

ELEVATOR 



Accessible Tourism Guide

Part 3 – Policy makers

Lift upward not just push ahead

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ACCESSIBLE TOURISM GUIDE | POLICY MAKERS

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INTRODUCTION

Accessibility is an important topic, in tourism yet often overlooked. It seems that the main reason for that is lack of knowledge and cooperation between key stakeholders.

This document is therefore created as a brief guideline introducing this topic and giving answers to 3 main questions:

- What is accessible tourism?
- How can accessibility in tourism be improved?
- What are the benefits of accessible tourism?

It has 3 parts where each part is dedicated to one VIP group, that play important role in development of accessible tourism: **Visitors, Tourism Industry, and Policy Makers.**

The first part “Be Actors more than Recipients” is dedicated to **Visitors**, i.e. all users of tourism infrastructures and services including residents, who could have more courage and be more pro-active in demanding accessible environments, products and services.

The second part “Be a level above rather than just a step ahead“, focuses on **Businesses in Tourism Industry**, i.e. tourism service providers, who should meet the accessible market demand and make their business more competitive and sustainable.

This last part “Lift upward not only push ahead“ is aimed at **Policy Makers**, i.e. politicians, public authorities, tourism boards and other decision makers in tourism and access policies on national, regional or local level, who are expected to take into account citizens’ needs and create a suitable environment for cooperation and motivation of all stakeholders in order to lift up tourism offer and environment for living.

Every group has its own particular role in the creation of accessible tourism products and destinations. The most important role, however, is to harmonize individual efforts in common strategy and communication. Success can be guaranteed only if these three main stakeholders work together as one team.

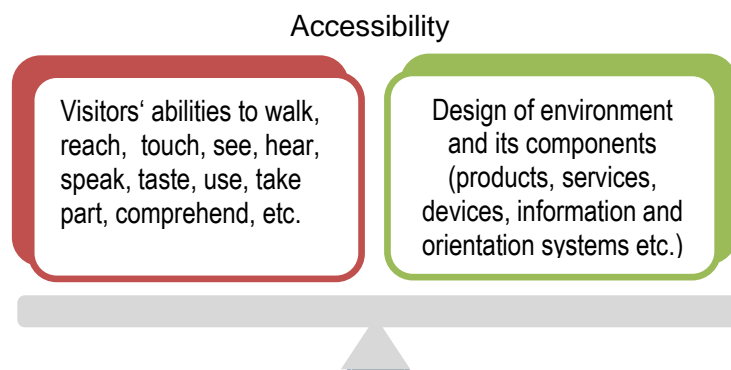
So, why wouldn't you create such a team?

„The source of our success is the cooperation of all stakeholders.“

(Józef Solecki, Manager of the Integration of People with Disabilities Section in Poznań City Hall; Access City Award 2014 – Third prize)

WHAT IS ACCESSIBLE TOURISM

Accessible Tourism (also called Tourism for All or Inclusive Tourism) is complex of products, processes and services that are designed, promoted, distributed and provided to meet specific access needs and requirements of visitors regardless of their age or abilities.



There are a lot of myths connected with accessible tourism or accessibility in general. The most common are:



”Accessible tourism is only for people with disabilities ...

Not at all! Although persons with disabilities have the greatest need of accessibility, accessible tourism covers the needs of a **variety of customers** with different access needs (not always visible) which can be caused by impairment, illness, injury, age, stature, foreign language proficiency or culture. **Any person**, who faces some difficulties in accessing, using or enjoying tourism services and facilities fully, comfortably, safely and independently, will prioritise accessible places.¹

Main Beneficiaries of Accessible Tourism

Persons with disabilities	Seniors with access needs	Others
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Persons with motor, hearing, vision or speech impairments, cognitive impairments, long-term health problems (e.g. respiratory and circulatory conditions or invisible disabilities) etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seniors with age-related impairments such as restricted mobility, ability to receive and process information, spatial and temporal orientation, difficulty in hearing, seeing, speaking etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children, pregnant women, persons with allergies, asthma and other chronic diseases, persons with injuries, carers of persons with disabilities, people with pushchairs and prams or with luggages, foreigners, etc.

In fact, accessible tourism can benefit everyone and all of us at least once in our lives will have a need for accessible environments, products and services.

¹ Source: World Tourism Organization (2016), Manual on Accessible Tourism for All: Principles, Tools and Best Practices – Module I: Accessible Tourism – Definition and Context, UNWTO, Madrid, <https://www.e-unwto.org/doi/pdf/10.18111/9789284418077>

... and it is a niche market.” 

On the contrary! Taking into account who is behind the term “person with access needs“, we cannot talk about a small market segment. Moreover, it is a loyal, growing market which brings competitive advantage and new opportunities to businesses². Accessible services have the potential to attract more potential customers, increase service quality and strengthen the image.

Basic facts about the accessible tourism market in EU



Source: European Commission (2014), Economic Impact and Travel Patterns of Accessible Travel in Europe – Final Report,

<http://ec.europa.eu/DocsRoom/documents/5566/attachments/1/translations/en/renditions/native>



”Accessibility means absence of architectural barriers.”

Well, not only. Accessibility is often narrowed down to the construction or adaptation of facilities but types of barriers and difficulties involved in tourism have a much wider scope and are present in all tourism and travel-related services.

Accessible destinations have to ensure the accessibility of the **complete value chain** including hotels, transport, attractions, free-time facilities, tourism information offices, information and booking systems, marketing and an inclusive attitude among all relevant actors. Accessibility measures in tourism have to be accompanied by adequate **accessibility of public spaces** and involvement of public bodies. Only coordinated efforts combining each phase of the visitor’s experience may lead to visitor satisfaction.



”Accessibility is expensive.”

Not always! Accessibility is not connected only with big financial investments. Even small adjustments and smart solutions can positively affect visitor’s decision and experience.

² Source: British Tourist Authority (VisitEngland), At your service, https://www.visitbritain.org/sites/default/files/vb-corporate/at_your_service_17.12.10.pdf

Examples of low-cost actions with positive impact on tourists with access needs:

- inclusive marketing
- accessible websites and information in alternative formats (raised text, audio/video format, plain language easy to understand, good contrast between the colour of text and background, appropriate font type easy to read, etc.)
- reliable information about accessibility of facilities and services
- trained staff
- technical aids and equipment to rent or loan (wheelchairs, bath chairs, toilet raisers etc.)
- free entry with guide dogs
- resting places where visitors can sit
- good lighting
- universally designed tourism products and activities

Efficiency of investment in accessibility is often measured as costs in relation to the number of visitors with disabilities. In fact, accessible measures improve safety and comfort and ensure that environment, products and services can be enjoyed by any person. That is why investment in accessibility should be perceived as an investment in dignity and quality for all.

“Přístupnost je ústředním prvkem jakékoli zodpovědné a udržitelné politiky” *Accessibility is a central element of any responsible and sustainable tourism policy. It is both a human rights imperative and an exceptional business opportunity. Above all we must come to appreciate that Accessible Tourism does not only benefit persons with disabilities or special needs; it benefits us all.”*

Taleb Rifai, UNWTO Secretary-General

HOW CAN YOU MAKE TOURISM MORE ACCESSIBLE



Be the driver and coordinator of accessible tourism in your destination

Development of accessible tourism requires coordination and involvement of subjects from the public and private sectors. This should be your main task. Show the tourism sector, by example, the direction they should take. Not only because “it is the right thing to do”, but for the sake of maintaining a sustainable development of business in a changing world.

Reaching a high level of accessibility is a long term process, which should be done gradually. To start with, you need to get informed about accessibility and understand it as a factor improving the quality of life, the quality of business and the whole society.

One of the most important steps is to integrate accessibility as a core issue in strategies, development plans and policies (not only in tourism) and be consistent with them in all relevant actions. Plan accessibility priorities and improvements in cooperation with tourism businesses and on the basis of research of accessibility of the offer in your destination and visitors’ feedback. Benchmark your efforts and make regular public progress reports.

Continuous monitoring of accessibility of your destination is strongly recommended, as a tool for developing accessibility further. This is the only way to identify the difficulties that visitors or residents with access requirements face in your destination.

Successful accessible destinations connect service providers in multi-stakeholder partnerships, working together on accessibility in the destination. Engagement of local stakeholders is an important driver.



Examples of inclusion of smart and easy accessible solutions in destinations

Barcelona, Spain

The Strategic Tourism Plan 2020 of Barcelona City Council includes actions and measures to promote better accessibility: “Barcelona needs to be turned into a destination where everyone, irrespective of their age and background, can enjoy and share experiences of visits by promoting measures that ensure universal accessibility.”

More information:

https://ajuntament.barcelona.cat/turisme/sites/default/files/documents/080517_resumexecutu_v01_en.pdf



Pull your weight to create accessible destination

Your participation in the creation of an accessible destination shouldn't stop on the political and strategic level. Your expected role is also on the practical level, at least in the creation of accessible environments and promotion of the destination.

Public environments and services are inseparable parts of the tourism industry. Ensure that any new construction or renovation of public spaces and buildings are designed in order to meet everybody's needs irrespective of age or abilities. In terms of services, great attention should be paid to accessibility of transport services, which represent one of the biggest barriers for the visitors.

It is also important to help the destination to inform visitors about accessible products and services. This information should be available in mainstream travel channels. Include accessibility features in your marketing and promotional tools. Use appropriate methods to measure the accessibility level of your destination. Involve visitors in the evaluation of accessibility, by asking them for feedback and asking about their satisfaction with accessibility parameters. This will help you to define accessibility priorities and improvements that really matter to your visitors.



Examples of promotion of accessible tourist destinations

Italy - campaign for tourism accessibility, called simply "hospitality for all". An interesting spot can be seen here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wis81eUts_I

Barcelona - has a very good website for Accessible Tourism <http://www.barcelona-access.cat/> with information about accessible attractions, transport, hotels and other services.

Visit Paris Region provides a comprehensive information service for persons with disabilities covering transport, access to monuments, attractions and museums and accessible accommodation, all via a single website. See <https://en.parisinfo.com/practical-paris/visiting-paris-with-a-disability>.

For more information and examples of Accessible Cities see the ENAT webpage at: <http://www.accessibletourism.org/?i=enat.en.accessible-cities>



Help business community in your destination

You should encourage the private sector to develop accessibility. There are many ways how you can do it.

A good start is to award a prize for good practices and to promote accessibility within businesses.

You can organise training programmes and workshops for the owners and managers, where you explain benefits of accessibility and good practices. A good incentive is also training programmes for the staff of local businesses on how to cater for and communicate with persons with access needs.

Creation of guidelines and counselling on how to make tourist facilities and services accessible is also one of the positive drivers that can help to improve the accessible tourism offer in your destination.

An important motivating factor is the provision of financial resources for investments in accessibility.

Incentives should be directed towards different actors in the tourism service chain. Even the smallest provider is extremely important, so as to guarantee the quality and accessibility of the whole destination.



Examples of complex and systematic approaches to improve accessibility

Portugal, “All for All” Campaign by the National Tourist Authority, Turismo de Portugal. It is addressed to all national tourism players. It aims at the adaptation and improvement of the tourist supply and its dissemination and promotion to all tourists. It has its own online channel, where technical information and useful content (videos included) about accessibility will be disseminated to tourist agents, to clarify that the supply’s adjustment lies in small gestures or adaptations, which do not always require big investments. It includes financial support for the creation of accessibility in tourist establishments, tourist entertainment companies, restaurants, travel agencies and public spaces and cultural facilities. More information: <http://www.accessibletourism.org/?i=enat.en.news.1987>

Prague, Czech Republic

Prague City Hall is implementing, in cooperation with experts and local stakeholders, a long-term project “Accessible and Open Prague”, which includes a number of activities and products improving accessibility of the capital city, such as:

- Creation of an expert group on the basis of impulses from citizens’ associations and individuals. Four years later the expert group transformed into the Committee of Prague City Council, a permanent advisory body with better negotiating position.
- Collecting citizens’ proposals for improvements of public space, cooperation with foreign projects and seeking inspiration abroad.
- Approval of policy for removing barriers in the public transport system in Prague and improving the use of public transport services by people with specific access needs. The goal of the Policy is to have completely barrier-free public transport in Prague by 2025.
- Online map of accessibility - survey of accessibility of buildings and public spaces for people with reduced mobility. The result of the survey is a map that contains detailed information about accessibility of the object or place including a photo gallery. There

are already more than a thousand objects and places in the map. The map is optimized for tablets and mobile phones.

- Raising awareness of accessibility issues among employees
- Investment measures - removing barriers in the public space - reconstruction of bus and tram stops, pedestrian crossings, pavements and footpaths, installation of lifts to metro stations, etc.
- Providing grants to the private entities to remove barriers at the entrances, toilets and to facilitate access to the buildings or space intended for the general public.
- A media campaign (planned activity) to inform the public about the issue of barriers in the public space and activities aimed at removing them. One of the aims of the campaign is also to educate the inhabitants to be friendly to their surroundings and not to create (unconscious) barriers for others.

Reference:

http://www.praha.eu/jnp/cz/o_meste/zivot_v_praze/praha_bezbarierova/index.html

Ljubljana, Slovenia

Ljubljana is the finalist of the EU Access City Award for the year 2018 (2nd prize) and 2015 (3rd prize), where it was recognized as an accessible city, actively developing accessibility and with strong commitment both on political and operational levels. Accessibility is integrated in overall city policy and work.

Here are examples of some activities that were done in Ljubljana to improve its accessibility:

- The city centre has been closed to motorised traffic; tactile paths and dropped crossings have been created, gaps between granite cobblestones have been filled in.
- Free transport service by electric vehicles in the city centre
- Accessible public transport network (vehicles and infrastructure)
- On-demand transport service for people with disabilities
- Free travel in the city for disabled residents and those travelling with them
- Elevators to the public garages and up to the castle (most visited tourist attraction)
- Accessible public toilets
- Protected buildings and historical heritage was made fully accessible
- Tactile model of the city and of the castle
- Accessible tourist information offices, tours for people with mobility difficulties
- Mandatory training on meeting the needs of disabled and older passengers for all bus drivers
- Open days - meetings with the mayor every month to listen to people's suggestions for improvement, including accessibility issues
- Direct involvement of older and disabled people in city policy-making through mayoral advisory bodies which offer advice on priorities for access improvements both to the city authorities and to private sector providers

- Action plans for improving accessibility with clear deadlines and concrete objectives. Improvements of accessibility are combined with sustainability issues (Ljubljana was named European Green Capital in 2016).
- Short video promoting accessibility of Ljubljana:
<http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1170&langId=en&videoId=2842&furtherVideos=no>

Reference: Access City Award 2015, Examples of best practice for making EU cities more accessible,

<http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=738&langId=en&pubId=7793&furtherPubs=yes>

VisitEngland - National Tourist Board

VisitEngland is the public body developing England's tourism, promoting Britain worldwide and supporting the tourism industry. Accessibility is an important component of their activities. VisitEngland is one of the best examples of systematic support of accessible tourism, not only in Europe but at global level.

Here is a brief list of what they are doing or have already done:

- Carries out research and provides data about the volume and value of accessible tourism market in England
- Produces, often in cooperation with disability organisations, reports, guidance and tools for businesses that help them to provide access for all, e.g.
 - tips on quick and low cost improvements to make facility accessible
 - how to write an Access Guide (formerly Access Statement). An Access Guide provides potential visitors with important accessibility information about a venue, facility or service and enables them to make informed decisions as to where to stay and visit in view of their requirements.
 - how to promote accessibility
 - guide for accommodation businesses how to improve accessibility
 - how to welcome customers with hearing loss, customers with assistance dogs or autistic customers
- Offers training for tourism staff raising their awareness of disability, publish learning material about accessible tourism market
- Awards prestigious VisitEngland Awards for Excellence; One of the categories is accessibility (Inclusive Tourism Award)
- Presents best practices - accessibility case studies
- Implements own projects with EU funding, e.g. Access for All (2014-2016) - a good practice example of public-private partnership. This project was focused on development of accessible tourism in 7 destinations, where the engaged businesses were supported with the help of access advisers and training. For each destination informative visitors' guides were created and they were promoted in national marketing campaigns in the mainstream press, aimed at people with access needs.
- Provides a range of guidance and tools for destinations, e.g. :

- guide that helps destination managers create a destination that meets the needs of older and disabled visitors
- guide on how to provide access information on destination website
- guidance on how to undertake a destination access audit
- Provides information for visitors - what to visit, where to stay, how to get there, guide to accessible coastal breaks, accessible countryside breaks and accessible city breaks in England

More information and inspiration including published guides and reports can be found at the website <https://www.visitbritain.org/providing-access-all> (for industry) and <https://www.visitengland.com/plan-your-visit/access-all> (for visitors)

WHAT CAN ACCESSIBILITY BRING YOU

Accessible tourism is a matter of equal rights to tourism services and a central element of any responsible and sustainable development policy.

For you, Policy Makers, it is primarily **a chance to develop your territory**, which is your main mission, and make it easy for local residents and visitors to live or stay there.

Accessibility of the city or region enables all citizens to participate fully in social life. Accessibility is nothing special or extra, it is a natural part and attribute of the territory that benefits everyone. It is an indicator of quality of life and a condition for sustainable development. It facilitates people with access needs in their everyday activities.

Benefits for Destinations

- Better place and environment to live - residents are the first who benefit from better accessibility of the environment and infrastructure
- More tax revenue – a more accessible destination attracts more visitors
- New job opportunities - more visitors positively influence the local economy, including the labour market
- Quality and competitive destination - accessibility brings better quality of the tourism offer and competitive advantage
- Better inclusion of people with disabilities in social and cultural activities - thanks to the better accessibility they can visit and enjoy these activities

„Improved accessibility brings not only reassurance and the necessary support to those who struggle with accessibility, but lasting economic and social benefits to the city and we will continue to place accessibility at the heart of everything we deliver“.

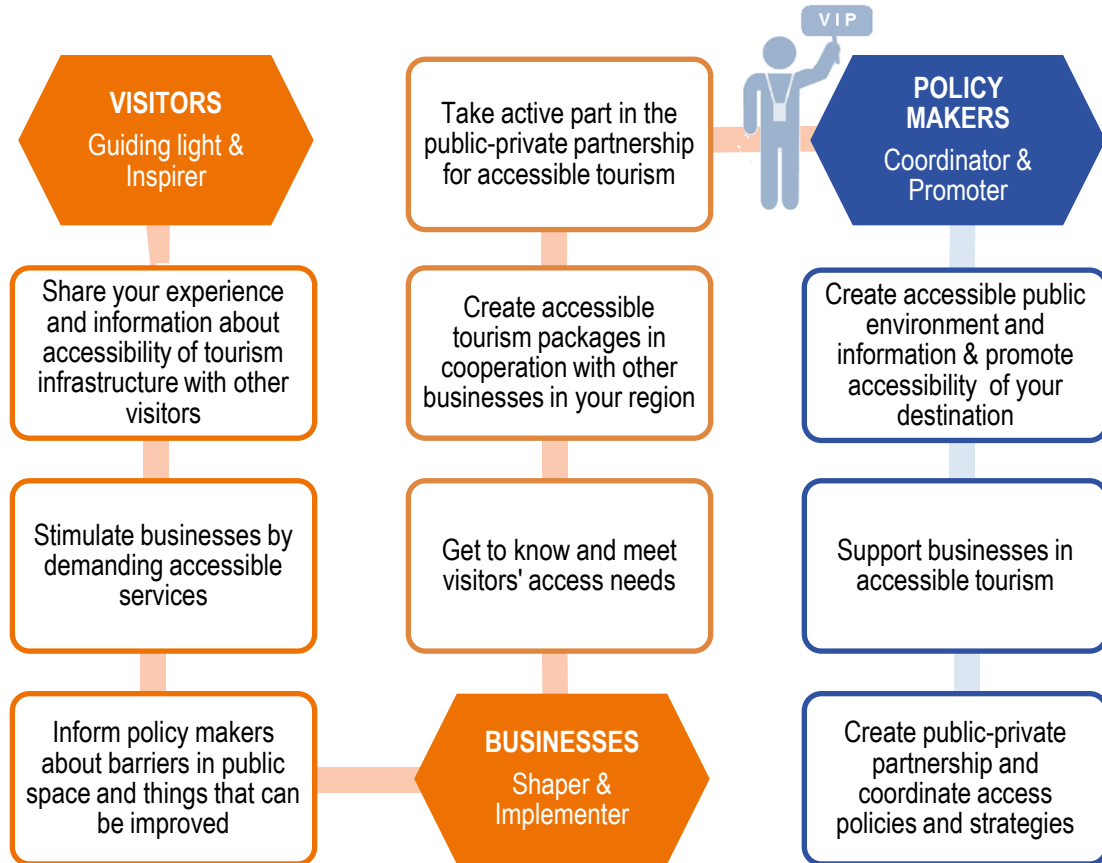
*Cllr Angela Claydon, Lord Mayor of Chester,
Accee City Award 2017, Winner*

<http://www.accessibletourism.org/resources/toolip/doc/2017/07/08/access-city-award-brochure-2017.pdf>

Development of accessible tourism is not only up to individual owners of tourist facilities and service providers. Individual and isolated solutions cannot bring all these benefits. It is a collective task, where everyone (every VIP group) has its role, which is equally important. The closer the cooperation between the partners, the better will be the results.

Where there's a will there's a way.

Role of VIP groups in accessible tourism





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