

BUSINESS PLAN
CEN/TC 452

ASSISTANCE DOGS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Scope

The scope of CEN/TC 452 is to develop European standards in the field of assistance dogs, users and training staff.

The term 'assistance dog' is defined as a dog specifically trained to perform tasks to increase independence and to mitigate limitations of a person with a disability.

Please note that 'assistance dog' is the umbrella term. Examples of assistance dogs are guide dogs, hearing dogs, mobility assistance dogs, PTSD assistance dogs, medical alert/response assistance dogs, autism and developmental disorder assistance dogs.

An assistance dog is permanently paired with a person with a disability to perform on a one-to-one basis tasks to mitigate the limitations of this person, or to perform these tasks under the guidance of an additional support person such as a parent or a spouse.

In such cases, the third partner will also take legal responsibility for the assistance dog (and, in the case of a support person, the assistance dog user).

An assistance dog may be specifically trained, by an appropriately qualified person(s), to successfully carry out „crossover“ tasks (from one formal role to another) to meet additional needs of the assistance dog user.

The requirements for assistance dogs will be specified in a series of European Standards (to be developed by CEN/TC 452).

Excluded from the scope of CEN/TC 452 are:

- dog assisted interventions such as facility dogs or dog assisted therapy;
- other kinds of working dogs (police dogs, rescue dogs, avalanche rescue dogs) and other assistance animals.

Business Environment

In Member States of the WHO European Region, 6 to 10 out of every 100 people live with a disability. In total, an estimated 135 million people in the Region live with a disability. With population ageing and the rising prevalence of noncommunicable conditions, including injuries, this number is set to increase in the future¹.

Independent living, quality social and employment services, accessible and inclusive housing, participation in lifelong learning, adequate social protection and a strengthened social economy are indispensable for decent living for all persons with disabilities. An assistance dog helps a person to undertake essential tasks so they can be less dependent on others and improve their quality of life. Accordingly, an assistance dog provides a person with more opportunities to maintain and increase their independence.

¹ SOURCE: <https://www.euro.who.int/en/health-topics/Life-stages/disability-and-rehabilitation/areas-of-work/disability>

Although having an assistance dog is not a suitable solution for all persons with disabilities or medical conditions, there is an increasing number of ways that dogs are being trained to assist and therefore, overall, demand for assistance dogs is rising.

Assessing assistance dogs

At present, there are no clear criteria at the European level (e.g. law, rulebooks, directives, etc.), for the training of assistance dogs, their placement with users and the ongoing assessment of the standard that the partnership is working to.

Given the lack of current criteria to provide guidance to existing and potential new assistance dog service providers, the development of recognized European standards that support the training and assessment of assistance dogs would be very valuable.

Such European standards will help address current issues arising from the lack of legislation/regulation. This includes the fact that many assistance dog service providers have limited external regulation, enabling them, in some cases, to put profit ahead of providing quality assistance dogs. Where that is the case, assistance dog users are being put at risk by being given a poorly and insufficiently trained dog.

ADI and IGDF accredited Members currently follow consensus standards as agreed by membership.

There are no publicly available statistics on how many assistance dog service providers/individuals in Europe train assistance dogs.

While the existing assistance dog standards developed by the professional umbrella organizations (ADEu/ADI and IGDF) are highly credible and provide well-established benchmarks for assistance dog service providers, new European standards will enhance this further, especially in terms of accessibility/liability/comparability, as the standards would need to be met by all assistance dog service providers, no matter which professional umbrella organizations they are members of.

New European Standards would affect the following stakeholders:

- providers of assistance dogs (e.g. schools, trainers, instructors, support staff)
- users
- businesses (e.g. restaurants, supermarkets, hotels)
- public authorities
- general public
- financial supporters (e.g. health insurance, funders)
- academia (e.g. universities).

Benefits

The application of any European standards, and the resulting assessment of assistance dog service providers, would ensure that assistance dogs are trained according to recognized standards by an appropriately qualified person(s), taking into consideration human and animal welfare and wellbeing.

Assistance dog users can rely on the quality of their dogs only if the dogs are trained to such high standards. Similarly, this would offer guidelines as to which dogs should be given public access and which should be denied public access.

Moreover, government and other regulatory bodies would be likely to use formal European standards to support legislation in favour of legitimate assistance dog users.

Public and service providers (e.g. airlines, etc.) would be more supportive of access rights and issues if formal European standards were adopted.

Priorities

The priority of CEN/TC 452 is to publish European standards that will result in the training of assistance dogs to consistent and high standards (both guiding and assistance skills), which will secure and maintain freedom of movement for assistance dog users both within and between European countries.

The first milestone in creating consistent standardization in the field of assistance dogs is to develop a common and harmonized terminology.

Any standards developed should include dog care, welfare, raising, training, matching applicant beneficiaries/users with available dogs, aftercare and requirements in terms of competences of all roles involved in providing a reliable assistance dog (including ongoing development and maintenance).

Having common European standards would lead to the harmonization of assistance dog service providers at the European level, which would in turn enhance not only user confidence but also dog welfare and protection.

1. BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT OF THE CEN/TC

1.1 Description of the Business Environment

The modern guide dog movement began in Germany during the First World War when thousands of soldiers returned from the Front blinded. The guide dog movement rapidly progressed in Europe and the USA in the coming years, expanding globally in the following years, eventually leading to thousands of people benefitting from the use of a guide dog. The 1970s and 1980s saw the biggest expansion in this field.

As people observed the benefits of working guide dogs, the development of different types of assistance dogs followed. Nowadays there is a wide range of uses for specifically trained dogs to assist people with sensory, physical or mobility impairments, or other medical, mental health or development conditions such as epilepsy, diabetes, autism or post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

An assistance dog can help a person undertake essential daily tasks, enabling them to be less dependent on others, thereby improving the person's quality of life.

Assistance dogs can help users to build a level of independence and enhance their confidence. In certain countries, assistance dogs are allowed, by law, to accompany their users into all public places and to access transportation.

Although access to public transport or public institutions is guaranteed by many European Acts and by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, many assistance dog users still encounter significant problems due to a lack of consistent standards of accessibility across Europe. This results in users being denied their rights to board public transport or enter public places, either as a result of ignorance of applicable rules about assistance dogs, or because assistance dogs and their users are perceived as an inconvenience.

European regulations quite often use the words "recognized assistance dogs" without explaining what that means and who is authorized to "recognize" these dogs.

There are differences in legislation among European countries, mostly in terms of how dogs are accredited and/or certified.

The European Commission has issued several mandates in the past addressed to CEN/CENELEC and ETSI to facilitate accessibility for persons with disabilities - e.g. Mandate 473 on Accessibility following the Design for All approach; Mandate 420 on accessibility in the built environment,

Mandate 376 in support of European accessibility requirements for public procurement of products and services in the ICT domain. Finally, the European accessibility act (the Directive (EU) 2019/882 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 April 2019 on the accessibility requirements for products and services) aims to improve the functioning of the internal market for accessible products and services, by removing barriers created by divergent rules in Member States. This will facilitate the work of companies and bring benefits to disabled and elderly people in the European Union.

1.2 Quantitative Indicators of the Business Environment

The need for CEN/TC 452 is supported by the following information relating to the business environment it operates in:

There are estimated to be:

- approximately 87 million persons having some form of disability in the EU¹;
- over 30 million blind and partially sighted persons in geographical Europe²;
- about 32.3 million adults diagnosed with diabetes in the European Union in 2019³;
- 34.4 million adults in the EU with a disabling hearing loss (35 dB or greater)⁴.

There are no statistics or estimates as to the number of assistance dogs that may be needed in the future, as not all persons with disabilities or medical conditions are interested in having an assistance dog or would benefit from one. However, demand is growing, not least because the number of potential users is rising as a result of an increase in health conditions associated with an ageing population.

While a certain number of assistance dogs are trained by assistance dogs service providers accredited by professional umbrella organizations, there are no statistics on the total number of programs/service providers/individuals in Europe that train assistance dogs.

2. BENEFITS EXPECTED FROM THE WORK OF CEN/TC

The European standard(s) will cover all aspects of dog care, welfare, raising, training, matching applicant beneficiaries/users with available dogs, aftercare and requirements in terms of competences of all roles involved in providing a reliable assistance dog (including ongoing development and maintenance).

In the context of developing competencies for assistance dog roles, including instructors across European countries, an agreed set of standards for assistance dog service providers is crucial.

It is anticipated the standards will be largely based on those established by existing international umbrella organizations and complement, meet and exceed any standards that have been set at an international level. This will help to ensure that robust standards operate across the whole of Europe.

The standards will facilitate the exchange of state-of-the-art knowledge in relation to training assistance dogs, improve the visibility of such dogs and their users and improve their lawful right to access to public transport, services and the built environment.

The common European standards on assistance dogs will improve the functioning of the internal market for accessible products and services and will for sure - although not directly (by mandate) -

²SOURCE: <http://www.euroblind.org/about-blindness-and-partial-sight/facts-and-figures#details>

³ SOURCE: <https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/sites/83231356-en/index.html?itemId=/content/component/83231356-en>

⁴ SOURCE: <https://www.hear-it.org/hearing-loss-in-europe>

support the European accessibility act in removing barriers created by divergent legislation.

3. PARTICIPATION IN CEN/TC

All CEN national members are entitled to nominate delegates to CEN/TC 452 and experts to the Working Groups, ensuring there is a balance of all interested parties.

The participation as observers of recognized European or international organizations is also possible under certain conditions.

ANEC (Association européenne pour la coordination de la représentation des consommateurs pour la normalisation), represented by EGDF, participates in the work of CEN/TC 452 as a partner organization to CEN. Liaison partnership has also been established with the International Guide Dog Federation.

In addition, liaison has been set up between CEN/TC 452 and CEN/CLC/TC 11 "Accessibility in the built environment" working on the standardization mandate from the European Commission (M/420) so that the needs of assistance dogs and their users in relation to the built environment will be taken into account.

Cooperation with CEN/TC 10 "Lifts, escalators and moving walks" has been established as well. Anyone wishing to participate in the activities of CEN/TC 452 should contact the national standards organization in their country.

4. OBJECTIVES OF CEN/TC AND STRATEGIES FOR THEIR ACHIEVEMENT

4.1 Defined objectives of CEN/TC

The objective of CEN/TC 452 is to develop standards in the field of assistance dogs which will include at least:

- terminology
- general dog management, training and assessment for assistance dogs
- user assessments & matching; user training & aftercare
- competencies of training staff in line with national and European systems for qualification
- dog care and lifetime welfare
- accessibility and universal access.

The CEN/TC 452 committee objective is to develop and provide assistance dogs standards for Europe that would:

1) support implementation of the upcoming European legislation on accessibility and the existing Regulations by supporting the ease of movement for assistance dogs and users, accessing universal space and preventing the abuse of rights and services designated for assistance dog users.

2) support different service providers in clearly identifying "recognised assistance dogs" and improve the visibility of such dogs and their users (conformity assessment as a tool to provide justification that standards are used and applied).

3) ensure a better quality of services for users and regulate the market of assistance dog service providers in terms of qualifications, organisation and working conditions.

4.2 Identified strategies to achieve the defined objectives of CEN/TC

CEN/TC 452 standardization work builds on CWA 16520:2012, *Guide Dogs mobility instructor - Competences*, and CWA 16979:2016, *Dog training professionals - Knowledge, skills and*

competence requirements.

The requirements for assistance dogs will be specified in a series of European Standards (to be developed by CEN/TC 452/WGs).

The work of TC is divided into 7 working groups:

CEN/TC 452/WG 1 "Terminology"

CEN/TC 452/WG 2 "Lifetime welfare"

CEN/TC 452/WG 3 "Competencies for assistance dogs' professionals"

CEN/TC 452/WG 4 "Training and assessment"

CEN/TC 452/WG 5 "Client Services"

CEN/TC 452/WG 6 "Accessibility and Universal Access"

CEN/TC 452/WG 7 "Conformity assessment".

WG 1 will develop commonly used terms and definitions in the field of assistance dogs, users and training staff (taking into account the existing documents).

WG 2 will develop standards aimed at supporting the lifetime welfare of the dog.

WG 3 will develop standards aimed at training reliable assistance dogs provided by qualified assistance dog service providers with professionally skilled staff.

WG 4 will define the standards relating to the training and assessment for different types of assistance dogs.

WG 5 will define standards aimed at pairing and training the assistance dog and the user to be a safe and well-functioning team, maintaining team quality over the years (under the condition of a transparent relation between the assistance dog service provider and client with clear responsibilities to one another).

WG 6 will define standards for moving about and accessing all public spaces for assistance dog teams and ensuring their rights under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities so that they have the same opportunities as all citizens and can participate independently in all areas of life.

WG 7 will define requirements for conformity assessment approach within all CEN/TC 452 working groups in a close cooperation with Convenors of the CEN/TC 452/WGs.

4.3 Environmental aspects

The scope of CEN/TC 452 does not explicitly cover environmental aspects; however, if these issues come up, they will be dealt with. CEN Guide 4, Guide for addressing environmental issues in product standards, will be consulted as a useful reference document.

5. FACTORS AFFECTING COMPLETION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CEN/TC WORK PROGRAMME

The work of CEN/TC 452 will only be successful if its stakeholders and national representatives engage actively. It is also very important that the work is discussed thoroughly by the national bodies' representatives and members of the working groups of CEN/TC 452 at all stages of the process.