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# ГОТЕЛЬНО-РЕСТОРАННА СПРАВА

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## BARRIER-FREE HOSPITALITY: BASIC APPROACHES AND NEW CHALLENGES

## БЕЗБАР'ЄРНІСТЬ В ІНДУСТРІЇ ГОСТИННОСТІ: БАЗОВІ ПІДХОДИ ТА НОВІ ВИКЛИКИ

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*The article explicates the relevant topic of barrier-free as an essential element of social development. The essence of the concepts of 'barriers', 'low-mobility groups' and "barrier-free" is defined. It is emphasized that every person may face physical, informational, psychological, or economic obstacles, and their removal contributes to equal access to services and improved quality of life. The study summarizes the achievements of foreign and Ukrainian authors in implementing barrier-free principles in society and the hospitality industry. The level of service accessibility in hospitality establishments in the city of Kropyvnytskyi was examined. The analysis revealed that management and staff do not always consider the needs of all customer categories, which restricts access to services for low-mobility individuals. A lack of specialized staff training and an insufficient level of spatial adaptation by modern inclusion requirements were identified. Practical recommendations for implementing barrier-free solutions in the HoReCa sector were developed. These include organizing training sessions, creating educational video materials, participating in round tables, and establishing a "bank of non-standard situations" for promptly addressing accessibility issues. The article considers the criteria for universal website design for HoReCa enterprises, ensuring convenient access to information for all user categories. It emphasizes that adapting hospitality establishments to barrier-free standards will enhance their reputation, competitiveness, and contribute to harmonizing the interests of business and society.*

**Keywords:** hotel and restaurant business, war, services, accessibility, low-mobility groups, barrier-free accessibility, barrier-free space, universal design, means of communication, mental health.

*У статті розкрито тему безбар'єрності, яка стає дедалі актуальною і охоплює все ширші аспекти суспільного життя. Визначено сутність понять "бар'єри", "маломобільні групи населення" та "безбар'єрність". Підкреслено, що кожна людина на певному етапі життя може стикатися з фізичними, інформаційними, психологічними, економічними та іншими видами бар'єрів. Зазначено, що усунення фізичних і ментальних бар'єрів розширює можливості сучасної людини. Узагальнено напрацювання зарубіжних та українських авторів щодо впровадження принципів безбар'єрності в суспільстві та індустрії гостинності. Визначено, хто саме з українських дослідників, ак-*

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тивістів та громадських діячів приділяє особливу увагу розробці універсальних рішень для підвищення доступності послуг у всіх аспектах індустрії гостинності. Досліджено рівень доступності послуг у закладах гостинності м. Кропивницький (Україна). Результати показали, що керівництво та персонал не завжди враховують потреби всіх категорій гостей, що обмежує доступ до послуг для маломобільних груп населення, а також приділяють недостатньо уваги створенню середовища, у якому буде комфортно всім. Простори закладів гостинності недостатньо адаптовані до сучасних вимог інклюзії, бракує спеціального навчання персоналу. Розроблено практичні рекомендації щодо впровадження безбар'єрних рішень у сфері HoReCa: організація тренінгів, створення освітніх відеоматеріалів, участь у круглих столах та формування «банку нестандартних ситуацій» для оперативного вирішення питань доступності. Рекомендовано перелік освітніх курсів для пізнання теми безбар'єрності персоналом. Розглянуто критерії універсального дизайну веб-сайтів підприємств HoReCa, що забезпечують зручний доступ до інформації для всіх категорій користувачів. Наголошено, що адаптація закладів гостинності до стандартів безбар'єрності та доступності дозволить гармонізувати інтереси бізнесу й суспільства, підвищить їх репутацію та конкурентоспроможність.

**Ключові слова:** готельно-ресторанний бізнес, війна, послуги, доступність, маломобільні групи населення, безбар'єрність, безбар'єрний простір, універсальний дизайн, засоби комунікації, ментальне здоров'я.

**Formulation of the problem.** Today in Ukraine, a barrier-free environment has become a priority in building a society that supports accessibility and the development of a comfortable environment. Due to the Russian aggression, the number of people with limited mobility is growing every day, so the issue of barrier-free services has become even more urgent. According to the Ministry of Social Policy of Ukraine, more than 300,000 Ukrainians have been diagnosed with disabilities in the first year and a half of the full-scale war [1]. Access to food, accommodation, and leisure facilities in Ukraine is often limited, as establishments such as restaurants, coffee shops, and hotels often do not meet inclusivity standards. Hotels and restaurants should ensure that all their services are accessible to people with different types of disabilities. For example, the introduction of menus in Braille, the use of technology for sign language interpretation, and the provision of special communication tools for people with hearing or visual impairments. Additionally, hospitality industry entities can ensure increased inclusiveness through partnerships with government agencies and organizations that specialize in supporting people with disabilities. As a result, they receive recommendations and advice on implementing best practices and accessibility standards. The problem of serving people with disabilities is a significant issue in our lives. Therefore, scientists and practitioners are trying to demonstrate why it is so important to implement barrier-free service methods, thereby providing comfort and quality accessible services to all groups of the population.

**Analysis of recent research and publications.** The study of barrier-free accessibility covers the removal of physical barriers and the formation of an inclusive society. Ronald Mays, Sharon Snyder, and David Mitchell have made a significant contribution to examining this issue [2,3].

The concept of barrier-free accessibility developed by Western scientists is gradually being adapted to Ukrainian realities. Domestic researchers are studying not only the theoretical foundations but also the practical mechanisms for its implementation in the hospitality industry. Ukrainian researchers Yukhnovska Y. O., Ryzhenko O. M. and Omelchak H. V. analyze the accessibility of hospitality and tourism services, study barrier-free accessibility as a development process that includes constant monitoring and adaptation to changes in people's needs [4]. Barna M. Y. and Tuchkovska I. I. focus on the development of universal solutions to improve accessibility in all aspects of the hospitality industry. They consider not only physical barriers, but also mental and organizational ones, which helps professionals to create comfortable conditions for all visitors [5].

Scientists O. Nikolaichuk, V. Popova, S. Popova, A. Slashcheva, and O. Simakova studied the accessibility of hospitality enterprises for people with limited mobility by conducting a

staff survey, emphasizing that creating a barrier-free environment improves the quality of services, promotes customer loyalty, and increases business competitiveness [6].

**Formation of the purpose of the article.** Despite the significant contribution of scientists to the development of approaches to creating a barrier-free environment, a number of important issues remain unresolved. The lack of a systematic approach to implementing barrier-free mechanisms, the limited use of modern technologies, and the weak integration of intercultural aspects indicate the need for further research.

Therefore, the purpose of the study is to analyze the barrier-free environment as the basis of a democratic value aimed at ensuring equality of people regardless of their differences, integrating accessibility for all categories of the population and creating conditions for the realization of their abilities and active participation in public life.

The research into barrier-free accessibility in the hospitality industry used comprehensive methods to ensure a thorough study of the issue. In particular, the analysis of information data, including the study of reference books, articles, papers, and relevant scientific research in this area allows us to analyze the key aspects that affect the level of accessibility in the hotel and restaurant business, identify existing barriers and gaps, and find effective ways to create conditions that will promote equal customer service.

The observation and survey methods were used to assess the accessibility of hospitality facilities with a focus on physical, mental, and organizational barriers. The synthesis and generalization of the results allowed us to identify the main trends and formulate practical recommendations for improving the level of accessibility of hospitality services. The use of these methods ensured an integrated approach to the study and increased its practical significance.

The research was initiated and conducted under the academic supervision of the author, in collaboration with students of the “Hospitality and Restaurant Business” program at Kherson State Agrarian and Economic University: Iryna Kovalska and Dariia Korshmeniuk.

**Presentation of the main material.** The issue of barriers in Ukrainian society has been publicized since independence, but became officially important after the ratification of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2009. State projects were aimed at making the environment accessible. Few people were interested in the categories and types of barriers (other than physical ones) faced by all groups of the population. The issue of barriers and barrier-free space gained a characteristic development after 2022, when the number of people with reduced mobility increased due to the full-scale invasion of Ukraine by Russia.

Barriers are obstacles for all population groups that prevent them from accessing various opportunities, improving their personalities and realizing their potential. The main problem of society is the imposition of stereotypes and labels, thereby creating barriers of their own. Because of this, ignorance, discrimination, judgment, and negative attitudes towards people with limited mobility are widespread in society. Due to ignorance, people believe that only people with disabilities belong to this group.

Thus, the category of “low-mobility groups” includes: pregnant women; children under 7 years of age; persons accompanying young children; the elderly; people with permanent and/or temporary functional impairments; people with disabilities; people who have been temporarily injured or are ill; people with non-standard body sizes: significantly higher or lower than average body weight, short or taller than average height; people who may be inattentive for a certain period of time [7].

Every person can face different types of barriers on a daily basis, such as: physical, information, psychological, economic, institutional barriers [8].

Thus, at some point in their lives, each person can be classified as having low mobility. According to various estimates, from 30 to 50% of Ukrainians are more or less mobility impaired [1]. Often, this is facilitated by poorly organized spaces and buildings. For example: children and wheelchair users may have difficulty communicating due to high

check-in desks; parents who cannot push a stroller down due to the lack of ramps or elevators in hotels. The key to creating a barrier-free space in the hospitality industry is to adapt the physical environment according to the principles of universal design. This approach takes into account the needs of all groups in society. Global experience shows that creating an environment for people with reduced mobility is not only an urgent need, but also an important factor in the development of the country and enterprises.

In order to help those “behind the barrier,” questions arise as to how to equip the space for such groups. Thanks to modern technologies, the accessible environment is being systematized to share methods for improving it, and informing the public is becoming much easier. Therefore, the topic of barrier-free accessibility is becoming more and more relevant and covers broader aspects of public life.

There are different approaches to explaining the essence of the concept of “barrier-free”.

Barrier-free accessibility is a concept that involves creating conditions in which all people, regardless of their physical, sensory, intellectual or other characteristics, have equal access to various aspects of public life. This is the way to create a comfortable environment where there are no restrictions and everyone has the opportunity to realize their potential [9].

Barrier-free mindset is primarily about our attitude towards each other, about respect and justice. Each of us can be part of these changes [10].

Barrier-free accessibility is a philosophy of a society without restrictions. It is about an inner readiness to create an environment where everyone will feel comfortable [11].

Barrier-free accessibility is a general approach to the formation and implementation of public policy to ensure unimpeded access of all groups of the population to various spheres of life [12].

Thus, barrier-free accessibility is an integrated social concept that envisages the formation of an inclusive space by eliminating architectural, informational and socio-cultural barriers, ensuring equal participation of all groups in public life.

This scheme demonstrates the types of barrier-free accessibility and methods of removing barriers (Fig.1).

However, despite the identified types of barrier-free accessibility and existing methods of removing barriers, the process of their implementation remains ambiguous, as society is constantly facing new challenges caused by technological, social and economic changes.

In Ukraine, the topic of barrier-free accessibility is actively developing thanks to the efforts of public organizations and government initiatives that are shaping new standards of social and infrastructural accessibility. Let's take a look at the contributions of leading figures and structures that promote the ideas of barrier-free accessibility, their role in implementing innovations, and positive examples of change.

The First Lady of Ukraine, Olena Zelenska, has made a significant contribution to the development of this topic, having initiated the project “Without Barriers” [13].

Tetiana Lomakina, Presidential Commissioner for Barrier-Free Environment, coordinates the efforts of government agencies aimed at implementing the National Strategy for Creating a Barrier-Free Environment in Ukraine for the period until 2030.

An important place is occupied by the research conducted under the leadership of Volodymyr Paniotto, Director General of the Kyiv International Institute of Sociology (KIIS) [14].

The Center for Social Change and Behavioral Economics, with the support of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), conducted a public opinion survey that showed that 83% of Ukrainians consider barrier-free accessibility to be an important social value [15], which is a confirmation of both infrastructural and social global changes.

Among the scholars who analyze international experience in this area are Nadia Lyubchenko and Roman Kozenko, who study the implementation of the state policy of barrier-free environment, focusing on the adaptation of the positive experience of European countries in the context of Ukraine's European integration [16].

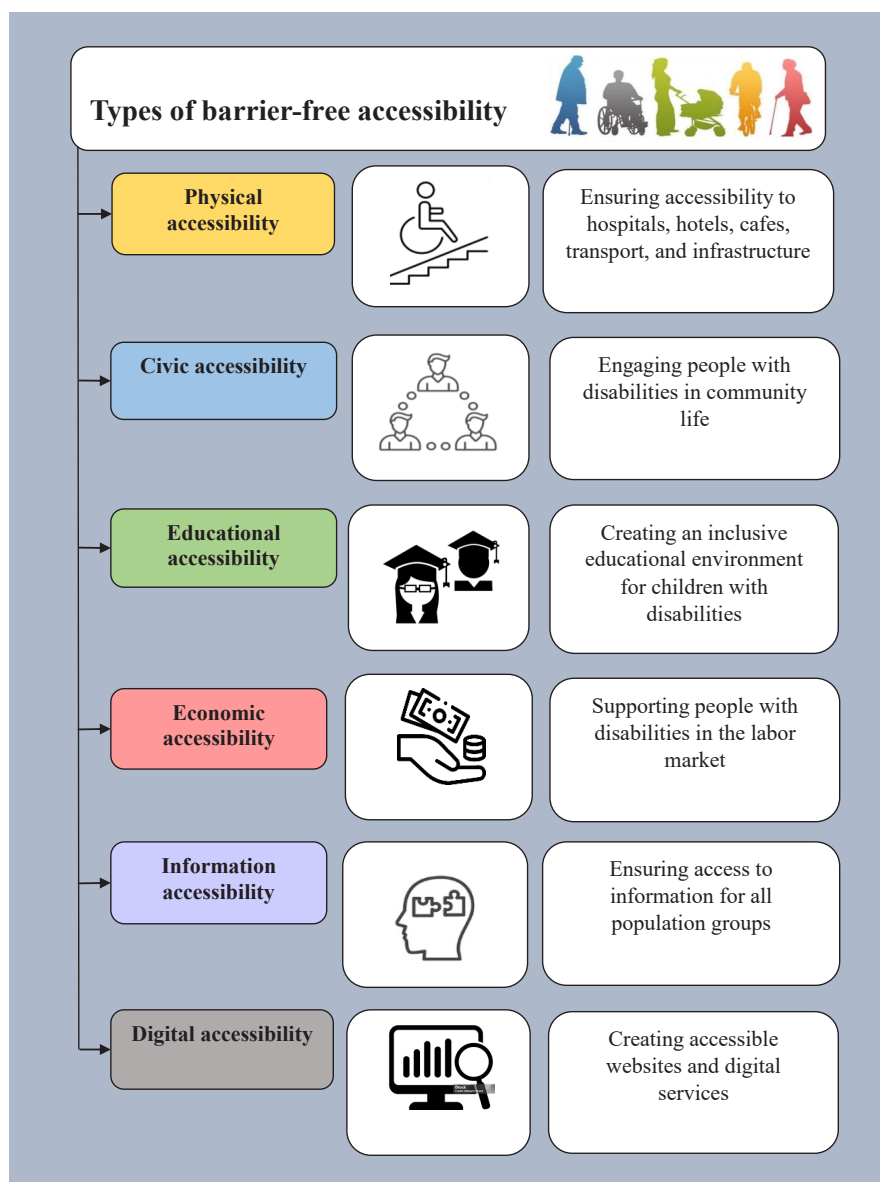


Figure 1. Types of barrier-free accessibility and methods of removing barriers  
 Source: formed on the basis of sources [9; 12]

We should also mention the activities of the public organization “Bezbariernist”, which promotes the ideas of inclusiveness.

The development of barrier-free ideas in Ukraine is closely linked to international experience, which serves as a basis for implementing modern accessibility principles [17]. In particular, the works of Ronald Mace, Sharon Snyder and David Mitchell should be mentioned, as they laid the foundation for understanding universal design and inclusivity in architecture and culture.

The study analyzed the accessibility of services at hotel and restaurant businesses in Kropyvnytskyi (Kirovohrad region, Ukraine) and planned further activities to apply the data obtained during the study. To study the barrier-free environment of the hospitality industry in Kropyvnytskyi, a survey was conducted among guests of restaurant establishments, which contained 10 questions. The survey involved 100 people.

According to the survey, the services of restaurant establishments (cafes, pizzerias, restaurants, etc.) in Kropyvnytskyi are considered to be fully accessible to city residents and visitors by only 25% of respondents (Fig. 2).

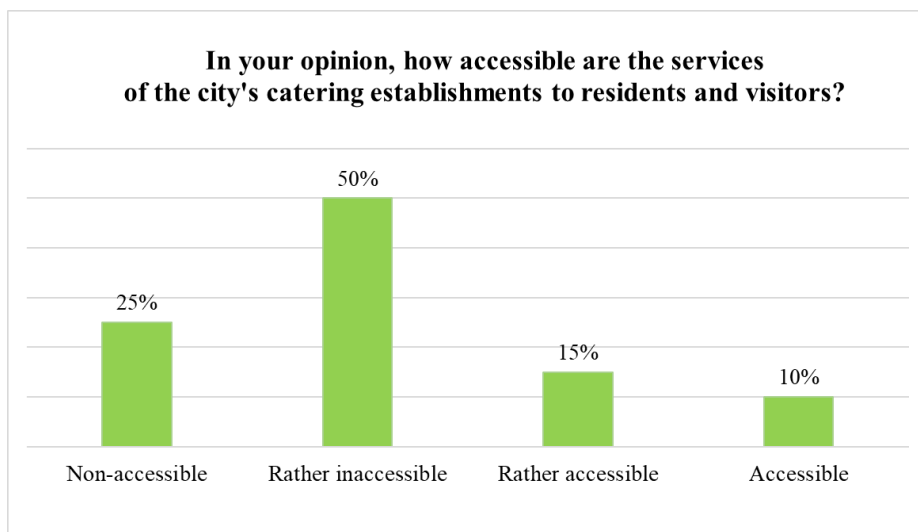
Services of restaurant establishments (cafes, pizzerias, restaurants, etc.) in Kropyvnytskyi, according to only 30% of respondents, are considered equally accessible to all residents and visitors of the city, including people with disabilities and those with reduced mobility (Fig. 3).

The average score for respondents' readiness to join forces and unite to solve problems related to the creation of accessible space is 7 out of 10. This indicates that most city residents are ready to take an active part in solving social issues, especially those related to accessibility of services (Fig. 4).

The study also found that a significant number of respondents discuss barrier-free and tolerant attitudes on social media and often participate in events organized in the city to support the ideas of a barrier-free environment and psycho-emotional support for vulnerable groups of the population. Such indicators indicate the need to promote civil society initiatives by creating conditions for interaction and open exchange of ideas between the local population, business representatives, and authorities to improve the quality of service provision by creating barrier-free access to services.

It should also be noted that 60% of respondents indicated that there are barriers to accessibility of catering services for city residents and visitors (Fig. 5).

Among the most frequently mentioned barriers are the lack of parking spaces for cars of people with disabilities; smooth pavements (without potholes); unobstructed entrances; visual orientation in the establishment (information signs, stands); furniture with enough space for a wheelchair or a baby carriage; universal restrooms that are convenient for



*Figure 2. Accessibility of catering establishments for residents and visitors of Kropyvnytskyi, %*

*Source: compiled by the author based on his own research*



In your opinion, how accessible are the services of the city's catering establishments for people with disabilities and low-mobility groups compared to other residents and visitors of the city?



Figure 3. Accessibility of catering establishments for people with disabilities and low-mobility groups compared to other residents and visitors of Kropyvnytskyi, %  
Source: compiled by the author based on his own research

### How often do you?

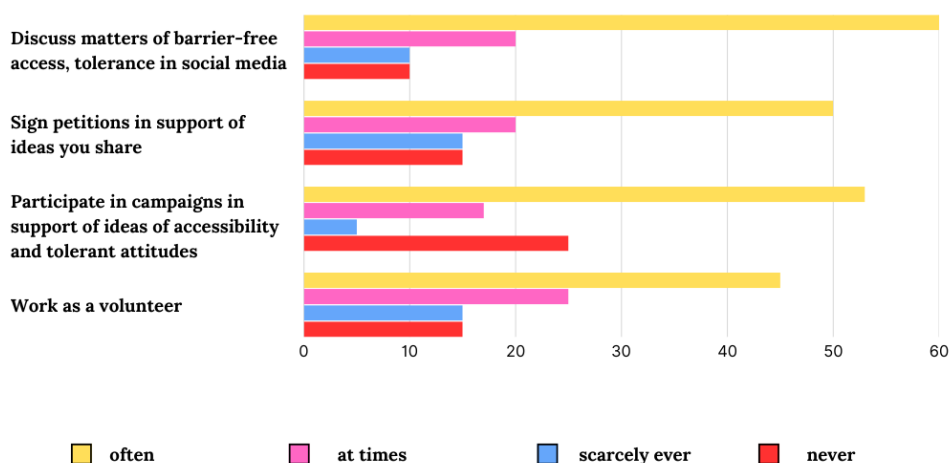


Figure 4. Willingness to join forces for the sake of accessibility of services, %  
Source: compiled by the author based on his own research

everyone; hygiene products for women in restrooms; a space for changing children; a quiet resource room where you can retire if necessary.

The majority of respondents also noted that the main problem is that the facilities are not adapted to the war conditions: they do not have shelters with the standardized ramp and width of the entrance, and if there is a restroom in the shelter, it is often not adapted and not convenient for people with disabilities (Fig. 6).

IN YOUR OPINION, ARE THERE ANY BARRIERS TO THE ACCESSIBILITY OF RESTAURANT SERVICES FOR RESIDENTS AND GUESTS OF THE CITY?

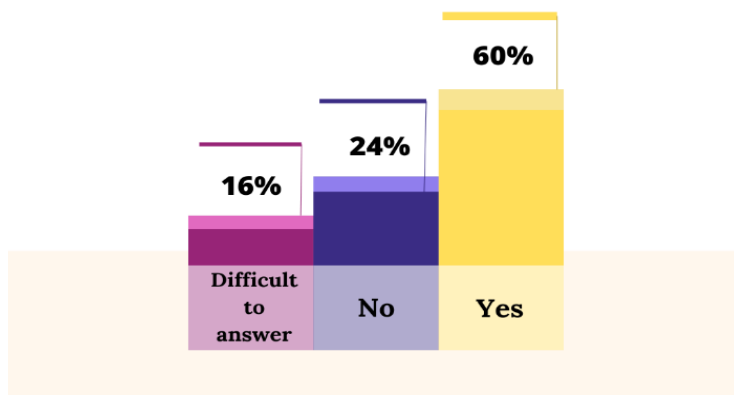


Figure 5. Availability of obstacles in the availability of restaurant establishments in Kropyvnytskyi, %

Source: compiled by the author based on his own research

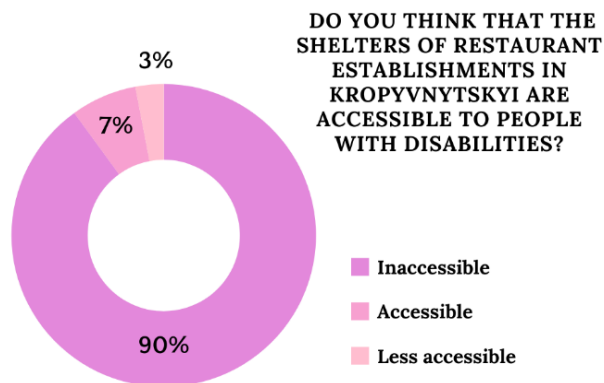


Figure 6. Availability of shelters in restaurant establishments in Kropyvnytskyi for people with disabilities, %

Source: compiled by the author based on his own research

The results of the survey on the question “Do you think that restaurant establishments in Kropyvnytskyi are sufficiently provided with qualified personnel, who can provide quality services to guests with the experience of war?” They show that only 20% of respondents believe that staff qualifications are sufficient to help guests with the experience of war. 14% of respondents noted that they were witnesses that outraged. The reason for this was the management that did not support the initiatives of the institution's contact group staff to communicate with the guests (Fig. 7).

Ten respondents noted that they were pleasantly impressed with the fact that establishments that are friendly to people with pets, including a guide dog, began to appear in the city.

The universality of the design of the city's hospitality industry was also analyzed. According to the results, only two sites of restaurant establishments and three sites of hotel





*Figure 7. The supply of restaurant establishments m. Kropyvnytskyi by the staff who is known to provide available services to guests with the experience of war, %*  
*Source: compiled by the author based on his own research*

enterprises of Kropyvnytsky have information about the availability of services, as well as effective visual support of guests that are part of low -mobility groups.

The study of the barrier space at the hospitality industry in Kropyvnytskyi showed that institutions do not effectively use a variety of innovations to attract guests who need special attention when receiving services. Institutions have a reserve and considerable potential for a new level of interaction with the target audience.

Formation of accessibility in the hospitality industry is a prerequisite for ensuring equal access to services, improving the quality of service and creating a comfortable space for all categories of visitors.

Proposals for creating a barrier-free environment at hotel and restaurant businesses:

- 1) Creation of educational mini-barrier centers on the basis of the city's hospitality industry. These can be several centers in individual neighborhoods of settlements;
- 2) Participation of staff in educational online courses for successful implementation of the concept of barrier in hospitality facilities. It is important that all the company staff have basic knowledge of inclusive service and understood their role in creating a comfortable environment for all guests. Managers and key employees should attend profile conferences, seminars and forums to get acquainted with new approaches to barrier -free service and exchange experience with colleagues [18];
- 3) organization and conduct of training sessions, seminars, round tables on accessibility of services for the publication of staff of institutions. It is recommended to hold regular offline or online meetings on the exchange of experience with employees of other institutions, networks;
- 4) collection of "Bank of non-standard situations", triggers, as well as their timely analysis and processing with staff;
- 5) development of instructions for "secret guests" that would take into account the issues of providing services to guests with disabilities, traumatic experiences, etc.;
- 6) creation of educational videos (series) on the issues of barrier and use in staff training, adaptation of new employees and more. The very preparation of such material will not only unite the staff, but also allow you to renew their knowledge again on the subject;

7) introduction into educational programs of higher education institutions for the specialties “241 hotel and restaurant business” and “242 tourism and recreation” of the disciplines “Barrier-free environment in HoReCa” and “Inclusivity in tourism”;

8) The Development of requirements for the design of the site of the hospitality industry. The website of the enterprise should contain information on the availability of an institution for people with disabilities and other low-mobility groups.

The elimination of physical barriers in enterprises is not always possible, and also requires significant financial investments. Therefore, you can start with staff training on correct communication with guests. For this purpose, it is worth organizing a series of educational events, including trainings/courses on the basics of barrier-free communication for executives and staff, where they will be able to get acquainted with modern practices.

It is not necessary to ignore the improvement of accessibility to web communication. The design of the site should be universal so that absolutely everyone can use it without special adaptation. The main principle of site accessibility is equality in use. The above criteria will ensure better perception of information and effective interaction with web content (Table 1).

Taking into account the mentioned above criteria it will contribute to the creation of an accessible space where every user, regardless of physical limitations, will be able to comfortably and effectively interact with the website and find information about the accessibility of services.

Therefore, the above proposals will become a fundamental basis in the development of methodological recommendations and instructions for creating a barrier-free environment in hospitality industry enterprises.

**Conclusions.** The conducted research allowed us to draw the following conclusions regarding the emphasis of society’s attention on the topic of barrier-free services in the HoReCa sector. It is noted that every person at a certain stage of life may encounter barriers such as physical, informational, psychological, economic and institutional. In order to destroy obstacles, an accessible space is created in which every person can feel harmonious. The international background has given a significant impetus to Ukrainian public figures and activists for the development of a barrier-free environment and deepening the knowledge of humanity. However, the results of the study of the accessibility of services at Ukrainian

Table 1

**The main criteria by which the universal design of a HoReCa establishment website is evaluated**

№	Universal website design criteria
1	Availability of information on the availability of location, availability of ramps, elevators, parking spaces
2	Availability of video and photo materials that reflect real examples of accessibility in the facility (photos of guests who are members of low-mobility population groups, etc.)
3	Providing visual support: contrasting colors and clear font
4	The site is well displayed and adapted to different screen sizes (viewing on both a laptop and a smartphone screen)
5	Information about inclusive (restaurant menu in Braille) / inclusive hotel rooms
6	Availability of videos with subtitles (videos of dishes, video reviews of rooms, videos about upcoming events at the establishment, etc.)
7	Alternative texts are available next to the photos that describe the images in them
8	Availability of contact channels for receiving additional information, feedback and suggestions
9	Using hashtags and keywords that indicate the accessibility of events at the venue, such as #AccessibleEvent

*Source: compiled by the author based on his own research*

enterprises of the hospitality industry demonstrated the inexperience and insufficient competence of the management of hotel and restaurant business establishments in matters of correct guest service. Therefore, a number of recommendations are proposed for adapting businesses to the needs of low-mobility population groups. Entrepreneurs who are interested in promoting business at the international level play a key role. Thanks to innovative approaches that emphasize barrier-free service, they provide all available resources for the professional development of staff. And the very adaptation of enterprises to barrier-free and accessibility standards allows you to harmonize the interests of business and society, strengthen the reputation of the enterprise as an institution that cares about everyone [18,19].

The introduction of barrier-free service is not only an ethically correct step, but also economically beneficial. This expands the base of potential guests, who, in turn, will be satisfied with a comfortable stay in a hospitality establishment. Therefore, we should not forget that business structures have certain obligations to society and must contribute to the development of equal opportunities.

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