



**Mapping and Performance Check of the Supply of  
Accessible Tourism Services  
(220/PP/ENT/PPA/12/6491)**

*Case Study 3*

**Arona, Spain**

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**European Commission  
Enterprise and Industry Directorate General (DG  
ENTR)**

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**Case Study: Arona**

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## Executive Summary

This case study focuses on the case of Arona which is one of the first and leading examples of accessible tourism in Spain.

The case of Arona stands apart due to two reasons; firstly, it was a destination made under the demand of tourists with disabilities that travelled to the municipality back in the 60's and secondly the destination has evolved overtime to continuously remove barriers and encourage accessibility in the tourism sector.

Arona benefits from the underlying conditions of 3S tourism. However, it has been through the effort of different entities (Arona municipality and Tourism Board, ONCE Foundation, SIMPROMI, and different private business) that the municipality has actively been involved in implementing and monitoring accessibility measures.

It is noticeable how the tourism chain works in this destination and offers a wide range of possibilities to make the stay in Arona safe, comfortable and enjoyable for all. This includes, for instances, assistive services for people with disabilities in Tenerife airport with around 200.000 services every year, the different options for transport, including the adapted taxis (Eurotaxi), to accessible accommodation, beaches and shopping centres and a wide range of sports and activities adapted for everybody.

This, like other successful cases of accessible tourism in Spain such as Ávila, Madrid or Barcelona, shows that one of the key factors for the achievement of accessibility in the tourism sector is the involvement of the DMO, together with the support of representatives of people with disabilities and the private sector.

## 1.0 Introduction

This case study focuses on Arona, a town in the southern part of the island of Tenerife, part of the Canary Islands. Due to an early demand for accessible services, dating back to the 1950s, Arona has been developing as an accessible tourism destination and is today one of the leading international examples of a destination which tourist offer integrates all kinds of accessible services from beaches to restaurants and shopping centres.

Mainly, due to the town's location and the year around good climate, it has provided an ideal setting for an accessible tourism destination. These underlying conditions suitable for accessible tourism has been complemented by the efforts and commitment of different organisations working together to create an integrated chain. This cooperation has ensured that accessibility is part of every step of the visitor journey. Comprehensive planning has been instrumental in order to increase the supply of accessible tourism offers. This is mainly attributed to the work of the Arona Tourism Board in conjunction with third sector organisations and public authorities over the past 10 years. This was also pointed out by the Councillor for Tourism of Arona, Evelin Santos, in the tenth anniversary of Arona's accessibility urban plan. She argued that Arona is the first destination in Europe and second in the world for people with reduced mobility, which requires "every effort" through planned accessibility, with a "clear commitment to tourism for all."

Tourism is one of the most important economic activities in Spain which represents 10% of GDP. 59 million tourists visit Spain each year and visitor numbers in the Arona municipality and outskirts amount to around 2 million tourists, mainly in the sun and beach tourism (3S tourism).

Arona is divided in four clearly defined areas.

- Playa de Las Americas, which presents a good quality tourist offer.
- Playa de Los Cristianos, the commercial and cultural driving force of the town.
- Playa de Las Galletas-Costa del Silencio, offering peaceful walks and beautiful gardens and Arona Rural, conjuring up the traditional Canary Islands.

Tourists come from the UK, Germany, Spain, Sweden and Norway with an average stay of 10 days.

## 2.0 Overview and background information

Arona started developing into an accessible tourist destination in 1957, when a group of Swedish tourists with reduced mobility, caused by rheumatic problems and multiple sclerosis, arrived in the fishing village of Los Cristianos<sup>1</sup> in search of a warm place to spend their holidays. Thanks to the health benefits brought on by the warm climate these early tourists began returning to Arona, where they could enjoy a higher quality of life. This sparked an unexpected birth of tourism in area, which ultimately led to an expanding tourism industry not only in Arona, but across the south of the island. Today the tourism industry employs approximately 60% of the workforce.

The case of Arona encompasses 2 distinguishing features:

- First, it was a destination which developed under to the demand of tourists with disabilities who travelled to the municipality back in the 60's and;
- Secondly, the destination has evolved over time to eliminate physical barriers to become an accessible destination for all.

For the past four decades, tourism has flourished in Arona. The town continues to receive a high influx of tourists with disabilities, staying in adapted hotels or in specialized clinics, enjoying leisure activities. However, due to persistent barriers on public roads, in the transport sector, and other public buildings a Comprehensive Accessibility Plan was implemented in 2003. This plan set out various actions and activities to improve the quality of life of people with disabilities, benefitting both tourists as well as the local population. It was SIMPROMI that promoted the idea of improving accessibility in different tourist destinations on the island, one of which was Arona. The Comprehensive Plan in Arona was prepared by Fundosa Accesibilidad (Via Libre). The financing was brought by the City Council and additional founding came from grants from Fundación ONCE, IMSERSO<sup>2</sup>, SIMPROMI, Canary Islands Government, Regional Departments of Social Services and Tourism of the Canary Islands and INEM<sup>3</sup> by signing agreements. This Accessibility plan provided accessibility analysis and proposals across all areas of public life and was applied at the municipal level covering the full range of activities of daily life.

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<sup>2</sup> Imsero is the Social Security Administration Body responsible for handling Social Services supplementing Social Security System provisions and which deals with older persons and dependent persons.

<sup>3</sup> National and Regional Employment Services

This Action Plan resulted in two main achievements:

- It resulting in a better understanding of the level of accessibility of the town; and
- It provided a comprehensive transversal approach to accessibility, and all areas of everyday life: public spaces, transport, public buildings, communication and tourism.

The primary objective of the Plan was, and still is, to create a town for all. As the plan is a continuous work to improve accessibility gradually, up to eleven organizations have participated to make the municipality more accessible. These organizations include, among others, the Spanish Committee of Representatives of People with Disabilities (Cermi Canarias), ONCE and the Federation of the Deaf People in Canarias (Fasican).

Although there is much more to be done in terms of continuous improvements, during these ten years the municipality has managed to keep up with the accessibility work. In addition, a permanent department on accessible tourism within Arona Tourism Board was created in order to continuously improve accessibility. This means that all political parties will support the improvements on accessibility and the work done by the Tourism Board.

2003 is also the key year in Arona's accessible tourism development as the town started to focus on how to implement the best solutions in the municipality through a number of measures and events:

- Firstly, exchanges between the municipality of Arona and a Scottish organisation representing people with limited mobility resulted in visits to both Glasgow and Arona with the aim of analysing an accessible European city and study the expectations of tourists with reduced mobility.
- Secondly, the municipality studied the accessible beaches model in Valencia, that was at the time, the pioneering province in Spain with assistive programs of access to bathing areas for people with disabilities<sup>4</sup>. The "Accessible Beaches Plan" started in Valencia in 2000 as a innovative project in Spain operated by the Valencian Province jointly with the Ministry of Social Welfare, which created accessible points and provided the equipment needed for assistive baths. This project is at the time of writing completely consolidated and in constant evolution. In 2012 hold accessible certifications in several of the beaches.

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<sup>4</sup> Ayuntamiento de Valencia. Accesibilidad en las playas de Valencia: Programa de ayuda al baño y puntos accesibles 2012  
[http://www.valencia.es/ayuntamiento/playas.nsf/0/C0B45EEE192775AAC1257766003DD126/\\$FILE/ACCESIBILIDAD%20%20PLAYAS%20%20CASTELLANO.pdf?OpenElement](http://www.valencia.es/ayuntamiento/playas.nsf/0/C0B45EEE192775AAC1257766003DD126/$FILE/ACCESIBILIDAD%20%20PLAYAS%20%20CASTELLANO.pdf?OpenElement)

### 3.0 Integration of the supply chain

During the more than 10 years that Arona have strived to improve and foster further accessibility along the supply chain, there are countless of different tools that have been used to promote and stimulate accessibility.

The first actions goes back to 1995 when there was a European Initiative HORIZON II that developed actions on accessibility in the field of tourism. In Arona the coast was improved within the project "Tourism and Culture for All". Additionally, in 1998 accessibility was improved in the Olympic Stadium Antonio Domínguez and in the Municipal Pavilion Jesus Dominguez Grillo, within the Forum Project without Borders.

In 2003, the big Accessibility Plan took place in Arona along with the Plan of Adaptation improving accessibility of the beaches of the island of Tenerife. This plan aimed to raise the quality and services allowing everyone to access and make use of the beach facilities in safety and comfort<sup>5</sup>. The accessibility plan was based on current legislation regarding accessibility (national and regional) alongside national standardization on accessibility and good practices coming from experience of the company which developed the Plan<sup>6</sup>.

Being aware of the need to remove physical barriers that make mobility difficult, the Council of Tenerife, included services and facilities in the beaches necessary for those with mobility impairments. This included a bathing support service with crutches and water chairs, as well as specific rest areas. In addition, all showers and bathrooms were fitted with access ramps, and walkways linking the different facilities to the coastline.

The integrated works in public spaces resulted in Las Vistas Beach to include reserved and signaled parking spaces, access ramps to the beach, accessible dressrooms and toilets, fixed and rolling walkways that reach the water, shadowed spaces with wooden platforms and assistive services for baths, making this activity a beach for all and it was recently awarded with the AENOR's<sup>7</sup> Universal Accessibility flag.

In Los Cristianos and Las Americas, one of the biggest promenades without barriers in the world with 7 km length was created. The pavement is clearly differentiated in color and texture to provide a guide for blind people and people with limited vision. This promenade was refurbished with a grant of 910.000€.

Other spaces in the town like avenues, squares and walkways were transformed to eliminate all kind of barriers, including the historical quarter.

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<sup>5</sup> <http://www.todotenerife.es/assets/downloads/417a9c3a5a.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> The company that developed the accessibility plan, Via Libre (Fundosa Accesibilidad) is a company specialized in universal accessibility with an experience of over 700 accessibility urban plan within the country. This company belongs to ONCE Foundation group of business.

<sup>7</sup> The Spanish Association for Standardisation and Certification



This initiative has completely eliminated urban barriers and it has created an accessible urban space.

In regards to building works, some of the public buildings were improved in terms of physical and sensory accessibility within the Plan. Examples of these buildings are the city hall, the cultural centers and the functional diversity center and the tourism office, this one with an investment of 38.000€, public toilets with the Eurokey system<sup>8</sup>.

Regarding private buildings, shopping centers close to Los Cristianos stand out because of their accessibility. In addition, there are also facilities within the private touristic sector like excursions and whale watching adapted for people with physical, visual and hearing disabilities, as Los Cristianos is an important location of whales and dolphins watching.

In terms of transport, Arona has 10 adapted taxis thanks to an agreement between ONCE Foundation, IMSERSO and Arona City hall where the investment was 96.000€.

The municipality has also a wide range of accessible accommodations, one of them Mar y Sol hotel<sup>9</sup> has been certified with AENOR Universal Accessibility label. This was the pioneer hotel to be certified in Tenerife.

Apart from promoting accessibility certification of Las Vistas beach and Mar y Sol hotel, this hotel has also achieved the AENOR certification, "UNE 170001-2 Universal Accessibility Management System". Arona has always been known for its sport vocation and multidisciplinary sport activities, which were developed back in the early 80s. This is the reason why there are many adapted sports offers for people with reduced mobility in the municipality including: athletics, swimming, diving and tennis. There are also cultural and sports activities in Arona and accessible hiking in the Rasca Nature Reserve.

The accessibility plans have promoted and encouraged local business and SMEs to become more accessible in response to the efforts made by the public sector. Although some businesses have not been concerned about the accessibility plans, the accessibility work carried out has increased tourist demand and as a result some businesses have been encouraged to adapt their infrastructure to effectively respond to this demand.

According to interviews businesses could notice several important features such as:

- a) Improvements in the accessible infrastructures and public services;
- b) A constant influx of tourist with disabilities in the area; and
- c) Not enough tourism services to cover the demand of the tourists in this regard. This is why the private sector considered adapting their services to everybody.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Toilets opening system exclusive for people with reduced mobility, implemented since 1986 in some European countries.

<sup>9</sup> [http://www.marysol.org/esp/new\\_01.php](http://www.marysol.org/esp/new_01.php)

Arona's tourist office, apart from being accessible, has different services to improve customer care like braille and tactile maps, adapted digital information points, and sign language interpreting services (Arona's citizen offices). The tourism office has published the touristic guide "Arona without barriers"<sup>11</sup> in three languages (Spanish, English and German) with a list of accessible resources from accommodation, beaches, transports and activities, along with other promotional material like an accessible beaches brochure, a city map with accessible itineraries and advertisement "Arona for all"<sup>12</sup>.

Finally, the Tourism Board Arona has also organized various courses on accessible tourism in order to provide municipal technicians, entrepreneurs and training to tourism professionals on legislative issues related to accessibility, best practices and recommendations to provide a higher level of accessibility. This is done with the view of improving services in caring for people with disabilities at the destination.

On the tenth anniversary of the first Accessibility Plan of Arona, it was noteworthy how cooperation between the different stakeholders from public and private sector had increased during the decade resulting in an enriched tourism offer in Arona. City Hall acknowledged the following organisation in their work:

- Cermi Canarias (Spanish Committee of Representatives of People with Disabilities)
- Coordinator of People with Physical Disabilities Canarias
- ONCE
- Federation of Deaf people in Canarias (Fasican)
- Federation of Organizations for Persons with Intellectual Disability (FEAPS)
- Insular society for the Promotion of Persons with Disabilities (SINPROMI SL)
- Kurthotel Marysol
- AENA Airport assistive Service "without barriers"
- Sol Travel Agency Access Services
- Hotel Zentral Center
- Arona Taxi Association

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<sup>10</sup> Interviews with hoteliers.

<sup>11</sup> The guide can be downloaded in the following link:

[http://www.arona.travel/portal/RecursosWeb/DOCUMENTOS/1/12\\_10029\\_1.pdf](http://www.arona.travel/portal/RecursosWeb/DOCUMENTOS/1/12_10029_1.pdf)

<sup>12</sup> The spot can be watched in English in through the following link

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IWLEvPk9jDA&noredirect=1>

## 4.0 Provisions for cross-impairments

Although Arona started its accessible tourism offer for people with physical disabilities in the first place, its commitment to accessibility has extended to actions in order to allow for tourism for all. The term of accessibility has replaced the idea of “for people with disabilities” as it is understood that accessibility implies benefits for everybody. The root of these ideas came from the comprehensive accessibility plan set up in 2003. It was not an isolated plan, but a global plan based on 3 points<sup>13</sup>:

1. **Will:** improving accessibility requires taking the demands and needs of all citizens into account and recognizes its advantages for all such as, inter alia, the elderly, parents with prams, people with temporarily reduced mobility, people carrying luggage. To achieve this goal, a series of actions and activities were developed by the private sector and the government. In this regard, the following particularly stands out:
  - Creating the “Accessible Tourism Area” in Arona Tourism Board.
  - Awareness campaign from school about disability and accessibility issues.
  - Training in Tourism for All.
  - Awards for private bodies that take actions or make improvements regarding accessibility.
  - Awareness in the touristic business sector.
  - Social cohesion and services provision.
  
2. **Technique:** analysing problems properly, investigate and provide appropriate solutions.
  - Analysis of barriers of different areas of daily life, by the Convention of Collaboration INEM / ACE.
  - Improvements in accessibility by removing barriers of the analysed areas: roads and public spaces, private buildings and on the official website of Arona.
  - Leisure Plan and Accessible Beaches Plan 2005. Accessibility on the beach of Los Cristianos and Las Vistas. All this reinforced by the advertising campaign of the Accessible Beach and by editing the "Arona, Tourism without Barriers" guide, brochure

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<sup>13</sup> LA ACCESIBILIDAD COMO OPORTUNIDAD DE MERCADO EN EL MANAGEMENT DE DESTINOS TURÍSTICOS <http://www.esade.edu/cedit/pdfs/papers/pdf3.pdf>

"Accessible Beaches" and "Adapted Taxis", all in Spanish, English and German, also available in pdf format online.

**3. Strategy:** Planning corrective and preventive actions in line with the social and political environment.

- Technical staff of the City hall are in charge of the analysis, advice and accessibility design for public and private entities. Their fields can be grouped by :
  - 1) **Architecture/ Building:** works were carried out in public buildings to facilitate access and usability, from administrative centers to health and educational facilities. In private buildings legislation compliance has been reinforced (Accessibility and Removal of Physical Barriers and Communication Act 8/1995) and awareness campaigns to business managers on how to improve accessibility in business, supported by the technical team of consultancy and design. They also provided brochures to entrepreneurs on how to improve accessibility in "Bars and restaurants", " Accessible Shops" and " Theme Parks".
  - 2) **Urban spaces:** curbs at pedestrian ways, entrances in main buildings and shops. Most roads and walkways of Playa de Las Americas and Los Cristianos have been adapted.
  - 3) **Transportation:** 10 Eurotaxis have been implemented as well as public transport adaptation completed by the wide range of private accessible transport.
  - 4) **Communication and Information:** signaling in pathways, beaches and public services, improvement in web accessibility standards, tourism promotion campaigns by attending trade fairs in disability and the tourism sector.
  - 5) **Publication of guides and brochures on accessibility as well as courses for municipal experts and tourism professionals.**
  - 6) **Leisure:** includes an Accessible beaches Plan, fully adapted sports facilities widely used by teams of international athletics to prepare for the preseason.

In order to follow the initial plan, which has been improved over the years, Arona has developed some cross strategies to meet accessibility requirements:

- a) Political commitment
- b) The "Local Board of Tourism" provides technical assistance in accessible tourism.

- c) The “Council of Tourism” have established continuous relations with entities representing people with disabilities (citizens and tourists).
- d) Business commitment.
- e) Monitoring the experiences of other touristic sites.
- f) The “Tourism Board of Arona” organizes courses for hotels, restaurants, shops, businessmen, customer service staff, municipal staff, architects and building companies.
- g) Touristic promotion in fairs like FITUR, ITB & WTM, in specialized fairs like Accesible Holiday Show, REHACARE, International Congress as the “International Congress of Tourism for All in 2004, 2007 and 2010” organized by “Fundación ONCE”. Promotion in the website and in the “Without barriers Arona’s Guide”.

As a result, the City of Arona has increased its tourism sector, and its holiday season by promoting tourism as a destination for all, as well as promoting inclusive leisure and revalued existing public spaces such as beaches, roads or trails. That is, not only offering tourism for people with disabilities, but adds economic value through tourism for all.

## 5.0 Business approach – building a business case for accessibility

In 2013, Arona Tourism Board published a report showing the results of surveys conducted in order to analyze the impact of accessible tourism in the municipality<sup>14</sup>. Below a short summary of the data is presented.

**Table 1: Current average spending of tourist visiting Tenerife and Arona**

	All tourists (average)	Tourists with reduced mobility (average)
Average expenditure	125,23 €	178€
Spending on origin	88,01 €	96.€
Spending in Canary Island	37,21 €	82€
Average stay	8,40 days	8,40 days
TOTAL BILLING	1.051,93 €	1.495,2€

Source: Promotor / Istac evolution of the profile of tourists visiting the Canary Islands. Arona Tourism Board.

<sup>14</sup> Tourist Accessibility Plan Arona (trajectory from 2003 to 2013) published by the Tourist Board of the City of Arona.

Tourists with disabilities visiting Arona spend more on origin and destination than the average tourist. This is due to the need for extra requirements such as rental of technical aids (wheelchairs, scooters), rehabilitation services and treatments, orthopedics, pharmacy amongst others.

58% of respondents were willing to pay a higher price (additional value) for the use of accessible facilities and services. The amount they would be willing to spend is between 100€ to 700 €.

**Figure 2: Spending average**

	<b>Tourists</b>	<b>Tourists with reduced mobility</b>
<b>Flight only</b>	14.9%	12,5%
<b>Flight and accommodatio</b>	24.4%	20,2%
<b>Flight, accommodation and breakfast</b>	8,7%	5,5%
<b>Flight, accommodation and half-board</b>	24.4%	39,3%
<b>Flight, accommodation and full-board</b>	5.3%	6,1%
<b>Flight, accommodation and all inclusive</b>	22.3%	7,3%

As for the contracted services, the preferred mode by tourists with reduced mobility is flight, accommodation and half board (occupying 39.3%). The mode of flight and accommodation is the choice for 20.2% of respondents, which may be due to familiarity of tourist with the destination as they have visited it in the past (see further the Index fidelity).

Regarding the mode for purchasing the holidays, 41% of interviewed tourists prefer to buy a package tour (transport and accommodation) through a generic tour operator or a specialized tour operator. Of these tourists who booked their holiday through a tour operator, 61.2% did so with a generic one while 38.8% was through an specialised operator.

26.5% of tourists with mobility limitations book their holiday individually, either through a travel agency (11.4%) or directly through the hotel (14%).

65.3% of visitors used Internet to purchase their holidays.

**Figure 3: Choice of type of accommodation**

Accommodation categories in Arona	Tourists (general)	Tourists with reduced mobility
<b>Hotel</b>	<b>48,9%</b>	<b>51%</b>
<b>5*</b>	6,4%	3,3%
<b>4*</b>	27,7%	40.4%
<b>3*</b>	13,6%	7%
<b>1 &amp; 2*</b>	1,2%	0.3%
<b>Non-hotel</b>	51,1%	49%

Source: Cabildo Insular de Tenerife.: Tenerife Tourism

The most frequently chosen accommodation type is the four stars hotel, representing 40.4%. This is because they are offering the highest level of accessibility in their facilities compared to other categories. However, 49% of respondents declare to choose non-hotel accommodation for their holidays in Arona. This high percentage is due to the existence of specialized establishments and rehabilitation resorts as well as a variety of non-hotel complex (apartments), which over the past decade has increased the number of adapted accommodation units.

## 6.0 Evidence of impact

Arona has been recognized for its work on accessibility in tourism in various ways. In 2005 Arona won the “Accessible Tourism Destination” award given by the Canary Island government. In 2009, the town won the “Queen Sofia” National Accessibility Award, being the first municipality to be rewarded in the Canary Islands.

Arona is also part of the Network of Cities for Accessibility REDCA4ALL<sup>15</sup>, the composition and presentation took place on 4 December 2013, under the chairmanship of her Majesty the Queen.

Data from the Arona Tourist Board Study<sup>16</sup> that included AENA (Spanish Airports) service “Sin barreras” in the period 2010-2012. The data presented below shows an increasing use of this service as well as an increase of tourist arrivals to the island, and South Tenerife in particular of which 40 or 50% of that volume are tourists coming to Arona,, according to the study.

<sup>15</sup> REDCA4ALL is a Spanish network that integrates 60 municipalities compromised with accessibility and it is a network of experiences and ideas exchanges to improve the accessibility plans and unify the elimination of accessibility barriers for people with disabilities.

<sup>16</sup> Tourist Accessibility Plan Arona (trajectory from 2003 to 2013) published by the Tourist Board of the City of Arona. [Plan de Accesibilidad Turística de Arona 2003-2013](#)



**Figure 4: Statistics on passenger numbers Island Airports**

ISLAND AIRPORTS	Number of Passengers		
	2010	2011	2012
<b>SOUTH TENERIFE</b>	<b>55.782</b>	<b>64.567</b>	<b>68.454</b>
<b>NORTH TENERIFE</b>	<b>19.283</b>	<b>19.479</b>	<b>18.885</b>
<b>GRAN CANARIA</b>	54.355	56.533	55.219
<b>LANZAROTE</b>	29.472	32.914	35.020
<b>FUERTEVENTURA</b>	14.996	17.265	17.163
<b>LA PALMA</b>	6.098	6.548	6.448
<b>EL HIERRO</b>	621	594	557
<b>LA GOMERA</b>	108	79	63
<b>PASSENGERS WITH REDUCED MOBILITY</b>	<b>180.683</b>	<b>180.683</b>	<b>201.809</b>

Source: AENA

It is also noticeable that there is a lot of floating population, the ones residing in autumn and winter on the island, and the rest of the year in their countries and those who simply are temporary tourists tends to stay between 2 and 4 weeks, preferably also in autumn and winter, which facilitates and enhances the seasonal adjustment.

### **Tourists' profile**

Also the working profile of the sample group interviewed reflects that 44,3% of tourists with disabilities are retired or pensioners. The other important sector corresponds to auxiliary workers and operators (mainly office salaried employees) occupy 25,5%. The following occupation is employers and freelancers with 9,4%

Earnings of the 44,3% of retirees come from allowances and non-contributory pensions. This data shows that people with disabilities do not represent a sufficiently large part of the workforce due to the existence of barriers in the workplace. The average monthly household income of respondents' tourists is € 2,570.

Regarding the age of tourists with disabilities in Arona, the age range from 31 to 45 years old (27,4%) and from 51 to 60 years old (22,6%) were the most frequent. Another noticeable age range was over 61 years old (15,4%). The rest of age ranges vary from under 25 years old (13,2%), from 46 to 50 years old (12,7%) and from 26 to 30 years old (8,7%)

The nationalities of tourists with reduced mobility visiting Arona are mainly British (19.1%), German (22.5%), Nordic (20.4%), mainly from Sweden and Spanish (19.4%).

Considering the companions, Arona Tourism Board came up with the following information.

**Figure 5: Travel patterns of tourists in Arona**

COMPANIONS	AVERAGE TOURISTS	TOURISTS WITH REDUCED MOBILITY
Couple	57.5%	39.8%
Couple and children	15%	
Family		34%
Other relatives	5.9%	
Friends	9.1 %	9%
Alone	5.5%	4.5%
Assistants		12,7%

Tourists with disabilities visiting Arona are accompanied in 94.5% of cases. Those who visit the municipality with their partner represent 39.8% while those that come with other members of the family amount to 34%. Those who have been accompanied by friends represent 9% of the total. 12.7% chose an assistant to accompany them you during their vacation while 4% choose to travel alone. The average person who accompanied them on their vacation companion stood at 1.6.

60% of people with mobility limitations need assistance to carry out their trip. Most of them (72%) say they need a full-time assistant to move around the destination, to perform daily tasks or for leisure activities. This rate, also, requires assistance to embark and disembark from public transportation (plane, bus, taxi, etc.).

### **Availability to travel**

Only 15.5% of respondents consider official school periods to choose the date of their holiday. This reflects that traveling with children is not one of the main concerns of this group. 84.5% reported having no family responsibilities.

Referring to the holiday period the study reveals that the off season is a period increasingly chosen by tourists with reduced mobility when they decide to take a vacation, having no family responsibilities.

Most take advantage of their holidays to travel. Although there is some preference for travel in low season (34.8%), a similar percentage (32.3%) answered that they traveled either due to the season or the destination.

## Loyalty

The study also showed the number of times, tourists with reduce mobility have visited Arona. It is noticeable that 41% had visited Arona more than 5 times, while it was the first time for 18,9% and the rest of the frequency varies from the third visit (12,2%) to the fourth visit (11,3%) to the second one (16,6%)

This shows that at least 81.1 % tourists with reduced mobility had visited Arona in the past. This shows a very high level of return rate for the town. In addition, 79 % of tourists with disabilities said that he had visited other Canary Islands.

Regarding the motivational factors to choose Arona over other destinations, 26.2% of tourists with disabilities considered destination accessibility as motivational factors in their holiday. Leisure and entertainment were determinants for 16.7 %, rest and relaxation 17,9%, and the sun and the beach for 21.2 %. Health-oriented purposes were 7.1 % and 4.1% were cultural purposes.

Therefore, the most important motivations for travel both for tourists with disabilities and without disabilities are leisure, rest and relaxation and good weather.

Regarding the frequency of traveling 87% of respondents stated that tourists enjoy their holidays once every year while 32% travel each semester. 91.4% of tourists with disabilities said the imperative factor to choose a destination is accessibility.

**Figure 6: Frequency of trips made by people with reduced mobility**

Frequency of trips made by PRM	
Once a year	58%
Once every semester	32%
Once every three months	5%
Rarely	5%

Regarding frequency traveling to Arona, 58% of interviews visit Arona once a year, whereas 32% travel to Arona once every semester. Just a 5% visit Arona once every three months or on rarely occasions.

## Satisfaction with Arona

The survey reflects that on a scale from 1 to 10, tourists with disabilities rated on average infrastructures and accessible services with 9.2, accessible

accommodation with 8,9, accessible transports 7,8 and accessible leisure activities 7,2.

Regarding the evaluation of Arona as an accessible destination, the results were as follows.

**Figure 8: Evaluation of Arona's accessibility**

<b>EVALUATION OF ARONA AS AN ACCESSIBLE TOURISM DESTINATION</b>	<b>1-10</b>
<b>When I travel I assume extra expenses due to my disability</b>	6.1
<b>When I travel, I have difficulties in transfers</b>	6.2
<b>I have time availability to travel</b>	6.8
<b>I will visit Tenerife again</b>	9.2
<b>I will visit Arona again</b>	9.3
<b>I will recommend Arona to my friends and relatives</b>	9.1
<b>I will recommend Tenerife to my friends and relatives</b>	9.1
<b>I will book my trip with the same tour operator</b>	5.2
<b>I will stay in the same accommodation establishment were I am this time</b>	5.7
<b>I will book my trip through internet again</b>	5.4

This table shows a high rate of satisfaction with Arona destination and a willingness to return and recommend the destination although there are some considerations about the way they will book or enjoy their stay.

## 7.0 Conclusions

The development of Arona as an accessible destination has undoubtedly benefited from the weather and geographical condition, but this clearly does

not build up the accessibility in a destination and there have been other factors that have made Arona a successful example of tourism for all<sup>17</sup>.

These have included the firm political commitment, present from the very start, which has continued up until the present day. The municipality considers accessibility as a basic feature of its tourism services which commitment includes the Accessibility Plan. This plan is continuously updated and implemented.

Also the technical support coming from Arona Tourism Board is of a great importance thanks to the staff's full time dedication to accessible tourism in the municipality. Other professionals are also carrying out specific fieldwork on accessibility issues. This staff is in charge of administration tasks, co-ordination and follow up of the Accessibility Plan, advising tourism business regarding accessibility and monitoring the levels of accessibility in order to inform the city council and the tourists.

The third key factor in the destination's success has been training and awareness that the Arona Tourism Board has been raising through the years with several courses. These courses have been focusing on pointing out the competitive advantage to be gained through accessibility. Specific courses have been targeted to tourist businesses, customer care staff, municipal technicians and architects as well as construction companies.

There is another important action taken by the Tourism Board which is the evaluation of the municipality as an accessible destination through the constant feedback from the tourists that visit the municipality. This allows for identifying any discomfort or issue of accessibility and consequently finding an appropriate solution.

Another key factor has been the commitment shown by the business sector. They are getting more involved in improving accessibility in their own facilities and establishments, in response to the ever-increasing demand of the tourists.

Benchmarking is the sixth key factor as Arona is looking closely at other good examples on accessibility (including establishments, management systems and destinations) in order to improve their facilities through the knowledge acquired. In the beginning Scotland and Valencia were taken as models to follow, however, the Arona Tourism Board is constantly updating the information regarding accessible tourism that has been developed in other destinations (national and international) and this is how they adapt their services (for example the inclusion of the Eurokey system in the municipality<sup>18</sup>)

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<sup>17</sup> Key factors have been provided by Jesús Hernández through the "Best Practice in Accessible tourism" chapter that he wrote regarding to Arona (and that was confirmed in the interview)

<sup>18</sup> See chapter 3.0

Finally, promotion has had an important relevance to show the results and attract more tourists. Arona has stands at the most important trade fairs such as FITUR, ITB and WTM, along with other accessibility fairs including the "Tourism for all" Congress organized by ONCE Foundation every three years. This promotion is complemented with the constant update of Arona's guide and website.

Therefore Arona acquires high client satisfaction by offering high quality products and services that can be enjoyed by everyone, and which report high recognition by the society in the destination image.



## 8.0 Recommendations





Accessibility is usability, and though it is often associated with people with disabilities it affects everyone who is either directly or indirectly a user, and under a good management, it can provide great benefits. Not only economically but also socially, for both residents and temporary users. However, accessibility must be developed in a comprehensive and integrated way, encompassing all those determinants for the design of a tourist destination, where collaboration between public and private sectors becomes essential for the proper design and installation of accessibility factors.

The following recommendations can be drawn out from this good practice example:

- Raise awareness among the technicians of the public administrations.
- Raise awareness within the business community.
- Raise the level of accessibility in tenders in all the public funding carried out.
- Improve communication between the different stakeholders, done by a management area or department to be in charge of accessibility.
- Provide greater variety and amount of accessible public transport and other services included in the tourism chain, within the town and its surroundings.
- Regularly update the information regarding the level of accessibility of the tourist facilities and information.
- Publish a report for the sector to help reinforce the creation of mechanisms to ensure compliance with current legislation. This should be done on a regular basis.
- Increase the promotion of the destination at a national and international level.

## Annex I: Criteria and justification for best practices

**Table 1: Criteria and justification for best practice**

Criteria	Justification	On track/off track
<b>Relevance</b>	There is a strategy that continues over time which has shown the importance of planning. This comprehensive plan has allowed the destination to improve over the last decades and has affected directly to the tourism sector.	
<b>Transferability</b>	The example of Arona is something that should be considered by other tourism destinations because it has proven results in increasing accessibility. Thus, it is highly transferable.	
<b>Efficient &amp; Effectiveness</b>	Efficiency is shown in the destination and abroad thanks to the continuity of the work done in the destination that has been closely reviewed and managed by Arona Tourism Board and City hall through the Tourist Accessibility Plan Arona <a href="#">2003-2013</a>	
<b>Sustainability</b>	The sustainability of this example is based on the opportunity business see in adapting their services to all tourists' needs and demands.	
<b>Innovation</b>	Innovation is based on the need of every tourists and the way to respond to them in consequence. There have been studies of the demand in the area and a close follow up form Arona tourism Board that allows to keep accessibility alive.	