



Services and Facilities for Accessible Tourism in Europe

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Accessible for All**

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1. Executive Summary

The tourism sector in Europe is facing growing demands from travellers who want better access in hotels, at holiday destinations and tourist attractions. The number of European travellers in the 55+ age group is increasing and, together with disabled people and their families, these customers are looking for travel options where basic accessibility features are standard. Level access to buildings, large-print menus and accessible toilets are just some of the things that are needed. And tourism providers must be prepared to deliver accessible premises and venues, if they want to catch the rising tide of accessible tourism.

Every tourist has certain expectations about travelling and the destinations they choose to visit. It is estimated that for more than 27% of the European population, the availability of accessible venues and services is an essential factor in deciding where to go and what to book. Notably, studies have shown that disabled people are excluded from travelling and enjoying a holiday - at home or abroad - by a lack of suitable facilities and services. There is generally a lack of choice and lack of availability in terms of accessible accommodation, transport modes, attractions and activities. The market potential is enormous, with 50 million disabled people in Europe, and nearly all of them would like to travel with their families and friends. Added to this there are hundreds of millions of older people (within Europe and from overseas) who may have health and mobility problems associated with ageing but they have the economic means and the desire to travel.

The European Network for Accessible Tourism (ENAT) aims to help tourism providers to meet these demands. ENAT is a new network for travel and tourism businesses and organisations that support – or want to know more about – making tourism accessible for all customers across Europe. The Network aims to build bridges between travel and tourism businesses operating in Europe, specialist advisors, policy-makers, researchers, tourism education institutions, consumer organisations and Non-Governmental Organisations, all of whom share the goal of creating more accessible destinations and offers for tourists.

As part of the two year ENAT work programme 2006 – 2007, a study of services and facilities for accessible tourism in Europe was conducted by Toegankelijkheidsbureau (Belgium). This report presents an overview of the definitions of accessible tourism, the target public and their specific needs, leading to an overview of services and facilities that tourism providers can adopt to improve accessibility.

Accessible services should be regarded as an essential adjunct to an accessible environment. Good design and accessible buildings cannot deliver truly accessible tourist experiences on their own. It is therefore vital that tourism providers develop and improve their services.

Good practices in the provision of accessible facilities and services can act as examples to inspire and encourage the tourism industry to make their offers more accessible. This study provides some examples from various sectors of tourism and different parts of Europe, pointing to resources and references which can assist providers in their commitment to make tourism accessible, so as to meet the needs of all consumers.

2. The Accessible Tourism Market

2.1 Introduction

A recent study by the University of Surrey, UK¹, puts the potential accessible tourism and travel market at more than 143 million people, (or 27% of the EU population), with expected tourism revenues upwards of 83 billion Euros for European travellers alone.

Taking into account people with disabilities, older people, pregnant women, families with young children and those who have other functional, health or mobility limitations, it is clear that some 30 to 40 % of all Europeans would benefit greatly from improved accessibility in tourist facilities and services. Figure 1 gives an indication of some of the target groups.



Figure 1. Accessible tourism promotion literature. Source: www.ossate.org

However, only a very small percentage of the industry addresses the market for accessible tourism. From a survey of Member States of the European Union it has been estimated that only a very limited proportion of facilities are accessible for people who use wheelchairs: 1,5% of restaurants & catering facilities, 6,5% of accommodation establishments and 11,3% of attractions². It appears that while the market potential is very high, the tourism industry as a whole is lagging far behind in terms of matching its services to customers' access demands.

Today, the majority of hotels, transportation facilities and tourist sites are not physically accessible for many people with disabilities and older persons. In addition, accurate (and accessible) information about the access characteristics of destinations and venues is lacking. In general, it is also rare for personnel at tourist venues to be trained in how to "meet and greet" people with a disability.

The lack of governmental policies and strategies for the promotion of accessible tourism in some countries might be partly the reason for some of the private sector's lack of progress in

¹ OSSATE Accessibility Market and Stakeholder Analysis (2005) available in PDF format from: http://www.ossate.org/doc_resources/OSSATE_Market&Stakeholder%20Analysis_Public_Version_Fin_a..pdf

² OSSATE, op cit. pp. 74-75.

this area. For example, few of the national tourist boards in EU Member States have well developed information, tools or incentives that can help tourism businesses to leverage the accessible tourism market. Where 'good practices' do exist, they are often not recognised as examples to follow, and the business advantages of accessible tourism are given little emphasis in tourism development policy.

Clearly, *accessibility* is not a widely used 'buzzword' in the tourism sector today and even less practiced. It is perhaps worth considering that the same might have been said about the word "sustainability" in relation to tourism some 10 years ago. The "inconvenient truth" of the negative impacts on our global environment caused by human activities has hastened a rising environmental awareness. This has led to new trends in travel and tourism in the past decade, with "eco-tourism" appearing as a new phenomenon. Similarly, we would predict that tourism will be transformed significantly in the coming years, as population ageing leads to increasing demand for and supply of "accessible tourism" offers.

Although a large group of people benefits from a fully accessible environment we will focus in the remaining part of this section on two groups of people for whom accessibility is a necessary condition for participation: (1) people with a disability; and (2) older people. In particular we will focus on the diversity of these target groups and the ways in which they benefit from accessibility measures.

2.2 People with a disability

The group of people with disability is very diverse and includes people with motor impairments as well as people with visual or hearing impairments, people with mental disabilities as well as persons with respiration problems or allergy, each with his or her own needs. Disability also has a high correlation with age: elderly people can achieve a mixture of impairments due to age. Studies indicate that over 50 million people in Europe are disabled.

This report follows the bio-psychosocial model of disability on which the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF) (ICF, 2001) is based. This model synthesizes both the medical and social models and views disability as complex phenomena that is both a problem at the level of a person's body, and a complex and primarily social phenomena. This model is gaining wider and wider acceptance as the basis for policy, legislation and practice.

The medical model of disability, which was the leading model some years ago, viewed disability as a feature of the person, directly caused by disease, trauma or other health condition, which inquires medical care provided in the form of individual treatment by professionals. (WHO, 2002). *The Social model* of disability on the other hand, views disability as a socially created problem and not at all an attribute of an individual, which demands a political response. (WHO, 2002)

Disability and functioning are viewed in the ICF as outcomes of interactions between **health conditions** (diseases, disorders and injuries) and **contextual factors** (both external environmental factors and internal personal factors).

Therefore disability involves a dysfunction at one or more of the following levels: body or body part, the whole person, and the whole person in a social context.

	Part 1: Functioning and Disability		Part 2: Contextual Factors	
Components	Body Functions and Structures	Activities and Participation	Environmental Factors	Personal Factors
Domains	Body functions Body structures	Life areas (tasks. Actions)	External influences on functioning and disability	Internal influences on functioning and disability
Constructs	Change in body functions (physiological) Change in body functions (anatomical)	Capacity Executing tasks in a standard environment Performance Executing tasks in a current environment	Facilitating or hindering impact of features of the physical, social and attitudinal world	Impact of attributes of the person
Positive aspects	Functional and structural integrity	Activities Participation	Facilitators	<i>Not applicable</i>
	Functioning			
Negative aspects	Impairment	Activity limitation	Barriers/ hindrances	<i>Not applicable</i>
	Disability			

Figure 2 The International Classification of Functioning, Disability & Health (ICF, 2001)

Persons with disabilities represent a significant part of the population. The total number of disabled people in Europe has been estimated by various authors and organisations. These estimations vary between 10 to 15% of the population.

A recent study by Surrey University, conducted within the framework of the OSSATE-project mentions the Dupré and Karjalainen data published in Eurostat (2003) as being the most reliable and detailed source. According to these researchers, one in six persons (15,7%) of the working population (aged 16 to 64 years) have either a long-standing health problem or a disability.

Prevalence of disability and long- standing health problems (LSHP) also greatly differ along countries: between 5.8 and 32.2% (Eurostat 2003). This variation, however, should be put in perspective as it is dependent on different definitions of disability. The label of “long-standing health problems” might also be a statistical artefact related to the conditions in some countries for receiving health-related benefits, such as free prescriptions or treatments.

Of all LSHP, four main groups of impairments can be defined:

- Mobility impairments: 37%
- Mental/intellectual impairments: 9,7%
- Sensory/communication impairments: 7,0%
- Hidden impairments: 46,3%

Other persons that might have special needs regarding services and facilities provided by the tourism industry are people with asthmatic problems and those who need particular diets or have allergy problems.

2.3 Older people

Disability has a high correlation with age: older people can acquire a mixture of impairments due to age. Although most of old persons will not label themselves as disabled, they will benefit from improved access. The proportion of the older people in the populations of developed countries is rising dramatically.

This increase of the ageing population is predicted worldwide. Factors explaining this growth are threefold: the baby-boom generation of 1945 to 1965 reaching 65+ in 2010, the decrease of the fertility rates since 1965 and the increasing life expectancy at older ages (OECD,2005).

It is assumed that within few years (by 2010) in Europe, 18,5% of the population will be 65 years or older. By 2040 this number will increase till one in 3 persons or 30%.

Results of a study on the ageing population in Europe (U.S. Census Bureau, 2005) show a relative high positive correlation between age and the occurrence of Long-standing Health Problems or Disabilities for 25 European Countries..

The increase in the ageing population, as well as the positive correlation with LSHP stresses the necessity for accessibility measures and shows a big market for accessible tourism.

2.4 Differences in needs

People have different accessibility needs. There are different types and different degrees of impairments. Figure 4 shows the relation between both.

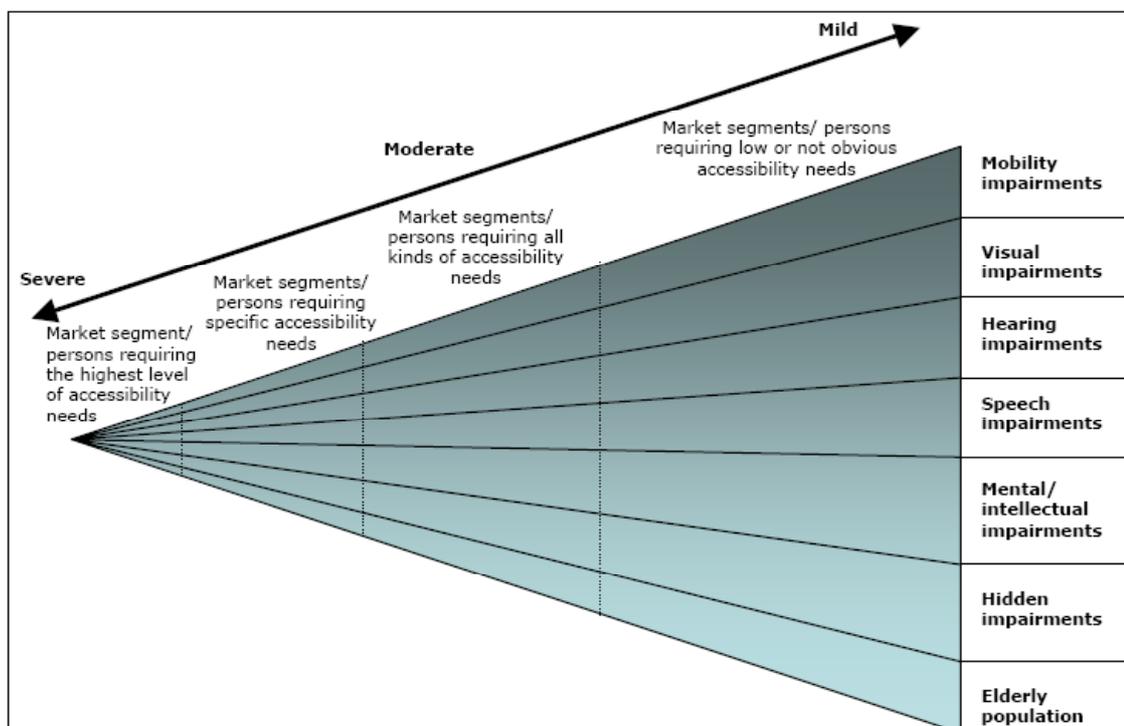


Figure 3 Pyramid of demand types: the continuum of abilities (source: University of Surrey, 2006)

The figure above denotes a theoretical continuum of market segments which follow the gradation in severity of disability and access requirements. However, in practice, the provisions that must be implemented for enabling different categories of disabled persons to access and use tourism facilities will vary greatly depending not only on the type of disability but also the way these provisions are designed and managed. It is often assumed that the more severe disabilities may only be accommodated by greater (and more expensive) access provisions, but this is not always the case and should not be taken as a general rule. Furthermore, it is difficult – if not impossible - to completely satisfy all persons' access needs in the best way. Sometimes accessibility measures for one group may even be 'bad' for an other group (e.g. a small threshold at an entrance might be useful to people with a visual impairment as some kind of signage to the entrance, but could be a real problem to a wheelchair user).

What is necessary in the context of tourism and travel is to focus on measures that ensure, as far as possible, a fully independent use of the facilities and services by all customers.

2.2 Creating accessible services and facilities

2.2.1 Terminology of accessibility

What makes a facility or service accessible for disabled people and others? The answer to this question is not straightforward as the term 'accessibility' is not defined in a mutually agreed way: different actors (consumers, designers, policy makers) and different regions and countries interpret the word according to their traditions, cultures, professional practices, legislations, etc. Different interpretations and applications have produced a variety of uses of the term across Europe. Even accessibility standards produced by National Standardisation Organisations give varying norms.

In general, policies and practices on accessibility in Europe refer to two main aspects, referring to who the access intended for and what can the user do in the accessible environment.

Who? – means **Independent** access on an **equal basis** (e.g. not being obliged to enter by the back door), **by all** (persons with and without a disability).

What? – refers to how easy it is to approach (**get there**) and enter (**get in**) buildings, outdoor areas and other facilities and to **use** buildings, facilities, products, etc.

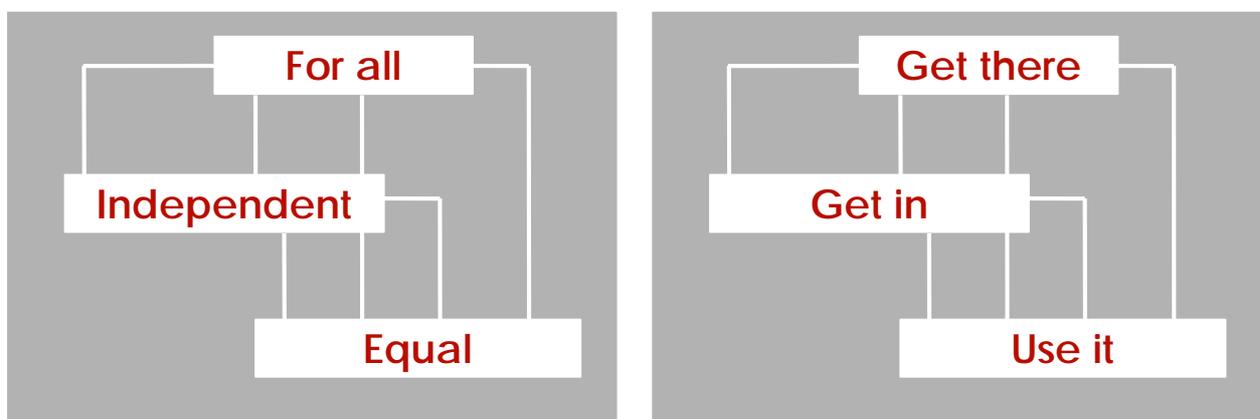


Figure 4 The basic components of accessibility

Accessibility must be seen as a social right, which concerns all citizens. It cannot be limited to the group of people in a wheelchair or other (typical) groups of people with a disability, such as people with visual impairments, people that are deaf or hard of hearing, people with a mental impairment, etc. All of these must be included, but accessibility applies equally to those with less visible ailments or health conditions, such as people with asthma or allergies, people with short-term or chronic illnesses. Also older, frail persons, families with small children, people with luggage, big and small people, tall people, people handling goods, are affected by poor accessibility. Indeed everyone benefits from an accessible environment and society: Accessibility generates more quality, more comfort, more security.

Accessibility refers not only to the built environment and physical barriers. Physical access is of course a basic condition for giving access to people with severe mobility impairments but accessibility is also about the accessibility of websites and written documents, signage, communication, transportation, and even disability awareness on the part of personnel in the tourism sector: in short, the provision of *accessible services*.

Accessible services are a key concept in achieving user-friendly tourism for everyone.

2.2.2 The chain of accessibility

Accessibility is often described as a chain, made up of many links. For example, to access a building requires an accessible parking space and entrance, reception hall, meeting rooms, toilets, signage, information, etc. Our experience of the accessibility of places is also built up according to the ways in which they may be related to each other: for example, people go to work and pass a grocery store before going back home. People walk, take their car or a bus to go from one place to another, etc.

As in all chains, the access chain is only as strong as the weakest link. Accessibility is highly interdependent on different stages of processes. Thus, a fully accessible city-house is not usable for wheelchair users if it is not possible for them to get there, an attraction park is not accessible if the public toilets do not include an accessible facility, a museum is not interesting for blind people if they can not touch objects or have an audio-description, etc.

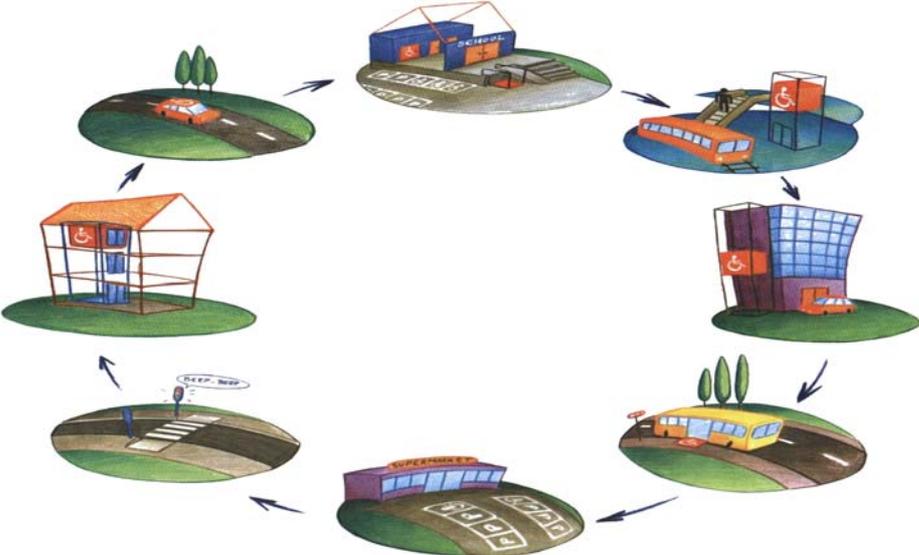


Figure 5 Accessibility: chain-structure

2.3 Universal Design – Design for All

A good design is an important condition for accessibility. Buildings, environments, products, communications and services that were designed, taking in to account the different needs of users, do not require special action or adaptations afterwards to make them more accessible. People refer to this kind of design with terms such as ‘Design for all’ or ‘Universal Design’.

Ron Mace has defined Universal Design as

*‘... the design of products and environments to be usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialized design’.*³

This designing concept includes 7 principles:

- 1) Equitable Use
The design is useful and marketable to people with diverse abilities.
- 2) Flexibility in Use
The design accommodates a wide range of individual preferences and abilities.
- 3) Simple and Intuitive Use
Use of the design is easy to understand, regardless of the user's experience, knowledge, language skills, or current concentration level.
- 4) Perceptible Information
The design communicates necessary information effectively to the user, regardless of ambient conditions or the user's sensory abilities.
- 5) Tolerance for Error
The design minimizes hazards and the adverse consequences of accidental or unintended actions.
- 6) Low Physical Effort
The design can be used efficiently and comfortably and with a minimum of fatigue.
- 7) Size and Space for Approach and Use
Appropriate size and space is provided for approach, reach, manipulation, and use regardless of user's body size, posture, or mobility.

Special arrangements to fit all users need to be designed without the stigmatisation or medical looks special arrangements ‘for the handicapped’ often have.

However, in the past (but still nowadays), a lot of buildings, facilities and products were not designed following these seven principles. Therefore there is a necessity to make all these existing ‘situations’ more accessible for all.

³ http://www.design.ncsu.edu/cud/about_ud/about_ud.htm

3. Accessible Tourism

3.1 The tourism chain

Like accessibility, tourism can also be viewed as a chain-like phenomenon. Tourism consists of a complex system of activities and services, which have numerous inter-relationships. These activities are to a large extent linked to the journey a tourist makes. Before travelling people look for information, go through a decision process and book their trip or holiday. Next they take a plane, car, train or bus to go to their destination, they arrive at their accommodation (a hotel, a camping, a holiday flat, a B&B, etc.). At their destination they go out to have a drink or a meal, they visit attractions, they go out shopping, etc. At the end of their holiday the travel back home and they share their experiences with others.

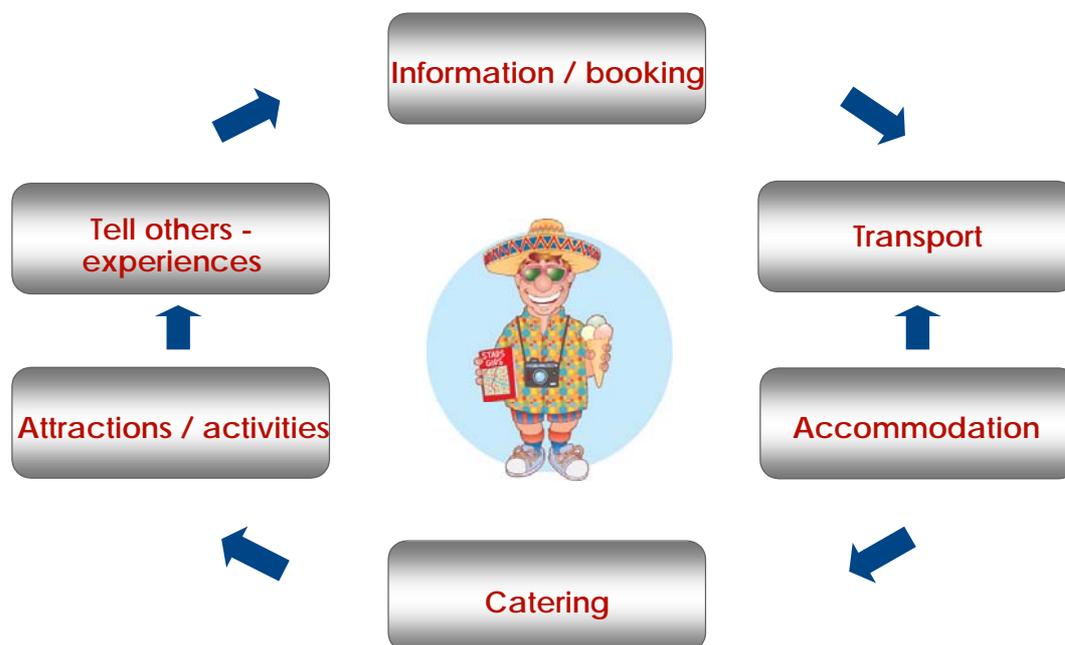


Figure 6 Tourism chain: interconnections

Accessible tourism takes into account this complexity. This implies that accessibility should be integrated within the whole chain; in booking, information provision, transport, the accommodation itself, attractions, staff attitudes, excursions, meals, etc.

The lack of appropriate accessibility measures in one link of the chain could have an enormous impact on the whole chain: e.g. (1) a wheelchair user that has booked a fully accessible room in a hotel, but isn't able to get to his room because of steps at the entrance of the hotel, (2) a person with a gluten allergy, who is not able to find a restaurant at the destination that serves gluten-free meals, and so on.

Following the 'links' of the tourist journey, several questions rise:

- Information and marketing: How easy is it to access information? In what format is information offered? Are websites accessible? What level of accessibility information is given? Is marketing inclusive – does it reflect the needs and interests of older and disabled people where appropriate?
- How easy is it to book (using the web, by phone, by email, etc.)?
- How easy is it to travel from door to door?
- At the destination: are accommodations, attractions, restaurants, bars, cafes, etc. accessible? How easy is it to get around? What information is offered?

Making tourism accessible doesn't always require big changes. Often some small changes and a raised awareness of critical issues can make a big difference. Staff training can go a long way towards alleviating or overcoming structural difficulties.

3.2 Target consumers

Who are the target consumers for accessible tourism services? As stated before: it is clear that older people and (most severely) disabled persons face the biggest barriers regarding accessibility. Therefore they are groups that can benefit most from accessible tourism. The type and extent of their functional impairments can have various impacts on whether and how they take a holiday, as shown in figure 6, below.

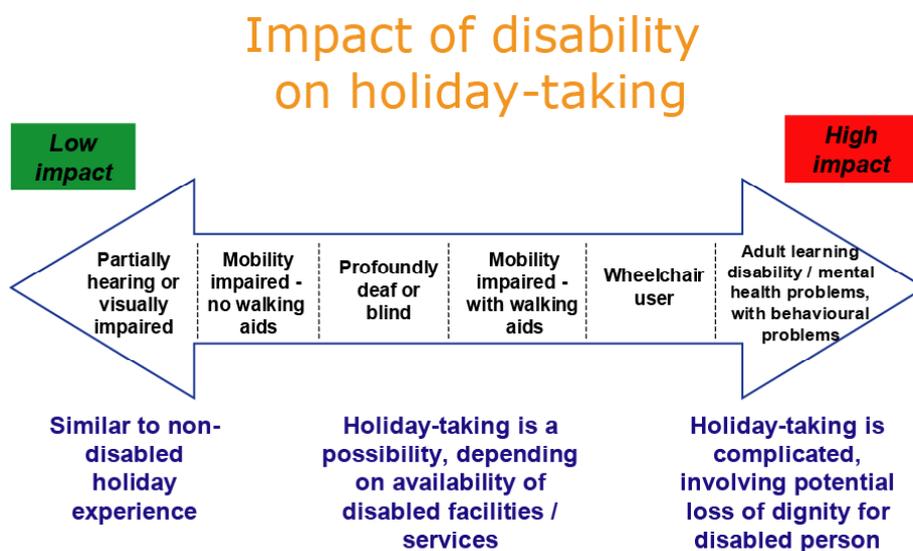


Figure 7 Impact of disability on holiday-taking (source: VisitBritain)

However, as stated previously, the total group that will actually benefit from accessible tourism is a lot larger compared to the number of people with a disability. People of all ages and abilities can benefit from accessible tourism: small children benefit from being able to reach things that are placed within reach of wheelchair users, both children and visitors who don't speak the local language benefit from the use of pictograms and clear information and signs. Even visitors who are in a hurry or may have forgotten their glasses can benefit from good signage. Improvement of the accessibility in tourism will therefore improve the quality and comfort of all travellers, visitors and guests.

Last but certainly not least, it is important to mention that the target group of accessible tourism isn't limited to tourists with and without disabilities, but includes also people working within the tourism sector, policy makers, etc. It is clear that efforts to improve accessibility of hotels, transport, travel agencies, etc. aren't only for the benefit of tourists. Another important economic aspect (besides from the higher market segment attracted) is the creation of new employment opportunities for people with disabilities.

3.3 Making tourism facilities and services accessible: a two way approach

Key principles

- A person with a disability has the right to have a holiday or travel on business like everyone else
- Like other travellers, the wishes and the way they want to spend their holiday differs widely
- Disabled people should not be hindered in their choice because of a lack of accessibility
- There is not a 'specific type of disabled traveller'
- Therefore the whole range of tourism facilities needs to be made accessible for a larger group of users
- For certain groups more is needed than an accessible infrastructure: care, therapy, rehabilitation training may be needed when away from home.

Ensuring good physical accessibility and services is of utmost importance when creating a destination suitable for all customers. This applies when upgrading existing facilities and services or when starting "from scratch".

Physical access includes, for example, creating level access routes (possibly by means of ramps in existing venues), adding good signage, making part of a reception desk lower to allow easy communication with wheelchair users, installing adapted toilets and adding contrast markings to large glass doors and windows.

But accessible tourism is about more than just providing physical accessibility. Many types of facilities can be made more accessible by improving the quality of service provisions:

Types of Accessible Services

Information: The provision of (accurate and detailed) travel and tourism information, including information about accessibility as well as the provision of this information in accessible formats such as the world wide web and digital or large print versions or brochures.

Assistance: Staff or volunteer assistance in specific places or for certain activities, e.g. shopping, beach access, porter service for baggage.

Special diets: E.g. providing meals for people with allergies.

Hire or loan of equipment: Tourism services like car hire can include adapted vehicles or additional service such as a transportable electric scooter. Beach wheelchairs, walking aids, etc. can also be hired out or lent to customers.

Activity packages: Tourism packages that are accessible for all customers.

When considering which accessible services to provide, either in an existing venue or as a new venture, tourism providers are faced with the usual consideration of how much "Return On Investment" (ROI) they might expect. This equation is intrinsically linked to market factors such as the customer segments they can attract, the numbers of customers over time and how much customers are willing to spend. On the investment side, providers must weigh the costs of providing the services, the way in which services are packaged and priced, and the possible need for staff training (and/or recruiting additional staff) so that the personnel have the appropriate qualifications to serve the anticipated visitors.

Two main strategies are found in the way tourism enterprises deliver accessible tourism services. First there is, 'Specialised' provision which characterises those tourism offers which are specially tailored to particular groups of disabled customers. Secondly there is the 'Mainstreaming' approach, which is to incorporate provisions for disabled people in the general tourism offers for all customers. Between these two approaches there are also various 'mixed' approaches which combine aspects of both specialised and mainstreaming provisions.

'Specialised' providers, whose premises and services are equipped to accommodate tourists with one or more types of disabilities, have been present in small numbers in many European countries for several years and in some cases even decades. In recent years, driven by market demand (and legislation in some countries) tourism providers have increasingly started to incorporate accessible provisions as part of their offers to customers. Generally speaking, tourism policies and practices in Europe are now moving towards the position of promoting 'mainstream accessible provisions if possible, specialised when necessary'.

3.3.1 Mainstreaming accessibility in tourism

A qualitative research study by NOP consumer on behalf of VisitBritain (2003) revealed that disabled consumers in the UK generally preferred accessible tourism accommodation to be in the mainstream tourism sector and not 'specialist-disabled'.

Respondents mentioned the disadvantages of specialist-disabled accommodation as 'implying segregation and high cost', and 'excluding other able-bodied holiday party members'.

Results of a recent study by Vos (2007) partly confirm these findings: If possible, holidays with a special focus on care for persons with high-end access needs should be organised in the mainstream tourism sector, as the majority of families with children prefer to go on holiday with their family and stay in accommodation which reflects 'the holiday feeling and atmosphere'. On the other hand, because of the necessity of care and medical treatment and the provision of specific services and facilities for these people with high-end needs, it is not always possible to organise these holidays within the mainstream venues.

In keeping with European and national policies for social integration and equal treatment of all citizens, it is desirable that tourists with disabilities should have the opportunity to find their interests within the regular tourism supply, and should not be 'obliged' to choose specially adapted accommodations, facilities and solutions.

When considering the variety of demand types according to the variety of impairments and the level of accessibility needs, probably not every accommodation and tourism facility will be able to serve all people in the best way but they can open their premises for a huge market by improving their accessibility, even by implementing relatively simple and low-cost measures.

Customers, such as older persons, who are not 'legally-disabled' but require a good level of access do not see themselves in need of special services and hence they seek to purchase tourism products from mainstream providers. Moreover, disabled people with moderate or low access needs do not feel that they should be obliged to use specialised facilities that may stigmatise them and they too argue for an inclusive design and service.

For providers who seek to adopt an accessibility-mainstreaming approach, this also entails attracting tourists via regular tourism information channels. Tourism offices, travel agents, websites, etc. should provide tourists with reliable information on the accessibility of

destinations. Two important issues are related to this: (1) reliable and detailed information on accessibility should be available, and (2) this information should itself be presented in formats that are accessible to people with disabilities, e.g. as accessible web pages or in text, audio or Braille formats.

An important consideration within mainstreaming tourism is price! Traditionally international hotels (4-star or 5-star) usually have more accessible facilities (although in most cases not enough), but these come at a premium price. Policies for mainstreaming tourism for all require an equal distribution of accessible accommodation in all price-categories. Where decision-makers in the public sector or in private enterprises are considering the introduction of accessible services, it is advisable to promote accessibility within smaller hotels or accommodation (e.g. also Bed & Breakfast) from the mid-price of the cheaper segment, as these accommodations are favoured by many disabled users because of their small scale and personally tailored service.

Many of today's owners of 'regular' hotels appear hard to convince when they are encouraged to make their accommodation more accessible, as they mention that they "never have any disabled guests or enquiries from disabled people". Probably this is a circular argument: the lack of accessible accommodation and reliable information in mainstream tourism may push tourists with disabilities to specialised tourism.

The key to effective mainstreaming of accessible tourism provisions is to ensure that the access requirements of as wide a range of disabled groups as possible are incorporated in the facilities and services. Providers should try to ensure that relevant 'accessibility components' are considered in all their services. It is not sufficient, for example, for a hotel to establish wheelchair accessible guestrooms without making the main service areas, such as dining rooms, corridors, lifts, entertainment and conference facilities wheelchair accessible too.

Mainstreaming accessibility requirements in tourism calls for an holistic approach to design and management of facilities and services, which is usually best achieved by assigning overall responsibility for access issues to a member of the venue management team.

But despite the best initiatives of a tourism provider, such as a hotel owner, improving the access of a venue *alone* cannot ensure a seamless 'chain of accessibility' for the visitor. Access to surrounding areas and attractions is equally important. While some accommodation owners may provide wheelchair accessible minibuses for transfers, these are usually only found at 'specialised' facilities. Without accessible transport and an accessible environment in the area surrounding the venue, tourists may be isolated and unable to enjoy the local attractions. Pavements, signage, lighting, pedestrian crossings and local services are some of the elements to be considered.

Public authorities have a vital role to play concerning area-wide application of accessibility measures in the built environment and in public transport. The public sector may also play a part in developing accessibility and disability awareness training and support for retail and service enterprises in some regions. Essentially, all local tourism and service businesses should be part of a general 'accessibility upgrade' for the benefit of tourists and local citizens alike.

Tourists with disabilities or other accessibility requirements, just like anyone else, should have the opportunity to choose their accommodation and the attractions they visit based on location, atmosphere and price and not just because the venue may be the only one that fits their access needs. This is the key goal a truly 'mainstreaming' approach to accessible tourism.

3.3.2 Specialised tourism and 'Care tourism'

Why do people choose specialised tourism offers? Is it a conscious choice, or because other accommodations and venues simply don't suit them? In the area of specialised tourist venues catering for disabled persons, the focus is particularly on holiday tourists.

Although hotels and accommodations designed according to the principles of universal design will satisfy the majority of tourists, some persons with disabilities are dependent on specialised care, medical treatment and services when they are on holiday. For example, people with more severe disabilities, persons who are chronically ill people or persons in early stages of rehabilitation may need extra care and special equipment or technical aids at their holiday destination. For these tourists specialised tourism is often a necessity: 'regular' accommodations are often not equipped to welcome them, nor is the staff able to provide the care they need.

In such cases 'care tourism', as it is sometimes known, offers tailored and specialised care and activities away from home, even for persons who may have quite extensive care requirements.

Specialised accommodation and care packages are often the best (or the only) solution for disabled people who travel in a group. Where many hotels or accommodations provide one or just a few accessible rooms, a larger group may need a range of accessible rooms and possibly extra rooms for carers and medical staff accompanying them. In this way, groups of disabled people are often obliged to use the specialised tourism facilities, with or without care services. However, groups travelling with carers often have higher access needs requiring technical aids that can't be provided within mainstream tourist accommodations. However, recent studies such as Vos, 2007, mention there is a trend among persons with disabilities away from having group-holidays to individual holidays, often accompanied by family and friends.

Specialised (Care) Tourism

- Care tourism for individuals and groups (institutions, organisations) requires a different approach from mainstream tourism
- 40 % (individuals and groups) do not go on holidays because of the lack of assistance or care.
- It is important to be able to rely on a 'safe environment' (specialised care and assistance nearby)
- Individuals and groups don't expect assistance from hoteliers, but would like staff in general to be trained in how to cater for people with a disability
- People appreciate the availability of technical aids (e.g. shower wheelchair, hoists, adjustable bed,..).
- Individuals are willing to pay extra for technical aids in the hotel.

3.3.3 Uniting mainstream and specialised approaches

The question is not whether mainstreaming 'OR' specialised is best for the market of people who require accessibility: both are needed. Customers expect to have the freedom to choose which kind of tourism accommodation suits them best in terms of their expectations, the care and services they need, and personal preference. Therefore mainstreaming and specialised tourism should be viewed as complementary.

Another important argument for maintaining both approaches is that people have different expectations about the other guests in their accommodation: some disabled tourists prefer to

share experiences with others who are 'in the same situation', whilst others prefer to mix with tourists who aren't disabled or care-dependent.

The expectations of tourists with disabilities about a holiday are generally the same as those of other tourists: they want to rest, relax, escape from routine and to find novelty in their travel experiences, strengthen family bonds, improve general well-being and have fun. As all tourists, tourists with disabilities also want to 'have been there' and to have experienced new things. Escaping from routine also includes not being confronted with access barriers all the time, as they typically face problems of inaccessibility on a daily basis. The provision and guarantee of accessible services and facilities creates a good basis for disabled persons to go on a trip and enjoy a holiday (together with families and friends). The same can also be said for disabled business tourists: they expect that their personal needs can be met at the venue, which requires accessible facilities and services.

4. Good practices in accessible tourism

4.1 Good practices overview

One of the principle aims of the European Network for Accessible Tourism (ENAT) is to enable tourism enterprises, public authorities, NGOs and other actors and stakeholders in the tourism sector to share experiences and promote good policies and practices in accessible tourism.

With this in mind, the network has built up a collection of examples concerning disability and accessibility issues in tourism and travel. Sharing good examples is an instructive way to support the dialogue about accessibility issues and to encourage the tourism industry to improve its practices.

Carefully selected “good practices” show how knowledge and ideas can be translated into practical tools. Examples cover policies and strategies for the public sector, planning and procurement guidelines for the tourism industry, awareness-raising methods, specialised training programmes, schemes for promoting employment and improving working conditions for disabled workers in tourism, and research and development projects.

ENAT researchers and members have gathered information in an on-line database covering almost 50 projects and good practices that address accessible information, services, facilities and training in the tourism sector. From these examples everyone can learn by seeing what works and then picking those tools and policies that might be adapted to their own situation.

Why not “best practice”?

ENAT’s philosophy is to gather and share many ‘good practices’ among its network members, rather than point to a few ‘best practices’. Without international standards it would be presumptuous to define ‘best practices’ in accessible tourism, and often a range of good practices may give useful input when developing or adapting facilities or services. The key is to find examples which have proved their worth in practice, and provide sufficient information about them to allow the reader to judge what is useful for their particular case. By offering detailed solutions for a variety of situations, we believe that tourism providers and others can make better informed choices when making improvements to their practices. Meanwhile, ENAT plans to collaborate with others to develop internationally recognised standards for accessible tourism which can lead to clearly defined best practice guidelines in the future.

ENAT’s website provides a Resource Centre that includes a ‘Projects and good practices’ section that continuously distributes good practices from all over Europe and further afield. http://www.accessibletourism.org/?i=enat.en.enat_projects_and_good_practices

After logging in to the site, ENAT Members can fill in a ‘projects and good practices’ submission form directly on the webpage. These forms are sent to the ENAT Editor. The good practices are reviewed by the editor and are, if appropriate, added to the site. When the example is displayed on the site other members can ‘Post a comment’ if they have anything to add. The comments, which may be positive, negative or simply informative, are moderated by the ENAT secretariat before publication. In this way there is an opportunity for ‘peer review’ of the submitted examples.

Figure 8 shows the ‘Projects and Good Practices’ submission form.

Figure 8 ENAT Projects and good practices – submission form

ENAT
European Network for Accessible Tourism

Working together to make Tourism in Europe Accessible for all

Supported by the European Commission

Language: English [EN]

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Create New Item

Please complete the form below in order to submit an Item to the ENAT Editor. Your submission will be reviewed and if appropriate added to the site.
(Required fields are marked by *)

Project Item

Title: *

Acronym:

Abstract: *

Description:

Start Year:

End Year:

Publisher:

Date published on the web:

Author(s):

Project URL:

Language(s): *
For multiple selections - press and hold the control key (Ctrl) and then click on your selection.

- ACT
- BUL
- CAT
- CES
- CHI
- CYM
- DA
- DE
- EL
- EN
- ES
- ET
- EUS
- FI
- FR
- GA
- GLG
- HRV
- HU
- IS

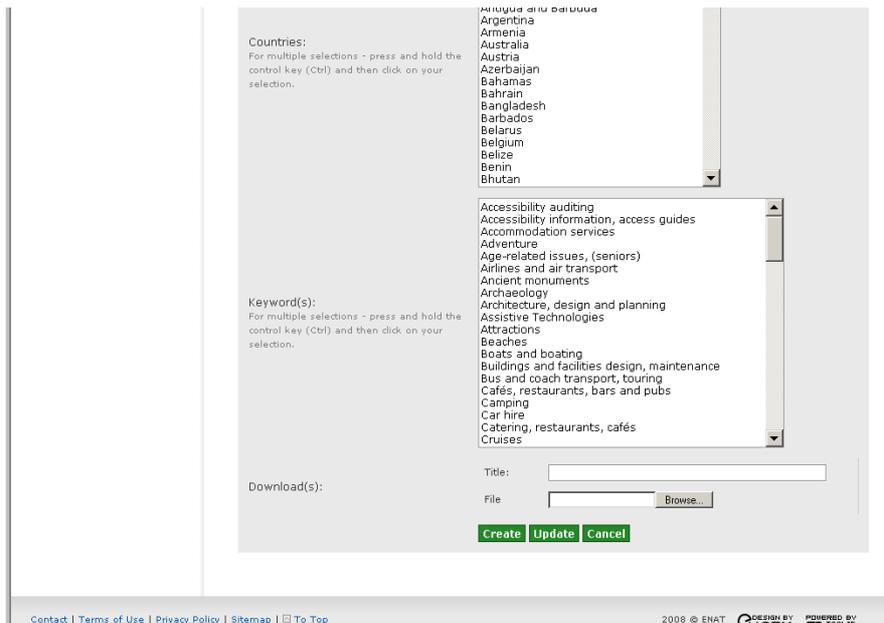
Target Group(s): *
For multiple selections - press and hold the control key (Ctrl) and then click on your selection.

- Academics / teachers
- Consumers / travellers / tourists
- Employees and Trades Unions
- Employers and Employers organisations
- Families with small children
- Non-governmental organisations
- Older people / Seniors
- Organisations of disabled people
- Organisations of older people
- People with a service animal
- People with disabilities
- People with hearing impairments
- People with learning difficulties
- People with long-term health problems
- People with mobility impairments
- People with visual impairments
- Policy makers / Decision makers / Government
- Professionals and professional bodies
- Public administrators / Authorities
- Students

Countries: *
For multiple selections - press and hold the control key (Ctrl) and then click on your selection.

- Afghanistan
- Albania
- Algeria
- Andorra
- Angola
- Antigua and Barbuda
- Argentina
- Armenia
- Australia
- Austria
- Azerbaijan
- Bahamas
- Bahrain
- Bangladesh
- Barbados
- Belarus
- Belgium
- Belize
- Benin
- Bhutan

Accessibility auditing



For each project or good practice the following items can be recorded. Required information is marked by *

- Project or Good Practice - title (*)
- Acronym
- Abstract (*)
- Description
- Start year
- End year
- Publisher
- Date published on the web
- Author(s)
- Project URL
- Language(s) (*)
- Target group(s) (*)
- Countries
- Keyword(s)
- Download(s)

The system provides the possibility for the original author to update the information fields. By denoting Target Groups, Keywords, Countries and Languages, the collected examples are easier for the user to explore and organise for later use. Hyperlinks to external web pages and published documents can also be attached to each example, providing additional information for the user. Other users may post a comment on the published practice.

At the beginning of the ENAT project in 2006 a selection of examples of good practices was gathered via an E-mail consultation of the ENAT project partners. Since the partners are situated in different parts of Europe (Sweden, UK, Greece, Spain and Belgium), this already gave a first overview of different approaches throughout Europe. Since then information has been gathered continuously via the system that was built into the ENAT website, producing a range of projects and good practices. Content is mainly European but also includes material from North America, Australia and other parts of the world.

Figure 9, below, shows the webpage of a good practice example.

The screenshot shows the ENAT website interface. At the top, the ENAT logo is displayed with the tagline "Working together to make Tourism in Europe Accessible for all". A navigation menu includes links for About, Membership, Sponsors, Workplan, Resources, Links, Events, 2007 Congress, Themes, SIGs, FAQ, Press, and Contact. The main content area features a title "OSSATE- One-Stop Shop for Accessible Tourism in Europe" dated 30/10/2007. The text describes the project's goal to implement a multi-platform information service. A right-hand column provides meta-data including "General Information" (submitted by Ivor Ambrose, language EL, start/end years 2005/2007), "Reference" (publisher OSSATE), "Target Group(s)" (consumers, policy makers, etc.), and "Keyword(s)" (accessibility auditing, information guides, etc.). A search bar and members area are located on the left side of the page.

Figure 9 Example of a 'good practice' web page : The "One-Stop Shop for Accessible Tourism in Europe" project, showing main text, and meta-data in right-hand column.

The following sections of this report provide descriptions of services and facilities that can play an important role in making tourism more accessible for everyone. The items and examples are taken from information gathered by ENAT from publicly available training materials, project reports, guidelines and current practices from Europe and further afield. Some of these "good practices" may be considered "generic", that is they can apply to a range of different settings, while others are more specific to certain types of tourist venues or activities.

Readers are reminded that they may visit the ENAT on-line Resource Centre to explore regularly updated good practices and projects on accessible tourism:
www.accessibletourism.org/?i=enat.en.enat_projects_and_good_practices

4.2 The built environment

Good physical access to buildings and the environment is one of the primary conditions for creating tourism opportunities for everyone. Physical access is not just about ensuring comfort and convenience: for tourists with severe mobility impairments such as wheelchair users, it is a *basic condition* for access.

Which accessibility factors must be taken into account when designing or renovating buildings and physical infrastructure?

In EU Member States accessibility criteria are usually included in the national building legislation, in the form of building regulations, norms, standards and guidelines. There is no European Regulation on accessibility to the built environment, this being an area of national jurisdiction, according to the principle of subsidiarity.⁴ With regard to buildings specifically intended for tourists' use, such as hotels, some countries have access criteria and specific quotas for the numbers of "accessible guest rooms" to be built but policies and design standards vary. When planning a new-build project or making changes to existing facilities it is always necessary to find out whether minimum access standards apply in the country or region and if so, what they are. Venue owners or architects may go beyond the legal requirements by using access guidelines that have been developed with a wide range of users in mind. It should also be pointed out that designing for all users need not incur additional material or construction costs (or only very marginal extra costs), as long as the design process includes the relevant access requirements from the start. In renovation works or building improvements, access requirements should also be included as part of the design brief.

When defining the spatial and functional requirements to move around comfortably, easily and safely, both outdoors and indoors, it is usual to take the needs and abilities of the 'typical' wheelchair user as the basic standard. This is because, in most cases, a wheelchair user, moving independently or with an assistant, has the largest space requirements and also, since he or she is on wheels, all floor surfaces must be easy to move across. Level access also suits people with walking difficulties, or others who have a pushchair, a suitcase on wheels, a trolley, etc. It should be remembered that wheelchairs come in many different models and sizes, and electric-powered chairs usually take up more room than manual models. The needs of the wheelchair user are not the *only* type of needs to be considered, therefore the following checklist goes beyond this group of users.

Some general points concerning physical access are given below.

⁴ According to this principle, the EU may only act (i.e. make laws) where member states agree that action of individual countries is insufficient. The principle was established in the 1992 [Treaty of Maastricht](#).

Physical accessibility checklist (not in order of priority)

Outside areas:

- Parking spaces clearly designated for disabled persons
- Drop-off area for motor vehicle passengers at or near the front entrance
- Access routes that are flat (without steps) and with a stable surface
- Ramps as alternative routes to steps and handrails where necessary
- Entrance doors with level access, sheltered from rain and well lit
- Tactile and high-contrast route markings

Internal access routes:

- Door handles – easy to reach and operate, or automatic opening/closing
- Ramps as alternative routes to steps and handrails where necessary
- Wide doors, passageways, corridors and space to pass between dining tables, display stands, etc.
- Clear turning spaces in rooms, meeting rooms, entrance halls, etc.
- Lifts (elevators) – wide and deep with tactile buttons; visual and audible indication of floors
- Clear general signage and understandable pictograms
- Signage indicating accessible areas and features
- Tactile and high-contrast route markings

Toilet and bathroom:

- Support handrails beside toilets, baths and overhead showers
- Free space beside toilets for side transfer
- Wheel-in shower (no step) and non-slip floor surfaces in bathrooms

General:

- Sufficient lighting levels, without glare or reflections
- Glass doors and large windows marked with contrast warning signs or patterns
- Easy- to-use window fastenings, temperature controls, etc.
- No smoking policy or designated non-smoking zones in all service areas (reception, lobby, meeting rooms, guest rooms, dining, bar, etc)
- Guestrooms with non-allergenic bedding and cleaning materials
- Provisions for service animals (water, toilets, accommodation).

Design features – points to remember

- People with visual impairments benefit from a logical structure of the physical environment and tactile / colour contrast guidelines as well as good signage with high contrast.
- Children, non-native speakers and people with learning difficulties benefit from good signage with pictograms and colours to find their way easily.
- People with hearing impairments benefit from good signage as they can find their way independently without having to rely on announcements by public address systems.
- Cleaners, delivery staff and technical staff benefit from lifts and slopes.

A list of websites, documents and other useful resources on 'Architecture, Design and Planning (Methods, Guidelines and Standards), for Buildings and Infrastructure' is shown at the ENAT thematic webpage: <http://www.accessibletourism.org/?i=enat.en.themes.227>

4.3 Transport

Like access to buildings, the accessibility of transport systems is a key aspect of accessible tourism, enabling tourists with disabilities to (easily) reach the destination, hotel, museum, attraction, etc. This includes, of course, the need for accessible streets, pavements, walking paths in the local environment and so on.

Coaches, aeroplanes, trains, ferries and boats bring tourists to their destinations; taxis and public transport bring people from the airport to their accommodation, and from their accommodation to restaurants, attractions. It is essential that vehicles and transit facilities are accessible, as well as reservation or booking systems that must take into account that passengers may need assistance when booking. Furthermore, assistance when boarding and the provision of particular services en route can also be necessary.

Accessible transport services checklist (not in order of priority)

In transit:

- Accessible railway stations, platforms, airports, ferry ports, waiting areas, desks and check-in, cafés, etc.
- Accessible toilets available in transit areas and on trains, planes and ships
- Sufficient comfortable seating in transit / waiting areas
- Induction loops at reception desks and in areas with public address systems, for persons with hearing impairments
- Physical accessibility of passenger areas in vehicles and onboard ships
- Space for wheelchairs, tall people. Appropriate furniture/seating for very large people, (plane seats, etc).
- Safe and secure systems for fixing wheelchairs in passenger vehicles (where the wheelchair user remains in his/her own wheelchair)
- Secure storage of passengers' luggage when waiting or on the move
- Provisions for service animals (water, toilets)

Transport at the venue:

- Public transport routes serving hotels, attractions, museums
- Private accessible transport services where necessary (e.g. an accessible minibus) for excursions (e.g. to the beach or other tourists attractions to allow tourists to make excursions during their stay)
- Accurate and reliable information on accessible services and accessible stations/stops
- On-board and off-board information in multiple and accessible formats (visual and audio information, electronic information, etc.)
- Accessible arrival and departure stops

Staff and additional services for the transport sector:

- Staff trained in disability awareness and client-friendly service
- 'Special Assistance' (available free of charge) by well-trained staff (for boarding and disembarking, for retrieving luggage. Also in case of, for example, cancelled or delayed flights, staff will assist with re-scheduling, catering, communications, etc.
- Facilities for service animals when travelling
- Catering - meals available for people with allergies or special diets.
- Smoke free areas and a smoke free policy

A list of websites, documents and other useful resources on 'Transport and related services and facilities' is shown at the ENAT thematic webpage:

<http://www.accessibletourism.org/?i=enat.en.themes.434>

4.4 Equipment and technical aids

Equipment and technical aids to enhance accessibility can be provided either as fixtures or for temporary use, as appropriate. The focus in the following is on accommodation facilities. In many cases, specialised advice is necessary regarding the choice of equipment and its use.

Checklist: Examples of equipment for accessible venues

Appliances for the bed and guestroom

- Choice of hard/soft mattress
- Electric bed
- Bed risers (to increase height of the bed)
- Hot water bottle / electric blanket
- Bed-sides
- Remote controls for windows, lighting, TV
- Telephone
- Flashing or vibrating alerts for smoke/fire alarms, telephones, guestroom doors
- Teletext enabled televisions
- Wardrobe with pull-down coat-hangers

For the bathroom

- Shower chair or wall-mounted shower seating
- Support handrails for shower, bathtub and toilet areas
- Toilet seat raisers (different sizes)
- Toilet chair with pan

Other

- Portable induction loop
- Cooling fan
- Fan heater

Leisure facilities

- Hoist for access to swimming pool
- Temporary access matting for beaches and pathways over soft ground

For walking / short trips

- Manual wheelchairs
- Beach-wheelchairs
- Electric scooters (3 and 4-wheeled models)
- Walking frames (rolling walkers - rollators)
- Baby buggy / pushchair

Most of the above equipment could be made available either free of charge or for rent at accommodations. More specialised items such as air mattresses, hoists, oxygen compressors, might be provided by accommodations that cater more especially for disabled customers and customers with long-term health problems. In the latter cases, cooperation with professional service providers may be a cost-effective way to offer additional services. It should be noted that some equipment requires specially trained staff to operate it.

The ENAT Theme page, 'Equipment, technical aids and Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) for accessible tourism' provides links to relevant resources:

<http://www.accessibletourism.org/?i=enat.en.themes.440>

4.5 Personal assistance

People with extensive access needs often need a personal assistant to help them with activities such as washing, clothing, eating, transport, etc. For these people the availability of personal assistants is a necessary condition to go on holidays.

Family and friends can fulfil the role of personal assistant. On the other hand, if this service is provided by their holiday accommodation, they can relax and enjoy their holiday together with their friend or partner.

Pilot projects such as mobile assistant teams during the summer holidays at the Belgian coast already give some indications that there are possibilities to start up so called 'mobile assistant teams' in tourist areas. Volunteer assistants organised under the Red Cross and other organisations help disabled people enjoy sea-bathing at beaches in Spain and France. Also a number of major European cities have established teams of accessibility assistants to help disabled tourists during their visits.

Schemes such as "Shopmobility" in the United Kingdom providing shopping companions, wheelchairs and electric scooters at shopping centres. This service is very helpful for those who have difficulty shopping on their own, due to mobility problems or other reasons. It also brings a direct financial reward for retail outlets that participate in the scheme.

The ENAT Theme page, 'Special Services for Disabled Tourists' highlights assistance and services that are especially suitable for tourists with disabilities. The listings include links and items about destinations and tour operators, as well as procedures to cater especially for disabled guests: <http://www.accessibletourism.org/?i=enat.en.themes.361>

4.6 Medical care

Some visitors might depend on periodic nursing care, medical care, therapy or health treatments when they are at a tourist destination. For these customers the availability of personal assistants, nurses, physiotherapists and remedial equipment is a necessary condition to go on holiday.

These more specialised care and nursing services can probably only be provided by care hotels or holiday centres which target this particular market. With specialist staff on hand, customers not only receive the care they need; they also have a greater sense of security, which enables them to relax and enjoy their holidays.

In recent years a variety of traditional tourism facilities in European countries have been developed to incorporate 'wellness' centres and health-promoting activities. In some of these, for example thermal spas and the like, the provision of accessible facilities and health treatments makes them much sought-after for holidays.

One example from Spain, below, shows how holidays for older and disabled tourists are being catered for on a large scale in spa facilities.

Example: The work of IMSERSO - Institute of the Elderly and Social Services, Spain

The Spanish Constitution, in its Article 9.2, establishes the obligation of public authorities to promote citizen participation in the political, economic, cultural and social life. Articles 40 and 43 refer to the promotion of social policies that guarantee the exercise of rights to rest and culture, as well as the promotion of health, which includes the proper use of leisure.

Actions on tourism and spas for people with disabilities are promoted by the Institute of the Elderly and Social Services (IMSERSO), focussed on the access to leisure and health in standardized conditions for all citizens. These actions take the form of holiday stays, in cultural tourism trips in the European Union countries and in treatments in spas integrated into the National Association of Thermal Stations in Spain.

Resources such as accommodation and adapted transport, or instructors-care staff assistance in each shift, are reinforced with the management of this type of tourism by non-governmental entities that take care of the different disabled groups, in a unique way since they are the real experts in satisfying the leisure needs that each disability requires.

The procedure for developing these actions is established by an Order from the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs which contains, among others, the requirements and the profile that the non-governmental entities have to comply with if they want to develop them. This Ministerial Order is complemented by a Resolution from the General Directorate of IMSERSO, annually, which summons the entities to participate and publishes the conditions for travelling and for spa treatments.

Further information: <http://www.imsersomayores.csic.es/programas/imserso.html>

4.7 Information about services and facilities

4.7.1 Alternative information formats

Providing detailed and reliable customer information about the accessibility of venues and services should be a key element of any tourism business. Besides this - and just as important - is the way in which this and other information is presented, both in marketing and publicity materials but also at the venue itself. There is no 'one-size-fits-all' solution, so the best solution is to provide information in as many formats as possible.

For customers with a visual impairment, information should be provided in alternative formats such as large print (16 point fonts and larger), audiotape or in an electronic version. Some people who are blind may read Braille.

For people who are deaf or have a hearing impairment, auditory information should be supplemented with written formats, such as presentation of text messages on TV screens or LED panels.

Printed format

The printed format is still the most popular format to provide tourists with information: brochures, city guides, maps, information leaflets, etc. Although for some groups of tourists information in alternative formats is a necessity, printed information can be presented in an accessible format by using an accessible font and size, a good contrast between font and background.

Pictograms

For a lot of people the use of pictograms is helpful as it allows people to find information in an easy and accessible way. Pictograms can be especially helpful for people with learning difficulties and those who do not read or cannot understand the local language.

Accessible websites

Nowadays Internet websites play a crucial role in the provision of information. Tourists plan their holidays by browsing websites and booking hotels and tickets on-line is increasingly popular. This is certainly also the case for people with a disability. However, this points to the need for websites and content that is accessible for people who may have sensory-motor limitations.

All well-designed tourist websites should provide information in an accessible format. Web accessibility means that people with disabilities can perceive, understand, navigate, and interact with the web content. Accessibility should also be an important aspect in database development. Developers of databases and websites need to focus on web accessibility. This means that people with disabilities and others can use these tools. Other people such as older web users benefit from an accessible and user-friendly website. The Web Accessibility Initiative provides a comprehensive list of guidelines for web content managers and web developers, which should be followed. See: <http://www.w3.org/WAI/guid-tech.html>

4.7.2. Accessibility information

Information, in particular about the accessibility of facilities and services, plays a key role for persons with disabilities and other customers when planning their holidays and choosing their accommodation. Customers in need of accessible surroundings usually know their requirements very well. Obtaining detailed and reliable information about the accessibility of venues and activities is an essential part of planning their travels.

“Information about accessibility refers to any aspects of a destination that can impact on users who are permanently or temporarily disabled, or persons who have any type of functional, sensory or cognitive impairment or restriction, due to age, body size, health condition or other factors. Accessibility information tells customers about services, physical design features, layout, materials, technical infrastructure, signage, furniture, fittings and equipment that can affect their comfort, safety and enjoyment of their surroundings.”

Definition of accessibility information given by the OSSATE project, 2005. www.ossate.org

From the perspective of an individual venue owner, the simplest way to inform customers about the accessibility (or inaccessibility) of one's facilities and services may be to write a Disability Access Statement. To write an access requires some knowledge of what might constitute useful information for persons with various types of disabilities. Some guidance on this may be available from organisations of disabled people, tourist destination management organisations – or from consulting design guidelines and checklists, as referred to in section 4.2, above.

An example of an access statement is given below.

Accessibility Information**DISABILITY ACCESS STATEMENT**

PALE HALL HOTEL

Palé Hall is a Victorian building built in 1872 situated approximately 5 miles from the town of Bala.

The hotel set in 16 acres of gardens is approached by a gravel driveway and has a large car park in front of the main entrance.

To enter the building there is 1 small wide step and 2 large narrow steps leading up to the main entrance door. A removable metal ramp has been made for wheelchair access. There are 2 doors to the entrance both are 76cm wide and will open to a width of 153cm.

From the entrance hall through to the main hall are 2 more doors both of which are 102cm wide and open to a width of 204cm. Each door leading off the main hall into the lounges, dining room and downstairs toilets are 102cm in width.

Access to the downstairs toilets are accessible by climbing 4 steps with the aid of a wooden hand rail. Each step is 16cm high.

The doorway to the ladies cloakroom which is immediately in front of these steps is 85cm wide. The toilet doorways are 61cm wide. Not suitable for wheelchairs. A metal hand rail is in place in both toilets.

Gents toilets are immediately to the right of the steps through 1 door 86cm wide and another at 80cm wide. Not suitable for wheelchairs.

A lift is available for access to bedrooms. The door to the lift is 56cm wide. Assistance is available at all times.

Several of the bedrooms have hand rails to assist getting in and out of the bath. Some rooms have walk in showers with a seat. The doors to the bedrooms are 79cm and 93cm wide.

Figure 10. Example of a Disability Access Statement, Pale Hall Hotel, Wales, UK

(Taken from the VisitWales hotel search page at:

[http://www.visitwales.co.uk/server.php?show=nav.6872&change=AccSearchPage&AccommodationSearch\[googleMapWidth\]=903&AccommodationSearch\[productId\]=GBWTB0122H#i_158474448_745_accessibility](http://www.visitwales.co.uk/server.php?show=nav.6872&change=AccSearchPage&AccommodationSearch[googleMapWidth]=903&AccommodationSearch[productId]=GBWTB0122H#i_158474448_745_accessibility))

As the example shows, a disability access statement may not always give accessibility information for a wide range of user groups. Here wheelchair access and provisions for people with walking difficulties are considered but other disabilities are not mentioned, although the availability of assistance at all times may be reassuring.

While access statements allow the customer to obtain some general or specific information about a venue, many disabled people are in need of more detailed information. Given the range of functional impairments the total list of possible information need runs into hundreds of items. To gather and present such information effectively requires more systematic and reliable approaches.

Several countries, regions and cities in Europe have developed their own tourist accessibility information schemes during the last ten years. (On the other hand there are still many countries that do not have such schemes). A recent study conducted by Toegankelijkheidsbureau within the framework of the OSSATE-project ('One Stop Shop for Accessible Tourism in Europe') made a review of 43 schemes in 19 different countries.⁵ These schemes were all very different in the facilities they cover, the number of facilities included, the methods and criteria used, their background, etc. Most schemes had a bias towards considering needs of physically disabled people and wheelchair users in particular.

⁵ OSSATE Inventory of Accessible Tourism Schemes: downloadable at: <http://www.accessibletourism.org/?i=enat.en.reports.427>

The study concludes that the variation of approaches and the differing types of information in national and proprietary schemes makes it quite difficult for any tourists travelling abroad to identify accessible venues. Differences in national legislations and design, together with a lack of alternative languages compound the problem for users. Furthermore many web sites are themselves in accessible – failing to comply with the WAI guidelines.

The OSSATE-project aimed to overcome these difficulties through the implementation of a prototype multi-platform, multi-lingual digital information service providing national and regional content on accessible tourist venues, sites and accommodation. In contrast to almost all existing schemes, OSSATE takes an "information approach", which is essentially descriptive, rather than legislative or design approaches, which are prescriptive.

The Europe for All accessibility information scheme

www.EuropeforAll.com is the on-line database which was developed within the OSSATE project. With data from 6 European countries this unified information scheme now allows customers to search for objective accessibility information for hotel and self-catering accommodation (and other tourist venue types in Belgium and Norway), with photographs of facilities and detailed measurements for specific areas, such as bathrooms, according to the user's particular needs.

By giving objective descriptions of the accessibility features of a venue and allowing users to specify which type(s) of disability information they require, the on-line search tool returns the specific details related to many disabilities.

User types covered by the scheme include wheelchair users, persons with walking difficulties, visually impaired, hearing impaired, people with learning difficulties, people with asthma or allergies, those requiring special diets, and people who have difficulty in communicating in the local language.

Collecting accessibility information is a time-consuming task, however it may be done. It always requires on-site measurement and analysis and may also need specialist knowledge. In EuropeforAll, venue accessibility data has been collected by two methods. The first, ("Level 1") is 'self-assessed' data provided by venue owners, based on a standard questionnaire, mostly built up of multiple choice questions but including some simple measurements. A Photo and Measurement Guide (available as a PDF file for downloading) helps the venue owner take photos of what users wish to see, and make the correct measurements. The second level ("Level 2") provides very detailed and objective information based on a series of checklists. This data must be collected by trained access auditors. This information is of particular value for people with higher accessibility requirements. In both cases, data is uploaded to the EuropeforAll website via an on-line tool. XML feed for transfer of multiple venue data sets is also possible.

The following pages show the result of a user search on www.EuropeforAll.com for accessibility information for hotels in Oslo, Norway. Figure 11 shows the full list of hotels, while Figure 12 shows the first page where access data can be selected for a single venue.

Background information about the EuropeforAll service is available at the OSSATE project showcase:

http://www.ossate.org/efa_showcase/index.htm

Details of how tourism venue owners and destination management organisations may join the EuropeforAll scheme can be found at:

<http://www.europeforall.com/tourismProviders.seam?conversationPropagation=end&conversationId=27367&conversationIsLongRunning=true>

Figure 11. Screenshot showing result of search on www.EuropeforAll.com for hotels Oslo, Norway. Venue and level 2 access data is provided by VisitOSLO A.S.

Destination Finder

Search Results

Search was performed using the following criteria:

- Location: Norway -> East Land -> Oslo (city)
- Venue Types: Hotel

[Go back to Destination Finder to alter your search criteria](#)

Modify search results

Current sorting is by **Assessment Level**

Change sorting by:

Filter by: [What is Venue Assessment Level?](#)

There are 38 results in 4 pages. Viewing page #1.

[First page](#) [Next page](#) [Last page](#)

Go to exact page: [1](#) [2](#) [3](#) [4](#)

Results sorted by Assessment Level

Venue Name	Category	Type	Location	Class	Assessment Level
 Thon Hotel Arena	Accommodation	Hotel	Norway->East Land->Oslo (city)	Not provided.	Audited (LEVEL 2)
 Thon Hotel Linne	Accommodation	Hotel	Norway->East Land->Oslo (city)	Not provided.	Audited (LEVEL 2)
 Soria Moria Hotell and Conference Center	Accommodation	Hotel	Norway->East Land->Oslo (city)	Not provided.	Audited (LEVEL 2)
 Hotel Bristol	Accommodation	Hotel	Norway->East Land->Oslo (city)	Not provided.	Audited (LEVEL 2)
 Voksenåsen Culture and Conference Hotel	Accommodation	Hotel	Norway->East Land->Oslo (city)	Not provided.	Audited (LEVEL 2)
 Holmenkollen Park Hotel Rica	Accommodation	Hotel	Norway->East Land->Oslo (city)	Not provided.	Audited (LEVEL 2)
 Radisson SAS Scandinavia Hotel Oslo	Accommodation	Hotel	Norway->East Land->Oslo (city)	Not provided.	Audited (LEVEL 2)
 Scandic Byporten	Accommodation	Hotel	Norway->East Land->Oslo (city)	Not provided.	Audited (LEVEL 2)
 Thon Hotel Opera	Accommodation	Hotel	Norway->East Land->Oslo (city)	Not provided.	Audited (LEVEL 2)
 Scandic Edderkoppen	Accommodation	Hotel	Norway->East Land->Oslo (city)	Not provided.	Audited (LEVEL 2)

[First page](#) [Next page](#) [Last page](#)

[Top of page](#)

Awards

Editor's Choice 2008
epractice.eu

Access data supplied by:

-  BFT
-  ANLH
-  BELGIUM, 2008
-  BELGIUM, 2008
-  GREECE, 2008
-  GREECE, 2008
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-  GREECE, 2008

Home [About](#) [Contact](#) [Disclaimer](#) [Privacy Policy](#)

Figure 12. Sample data sheet for Hotel Bristol, Oslo

The screenshot displays the EuropeforAll website interface for a venue profile. At the top, there is a navigation bar with links for 'Page content', 'Site Navigation', and 'Account Login'. Below this is the 'europeforall' logo and a secondary navigation menu with options like 'Homepage', 'EFA Destination Finder', 'Tourism Providers', 'Press and Content Providers', 'Travellers', 'Venue Assessments', 'About', and 'Feedback'. The breadcrumb trail shows the user's path: 'Home / Destination Finder / Search Results / Europe for All - Hotel Bristol - Venue Introduction'.

The main content area is titled 'Hotel Bristol' and is divided into several sections:

- Exit Venue Preview Section:** Includes a link to 'Return to your search Results'.
- Venue Information:** Lists 'Introduction', 'Contact Info', and 'Pictures'.
- Venue Assessment Level:** Shows an 'Assessment Level 2' badge with a 'AUDITED VENUE' status and a link to 'What is Venue Assessment Level?'.
- Accessibility Information:** A section titled 'Please select the info you wish to view:' with a list of checkboxes for various accessibility needs:
 - General
 - Wheelchair user
 - Walking Difficulties
 - Visual impairment
 - Hearing impairment
 - Asthma / Allergies
 - Diet restrictions
 - Language
 - Learning difficulties
 - Other Requirements
 A 'Show' button is located at the bottom of this section.
- Introduction:** Features a photograph of a hotel room and a 'Venue Long Description' starting with 'On a quiet corner in the centre of town, the Hotel Bristol is renowned for its interior design inspired by Edwardian England...'.
- Awards:** A section titled 'Awards' featuring the 'Editor's Choice 2008' badge from epractice.eu.
- Access data supplied by:** A grid of logos representing various international accessibility organizations, including BFT (Austria), ANLH (Belgium), ANH (Belgium), A (Denmark), A (Finland), GORX (Greece), GORX SA (Greece), GALEA (Greece), VISIT OSLO (Norway), VISIT OSLO AS (Norway), VISIT BRITAIN (UK), and VISIT BRITAIN (UK).

At the bottom of the page, there are links for 'Home', 'About', 'Contact', 'Disclaimer', and 'Privacy Policy'.

Users can search the accessibility information for each venue by using the “filters” at the bottom left of the screen. Multiple criteria may be selected by ticking the relevant boxes. Information is then returned, section by section for all parts of the venue.

It is of interest to note that, in the United Kingdom, the National Tourist Authority, VisitBritain, has incorporated self-assessed accessibility data (but without the measurements) from the EuropeforAll Level 1 questionnaire into its national Quality Scheme for serviced accommodation. Starting in 2008 in the first phase, this access information will be displayed for all the 30,000 venues listed in the VisitBritain accommodation database. Including accessibility data in the UK Quality Scheme is a positive signal to the European and global tourism sector that access is becoming a key aspect in mainstream tourism.

4.8 Staff training and communication

Good personal service can make a significant difference for any tourist. It is therefore unfortunate that staff often lack confidence and skills when catering for tourists with a disability. Providing staff with disability awareness training and communication skills will show them that guests with a disability are essentially no different from other guests and satisfying their needs is not overly difficult.

Several examples of training programmes (e.g. in the UK, Italy, Spain, Sweden and Belgium) have already shown that these kind of programmes make a difference. Interaction with disabled people in these programmes can overcome many fears and uncertainties.

Disability awareness training programmes not only make participants more sensitive to the abilities and requirements of disabled visitors but also provide them with the necessary communication skills: for example, using words that are more acceptable and avoiding (unfortunately common) stigmatising language. Staff should be made aware how non-verbal signals influence perceptions and behaviour; that they should speak to the disabled person, not the personal assistant, and how to give directions, for example to a blind person. Some training may include use of technical aids, such as the operation of vibrating alarms. Training should also address emergency egress procedures for disabled people from buildings, especially in accommodation facilities.

Training of tourist guides might also include specific methods such as the use of models and tactile maps for people with visual impairments and interpretive techniques for explaining an historical monument to people with learning difficulties. Referring to other senses than sight, such as smelling, moving, tactile sensations and hearing when guiding people with a visual impairment is also something which can be trained.

A list of relevant resources for disability awareness education and training of tourist personnel is shown in the Theme section of the ENAT website at the following address:

<http://www.accessibletourism.org/?i=enat.en.themes.232>

The listed resources address tertiary level education and on-the-job training in the travel and tourism management fields; staff training - with an emphasis on meeting the requirements of disabled customers; curriculum development, projects, employment and working conditions, good practices and teaching materials.

4.9 Adventure and sports tourism

“All tourism is adventure tourism for people with disabilities!”

- says Scott Rains, writer, disability activist and world traveller, who publishes a travel website at www.rollingrains.com

His wry statement is undoubtedly true, given that most ‘mainstream’ tourism destinations, facilities and services are not made with disabled people in mind, which makes doing many of the simplest things a struggle.

However, it should not be forgotten that people who have some greater access needs than the majority nevertheless enjoy many forms of adventure tourism, sports and outdoor pursuits such as camping, ornithology, skiing, quad-biking, horse-riding, sailing and scuba diving.

There are many tourism offers for adventurous disabled tourists and more are being developed in countries and regions of Europe. The ENAT website's Themes section provides up-to-date listings of relevant items under the heading, "Adventure tourism, sports and outdoor pursuits" at: <http://www.accessibletourism.org/?i=enat.en.themes.435>

4.10 Policies and action plans for accessible tourism

The previous sections of this report gave an overview of some important services and facilities for accessible tourism. Several times it was mentioned that it is not enough to focus only on the accessibility of accommodation. Accessible tourism includes accessible transport, attractions and restaurants, information and communication, the provision of equipment and assistance and activities which can be enjoyed by a wide range of visitors.

One of the most effective ways to work towards improved accessible facilities and services and to avoid *ad hoc* decisions is to have an access policy plan that takes a long-term view. Such a plan and the action plans that are linked to it can provide a general framework to improve accessibility.

Ideally these plans will include a statement of what has been achieved so far, and take into account the business's need for subsidies or financial support, technical support and information and guidance. Monitoring of progress should also be part of the plan.

Resources for policy development are shown at the ENAT Theme page on "Policy and Legislation":
<http://www.accessibletourism.org/?i=enat.en.themes.224>

5. References

5.1 General references

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5.2 On-line resources referred to in this report

Links are listed under the section headings of the report

4.1 Good practices overview

ENAT Resource Centre, 'Projects and good practices' section:

http://www.accessibletourism.org/?i=enat.en.enat_projects_and_good_practices

4.2 The built environment

ENAT Theme page: 'Architecture, Design and Planning (Methods, Guidelines and Standards), for Buildings and Infrastructure': <http://www.accessibletourism.org/?i=enat.en.themes.227>

4.3 Transport

ENAT Theme page: 'Transport and related services and facilities':

<http://www.accessibletourism.org/?i=enat.en.themes.434>

4.4 Equipment and Technical Aids

ENAT Theme page: 'Equipment, technical aids and Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) for accessible tourism':

<http://www.accessibletourism.org/?i=enat.en.themes.440>

4.5 Personal Assistance

ENAT Theme page: 'Special Services for Disabled Tourists':

<http://www.accessibletourism.org/?i=enat.en.themes.361>

4.6 Medical care

Example of Spa Tourism, IMSERSO - Institute of the Elderly and Social Services, Spain:

<http://www.imersomayores.csic.es/programas/imsero.html>

4.7 Information about services and facilities

W3C-WAI - Web Accessibility Content Guidelines: <http://www.w3.org/WAI/guid-tech.html>

4.7.1 Alternative information formats

Tiresias guidelines: http://www.tiresias.org/guidelines/alternative_formats.htm

4.7.2. Accessibility information

Example of a Disability Access Statement for Pale Hall Hotel, Wales, UK, taken from the VisitWales hotel search page at:

[http://www.visitwales.co.uk/server.php?show=nav.6872&change=AccSearchPage&AccommodationSearch\[googleMapWidth\]=903&AccommodationSearch\[productId\]=GBWTB0122H#i_158474448_745_accessibility](http://www.visitwales.co.uk/server.php?show=nav.6872&change=AccSearchPage&AccommodationSearch[googleMapWidth]=903&AccommodationSearch[productId]=GBWTB0122H#i_158474448_745_accessibility)

OSSATE project showcase: http://www.ossate.org/efa_showcase/index.htm

EuropeforAll on-line accessibility information service: www.europeforall.com

VisitOSLO accessible venues search (based on the EuropeforAll system):

<http://www.visitoslo.com/en/oslo-for-all.49114.en.html>

4.8 Staff training and communication

ENAT Theme page: 'Education and Training for Accessible Tourism':

<http://www.accessibletourism.org/?i=enat.en.themes.232>

4.9 Adventure and sports tourism

ENAT Theme page: 'Accessible Adventure Tourism, Sports and Outdoor Pursuits':

<http://www.accessibletourism.org/?i=enat.en.themes.435>

4.10 Action plans and policies for accessible tourism

ENAT Theme page on "Policy and Legislation":

<http://www.accessibletourism.org/?i=enat.en.themes.224>