

European Guide Dog Federation

Report on Number of Guide Dogs in Europe

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The seven-year Programme targets all stakeholders who can help shape the development of appropriate and effective employment and social legislation and policies, across the EU-27, EFTA-EEA and EU candidate and pre-candidate countries. For more information see:

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EGDF Survey on the Number of Guide Dogs in Europe

Background and History of the Guide Dog Movement

References to guide dogs date at least as far back as the mid-16th century although the first guide dog training schools were established in Germany during World War I, to enhance the mobility of returning veterans who were blinded in combat.

Interest in guide dogs outside of Germany did not become widespread until Dorothy Harrison Eustis, an American dog breeder living in Switzerland, wrote a first-hand account about a guide dog training school in Potsdam, Germany that was published in *The Saturday Evening Post* in the US in 1927. Earlier that same year blind United States Senator Thomas D. Schall of Minnesota was paired with a guide dog imported from Germany. The guide dog movement took hold in America when Morris Frank returned from Switzerland after being trained with one of Eustis's dogs, a German shepherd named Buddy. Frank and Buddy embarked on a publicity tour to convince Americans of the abilities of guide dogs, and the need to allow people with guide dogs to access public transportation, hotels, and other areas open to the public. In 1929, Eustis and Frank co-founded The Seeing Eye in Nashville, Tennessee and relocated it to New Jersey in 1931.

The first guide dogs in Great Britain were given in 1931 to veterans blinded in World War I. The Guide Dogs for the Blind Association in Great Britain began operation in 1934, their first permanent trainer being a Russian military officer, Captain Nikolai Liakhoff, who moved to the UK in 1933.

The movement spread throughout Europe and after World War II more returning soldiers received guide dogs. Blind and other disabled people moved from the shadows and wanted access to transportation and other services.

Barriers to disabled people and guide dog owners began to ease with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948 and the European Convention on Human Rights in 1950. Attitudes to disabled people improved as member countries enacted national legislation.

In 2000 the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union consolidated and enshrined the broad array of rights afforded to citizens of the EU. IGDFXXX In 2007 the European Guide Dog Federation was founded to promote these rights for blind guide dog owners.

The work of the EGDF supports Article 1 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union which states that 'Human dignity is inviolable. It must be respected and protected' and Article 26 which states that 'the EU recognises and respects the rights 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' and it supports Article 21 which prohibits any discrimination on the basis of disability.

Moreover the EGDF supports Article 10 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU which requires the European Union to combat discrimination based on disability when defining and implementing policies and activities and Article 19 which empowers the European Union to adopt legislation to address discrimination against persons with disabilities.

Thirdly the EGDF supports the United Nations Convention on Human Rights of Persons with Disabilities. This requires those member states who have ratified the Convention to 'protect and safeguard all human rights and fundamental freedoms of persons with disabilities'.

Finally, the work of EGDF supports the European Disability Strategy 2010- 2020. The overall aim of the strategy is "to empower people with disabilities so that they can enjoy their full rights, and benefit fully from participating in society and in the European economy". The strategy sets clear objectives to remove the barriers persons with disabilities meet in their everyday life and clusters these around eight priority areas.

As an initial step to fulfilling our campaign objectives we needed to know the actual numbers of guide dogs in each EU country so that we have a base line from which to track the evolution in coming years and to campaign for these people. In addition, in parallel with the guide dog movement, many other assistance dogs are being trained whose owners need the same rights of access and these two groups are more powerful when acting together.

Terms of Reference of the Study

EGDF was given a grant by the European commission to carry out a programme of work in 2013. The following activities under the heading "Improving the networks' organisational capacity and management" were completed during this study

- Using web-based technologies to gather and disseminate accurate information and improve communications and network across Europe
- Data on numbers of guide dogs, a report based on a survey of member organisations
- Compilation of a set of accurate statistics on guide dog numbers to assist in the development of appropriate service for guide dog users
- Continue to use web-based interfaces to carry out quantitative statistical research, including an up-to-date survey of guide dog partnership numbers across Europe.

Methodology

Source Material

- Current EGDF membership records: 47 members in 23 European countries. Members can be either guide dog training schools or organisations representing guide dog users and care had to be taken to not double count the returns.
- International Guide Dog Federation (IGDF) website: 37 full members and 1 affiliate in 26 European countries
- Assistance Dogs International (ADI) and Assistance Dogs Europe (ADEu) websites: 64 programmes, of which 31 are members, in 19 European countries.
- European Blind Union (EBU) website: figures based on research in various member countries.
- Search of the internet for schools and associations who are not members of any of the above, covering 30 countries in total.

Source Data Collation

Details from EGDF records or from the websites of the other umbrella organisations listed above were entered on a spreadsheet. This was supplemented by additional data obtained from the websites of the individual organisations. The information was examined for consistency and we sought clarification by telephone directly with the individual organisations to ensure we had the most reliable data possible.

Accreditations and Membership

68 of the schools identified are full members of, or accredited by, IGDF or ADEu -- associations which set operational standards for the training of guide and assistance dogs.

Of the 34 schools who are full or associate EGDF members, 22 were also full members of the IGDF. Four schools training guide dogs as part of their programme were also accredited by the ADI/ADEu because they train assistance dogs as well.

Survey Questionnaire

A brief questionnaire with explanatory notes was e-mailed to all listed schools and user groups (see Attachment 1) and followed up by telephone and email to ensure the highest possible response rate. It was made clear at every stage of this process that we were only seeking overall numbers and not personal information so that anonymity was guaranteed.

Response to Survey Questionnaire

We contacted 116 schools and 47 (40%) replied, including 13 of the 34 EGDF member schools. To supplement and support this data we contacted knowledgeable people and umbrella organisations in individual countries, a network of contacts we have developed across the EU.

Some schools declined to take part for following reasons:

- Information already given to IGDF / ADI
- Information covered by Data Protection Act
- Information regarded as medical records and thus confidential

In parallel with this study, we sought comparable information for other assistance dogs and have shown the results in Appendix 2.

Barriers

There was some reluctance amongst schools and associations to respond to the questionnaire and to contribute to the survey. Some felt they did not want their details to be published, others claimed that the details of their customers or members were confidential. Some members of other federations felt that, as they had already submitted details to these, there was no reason to provide the same to us. There may also be a degree of survey fatigue which may be overcome in the future by closer co-operation between federations and an exchange of data.

With regard to individual EU countries we learned that in Luxemburg details on guide dogs are classified as medical records and, it was claimed, cannot be released. Germany, the largest EU country with a significant number of guide and assistance dogs, has no umbrella organisation and consequently there are no consolidated records.

Outcomes

The results of our research are summarised as follows

Number of guide dogs in EU countries	13,646
Number of guide dogs in other European countries	653
Number of assistance dogs in EU countries	<u>4,105</u>
Total	<u>18,396</u>

The table in Attachment 2 shows the breakdown of guide dogs by country. ADEu have cooperated in this work and we have added their figures to the study. The statistic on guide dogs per million of population clearly indicates countries that are far below average. We suspect that this is due to lack of provision of guide dogs rather than ophthalmologic health.

Conclusions and Trends

Growth in the Number of Guide and Assistance Dogs

Guide dogs are well established in the major European countries and we expect their numbers will continue to increase to correspond with demand and available resources. One of the objectives of EGDF is to help those countries where the guide dog movement requires encouragement and development to make progress.

Assistance dogs are a more recent concept but are becoming established as:

- aids for the disabled and wheelchair bound
- hearing dogs for the deaf
- companions for children and adults with autism
- aids and companion for sufferers of early-stage dementia
- alert dogs for diabetics and epileptics

A more recent development is the use of assistance dogs in diagnostics such as cancer.

Consequently it is likely that the number of assistance dogs will increase at a faster rate than guide dogs. Properly trained guide and other assistance dogs with their owners should have the same rights of access and mobility as all other citizens of the EU. It is important, therefore, that when making our representations we include the full cohort so that the commercial and practical impact is evident. To this end the EGDF is developing a Memorandum of Understanding with ADEu.

Which countries need help?

The northern and western countries are generally well-funded and well-developed. The table shows that in eastern and some southern European countries, such as Greece and Cyprus, cultural prejudices still appear to impede progress and a woeful ignorance remains about the benefits guide dogs can offer the visually impaired. In some of the accession states we found that the challenge was not a lack of understanding but one of funds. As other countries seek to join the EU their guide programmes will need developing.

Our research was confined to continental Europe and did not extend to overseas dependencies which may warrant further study in the future.

Creating a culture of cooperation

It is desirable that all organisations in this field, be they schools, associations or federations, cooperate in the interests of those who are dependent on guide or assistance dogs. During our research we found that a climate of caution exists in some areas which makes cooperation difficult. EGDF considers it a priority to build a

culture of trust in order to improve the future for guide dog users throughout the EU.

This was evidenced particularly in Germany where many of the schools we contacted declined to take part in the survey, stating that they did not wish their data to be published. Our research confirmed that guide dogs are funded by health insurers who impose cost restrictions which has led to some dogs being imported from countries which may not be committed to the high standards of breeding and training required by the IGDF. As a result, some German schools have left their federations and are becoming isolationist. This is a trend we hope does not spread elsewhere and we will work to reverse it in Germany.

Recommendations

1. Continually update the detailed spreadsheet behind the summary table as new information becomes available.
2. Carry out a comprehensive survey every three years
3. Raise the profile of EGDF and cultivate meaningful relationships all guide dog organisations to facilitate future surveys
4. Use this data to inform and empower our lobbying and campaigning
5. Maintain and publish trend data by country as a driver to improvement and equality

Acknowledgements

We are grateful for the assistance given by the European Commission, the European Blind Union, the International Guide Dog Federation, Assistance Dogs Europe and the member organisation.

Attachment 1: Survey Questionnaire

We are sending you this e-mail because you are a member organisation of the European Guide Dog Federation or you are involved in the training and supply of guide dogs or other assistance dogs in Europe.

To assist us in influencing European laws and regulations and in facilitating the development of services and activities we need to keep our statistics on guide dog numbers in each European country up to date. We need your help in updating our data base and we would be most grateful if you will take a few moments to answer the questions below and return the information to me by email. This year we are including statistics on all assistance dogs because so many of the guide dog issues are also assistance dog issues and having larger numbers makes our voice more powerful.

The name of your organisation	
The type of dogs trained and the total number of working partnerships in each category:	
- Guide dogs	
- Dogs for the Deaf	
- Other assistance dogs – please specify:	
-	
-	
-	
Number of new dog partnerships in 2013	
Waiting time for new partnerships	
Annual turnover in €	

Many thanks for taking the time to reply. We will send the results of this survey to you as soon as it is compiled. If this should have been sent to someone else in your organisation we would be grateful if you would forward this to them and let me know.

If you have any questions or comments, please email me at Research@EGDFed.org.

Barbara Baganz

Attachment 2 Detailed Table of Results

Country	Population	Total Number of Identified Organisations	Number of Schools	Number of Survey Respondents	Existing Partnerships at 31 Dec 13	Dogs per million of pop.
Austria	8.46	5	5	2	250	30
Belgium	11.14	14	13	4	175	16
Bulgaria	7.31	1	1	1	30	4
Croatia	4.27	1	1	0	59	14
Cyprus	1.13	0	0	0	0	0
Czech Republic	10.51	6	6	1	600	57
Denmark	5.59	2	1	0	250	45
Estonia	1.34	2	1	1	35	26
Finland	5.41	4	3	1	209	39
France	65.70	16	14	3	1500	23
Germany	81.89	16	13	5	2100	26
Greece	11.28	5	4	0	8	1
Hungary	9.94	4	4	2	140	14
Ireland	4.59	3	3	0	190	41
Italy	60.92	8	1	1	1000	16
Latvia	2.03	1	1	0	3	1
Lithuania	2.99	0	0	0	0	0
Luxemburg	0.53	1	1	0	25	47
Malta	0.42	1	1	0	11	26
Netherlands	16.77	14	12	7	700	42
Poland	38.54	2	2	1	120	3
Portugal	10.53	2	2	0	75	7
Romania	21.33	1	1	1	3	0
Slovakia	5.41	2	2	2	70	13
Slovenia	2.06	2	2	2	20	10
Spain	47.24	12	3	3	1013	21
Sweden	9.52	7	5	2	290	30
UK	63.23	9	9	6	4770	75
Sub-Total EU	510.06	141	111	45	13,646	27
Non-EU						
Albania	3.16					
Belarus	9.46	0	0	0	0	0
Iceland	0.32					
Montenegro	0.62	1	1	1	3	5
Norway	5.02	4	4	0	300	60
Russia	143.50					
Serbia	7.22					
Switzerland	8.00	6	6	2	350	44
Ukraine	45.59					
Sub-Total Non-EU	219.74	11	11	3	653	3
Total Geographic Europe	729.80	152	122	48	14,299	20

Attachment 3

