



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' 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 autism assistance dogs, developmental disorder assistance dogs, diabetes assistance dogs, guide dogs, hearing dogs, medical alert/response assistance dogs, mobility assistance dogs, PTSD assistance dogs, seizure assistance dogs. An assistance dog may be trained to perform a combination of tasks of the afore mentioned types of 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. If the third partner in the assistance dog team is also legally responsible for the dog and the person with a disability, the team is called a triad team.

The requirements for assistance dogs will be specified in the European Standard in a series (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, etc.).

Business Environment

According to Eurostat, 80 million European Union citizens are affected by some kind of disability, a number which is projected to increase to 120 million by 2020 in light of an ageing population.

In a Eurobarometer study on accessibility undertaken in 2012, the vast majority of respondents (97%) underlined the point that persons with disabilities should be an integral part of the society like persons without disabilities. Persons with disabilities should be an integral part of society and have the right to remain within their local communities. Accordingly, they should receive the support they need within the ordinary structures of education, health, employment and social services.

86% of Europeans agree that having consistent accessibility solutions across the whole of Europe would enable them to travel, study and work in another European country.

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 improve their independence.

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 European level (e.g. law, rulebooks, directives, etc.), that covers the training of 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 training service providers, the development of a recognized European standard that supports 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 schools have limited external regulation, enabling them, in some cases to put profit ahead of providing excellent assistance dogs. Where that is the case, assistance dog users are being put at risk by being given a poorly and insufficiently trained dog.

At the moment there are 41 assistance dog schools accredited by ADI and 54 guide dog schools accredited by IGDF (some of them are accredited both by ADI and by IGDF because they train all types of assistance dogs) in Europe, but there are no publicly available statistics on how many other schools/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 schools training assistance dogs, a new European standard will enhance this further, especially in terms of accessibility/liability/comparability, as the standard would need to be met by all service providers, no matter which professional organizations they are members of.

Any new European Standard 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 standard, and the resulting certification of assistance dog schools, would ensure that assistance dogs are trained according to safe and recognized standards by training staff qualified to carry out the work, taking into consideration human and animal welfare and wellbeing.

Only by training dogs to such high standards can assistance dog users rely on the quality of their dogs. Similarly, this would offer guidelines as to whom to give access and whom to refuse access. Moreover, public service providers would be far more inclined to support access for assistance dogs to their premises, which in turn would help to strengthen rights of access for assistance dog users across Europe.

Priorities

The CEN/TC 452 priority is to publish European assistance dog training standard(s) that will result in the training of assistance dogs with consistent and high standards (both guidance 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 dog training and support is to develop a common and harmonized terminology.

Any standards developed should include dog care, welfare assessment, dog training and requirements for assistance dog training professionals.

Having a single European standard would lead to the harmonization of assistance dog training 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 during the coming years, eventually leading to thousands of people benefitting from the use of a guide dog.

As people observed the benefits of working guide dogs, the development of different types of assistance dogs followed. Nowadays there are a wide range of uses for specially 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 posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

An assistance dog can help a person undertake essential daily tasks, enabling them to be less dependent on others, thereby improving their 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 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 and enter public places, often 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 EC proposed a Directive on the approximation of the laws, regulations and administrative provisions of the Member States as regards the accessibility requirements for products and services (also known as European Accessibility Act, which is still pending approval) that aims at improving the functioning of the internal market for accessible products and services by removing barriers created by divergent legislation. This will facilitate the work of companies and will 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:

- Over 30 million visually impaired persons (blind and partially sighted persons) in geographical Europe (according to the European Blind Union & WHO)
- About 60 million people with diabetes (in 2010: 55,4 million people with diabetes, estimate for 2030: 66,5 million, source: International Diabetes Federation, 2015)
- 80 million European Union citizens are affected by some kind of disability (according to the Eurostat)
- About 71 million adults aged 18 to 80 years have hearing loss greater than 25 dB, the definition of hearing impairment recognized by the World Health Organization (WHO); in the European Union alone, the number of people with hearing loss is over 55 million (according to the scientific Survey, Evaluation of the Social and Economic Costs of Hearing Impairment).

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.

A survey conducted by EGDF in 2013 revealed that there are 14,299 guide dogs and 4,105 other types of assistance dogs in Europe and these numbers are steadily increasing.

While a certain number of assistance dogs are trained by recognized schools accredited by professional umbrella organizations (in Europe there are 52 Assistance Dogs Schools, of which 41 are accredited by ADI and 54 guide dog schools accredited by IGDF), there are no statistics on the total number of programs/schools/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 breeding, training and placing assistance dogs, including the requirements for training staff.

In the context of developing a common curriculum for assistance dog instructors across the European countries, a common set of standards for assistance dog training is crucial.

It is anticipated the standard(s) will be largely based on those established by existing international umbrella organizations and replace any standards that have been set at a national level. This will help to ensure that safe and recognized standards operate across the whole of Europe.

The standard(s) 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 standard 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) - 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 (represented by EGDF) participate 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. There will also be liaison 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 are taken into account.

Anyone wishing to participate in the activities of CEN/TC 452 should contact the national standards organization in their country.

CEN/TC will also inform the EC and European Disability Forum about progress of this standardization work, as they have already established contact and expressed an interest in this work.

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 a standard(s) 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 & after care
- competencies and education of training staff in line with national and European systems for qualification
- dog care and lifetime welfare
- accessibility

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 work of TC is divided into 6 different working groups:

CEN/TC 452/WG 01 "Terminology",
CEN/TC 452/WG 02 "Lifetime welfare",
CEN/TC 452/WG 03 "Competencies for assistance dogs' professionals",
CEN/TC 452/WG 04 "Training and assessment",
CEN/TC 452/WG 05 "Client Services",
CEN/TC 452/WG 06 "Accessibility and Universal Access"

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

WG 2 will develop standards aimed at supporting the lifetime welfare of the dog (healthy, happy and socially well-behaving assistance dogs). These standards will include the following topics (at a minimum):

- breeding
- selection (incl. medical tests)
- puppy rearing & development
- puppy walking program & education
- ongoing healthcare, aging and welfare
- kennel facilities - kennel enrichment
- exercise

- recording health and performance issues to inform future breeding programmes
- dog care and welfare assessment
- ongoing training, behavioural and social opportunity needs throughout life course
- criteria for meeting welfare needs for retirement and post retirement.

WG 3 will develop standards aimed at training reliable assistance dogs provided by qualified service providers with professionally skilled staff. Skills, requirements and competencies for assistance dog professionals and service provider staff covering the following topics (at a minimum):

- education
- assessment
- skills maintenance
- education & assessment for mentoring and training the professionals and the volunteers.

WG 4 will define the standards relating to the training and assessment for different types of assistance dogs covering the following (at a minimum):

- assessment of canine temperament and behaviour (temperamental and behavioural analysis)
- dog training methods
- dog assessment methods and timing.

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 service provider and client with clear responsibilities to one another). The group will cover the following (at a minimum):

- client application and assessment
- client-dog matching / beneficiary/handler training (class)
- assistance dog team examination
- after care with beneficiary/handler
- criteria and procedures for removing a dog from a client
- retirement criteria and replacement procedure
- grievance procedures, rights of client, responsibilities of organizations.

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, with the following objective topics (at least):

- transportation and free movement
- legislation considerations
- acceptable prohibited areas for assistance dogs
- procedures for limiting access
- testing for accessibility
- identification
- certification

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.