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## Accessibility to, and mobility in public space for people with cognitive disabilities

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Almost every day we move about outside our homes. As example we perform errands and other practical things; visit friends and relatives to keep in touch with persons who are important for us or we move outside our homes just for relaxation or recreation. Everybody needs to be mobile, though the needs might look different. Although to some people mobility is limited. People with various kinds of disabilities are limited when it comes to mobility. In the field of traffic planning there is relatively much understanding for mobility and accessibility to public space among elderly people and persons with physical disabilities. Though there is still a lack of information about mobility behaviour of people with cognitive disabilities.

This study aims at exploring accessibility to and mobility in public space among people who have cognitive disabilities. This study is done by taking part of knowledge and experience from people used to meet persons with cognitive disabilities in their everyday life by focus group interviewing. This method was used due to explore the field, not from a subjective understanding, but by seeing the comprehensiveness of the field by taking part of different kind of expert's knowledge. Four focus group sessions took place, and the informants were persons who were called *experts* which refer to a person who can generalise from his or her practical or theoretical knowledge about cognitive disabilities. The criterion was that the participants should not solely have a silent personal experience of disability themselves, but they should have made reflections about cognitive disabilities in relation to everyday life.

At this stage analysis is ongoing and at the moment the results showed that mobility is an important part of everyday life for the target group, but it could be problematic. The request for mobility and accessibility to the public space is not differing from the rest of the population – the persons in this group are, and want to be just like anyone else. But hinders for using public space could appear, for instance hinders could arise within the individual when thinking that the brain-injury is a hold-back or when people around prevent the target group from leaving home because they do not think he/she will manage after having



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a brain injury. Unknown places are also problematic when it comes to finding a way. For some persons most of their days were spent at home, because of isolation from friends and relatives or because they did not dare to leave home. Though being mobile or not being



mobile is like balancing on a fine line to avoid falling down into chaos. The target group used different strategies to stay on the line. Strategies to find a way in unknown places are to learn about them before entering them (planning) and using a mobile telephone to be lead by other persons. To get help from other persons to access public space and be mobile could be a possibility to use public space, but it could also feel like a limitation, lack of freedom or not being a “real” adult. Using traffic space was a mission in a complex world with difficulties in sorting out the relevant information. The information given could also be experienced as impossible to understand or not sufficient enough. Results from this study will be a basis for continuing research about mobility for persons with cognitive disabilities.