

Harmonized E.U. Vocabulary

Useful Terms & Definitions Relating to **'Disability & Human Perception'**

This Vocabulary takes account of the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (**ICF**) which was adopted by the World Health Organization on 22nd May 2001. In some instances, account is still taken of earlier ICIDH-2 drafts.

Certain Terms and Definitions are included in order to facilitate a better understanding of:

- the complexity of human behaviour ; and
- impairment(s) of a mental, cognitive or psychological nature.

This Vocabulary also takes account of the 1991 Principles for the Protection of Persons with Mental Illness and the Improvement of Mental Health Care (UN OHCHR)

- Accessibility :**
(Building) Ease of independent approach, entry and/or use of a building and its services and facilities, by all of the building's potential users ~ with an assurance of individual Health, Safety and Welfare during the course of those activities.
- Accessibility :**
(Built & Virtual Environments) Ease of independent mobility throughout the built and virtual environments, and/or use of the facilities, services and information available in those environments, by any person or group of people ~ with an assurance of individual Health, Safety and Welfare, and group Wellbeing, during the course of those activities.
- Activity :**
(WHO, 1999) An action performed by a person - at any level of complexity including complex skills and behaviour.
- Activities may be simple physical functions of the individual as a whole (e.g. grasping, moving a leg or seeing), or complex mental functions (e.g. remembering past events or acquiring knowledge), or an amalgam of physical and mental activities at various levels of complexity (e.g. driving a car, personal social skills, interacting with individuals in formal settings).
- Activity Limitation :**
(WHO, 1999) A difficulty in the performance, accomplishment or completion of an activity at the level of an individual person.
- Difficulty encompasses all of the ways in which the performance of the activity may be affected: doing something with pain or discomfort; doing it too slowly or quickly, or not at the right time and place; or doing it awkwardly or otherwise not in a manner expected; or not being able to do it at all. An activity limitation may range from a slight to a severe deviation, in terms of quality or quantity, in performing the activity to the extent or in a manner which is expected.
- This term replaces 'disability' in the WHO International Classification of Impairment, Disability and Handicap (1980).
- Adaptability :** The extent to which a building, or a building component, is designed when new to be capable of being easily modified, at any later stage during its life cycle, to meet the changing life and living / working needs of the broad average of potential users, who may or may not have activity limitations or develop a health condition.
- Aggression :** A hostile or destructive mental attitude of a person, frequently accompanied by violent behaviour.
- Aggression, Altruistic :** Aggression which functions to protect others.
- Aggression, Fear-Induced :** Aggression induced by extreme fear.
- Aggression, Instrumental :** Aggression which is a means to another end, e.g. pushing someone aside to escape from danger.

- Agoraphobia :** A fear of open spaces.
- Agoraphobia is one of the most commonly cited phobic disorders of people seeking psychiatric or psychological treatment. It has a variety of manifestations, e.g. a deep fear of leaving a building, or of being caught alone in some public place. When placed in threatening situations, agoraphobics may experience panic attacks.
- Anosognosia :** A neurological disorder marked by the inability of a person to recognize that he/she has an activity limitation or a health condition.
- Aphasia :** A general term covering any partial or complete loss of language abilities caused by a lesion in the brain.
- Apraxia :** Any partial or complete loss of the ability to plan and carry out skilled or non-habitual motor activities, resulting from brain lesions in which there is no paralysis or loss of sensory function.
- Area of Rescue Assistance :** A building space directly adjoining, and visible from, a main vertical evacuation route - robustly and reliably protected from heat, smoke and flame during and after a fire - where people may temporarily wait with confidence for further information, instructions, and/or rescue assistance, without obstructing or interfering with the evacuation travel of other building users.
- Body Functions :** (WHO, 2001) The physiological and psychological functions of body systems.
- Body Structures :** (WHO, 2001) Anatomical parts of the body, such as organs, limbs, and their components.
- Building Related Ill-Health :** Any adverse impact on the health of building users - while living, working, generally occupying or visiting a specific building - caused by the planning, design, construction, management, operation or maintenance of that building.
- Symptoms and signs** may include
- irritation of eyes, nose and throat ;
 - respiratory infections and cough ;
 - voice hoarseness and wheezing ;
 - asthma ;
 - dry mucous membrane and skin ;
 - erythema (reddening or inflammation of the skin) ;
 - lethargy, mental fatigue and poor concentration ;
 - headache ;
 - stress ;
 - muscular strain and backache.
 - hypersensitivity reactions ;
 - nausea and dizziness ;
 - cancers.

Building Related Ill-Health : (cont'd)

These symptoms and signs are present in the population at large, but are distinguished by being more prevalent in some building users, as a group, when compared with others. The symptoms and signs may disappear, or may be reduced in intensity, when an affected person leaves the building. It is not necessary that everyone in a building should be affected before Building Related Ill-Health (BRI) is suspected.

Ergonomic factors, such as repetitive tasking, poorly designed workstations and seating, and extended use of computer equipment without breaks, etc., and **construction factors**, such as poor thermal performance, lack of windows and/or ventilation, unwanted or nuisance noise, inadequate lighting, prolonged exposure to radon, etc., will all cause adverse health impacts on people. Low indoor air quality may occur in all types and ages of buildings - exposure to environmental tobacco smoke (ETS) poses a known and serious hazard to health. Problems in modern, clean buildings are seldom related to microbial growth, since the physical structures are new. Older buildings, however, which are inadequately maintained will have problems with bioaerosols if parts of those buildings have been allowed to become reservoirs for microbial growth. Regardless of the age of the building, if inadequate outside air is provided for ventilation, chemical and biological contaminants will increase to levels which cause ill-health.

Built Environment :

Anywhere there is, or has been, an intrusion or intervention by a human being in the natural environment, i.e. cities, towns, villages, rural settlements, roads, transport, bridges, tunnels, cultivated lands, lakes, rivers, coasts, and the seas, etc. - including facilities, services, information and the virtual environment.

Cognitive Impairment Disorder :

A general term covering those disorders whose primary symptoms include impaired cognitive functioning, e.g. thinking, conceiving and reasoning.

Contextual Factors :
(WHO, 2001)

The factors which, together, constitute the complete real and virtual context of a person's life and living situation, i.e. environmental and personal.

Dementia :

Any degenerative loss of intellectual capacity, to the extent that normal and occupational activities can no longer be carried out.

This term is reserved for multifunctional disorders where memory, reasoning, judgement and other 'higher mental processes' are lost.

Intellect refers to human cognitive processes as a whole. **Alzheimer's disease** is a progressive form of dementia.

- Depth Perception :** Experiencing the spatial field in three dimensions.
- De-Sensitization :** Any decrease in a person's reactivity or sensitivity after repeated exposure to simple stimuli, e.g. sudden noises.
(Simple)
- Disability :** A general term denoting the negative aspects of the interaction between a person (with a health condition) and that person's contextual factors, i.e. environmental and personal.
(WHO, 2001)
- This term is only used when reference to the three dimensions of the 2001 WHO International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF) - **Body Functions & Structures, Activity and Participation** - is intended.
- Disorientation :** Inability of a person to orient himself/herself with regard to space, time and context in either the built or virtual environments.
- Acute disorientation brought on by the use of alcohol, 'social' drugs and some medicines, or dramatic alterations in a person's circumstances, e.g. involvement in a fire incident, is not uncommon or abnormal. Long-term progressive disorientation is a symptom of a variety of psychological and/or neurological disorders.
- Dysmnnesia :** Any impairment of memory.
- Dysosmia :** Any impairment in the sense of smell.
- Egress :** Independent emergence of user(s) from a building, under normal conditions, and removal from its immediate vicinity.
(Building)
- Environmental Factors :** Those factors which are external, or extrinsic, to the context of a person's life and living situation, e.g. the built environment and its features (real / virtual), other people in different roles, social attitudes and values, services, systems and policies.
(WHO, 2001)
- Evacuation from a Fire Building :** To withdraw, or cause to withdraw, all users from a fire building, in planned and orderly phased movements, to a **place of safety** .
- Facilitator :** Any environmental factor which, through its presence or absence, improves activity and functioning, or reduces disability.
(WHO, 2001)
- Figure-Ground Perception :** The ability of a person to focus on relevant target material, e.g. visual, auditory, olfactory or tactile, in correct relationship to the remainder of the perceptual field.

- Fire Defence Plan :** A pre-determined and co-ordinated use of available human and material means in order to maintain an adequate level of fire safety and protection within a building and, in the event of an outbreak of fire, to ensure that it is brought speedily under control and extinguished.
- Fire Resistance :** The inherent capability of a building assembly, or an element of construction, to resist the passage of heat, smoke and flame for a specified time during a fire.
- Fire Safety Strategy :** A coherent and purposeful arrangement of fire protection and fire prevention measures which is developed in order to attain specified fire safety objectives.
- Flexibility :** The extent to which a building interior is designed when new to be capable of being easily varied at any later time, with minimal cost and user inconvenience, because of changing living / working needs.
- Functionality :** A general (internet-related) term describing the capability of a WebSite, or an item of computer hardware / software to work and to meet specified design objectives.
- A **functional** WebSite, for example, would display the following higher level design characteristics
- 'person-centred' ;
 - accessible ;
 - respectful of user dignity, rights and privacy ;
 - open, transparent and secure ;
 - current, i.e. regularly maintained and updated.
- Functioning :**
(WHO, 2001) A general (disability-related) term denoting the positive aspects of the interaction between a person (with a health condition) and that person's contextual factors, i.e. environmental and personal.
- Generalized Anxiety Disorder :** A class of anxiety disorders characterized by a persistent 'free floating' anxiety and a host of unspecific reactions such as trembling, jitteriness, tension, sweating, light headedness, feelings of apprehension, irritability, etc.
- Health Condition :**
(WHO, 1999) An alteration or attribute of the health status of a person which may lead to distress, interference with daily activities, or contact with health services ; it may be a disease (acute or chronic), disorder, injury or trauma, or reflect other health related states such as pregnancy, ageing, stress, congenital anomaly or genetic predisposition.
- Human Health :**
(WHO) A state of complete physical, mental and social wellbeing, and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.

- Impairment :**
(WHO, 2001) Any loss or abnormality of a body function, or body structure.
- The word 'abnormality' is strictly used here to refer to a significant deviation from an established population mean, within measured statistical norms.
- Impairments may be physical, mental, cognitive or psychological.
- Impairment, Cognitive :** A deficiency of neuropsychological function which can be related to injury or degeneration in specific area(s) of the brain.
- Impairment, Mental :** A general term describing a slower than normal rate in a person's cognitive developmental maturation, or where the cognitive processes themselves appear to be slower than normal - with an associated implication of reduced, overall mental potential.
- Informed Consent :**
(UN OHCHR, 1991) Consent freely obtained - without threats or improper inducements - after appropriate disclosure to a person of relevant, adequate and easily assimilated information in a form (e.g. oral, written, braille) and language understood by that person.
- Lesion :** An area or section of body tissue with impaired function, resulting from damage caused by disease or injury.
- Mental Health Care :**
(UN OHCHR, 1991) A term which includes analysis and diagnosis of a person's mental and/or cognitive condition, and treatment, care and rehabilitation for a mental illness, a suspected mental illness, a cognitive impairment, or a suspected cognitive impairment.
- Mental Health Facility :**
(UN OHCHR, 1991) An establishment, or any unit of an establishment, which provides mental health care.
- This term includes community-based residences, day care centres, nursing homes, rehabilitation workshops, etc.
- Mental Health Practitioner :**
(UN OHCHR, 1991) A medical doctor, clinical psychologist, nurse, social worker or other appropriately trained, qualified and experienced person with specific skills relevant to mental health care.
- Organic Mental Syndrome :** This is a general term for a number of disorders, including amnesic syndrome, delirium, dementia, organic delusional syndrome, organic mood syndrome, and organic personality syndrome.

Panic : A sudden overwhelming feeling of anxiety, which may be of momentary or prolonged duration.

Anxiety is the normal response of the human body to recognised danger. Numerous reflexes are involved. The supply of blood to the muscles is greatly increased, partly because the heart beats more rapidly and strongly, and partly because the blood vessels of the muscles dilate while those of many other organs constrict, diverting the flow of blood to where it is most needed. The muscles themselves are tensed. Breathing is deeper and more rapid. The mind becomes more alert, and the pupils dilate, admitting more light to the eyes.

Panic Attack : A momentary period of intense fear or discomfort, accompanied by various symptoms which may include shortness of breath, dizziness, palpitations, trembling, sweating, nausea, and often a fear by a person that he/she is going mad.

Panic attacks are initially unexpected, and typically last no longer than 15 minutes.

Panic Disorder : A class of anxiety disorders characterized by recurrent panic attacks.

This term is not used in cases where a known organic factor is responsible. Panic disorder is typically classified as with, or without, agoraphobia.

Participation :
(WHO, 1999) A person's involvement in life and living situations, particularly in relation to Health Conditions, Body Functions, Activities and Contextual Factors.

This term refers to all areas of human life, including full experience of being involved in a practice, custom or social activity. Domains of participation - personal maintenance, mobility, exchange of information, social relationships, education, work and employment, economic worth, civil status - are 'social' in the sense that the character of these complex experiences is shaped by society and the socio-economic environment.

Participation Restriction :
(WHO, 1999) Some reduction in the degree or extent of participation in a community, society or culture - expected of a person without a health condition or physical / mental / cognitive / psychological impairment - which is created or increased by Contextual Factors, i.e. environmental and/or personal.

This term replaces 'handicap' in the WHO International Classification of Impairment, Disability and Handicap (1980).

People with Activity Limitations / Personnes à Performances Réduites :
(WHO, 2001)

Those people, of all ages, who are unable to perform, independently and without aid, basic human activities or tasks - because of a health condition or physical / mental / cognitive / psychological impairment of a permanent or temporary nature.

This definition is derived from the 2001 World Health Organization's International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF).

The **term** may include

- wheelchair users ;
 - people who experience difficulty in walking, with or without aid, e.g. stick, crutch, calliper or walking frame ;
 - frail, older people ;
 - the very young (people under the age of 5 years) ;
 - people who suffer from arthritis, asthma, or a heart condition ;
 - the visually and/or hearing impaired ;
 - people who have a cognitive impairment disorder, including dementia, amnesia, brain injury, or delirium ;
 - women in the later stages of pregnancy ;
 - people impaired following the use of alcohol, other 'social' drugs, e.g. cocaine and heroin, and some medicines ;
 - people who suffer any partial or complete loss of language related abilities, i.e. aphasia ;
 - people impaired following exposure to environmental pollution and/or irresponsible human activity ;
- and
- people who panic in a fire situation or other emergency ;
 - people, including firefighters, who suffer incapacitation as a result of exposure, during a fire, to poisonous or toxic substances, and/or elevated temperatures.

Perception :

Interpretation of sensory information by the brain, e.g. visual, auditory, olfactory, gustatory or tactile, with the aim of developing understanding prior to action.

While input in the form of stimuli (real / virtual) is an essential feature of perception, other factors influence this process of interpretation, e.g. attention, constancy, motivation, organization, set, developmental maturation, illusion, distortion and hallucination.

Perceptual Field :

A general term which refers, collectively, to all those stimuli (real / virtual) of which a person is conscious.

Personal Factors :
(WHO, 2001)

Those factors which are internal, or intrinsic, to the context of a person's life and living situation, e.g. age, gender, level of education, socio-economic status, and life experiences, etc.

- Personal Representative :** A person charged, under European Union* or national law, with the duty of representing another person's interests in any specified respect, or of exercising specified rights on that person's behalf - and including the parent or legal guardian of a minor unless otherwise provided for by European Union or national law.
- 'Person-Centred' Design :** That design process which places real people at the centre of creative endeavours and gives due consideration to their health, safety and welfare in the built and virtual environments - it includes such specific performance criteria as : accessibility and richness of sensory stimuli ; protection from fire ; air, light and visual quality ; protection from ionizing and electromagnetic radiation ; thermal comfort (EN ISO 7730) ; protection from unwanted or nuisance noise ; etc.
- An important 'person-centred' design aid is the questionnaire survey, carried out by an independent, competent, non-threatening individual, and which comprises both open and closed format questions.
- Place of Relative Safety :** Any location beyond the buffer zone surrounding a fire in a building.
- Place of Safety :**
(Building User - Fire) Any location beyond a perimeter which is [100] metres from the fire building or a distance of [10] times the height of such building, whichever is the greater ;
and
where necessary medical care and attention can be provided, or organized, within one hour of injury ;
and
where people can be identified.
- If there should be any associated risk of explosion, the quantities shown in square brackets above must be modified.
- Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder :**
An anxiety disorder which emerges following a psychologically distressing, traumatic ordeal such as a natural disaster, accident, fire, war, rape, etc.
- Symptoms and signs** may include re-experiencing the trauma in dreams, recurring thoughts and images, a psychological numbness with an accompanying feeling of lessened involvement with events and surroundings, hypervigilance, and an exaggerated startle response.
- Proprioception :** The perception by a person of stimuli relating to his/her posture, equilibrium, and internal condition, and his/her own position and movement in space.

* Where European Union law exists, it is superior to the national laws of the Union's Member States.

- Skill :** The ability of a person - resulting from training and practice - to carry out complex, well-organized patterns of behaviour smoothly and adaptively, in order to achieve some end or goal.
- Social Wellbeing :** A general condition - in a community, society or culture - of health, happiness, creativity, responsible fulfilment, and sustainable development.
- Space Perception :** The experienced sense of space within which a person acts and behaves over time.
- This is a general term used to cover depth perception, awareness of distance and direction, real movement, apparent and relative movement, personal space, etc.
- Spatial Abilities :** Those perceptual and/or cognitive abilities which enable a person to deal effectively with orientation of objects and events in space, distance and direction, visual-spatial tasks, etc.
- Frequently, visual and non-visual spatial abilities are distinguished.
- Spatial Orientation :** The ability of a person to orient himself/herself in space relative to other objects and events.
- Structural Reliability :** The ability of a structural system to fulfil its design purpose, for a specified time, under the actual environmental conditions encountered in a building.
- (ISO 2394)
- In structural fire design, the concern must be that the structure will fulfil its purpose, both during the fire - and for a minimum period afterwards, during the 'cooling phase'.
- Survivor Syndrome :** A pattern of reactions frequently observed in those people who have survived some catastrophe or traumatic ordeal such as an earthquake, flood, fire or war, including chronic anxiety, recurring dreams of the event, a general numbness, withdrawal from and loss of interest in events and surroundings and, often, survivor guilt.
- Sustainable Design :** The art and science of the ethical planning, design, supervision, and control of related construction / de-construction, and maintenance of sustainability in the built and virtual environments.
- As a core value, Sustainable Design embodies the concept of '**person-centred**' design .
- Sustainable Development :** Development which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.
- (Brundtland Report, 1987)

- Sustainable Development :** (EU Regulation 2493/2000) The responsible improvement of the standard of living and wellbeing of a community or society within the limits of the capacity of regional ecosystems by maintaining natural assets and their biological diversity for the benefit of present and future generations.
- Sustainable Engineering :** The ethical application of scientific principles to relevant aspects of sustainable design.
- Task :** A focused or pre-determined human activity.
- Temperature Sense :** The sensory system which responds to temperature and temperature changes, including the perception of stimuli above and below the adaptation levels of human skin.
- Unilateral Neglect :** A neurological disorder in which a person is unable to integrate and use perceptions from one side of the body and/or one side of his/her surroundings.
- Virtual Environment :** A designed environment, electronically-generated from within the built environment, which may have the appearance, form, essence and impact - to the person perceiving and actually experiencing it - of a real, imagined and/or utopian world.
- Visual Field :** Everything in a person's physical surroundings which can be seen objectively by a stable eye at a given moment in time.
- Visuospatial Perception :** Ability of a person to distinguish, by sight, the relative position of objects in his/her surroundings, and in relation to himself/herself.
- Waste Prevention :** Those activities in planning, design, construction and production, and/or use and consumption, which consist of :
- reducing the input of raw materials ;
 - substituting the input of primary or non-renewable raw materials ;
 - improving the cost effectiveness and energy efficiency of the existing 'built environment' ;
 - optimizing the design of new buildings, engineering works, products, processes and services ;
 - extending the life cycle of buildings, engineering works, products, processes and services, by means of adaptability, flexibility and better accessibility ;
- and which also result in :
- ease of re-use and recycling ;
 - elimination of waste ;
 - minimization of harmful environmental impacts, during the life cycle of those materials, products, processes and services.
- Waste prevention begins with these vital questions**
" Must we build ? " and " Do we need this product ? " .

Welfare : A person's general feeling of health, happiness and fulfilment.

Workplace : A place intended to house workstations on the premises of an undertaking and/or establishment, and any other place within the area of the undertaking and/or establishment to which a worker has access in the course of his/her employment.
(EU Directive 89/654/EEC)