



Plaże dla wszystkich

**Summary of the 2021 beaches
audit report**



The “Machina Zmian” Foundation has been working for 10 years to make Poland’s beaches accessible to everyone, regardless of their physical abilities.

By implementing the “Plaże dla Wszystkich” [Beaches for All] project, we are changing Polish beaches to make them comfortable, friendly and accessible. We educate, audit and carry out control and guard activities. In line with the principles of universal design, we create recommendations for plans to modernise beach entrances. We strengthen the presence of people with disabilities in public spaces. We speak out about the right to education, culture and rest – for all.

Since 2012, for 10 years we have organised a summer walking tour along the Baltic coast (“440 km po zmianę” [270 miles for a change]), during which we checked whether the entrances to beaches specified as accessible by local authorities are in fact so.

We carried out our first social audit of beaches in 2019. The foundation’s volunteers walked the Polish coast on foot, checking those entrances to beaches specified by local government units as accessible to people with different levels of mobility, including people with disabilities, the elderly and those with prams.





The audit involved completing a checklist created by the foundation's Accessibility Team. The list included questions concerning various aspects of beach accessibility. The second social beach audit took place in 2021. Drawing on previous experience, we modified the checklist to improve the work of the social auditors.

The report, which was published in spring 2022, summarises the data collected in the second social beach audit, conducted in 2021. It is a compendium of the most recent knowledge on how Poland's beaches meet the accessibility criteria and how to prepare them so that every person can use them. The document includes the list of particular beaches that have already introduced facilities, but also those that have yet to do so.

Please read a summary of the highlights and conclusions of the audit, as well as a table with the results on the accessibility of beach entrances in each municipality.

The entire report with a summary of the data collected in the second social beach audit 2021 can be found on our website, downloadable electronically (in Polish).



Audit 2021 – BASIC INFORMATION

- The audit was conducted on 87 beaches in 2 voivodeships, in municipalities such as Gdańsk, Hel, Kuźnica, Trzebiatów, Choczewo, Darłowo, Dziwnów, Gdynia, Jastarnia, Kołobrzeg, Krokowa, Krynica Morska, Łeba, Mielno, Międzyzdroje, Postomino, Rewal, Sopot, Stegna, Świnoujście, Sztutowo, Ustka (city), Ustka (municipality), Ustronie Morskie, Władysławowo. Detailed information on municipalities, localities and specific beach entrances is included in a comprehensive table, Appendix 2.
- The unit of survey and analysis was a beach (including beach infrastructure) and its immediate surroundings – a single numbered entrance. Beach accessibility was analysed during the audit.
- The selection of the sample of beaches/entrances was purposive (local authorities indicated entrances that are adapted in terms of accessibility), and therefore the audit data is not representative of Polish beaches, but represents a certain slice of those beaches that, according to representatives and representatives of municipalities, are the most accessible.
- This has consequences for the understanding of the data – the percentage and numerical data refer only to the audited beaches, therefore the results definitely cannot be generalised to all Polish beaches.



- The surveyed purposive sample is N = 87, but many results refer to a few or a dozen beach entries. Sometimes the low counts are due to lack of data, but in general they indicate that a particular solution (e.g. amphibious vehicle, sea trolley), natural conditions (e.g. slope requiring stairs or ramps) and other aspects apply to only a few beaches. In such cases, data are given in absolute numbers rather than percentages.
- The audit was carried out according to what is known as the so-called access chain, which leads from a resort (car park or public transport stop), through the marked beach entrance, to the sea line.

Access Chain

The concept of the Access Chain was created by the Sensory Trust, a UK organisation dedicated to creating accessible recreational areas. Presenting the accessibility of spaces and facilities in a sequential manner, using the chain as an example, is very apt, as it emphasises the need to take care of accessibility at every stage and to plan it within a defined system. This is because if the accessibility chain is broken at any point, the entire space or object becomes practically inaccessible.

<https://www.sensorytrust.org.uk/resources/guidance/access-chain-an-inclusive-design-tool> (access: 27.03.2022).



- The checklist has been arranged according to the access chain and we present the data in this order in the report.

Access Chain of beach spaces		
SPACE AROUND THE BEACH ENTRANCE	BEACH ENTRANCE	ON THE BEACH
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• car park and pedestrian route from the car park• bus stop• signposts• bicycle path	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• information board• ramp• stairway	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• information board• changing rooms• showers• footbridges, mats (pedestrian route)• amphibious vehicle• benches• waste bins• information and support• toilets• changing table



Audit 2021 – SUMMARY OF DATA collected

The table "Database. Summary of the 2021 Beach Audit" contains data for all audited beach entrances in terms of the accessibility criteria on which the assessment was based. Looking at the colours, it can be seen as a 'heatmap' of beach accessibility. The more green, the better accessibility. Red means no accessibility, blue means beaches assessed ambiguously, in which case it is difficult to consider them as (more) accessible, but in turn considering them as (more) inaccessible could be unfair.

Considering the 12 selected criteria that make up the MINIMUM OF ACCESSIBILITY* adopted in the assessment carried out, it can be estimated that among the 87 beaches audited there are:

- 28 (rather/more) accessible beaches (32%),

COLOUR GREEN

- 47 (rather/more) inaccessible beaches (54%)

COLOUR BLUE

- 12 beaches whose assessment is ambiguous – potentially accessible or inaccessible (14%),

COLOUR ORANGE

* Szczegółowe kryteria oceny oraz zasady doboru kryteriów dla minimum dostępności znaleźć można w całościowym dokumencie raportu, do pobrania na naszej stronie internetowej: <https://plazedlawszystkich.pl//container/RAPORT-2021-PlazeDlaWszystkich-razem-1657621963.pdf>



This means that – even reducing the number of criteria and considering the assessment as partial – **only one in three beaches is “more accessible than inaccessible” compared to more than half of the “rather inaccessible than accessible” beaches.**

It is noteworthy that the audited beaches are far more often (at least partially) accessible for wheelchair/wheelchair users than for people with other disabilities. In fact, there is a lack of solutions facilitating orientation for visually impaired people, the elements of beach equipment are very rarely contrasted and the solutions used – piers, ramps or stairs – are often made of openwork materials (e.g. steel gratings), making it very difficult for people using orthopaedic aids (walking sticks/balls/walkers) to move around and uncomfortable for assistance dogs

The problem is also often not so much the existing infrastructure, but its condition: some of the elements are in a poor state of repair, some are simply gritty (e.g. ramps), which also makes them difficult or impossible to move.

We are still a long way from FULLY ACCESSIBLE BEACHES FOR ALL. As a foundation dedicated to creating accessible beaches, we hope that the “Plaże dla Wszystkich” Accessible Beaches Certification Programme we are introducing from 2022 will significantly improve the current situation. We encourage you to keep up to date with certification information at www.plazedlawszystkich.pl