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What a Difference a NETWORK Makes!

Welcome to the first Newsletter of the European Network for Accessible Tourism (ENAT). ENAT aims to make a difference to European tourism destinations, products and services, by helping to make them truly accessible to all travellers. ENAT provides an international network for collaboration between individuals and organisations:

- bringing together sector actors to share their experience;
- promoting wider awareness and understanding of the need for accessibility in all areas of travel and tourism throughout Europe;
- supporting the development and spread of good policies and practices;
- working to develop knowledge and expertise on accessibility issues in the European tourism field.

The key platform which will help make all this happen is the ENAT website which is being upgraded for re-launch at the end of this month. With the new web site members will be able to access an online library as well as forums for Special Interest Groups and other helpful features. Members will be able to submit their own news, articles and links, building a unique and authoritative body of accessible tourism resources.

If you are not already a member of ENAT take a look at www.accessibletourism.org and join today. Don't forget to tell others about ENAT and encourage them to join, as the strength and real benefits of the network comes from the membership playing an active role. See the last page of this newsletter for information about how to join ENAT.

Next ENAT NEWS:

If you would like to contribute a news item to the next ENAT Newsletter (June 2007) please send an Email to info@accessibletourism.org or call us in Athens: (+30) 210 6148380.

Think before you print to save energy and paper. If you do, then print double-sided.

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ENAT International Tourism for All Congress 2007

Supported by ENAT, Fundación ONCE and the European Commission, the Congress will take place on 21 to 23 November, 2007, at Marina D'Or, Region of Valencia, Spain. Fundación ONCE plans to make this the major European accessible tourism event of the year. The Congress is open to all actors and stakeholders in the field of accessible tourism. Best practices, forward-looking policies and innovative approaches will be presented and debated by business leaders, decision-makers, consumer groups and experts from across Europe and the International community. Exhibitors will have the opportunity to showcase destinations, travel and tourism services.

Participation in the Congress will be free of charge for all delegates, thanks to funding from the EU, the sponsors and the Autonomous Region of Valencia. The Congress will also host the Annual General Meeting of ENAT, where ENAT members will elect the ENAT Board and approve the Work Programme for the coming 2 years.

The Open Call for Papers will be published soon on the websites of ENAT, www.accessibletourism.org/ and Fundación ONCE, www.fundaciononce.es

Project News

OSSATE project launches “www.EuropeForAll.com” at ITB, Berlin and the European Cities Marketing Spring Meeting, Barcelona

The European Commission-funded OSSATE project (One-Stop-Shop for Accessible Tourism in Europe) was officially launched on 9th March to the European travel trade as 'EuropeForAll' at the Internationalen Tourismus-Börse (ITB), **Berlin**, Germany. As the world's biggest travel and tourism trade show, this year attracting over 100,000 trade visitors from across the globe, ITB was the obvious forum to inform and enthuse tourism professionals and decision makers of this important initiative and the fundamental commercial message behind it.

Co-ordinated by OSSATE partner and leading National Tourist Office, VisitBritain, a three day programme of activity was delivered under the banner of "Targeting Europe's Fastest Growing Segment" - highlighting the rapidly increasing global ageing population, and attractive commercial opportunity this presents to Europe's tourism industry, providing this market's needs can be met.



VisitBritain, together with Foreningen Tilgængelighed for Alle (Denmark), the Hellenic Ministry of Tourism (Greece), EWORX S.A. and University of Surrey's School of Management held meetings with over 40 companies and organisations, including national and regional tourist offices, tour operators, transport operators and other tourism businesses as well as tourism systems providers such as Austrian-based Tiscover AG.

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The Berlin programme culminated with a short seminar, consisting of presentations from OSSATE partners VisitBritain and EWORX S.A., supported by other OSSATE partners Foreningen Tilgængelighed for Alle, Turism för alla i Sverige (Sweden), Infoplattform Barrierefreier Tourismus (Austria), Hellenic Ministry of Tourism and the University of Surrey (UK), and was attended by representatives of over 30 tourism organisations across Europe.

At the same time in **Barcelona**, Spain, details of the OSSATE project were presented to over 100 delegates attending the European Cities Marketing Spring Meeting.

The OSSATE project is a response to customers' accessibility needs, which feature increasingly in leisure and business tourism. From the low-level access needs of the huge growing seniors market and families with young children, to the potentially high-level needs of disabled visitors. The project aims have been therefore to provide, via new media channels, better information on the accessibility of tourism products in Europe for the benefit of all potential travellers, both within Europe and from the rest of the world.

Katrine Mosfjeld of VisitOSLO, presents the OSSATE initiative at the European Cities Marketing Spring Meeting in Barcelona



To deliver this improved information, OSSATE partners have developed a series of questionnaires covering: the accessibility of Serviced Accommodation, Self-Catering and Attractions. Two sets of these questionnaires have been developed; the first is for self-assessment, to be completed independently by providers, the second set are intended to be used as part of an independent audit, and completed by an accredited access auditor. The information collected is not about setting a standard or fixed criteria, its purpose is simply to tell visitors, 'what is there' to help them make an informed decision about the places where they might wish to stay or visit.

The collection and on-line display of this accessibility information has been piloted in the UK and Greece. In Greece questionnaires were sent to 1,467 hotels with 628 (43.5%) responding. The Hellenic Ministry of Tourism, who were responsible for managing the pilot, emphasized to businesses the competitive advantage, which can be gained by providing this additional accessible data to visitors.

Meanwhile, in the UK, three destinations, Chester and Cheshire, Leicestershire and parts of Wales have been pilots for the collection of "self-assessed" data that forms part of the general everyday data collection at destination level for accommodation and attractions. Chester and Leicestershire are now displaying this data on their websites. To see examples of the accessibility data that is now available in these pilot areas check out www.visitcheshire.com and www.goleicestershire.com.

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OSSATE has developed the new website www.europeforall.com, as a dedicated online accessibility information service for travellers to destinations across Europe. The site gives travellers information for venues and destinations within Europe and offers a personalised search facility.

To learn more about the OSSATE project take a look at www.ossate.org/.

Sweden - New Accessible Tourism Network Launched

Access Sweden, a new network for accessible tourism in Sweden was officially launched in March at TUR07, the Swedish Tourism Fair. It aims to be a focal point to promote accessibility in the tourism industry by bringing together in one arena all interested actors in Sweden, to consolidate experiences and knowledge, share best practice and encourage co-operation.



Access Sweden aims to:

- Establish an accessibility Academy for training
- Create an Information point
- Gather and distribute information
- Raise awareness
- Promote dialogue
- Encourage co-operation between public and private sectors

The launch of the new network was marked by an international seminar on Accessible Tourism with a focus on *the fastest growing market in Europe*: that of older tourists and others who need better accessibility. The seminar pointed to the global trend of a growing ageing population and the impact this will have on tourism businesses as well as the opportunities it offers. As the segment of older tourists - who have greater accessibility needs - increases, so do this group's demands for higher service quality.

The event was opened by Ms. Marie Linde of the West Sweden Tourist Board. Other speakers included Mr. Andrew Daines, eBusiness Partnerships Manager at VisitBritain; Mr. Ivor Ambrose, Coordinator of ENAT and manager of the OSSATE-project, as well as representatives of Access Sweden. By creating platforms for accessibility issues in the tourism sector and encouraging the exchange of good practices at both the Swedish and European level, Access Sweden hopes that initiatives such as this seminar will be the natural focal point to promote accessible tourism for all. The seminar presentations can be viewed on the ENAT website at: www.accessibletourism.org/pages/events_international_invitation_seminar.jsp

For further information contact: **ACCESS SWEDEN** Tel. +46-42-13 48 01, Fax. +46-42-13 61 85, E-mail: info@access-sweden.se, Web. www.access-sweden.se

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UK - "Access Statements" Go National

From April 2007, accommodation providers in the UK who are part of the quality schemes managed by VisitBritain, VisitScotland, VisitWales and the Automobile Association, will be required to prepare an **Access Statement**, as part of their quality grading assessment.

An Access Statement is a written, clear and accurate - and above all, honest - description of the current facilities and services offered by a business, to enable a potential visitor to make an informed decision as to whether their particular access needs will be met.

The provision of an Access Statement is part of a response by businesses to all potential customers who today demand a high quality of service. Offering guests more information about the property and services on offer to them and how their needs can be met is regarded as a matter of quality. An Access Statement is therefore away for providers who participate in quality grading schemes in the UK to enhance the quality of the service they offer for all their customers and is also seen as an essential and valuable marketing tool.

VisitBritain is now offering guidance to accommodation providers to help them understand more about an access statement – what it is, why they need one, who it is intended for, how to write one, and where to publish it. For more information see: www.visitbritain.com/accessstatements

Finland - CAN YOU HELP?

"I'm writing to you on behalf of a project, concerning accessible nature sport and tourism, called Nature 4 All. The project is financed by the State Provincial Office of Lapland. We are aiming to develop new tools for measuring and evaluating the accessibility of the outdoor environment and nature activities. The focus at the moment is especially on winter activities. We would appreciate your help in finding new solutions creating a new measuring /evaluating system. This would be a great benefit for all the disabled people around the world. We are looking in particular for any *research or studies* based on evaluating and measuring the *services* of accessibility for the disabled, as well as any general relevant measuring and evaluating systems of accessibility. Also, If you know of any solutions which improve accessibility for the disabled people, I would be very happy to hear from you. Many thanks in advance!"

If you have any information to share please contact:

Elina Harmainen Tel: +358 20 798 5655 Email: elina.harmainen@edu.ramk.fi

Hungary - CAN YOU HELP?

"I am a student in the College of Commerce, Catering and Tourism in Hungary. My thesis is about the tourism opportunities for disabled people in the European Union. I would be really grateful if you could send me some information about the accessibility of hotels, restaurants and the museums, or relevant laws where they exist."

If you have any further information, please write to Szilvia Gyuk.

Email: gyuk.szilvia@gmail.com

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Accessible Tourism Reference Documents

The ENAT Website is developing an on-line Accessible Tourism Resource Centre, including a document library. Meanwhile, the ENAT Secretariat has pointed Elina and Szilvia (see above) to these links for reports and further information:

<http://www.accessibletourism.org/pages/publications.jsp>

Policy proposals for accessible tourism in the ENAT-IGM report (download PDF). Also contains references to good practices.

<http://www.ossate.org/index.jsp>

A project supported by the European Commission about tourism accessibility information.

http://www.ossate.org/quest_view_list.jsp

Reports from the OSSATE project – the accessible tourism market, information systems, etc. (downloadable PDFs).

<http://www.ossate.org/links.jsp>

Selected links to accessible tourism information from Belgium, Greece and UK.

http://www.ossate.org/events_conference_presentations.jsp

Presentations and speeches from a European Commission/OSSATE conference held in Brussels 18-19 January 2007. (Downloadable PDFs).

GREECE: Autonomia Expo, Athens, 18 – 20 May 2007

The Expo takes place at the Peace and Friendship Stadium at Faliro, possibly the most accessible exhibition venue in Athens. This is the first time such a fair has been organised in Greece. It is intended to be an annual event. Autonomia EXPO will highlight, among other things, solutions and technologies that address primarily the human requirements and secondarily the major types of disabilities. **ENAT** will present its activities at the stand of DISABILITY NOW, the leading Greek disability NGO, which is also an ENAT sponsor. More details at the exhibition Website:

<http://www.autonomiaexpo.org>

ENAT Membership – How to join!

ENAT membership is open to all kinds of organisations, including businesses that serve travellers and tourists, public authorities, professionals, researchers and educational institutions. Individuals may also join. All members can benefit from ENAT's information and networking services. Membership of ENAT is free until the end of 2007 thanks to support funding from the European Commission.

For more information about how to join see:

www.accessibletourism.org/pages/registration.jsp

Please don't forget to tell others about ENAT and encourage them to join in.

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