommended.
- counters that can be accessed by hearing-impaired people must be visibly indicated as such, by means of a pictogram.
- counters can be fitted with a transmitter creating a magnetic field, an intercom and amplifier.
- it may be necessary to use written messages

2.5.1.2. Arrival/departure halls and platforms

- display of information messages
- arrowing
- in phone booths, handsets should be fitted with a magnetic induction coil or the booth itself may be fitted with a visual telecommunication system.

2.5.2. Train coaches and buses

It is recommended to clearly display any recommendation or message that should be known to passengers.

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