

Minutes of the ARRE technical meeting
“Improving Access at the Palace-Museums”
Parques de Sintra-Monte da Lua, Portugal
20-21 May 2014

Attendees:

- **Parques de Sintra Monte da Lua, SA, Portugal**

António Lamas, Presidente do Conselho de Administração

Miguel Crespo, Museologist / institutional relations

Inês Ferro, Director of the National Palace of Sintra and National Palace of Queluz

António Nunes Pereira, Director of the National Palace of Pena

Nuno Oliveira, Coordinator of the access project “Parks of Sintra welcome better”

Carolina Martins, Contributor in the access project “Parks of Sintra welcome better”

- **Lisbon City Hall, Portugal**

Jorge Falcato Simões, Architect

- **General Directorate of Cultural Heritage of Portugal**

Clara Mineiro, Responsible for promoting access in monuments, museums and palaces

- **Centre for Accessible Environments, United Kingdom**

Brenda Puech, Director of Consultancy

- **Stiftung Preussische Schlösser und Gärten Berlin-Brandenburg, Germany**

Heinz Buri, Director of Marketing

Kerstin Schilling, Head of Palace Management

- **Royal Castle in Warsaw, Poland**

Agnieszka Lichacz, Curator, Education Department

- **Museum of King Jan III's Palace at Wilanów, Poland**

Marta Walewska, Specialist of access

- **Palace Het Loo, Netherlands**

Karliën Dijkstra, Advisor visitor information department

- **General Directorate of Cultural Heritage of Portugal**

Clara Mineiro, Responsible for promoting access in monuments, museums and palaces

- **Schloß Schönbrunn Kultur- und Betriebsges.m.b.H., Austria**

Franz Holzer, Assistant manager of the exhibition rooms in Schönbrunn Palace

- **Gödöllő Királyi Kastély Kht, Hungary**

Tamás Ujvary, Deputy General Manager

- **Palace of Versailles, France**

Marie-Armelle Hoyau, Référent accessibilité / handicap

Sylvie Montillon, Chef du service des plans et affaires patrimoniales

Anne-Sophie Philonenko, Architecte

- **La Venaria Reale, Italy**

Carlo Riontino, Servizio Prevenzione e Protezione

- **Palácio Nacional de Mafra, Portugal**

Sónia Silva, Educational Department
Rita Miranda, Educational Department
Gabriela Cordeiro, Curator

- **The Peterhof State Museum-Reserve, Russia**

Larissa Nikiforova, Head of Department of Cultural Heritage Preservation and Learning
Natalya Nikiforova, PhD, Senior Lecturer, Saint-Petersburg State Polytechnic University, International Scholar of the Society for the History of Technology (USA)

- **The Royal Palace in Stockholm, Sweden**

Berit Edling, Curator of the Royal palace

- **National Property Board of Sweden**

Erik Kampmann, Project manager

- **Association of European Royal Residences, Palace of Versailles, France**

Céline DELMAR, Coordinator

Emeline PELZER, Trainee

Tuesday 20 May

António Lamas, Opening of the meeting

The Parks of Sintra were recognised as a cultural landscape in Europe by Unesco in 1994. To answer the preoccupations of Unesco in Sintra, the government of Portugal created the company of Parques de Sintra Monte da Lua in 2000. PSML is a public company of exclusively public capital established in 2000, funded solely from the revenues of visitors: ticket entrances, cafeteria and shops. So, for us, visits are indicators of success or possibilities of growth. In 2013, we received about 1.7 million visits. When the company was created, the shareholders gave lots of properties and a big area to manage. In 2012 we also received the Palace of Sintra and the Palace of Queluz. Last year, during the ARRE's general assembly in Gödöllő, we suggested a technical meeting about the accessibility to palaces. We offered to do it in Sintra, with the example of our project "Parks of Sintra Welcome Better", co-financed by The Tourism of Portugal in a way to improve the capacity to welcome visitors with difficulties. We also have lots of concerns because of the numerous gardens and parks we have, which represent problems for mobility.

Introduction by Céline Delmar and Emeline Pelzer

The Association of European Royal Residences (ARRE French acronym) was created in 2001. ARRE's mission is to develop the existing network of professionals working in European Palace-Museums by providing a context in which they can analyse and share practices and experiences. We do this by organizing regular meetings on general and specific technical themes; by facilitating international mobility between sites; running exchange programs; and creating common tools... This topic "Improving access to the Palace-museums" was suggested by Mr Lamas last year during our General Assembly in Hungary. And this is the first time that we deal with this topic with the specialists of our Network. Thanks to this first technical meeting on "accessibility", we hope to make an assessment of the accessibility in Palace-Museums, create a network of professionals confronted with these issues, provide sources of inspiration for disability access measures and explore the opportunities to engage, adapt and extend the cultural offer of the European Royal Residences.

Reminding the European context

The EU and its Member States have a strong mandate to improve the social and economic situation of people with disabilities.

- ❖ Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU (the Charter), Treaty of Nice, 2000 :
 - Article 1 'Human dignity is inviolable. It must be respected and protected.'
 - Article 26 'the EU recognises and respects the right of persons with disabilities to benefit from measures designed to ensure their independence, social and occupational integration and participation in the life of the community.'
 - Article 21 prohibits any discrimination on the basis of disability.

- ❖ The Treaty on the Functioning of the EU (TFEU), Treaty of Lisbon, 2009 :
 - Article 10: requires the Union to combat discrimination based on disability when defining and implementing its policies and activities
 - Article 19: gives it the power to adopt legislation to address such discrimination
- ❖ UN Convention - United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, ratified 2010:
 - Signed by the EU members in 2007
 - First legally-binding international human rights instrument to which the EU and its Member States are parties
 - Requires States Parties to protect and safeguard all human rights and fundamental freedoms of persons with disabilities
- ❖ General objectives of the *European Disability Strategy 2010-2020: A Renewed Commitment to a Barrier-Free Europe* :
 - Ensure accessibility to goods, services including public services and assistive devices for people with disabilities.
 - Achieve full participation of people with disabilities in society by enabling them to enjoy all the benefits of EU citizenship; removing administrative and attitudinal barriers to full and equal participation; and providing quality community-based services, including access to personal assistance
 - Eradicate discrimination on grounds of disability in the EU

Summary of the questionnaires:

- **Access team :**

Different departments and professionals are involved in the access of the Royal Palaces. In several palaces (Warsaw, Wilanow, Gödöllő, Versailles, Sintra, Schönbrunn), the experts are cross-functional professionals so that they can work properly within the institution. Some residences don't have staff exclusively dedicated to the access issues (Mafra, Venaria Reale). The task is shared between different departments, like Building, Marketing, Gardens, Visitors management and others (Prussian Palaces). We can remark today around this table that we need a combination of different competencies. Our group gathers together multidisciplinary expertise. You are working in very various fields as architects, curators, marketing or educational department, cultural heritage, preservation... Here is a question that we could discuss during our meeting: what are the necessary competencies to be in charge of "improving access" within a palace museum?

- **Staff Training**

In general, professionals in our institutions seem aware of these issues, thanks to staff trainings. But the trainings are not offered to everybody and apparently, the disabled trainers are rare.

- **Information and Publicity**

About the communication media: each palace focuses on different disabilities. We can mention guided tours for people with mental health difficulties in Mafra, information for visually and hearing impaired people and people with reduced mobility in Gödöllő... But in general, plain language is not used. The media for people with learning difficulties are not so used either.

- **Improving access in and around historic buildings**

Globally, the basic access tools are adapted for disabled people: parking lots / car parks, seats and toilets. But emergency procedures are not so much adapted. We are more in front of everyday life solutions which can sometimes be adapted in particular situations. For example in Mafra → They face this kind of situation – when there are only stairs instead of elevators – “with good will to carry disabled people to the main floor”

- **Collections and technologies**

The disability culture and issues are not so much represented in the collections. The different accessible formats depend again on the specificities developed by each palace-museum. Accessible formats for people with learning difficulties are again not so much used. More globally, the disability access issues are partially taken into account in the collections management.

- **Consultation**

According to the questionnaire, you are numerous to consult specialised agencies, organisations, associations or even disabled visitors about the access issues.

- **New technologies**

- In Parques de Sintra Monte da Lua, they use a digital guide which is being improved with simple text, audio and sign language
- In Schönbrunn, they try to use social media, specific information for smartphones to improve accessibility
- In Versailles, some audio contents and videoguides are accessible and some touch devices are offered for people with visual disabilities.
- In Venaria Reale, iPod Touch devices are available to deaf visitors

- **What about the solutions?**

Some insisted on a proactive policy, by creating specific projects:

- Parques de Sintra Monte da Lua : “Parks of Sintra welcome better »
- The Action Plan for Sanssouci palaces and park
- La Reggia di Tutti e la Reggia per Tutti (The people’s palace, open to all) in Venaria Reale

Generally, the main difficulties seem to be about accessibility for people with physical disabilities as the facilities needs are bigger and more noticeable.

Regarding the conflict between the authenticity or the beauty of an historic room and its accessibility, the answers are also really specific according to the different palaces:

- Parques de Sintra Monte da Lua offers removable solutions such as ramps and other equipment
- For Schönbrunn Palace, this question is directly discussed with advisory bodies such as the Federal Monuments Office and the ÖAR (Austrian national Council of Disabled Persons)
- The Royal Palace of Gödöllő gave another solution by rearranging the room to install elevators.

Presentations:

Carolina Martins, Parks of Sintra Welcome Better (PSML)
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➤ **Issues:**

- Steps and stairs
- Physical barriers, high slopes, non-accessible transportations
- Lack of information

➤ **Effective solutions:**

- Member of the ENAT (European Network for Accessible Tourism)
- Partnership with 3 main Portuguese associations: for the deaf and hearing impaired people, for the promotion of the integration of physically disabled people, for blind and visual impaired people
- Methodology: define two surveys: conservation and access. Crossing both references was possible to define priorities and strategies to each park.

Short term solutions:

- Reduced prices and free entrance for people who accompany them
- Staff training (to know the project, to explain what we want them to do, to organise the staff so everyone knows their role on the project)
- Solve small physical problems as kurb’s correction.
- Showing the progress, giving information on maps and website

Long term solutions/ action plan:

- Accessible website to become AAA in the WCAG 1.0 (Web Content Accessibility Guidelines)
- Clear symbols and accessible information
- Changing the bus, now fully accessible for people in wheelchair
- Stairs: platform for wheelchairs, easily and autonomously used by handicapped people
- Aluminium ramps with access to cafeteria, , shops, toilets

- Accessible shops, ticket office, cafeteria, terrace, toilets etc. which connects all the places in Palace of Pena
- Accessible application – improvement of *Talking Heritage* including audio, sign language and simple text

Temporary solutions / not fixed solutions:

- stair climbing seats for stairs with no possibility of platform because of visual impact (Advantage: not fixed and only used when needed, disadvantage: quite low and not autonomous)
- Innovative ramp system with the Roll-a-ramp: very easy to implement
- High slopes : Swiss Trac (electric, slope of 20% with 100 kg, very safe to drive)
- Regulating ways with stones
- New wheelchairs, lighter
- Including more resting points, designed ergonomic benches
- Adding simple text, audio and sign language. Sensorial and tactile visits
- Working with a sign language interlocutor between PSML and visitors by video company which can do visits for hearing impaired people
- Project promotion

➤ **Planned solutions:**

- More platforms for wheelchairs in Moorish castle
- Handrails
- Accessible ticket offices
- More accessible toilets
- More parking spaces
- More resting places
- Tactile maps and models
- Wi-Fi and audio announcements
- Sign language training for part of the staff
- Accessible electric transport *HOP.on HOP.off*

Question: *How much did the Swiss Trac cost?*

Answer: We bought 4 of them (3 for adults and 1 for children) and it cost around 15-20 000€ totally.

Q *Who uses it? Which staff?*

A That was a challenge. We have a lot of staff. As they can't stop what they are doing, we established a hierarchy: 1/ guides, 2/ responsible of the park for the day, 3/ if not available, security staff, 4/ people from the ticket office. They all know the project, are ready to implement it and are trained with all the equipment. (Not everyone but) Only specific groups of people are trained. People are asked to make reservations as the equipment has a limited number, and a responsible inside that hierarchy will receive and help the visitor with the equipment.

Q *Do people need to know how it works? Do they have instructions and training for that?*

A The distributor leaves the training to us, and we continually train the staff. The staff will present the equipment and show the visitor how to make it work efficiently and safely.

Q *How disabled people know (that) they can be helped?*

A Thanks to the website and maps. After the ticket line, if they want to use the platform by themselves, they just need to inform us so that we can give them the keys. The staff is responsible (to go there and) for explaining briefly how to use the platforms.

Q *What is the specificity of roll-a-ramp? Are we going to see it during the visits?*

A Two roll-a-ramp were ordered but they will be delivered next week. It is not heavy, not too expensive and really handy. For more information: rollaramp.com

Q *Who is financing the project?*

A We applied for the project 2 years ago with a total budget of 2 million€ for 3 years. Only 25% of this project is financed by Portuguese money, it is not European funds... We have to provide the rest.

Q *Which staff, which manager is in charge of it?*

A Manager of the project: Nuno Oliveira, and I am a PhD student, but we do it with all the departments. All the departments are involved in providing better access to all.

Q *How many visitors can benefit from all these solutions? Did you already count them? Do you have a goal that you would like to reach?*

A The project just started a few months ago, so we don't have data yet. We are already counting the groups, but not the individual visitors.

Brenda Puech, Two case studies: Accessing the Tower of London and Access alterations to the Queen's House, Greenwich

➤ **Issues**

Tower of London

- Identify the barriers (vertical, horizontal circulation, , , narrow spiralled staircases, lighting issues, completely inaccessible surfaces, inconsistent interpretation)
- Identify the solutions
- Maximize independence

Queen's House

- Iconic building difficult to change
- Curved and symmetrical entry stairs
- Different levels
- Lift rejected by English Heritage in the 80s

➤ **Effective solutions**

Tower of London

- Website with developed information
- Clear signage: low level, tactile
- Clear access guide and pamphlet in different formats
- Accessible ground floor
- Accessible toilets
- Accessible shops and ticket offices
- Temporary ramps

Queen's House

- Changed the entrance in the basement
- Lift in an already damaged/changed location, with two wheelchair users at a time
- Step-free entrance to the basement at the front, lower the 2 curved steps
- a discreet and flexible lighting system highlights paintings and the classical architecture

➤ **Still planned solutions**

Tower of London

- Access to the towers

Heinz Buri, Study of accessibility focused on the palaces and the park of Sanssouci made in 2013 and list of measures to be taken (SPSG)

➤ **Issues**

- Lots of sites
- Huge park so a lot of walking
- Stairs

➤ **Method**

- 2 questions: How easy is it to get there and find it? / How easy are the access and the usability?
- List of weaknesses and measures taken
- Strategy to qualify selected places referring to accessibility

➤ **Effective solutions**

- Using ISO's standards (International Organisation for Standardization)
- Study on accessibility
- Touch model of park of Sanssouci and tactile station with textile
- Lower counters
- Temporary ramps

➤ **Planned solutions**

- Staff training, accessible information and orientation, barrier free to Sanssouci palace
- Creating orientation system for people from bus station, signs and zebra crossing
- Adapt surfaces
- Reduce slopes (currently more than 15%)
- Accessible ticket office, information, toilets for wheelchair users

Agnieszka Lichacz, Problems with the access for disabled people to the Royal Castle in Warsaw

➤ **Method**

- Working with groups with different disabilities / working with different disability groups

➤ **Effective solutions**

- Platforms
- Lift for wheelchairs
- Cheap solutions: ramps
- Parking spaces near the entrance
- Adapted toilets
- Braille maps, texts, audio description (on MP3 player and on the website)
- Blind people allowed to come with guide dogs
- Training for security guards and other staff
- Activity for disabilities people and results: workshops, exhibitions (sculptures deaf and blind people), dance performances (wheelchairs), concerts.
- Workshops for mentally handicapped: artistic exercise in creation of large pictures, workshop about the history of costumes.
- Among 400 workshops, 163 workshops (were) organized for special schools, 250 took place in public institutions (hospitals etc.) 20 meetings (were) held in psychiatric hospitals in 2013

➤ **Planned solutions**

- Automatic doors (which are too heavy at the moment)
- Adapted escalators which is not suited for wheelchairs or finding new solution,
- Connections between the main building of the Castle and the garden and the Tin-Roofed Palace (now the stairs)

Marta Walewska, Education offer prepared for disabled people in last period: achievements and limitations caused by conservatory rules applied for historical building (Wilanow)

➤ **Issues**

- Architecture : stairs, ramps not possible
- Main entrance with steps
- Very heavy ramps
- Toilets not accessible

- No lifts
- Way to the palace coated with cobblestones

- **Method**
- 1/ Accessibility of the website
- 2/ Accessibility of the architecture
- 3/ Staff – specially prepared
- 4/ Exhibition and expositions areas
- 5/ Education and cultural offer

- **Effective solutions**
- Cooperation in Sign language
- Simply fit language for school children
- Pantomime workshops for people with hearing impairment
- Special invitation for sign language visit (Museums' night...)
- Ground floor accessible
- Electricity
- Staff training (in wheelchairs etc.)
- Consultation with specialized people
- Preparation of didactic materials
- Adapted pictures for blind people (draws, thermoforms)

- **Planned solutions**
- Guidelines for preparing exhibitions

Q *Who prepares these draws? Is s/he a psychologist?*

A Somebody in the team draws them and I have a special machine to print them. The “drawer” knows history of art. She is not a psychologist. And we always ask blind people if they are “readable”.

Q *About autism, do you have external or internal people to help you?*

A We collaborate with a foundation. If we want to prepare a project, we plan something then we consult them to see if it's correct or not.

Karlien Dijkstra, Improving accessibility in a new-to-build palace museum (Het Loo)
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- **Issues**
- Old-fashioned
- Escalator: one wheelchair at a time, not so good
- Visits for disabled people start in the middle of the Palace, no sense, visitors feel lost,
- Garden

- **Method**
- Partnership with the Sunflower association
- Organising visits for wheelchair users
- Improving accessibility

- **Effective solutions**
- Sunflower days
- The association provides light-weight wheelchairs
- Crowd management
- Transport of wheelchairs
- Waiting facilities
- Leaflets for individual visitors
- Communication between garden, parking lots and palace for no detour
- Shuttle service which can transport wheelchairs

➤ **Planned solutions**

- Not same place for stairs and lifts
- Special new guide for visitors with practical information
- New Palace Museum with better access in 2017 under the Palace

Wednesday 21 May

Clara Mineiro, Auditing accessibility in heritage sites – a self-assessment toolkit

➤ **Issues**

- Economic, cultural, physical, sensory, intellectual, attitudinal barriers
- Many sites are not accessible
- Laws concern essentially physical access
- Exceptions are generous
- Public funding does not depend on access criteria
- Attitudes of professionals in the heritage sector are often the most important barrier

➤ **Monuments and Palaces**

- Access audits are usually commissioned to external evaluators
- Lack of comparison between museums or monuments under the umbrella of the same institution
- Lack of qualitative and quantitative evaluation

➤ **Method**

- Literature review in other countries
- Listing areas with impact on accessibility
- Listing good practice quality criteria for each area
- Developing a framework for data collection: qualitative and quantitative evaluation

➤ **Effective solutions**

Museums

- Publishing books: Museum and Accessibility
- Staff training
- Pilot project in a permanent exhibition in a main national museum: tactile replicas for all the main Tile panels in the collection, large print information and Braille

Monuments and palaces

- Establishing a self-assessment toolkit (visit to the site with observation, interviews, report)

➤ **Planned solutions**

- Conceiving a possible visit tour which can be accessible for all
- Including the most important spaces in the building and objects in the collection
- Finding ways in which physical, sensory and intellectual barriers are minimized
- 2015: Studying the National Palaces of Portugal
- Finding partners for European funding

Q *If you identify weaknesses, have you any opportunity to force measures to be taken and to find money for it?*

A the weakness is that many of these criteria are in a way subjective. We have to find another way when we formulate questions for everything, to list the most important criteria from 1 to 3 and not value them in the same way. So this is a weakness of the toolkit that we haven't been able to solve until this point. We have no opportunity to find money, we have to apply to European funding, and we have to address the subject very shortly. The other problem is that we go on developing a temporary exhibition in the DGPC and, access criteria are not in the list when you commission a study or a project. So I have no doubt that those attitudinal barriers in museum professions are still the main barriers we have not been able to solve.

Q *What are your criteria, your measurements, your standards? Are they Portuguese building regulations?*

A Our first concern was addressing the Portuguese regulation but it only addresses physical access so, this study does not propose a compulsory recommendation but they are only recommendations which comply to the standards of good practices all over the world.

Q *You have a big check list of objectives; do you at the beginning give a summary and explain what the main issues are?*

A Yes, for sure. It's a huge list.

Q *What about costing?*

A We were asked to put a column for costing, but as the financial resources are impossible, we decided not to waste our time in costing and develop our study until the end, and if it is possible, then we do it.

Q *Are your criteria divided into different disabilities?*

A No it's for everybody. We select the main spaces and if some are not accessible, then we make a suggestion for ramp or virtual access for visitors or elevator. And these suggestions are for everybody. Regarding the intellectual access, we are suggesting that people offer different information and formats for everyone.

Q *What about European funding? What kind of expenses would you like to finance particularly?*

A Physical (access) and intellectual access: ramps, lifts, some items in the buildings and collections, models... In the audio guide, insert an option with audio description.

Q *Did you already identify funding and programmes?*

A Not yet

Q *Do people who are making the check list have trainings to know what are the barriers...?*

A Yes, the architect who is working with me on these issues has trainings, same for the young designers...

Jorge Falcato Simões, Access in São Jorge's castle

➤ **Issues**

- Surroundings of the castle
- All the public spaces in the castle
- Information available in different alternative formats
- Accessible events too
- Emergency evacuation plan for every kind of people / everybody
- Castle surrounded by narrow streets and slopes
- Paved streets to (reach) the castle
- Castle built in the 40s, not the original one
- Security

➤ **Method**

- Based on an accessibility audit and a heritage audit
- identify the options of accessibility

➤ **Effective solutions**

- Elevators
- Evaluation of what exists in the castle
- Identify all the areas that should be accessible
- Identify all the different pavements (we have) in the castle
- Analyse the slopes
- Proposal for a store out of the building
- Make a ramp at the entrance
- Proposal for a lift (to go) to the ramparts
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➤ **Planned solutions**

- Reanalyse from time to time the accessibility of the place
- Create 4 more accessible paths to reach the castle
- Escalators accessible for wheelchairs
- Regular pavements and slopes
- Mechanical solutions to reach different platforms
- Guards and barriers to avoid falling
- More places to sit

Franz Holzer, Museum Sign Language Guides, Guided tour for optically impaired people (Schönbrunn)

➤ **Issues**

- Panorama roof terrace of the Gloriette Hill not accessible for wheelchairs, no place for an elevator
- Elevators not accessible in case of a fire in the basement
- Emergency procedure complicated

➤ **Effective solutions**

- New visitor centre with toilets but in the basement
- Barrier-free access information on the website
- Hands-on objects for visually impaired people
- Guided tours for visitors with special needs on request
- Museum Sign Language Guides for hearing impaired people
- Access to all exhibition rooms
- Supporting measures
- Elevators
- Dedicated guided tours for blind and sight-impaired visitors, in the same rooms as standard guided tour with an access behind the cordons and allow to feel objects
- Development of a high quality system for hearing impaired visitors within the framework of the EU Grundtvig funding programme, the European programme for adult education
- Collaboration with sign language guide experts
- Museum Sign Language Guide as a permanent service

Tamás Ujváry, Diversity of accessibility – offer for all. Depends on budget? (Gödöllő)

➤ **Issues**

- 2% of visitors with disabilities
- Free entrance for disabled people and one guide, no ticket revenue
- Hungarian law about disability in museums but Gödöllő Palace = a public benefit company (less influence from the State)
- But there are indirect revenues,

➤ **Method**

- Not only thinking about disabled people but improving access in general: senior visitors, babies...

➤ **Effective solutions**

- Free entrance for disabled people + 1 person for main exhibition -> indirect revenues
- Award of accessibility for Royal Palace Gödöllő
- 4 elevators, ramps, stair climber gadgets
- Braille signs, maps
- Built-in induction loops in Ticket office, Ballroom, Theatre and mobile induction loops for audio guide
- Text reader for touchscreens

- Touchable objects in exhibition: two different ways (one for everybody, (free,) and one list by colleagues) (for everybody)
 - Clear signs (they can't be big and clear enough)
 - 5 disabled toilets
 - For babies – changing rooms, feeding chairs, free baby carriers
 - Staff trainings
- **Planned solutions**
- Develop more individual solutions, less expensive (free applications...)
 - Instead of Braille system – free text reader mobile apps (text to speech engines)
 - Free call sign service (video calls)

Q *What is your personal opinion about the use of Braille?*

A We do have Braille signs and maps in the exhibitions, main entrance... But, as I see, the future will not be the Braille system but the applications for mobile phones and tablets, which are free, you can use them easily, and you can hear what you should read. According to researchers in Hungary, 70% of young blind people don't want to learn the Braille system, but use applications.

Marie-Armelle Hoyau, Sylvie Montillon et Anne-Sophie Philonenko, Accessibility, a universal issue (Versailles)

- **Issues**
- 800 hectares of parks and gardens, 120 buildings, dependencies
 - Large distance with lots of difficulties
 - Lots of stairs which are master pieces of 17th or 18th architecture
 - Garden paths
 - Petit Trianon not totally accessible (only ground floor)
- **Method**
- Ensure that heritage is accessible to the largest public
 - Working with competent bodies to offer accessible services
 - Consulting association of people with disabilities to improve visits
- **Effective solutions**
- Free brochures for the public, including in Braille and in large print
 - People with disability can be brought by car near the main entrance
 - Audio guides in several languages, free service
 - Video guides in French Sign Language with French subtitles, free service
 - Behind the ear audio guides compatible with the loop system
 - Tactile models and maps
 - Manually powered wheelchairs freely available
 - Itineraries proposed to people with reduced mobility in the gardens, maps available on the website
 - Free mobile application available with 3D map and navigation by satellite through the gardens
 - Free and accessible restrooms
 - Free admission and priority access for people with disabilities and their companions
 - Specialised workshops
 - Multimedia room to explain some exhibitions and virtual visits for not accessible rooms
 - Central paths with regular stones
 - Disabled car parks
 - Routes with lifts are the same than common routes
 - Integration of technical equipment in the Palace
 - Integrated special facilities for the public
 - Removable wooden access ramps at the Grand Trianon and Aile des Ministres
- **Planned solutions**
- Changing in Pavillon Dufour:

- Exit with same level as the courtyard
- Toilets at the Ground floor
- Human help remains indispensable

Q *Why wooden ramps?*

A The heritage architects wanted (to have) this material, because it is removable. It will change maybe in some years. It is different for the Pavillon Dufour as it was destroyed in the 19th century. Therefore, the special heritage disappeared, and a new project was implemented / is being discussed. But for the main building, no permanent ramps are possible. Wood looks natural and allow us to keep the stairs.

Q *Are these wooden ramps used by normal people? Yes...*

It is not allowed in Italy because it is too dangerous; it causes security problems.

Q *Do disable people pay the same as other visitors?*

A Free for disabled and the companions, except for the guided tours (reduced price)

Q *Are these wooden ramps used by other visitors? It can be dangerous. Our legislation doesn't allow us to use wood.*

A Yes, they are used by everybody.

Q *How did you choose the place for the lifts?*

A It depends on the shape of the building. They lead to all the floors and can be used by curators and professionals too.

Carlo Riontino, The Royal Palace of everybody and for everybody (La Venaria Reale)

➤ **Issues**

- Use of (mobility) scooters : not easy to reach the seats
- Stabilised floor but not very easy to use
- Emergency exits are not accessible (stairs)
- Temporary exhibitions not accessible

➤ **Method**

- Project of accessibility for all (internal and external people from the Palace)
- Consulting individuals and associations of people with disabilities
- Working with expert institutions
- Designating a coordinator of these issues
- Communication plan

➤ **Effective solutions**

- Many elevators
- Tactile itineraries
- Video and audio guides
- Receptions and visits for people with mental-health difficulties
- Traffic light map of the gardens for strollers and wheelchairs (to avoid danger)
- Use of free wheelchairs
- Staff training
- Information on the website
- Electrical scooters (also for old people)
- Model for blind people in the 1st room
- Tactile elements
- Collaboration with universities
- Contemporary exhibitions touchable in the garden
- (Project permits the) constitution of a commission of experts
- Mini tablets with international sign language
- Translated visits in sign language

- Visit is an inclusion
- **Planned solutions**
 - Swiss Trac for wheelchairs / wheelchair tractors
 - Making accessible temporary exhibitions with audio guides and videos
 - Emergency solutions

Q *In case of a fire, as we are not allowed to use lifts, what do you do to evacuate disabled people?*

A We have no other possibility than to use these very long stairs. So we are obliged to help physically disabled people. In every room, there is a guardian who knows the fire emergency procedure and his first duty is to help disabled people. We are searching for other solutions.

Q *Are you using evacuation lifts anyway?*

A It depends on the security problem. In case of a fire, you cannot use lifts.

- Some special lifts exist for evacuation. They are very expensive, so the institutions can refuse to buy it. In the UK, the extra cost is about 60 000 pounds extra for evacuation lifts. Because there is no law anyway about it, so no one does it.

- We installed one in Sweden but it had an additional cost.

Q *Do you have evacuation chairs?* In Britain, it is a common way. It doesn't cost anything. But the best solution remains the evacuation lift.

- You can sometimes use normal elevators when the problem doesn't come from there, but someone responsible has to take the decision to take some lifts or not. In the part where the emergency is, for the moment we can't do anything.

Céline Delmar, Conclusions:

During this meeting we saw that there are a lot of difficulties, issues and weaknesses. So it could be a suggestion to reorganise this type of meeting in two years, in another place, in order to continue the discussion, because during these two days, we had a good overview of what is made in different palaces. It was a first contact to then discuss and share about it later. The goal of our Network is not only to make a list of what is organised everywhere but to contribute to develop activities together and cooperation. Concerning the European funds, new programs exist at the moment from 2014 to 2020, and such as the Erasmus + programme which could be useful. I suggest to study these possibilities and to inform us of what we can do in the next following years. For a next meeting we could maybe imagine more workshops. For example, we saw that it is not easy to think about accessibility when organising new exhibitions. It could be a case study for us to organise an exhibition in one palace. We would have to think about what we can do in different fields to develop accessibility for all and really work together to make some recommendations before the exhibition. So it would be a sort of cooperation to prepare an event in one of the Palaces. Now we are in contact, do not hesitate to contact me or your counterparts if you have the opportunity to visit the Palaces. Thank you very much.