



Report of the Inaugural General Meeting

Held on 11 May 2006

Brussels, Belgium

**Working together to make tourism in Europe
Accessible for All**

Supported by the
Commission of the European Communities



ENAT Inaugural General Meeting Report (Public document)

Further information about ENAT is available on the Web:

www.accessibletourism.org

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1 Introduction

1.1 “Accessible Tourism” – Essential for Many, Good for All

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.

People everywhere have a diversity of requirements. So why doesn't the holiday market place take this into account? Several studies have shown that disabled people are excluded from travelling and enjoying a holiday - at home or abroad - by a lack of suitable facilities. The market potential is enormous, when you consider that there are 50 million disabled people in Europe, and nearly all of them would like to travel with their families. 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 want to travel!*

A recent survey conducted by the University of Surrey (UK) estimates the market potential for accessible tourism at over 134 million people or 27% of the total EU-population (people with a disability, their families and friends, ...). Taking into account people with a disability, older people, pregnant women, families with young children and people with other impairments, it is calculated that that approximately 30 to 40% of all Europeans can benefit directly from accessible tourism. As populations both in Europe and globally are ageing rapidly, it is only common sense to make tourism accessible for all travellers.

1.2 The European Network for Accessible Tourism

To help meet these demands, the European Network for Accessible Tourism, or ENAT, was launched at the ENAT Inaugural General Meeting on 11 May 2006, in Brussels.

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. ENAT has been set up by nine founding organisations: VisitBritain, the Greek Ministry of Tourism, Fundación ONCE, Spain, Tourism for All Sweden, Disability Now, Greece, Belgian accessibility specialists Toegankelijkheidsbureau and ANLH, Work Research Centre, Dublin and the network coordinator, EWORX s.a., Greece.

In its start-up phase, ENAT is being supported by a grant from the European Commission.

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. In the coming two years, ENAT will establish contacts with businesses and other organisations in all the Member States of the European Union and other European countries, leading to a Network that will enable providers, consumer representatives and specialists to share experiences and promote better policies and practices in accessible tourism. The Network is also organising a number of events where Members and interested parties can meet, exchange ideas and plan further initiatives.

ENAT will also undertake studies to benchmark the progress that is being made in the tourism sector towards improving the accessibility of hotels and destinations, showing how disabled and elderly tourists are being better served by the industry.

1.3 Scope of the IGM-Report

This 'Inaugural General Meeting' report gives an overview of the 'European Network for Accessible Tourism' Inaugural meeting that was held on Thursday 11 May 2006 in the Ferraris Building, Koning Albert II laan 20, 1000 Brussels. The launch event was attended by 100 leaders from the European travel industry, consumer groups and organisations that shape EU and national policies in the tourism sector. Over 14 different countries were represented.

This report presents the results of the meeting, including the contributions of the keynote speakers and the outcomes of three thematic parallel workshops.

A List of Delegates is shown in the final section.

Further information about ENAT can be obtained by writing or calling the ENAT Secretariat. The contact details are shown on Page 2 of this report.

2 Programme

- 10:30 First Plenary Session**
Chair: Mieke Broeders, Toegankelijkheidsbureau, Belgium
- 10:30 Opening and Welcome
Elizabeth Straw, European Commission, DG Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities
- 10:40 Presenting ENAT: The European Network for Accessible Tourism
Ivor Ambrose, ENAT Co-ordinator, Greece
- 11:00 Investing in Accessible Tourism
Ioanna Tselika, Director of Tourist Investments Dept., Hellenic Ministry of Tourism.
- 11:10 Welcoming ALL Tourists to Europe
Andrew Daines, eBusiness Partnerships Manager, VisitBritain
- 11:25 Accessibility: an Important Economic Opportunity for the European Tourism Sector.
Victoria Eichhorn, University of Surrey, School of Management, UK
- 11:45 Policy Challenges for Accessible Tourism in Europe
Maria Nyman, Policy Officer, European Disability Forum
- 12:30 Lunch**
- 13:45 Second Session (Parallel Workshops)**
- Workshop 1: Learning from 'Best Practices' in Accessible Tourism**
Moderator and Rapporteur: Steven Vos, Toegankelijkheidsbureau, Belgium
- Workshop 2: Special Needs: Customer Service**
Moderator and Rapporteur: M. José Sánchez, Fundación ONCE, Spain
- Workshop 3: Addressing Policy Challenges in the Tourism Sector**
Moderator and Rapporteur: Lilian Müller, Tourism for All in Sweden
- 15:15 Tea/Coffee**
- 15:45 Final Plenary Session**
Chair: Cléon Angelo, ANLH, Belgium
- 15:45 **Rapporteurs report back**
1. Best Practice: Conclusions and priorities for ENAT
 2. Special Needs: Customer Service: Conclusions and priorities for ENAT
 3. Policy Challenges: Conclusions and priorities for ENAT
- 16:15 Universal Accessibility in Tourism Policies: an Approach from the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO)
Henryk Handszuh, Chief of Quality Dept. UN World Tourism Organisation
- 16:30 Discussion
- 16:45 Address by Kathleen Van Brempt**, the Flemish Minister of Equal Opportunities, Mobility and Social Economy
- 17:00 Closing Message by Ivor Ambrose**, EWORX S.A.
- 17:15 Cocktail Reception at the Ferraris Building**

3 Keynote Speakers' Speeches and Presentations

3.1 Mieke Broeders, Toegankelijkheidsbureau



Title: 'Introduction

Good morning,
My name is Mieke Broeders and I am the director of Toegankelijkheidsbureau, which is an accessibility centre in Flanders.
Today, I'm in charge of leading you through the morning session of this meeting.

First of all a very warm welcome here in Brussels We are delighted that you all responded to our invitation to join us on this first meeting of the European Network for Accessible Tourism. We hope this day will be an important start, a kind of historical day for this European Network for Accessible Tourism.

What brings us here together is the fact that we all believe that accessibility and tourism is the future.

Travelling, visiting places, enjoying culture across Europe in a comfortable and equal way is something which should become reality and a joy for everyone. Still, a lot needs to be done. However there is a lot of good will and there are already a lot of good initiatives all over, policy measures are coming up, ...

ENAT wants to present a platform where all of you can meet to exchange information and learn from each other, inspire each other and in the future take initiatives to make Europe accessible and fun for everyone.

Before we really start this day, may I ask you to switch off your mobile phones.

This morning we will have some presentations. After lunch we will first split up in working groups and come back together in a plenary session with the reports of these working groups . To end the day we have a speaker from the World Tourism Organisation and we are very pleased that the Flemish Minister of Equal Opportunities will join us and will address us.

The ENAT project is made possible thanks to the European Commission and more particularly within the programme "Pilot Actions for Mainstreaming Disability" of DG Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities. We are very grateful for this and we are very pleased not only that we get the financial support but also the moral support of the European Commission which is represented today by Mrs Elizabeth Straw.

I hope you will enjoy this day!

3.2 Elizabeth Straw, European Commission



Title: 'Opening and Welcome'

Ladies and Gentlemen

I am very grateful to the European Network for Accessible Tourism for inviting me here today to the inaugural general meeting of this new network.

My name is Elizabeth Straw and I work for the European Commission in the unit for the integration of people with disabilities.

I am not an expert on tourism and am therefore somewhat inhibited in speaking to an expert audience like you. However, one of my tasks in our unit is accessibility of public buildings and their environment to people with disabilities and this is a very important issue for us. Allow me to tell you why.

Our European Disability Strategy encompasses a very wide range of issues of concern to disabled people and includes a biennial Action Plan and report on the overall situation of people with disabilities in the Europe of 25 Member States. The broad range of areas addressed includes accessibility. The Communication and Disability Action Plan is available on our web-site at: http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/index/com_2005_604_en.pdf.

A more specific document on accessibility to the built environment can also be found on our web-site at: http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/index/final_report_ega_en.pdf.

Quite a few of you here to-day were members of the independent group of access experts who drew up this document for the Commission as part of our contribution to the European Year of People with Disabilities in 2003.

I would like at this stage to reiterate my very grateful thanks and those of the Commission to those un-paid experts who gave so much of their time to this project and who produced such a high quality output. Their document makes a powerful case for including the disability dimension in all aspects of building planning, design and construction right from the outset. In doing so it also makes a compelling economic argument for the concept of 'design for all' whereby meeting disability needs also has enormous benefits for society as a whole.

This dovetails very neatly with our emphasis on 'mainstreaming', that is, incorporating the disability dimension in all social, economic, environmental and other policy areas which impact upon disabled people as much as on every other citizen.

This concept does not mean having no policies that are specific to people with disabilities – far from it – these are an integral part of mainstreaming. Policies that address the particular needs of disabled people are designed to take away the barriers and inequalities that still exist to-day and that prevent disabled people from taking their rightful place in society on equal terms with non-disabled people.

Our underlying principle in everything we do is to achieve full equality for disabled people and ensure their full access to all the same rights that non-disabled people take for granted. I should also say that we wholeheartedly support the guiding principle outlined to us by the European Disability Forum – with whom we work in very close co-operation – that is 'Nothing about us without us'.

Arguably the most important area where barriers continue to exist is in actually getting into buildings and being able to use their facilities. That is why we have made this a priority area for action.

Naturally, since we are DG Employment, we pay particular attention to making workplaces accessible to disabled people. But life is not all about work. We are here to-day to talk about accessible tourism. This is essential for disabled people who must be able to enjoy travel and leisure facilities in the same way as all other citizens. Not only to enjoy an enhanced quality of life but also to experience to the full the variety, beauty and cultural heritage that the 25 Member States have to offer.

Earlier I mentioned 'mainstreaming'. We put that into practice in the European Commission in a very positive way. Our colleagues in other Directorates General play an essential role in this regard.

The Tourism Unit of DG Enterprise is a prime example. They have produced a number of very helpful documents on accessible tourism including an extremely useful handbook – produced in 1996 but still relevant to-day – called 'Making Europe accessible for tourists with disabilities'. More recently they have produced a further study entitled 'Improving information on accessible tourism for disabled people'. My friend and colleague Rüdiger Leidner from the tourism unit in DG Enterprise is here to-day and can give more details for those of you who would be interested.

Travel and tourism are social rights that concern all of us. It is estimated that over 40 million Europeans do not take holidays; this seems to me to be a clear consequence of the inaccessibility of many tourist venues, hotels and leisure facilities. If an economic argument is appropriate in an area where cost should not be the determining factor, this represents a large un-tapped audience for the tourism industry.

Of course, buildings have to be accessible to people with disabilities – and all forms of disability should be catered for – but to be able to get into these buildings and visit these sites you need to be able to travel in the first place. This is where our colleagues in DG Transport play a vital role indeed. You may have noted the lack of reference so far to European legislation. This is not a deliberate error on my part. It is because disability is an area where the legal competence to make laws rests with the Member States themselves and not with the European Commission.

But transport is within our competence and we have made great use of this ability to make laws on accessible public transport: buses and coaches, rail and boat travel and most recently on air transport. With very strong support from EDF and the European Parliament, we anticipate early adoption of a Regulation on the rights of passengers with reduced mobility when travelling by air. This will be the very first instance of disability-specific EU legislation in any field and should end the sort of discriminatory practices by one particular airline that have been well publicised in recent months.

My unit itself does not deal directly with accessible tourism but we do provide financial support, courtesy of the European Parliament, for a number of studies on accessibility some of which have a tourism aspect.

One such study is looking at a representative sample of buildings across Europe, including leisure facilities, to identify both good and bad practical examples in building design and access. I was particularly struck by pictures of an hotel in Greece where the swimming pool has a well-designed ramp that is non-slip and is equipped with a handrail, allowing easy access for wheelchairs and people with visual impairments. Things like good signage inside buildings, handrails, tactile paving surfaces both inside and outside buildings, brail maps of building lay-outs, really accessible lifts, ramps alongside stairs – these all make a huge difference to the disabled tourist.

I therefore welcome the setting up of your new network and would like to wish you every success for the future.

Thank you for your attention.

3.3 Ivor Ambrose, ENAT Coordinator



Title: ‘The European Network for Accessible Tourism’

Slide presentation

http://www.accessibletourism.org/pdfs/ENAT_IGM_1Ambrose.pdf

Good morning, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Today we are here to witness the birth of a new European organisation. We might say ‘another new European organisation’ and indeed ‘another new organisation in the European tourism sector’! Some might well ask: - Aren’t there already enough networks and lobby groups and important bodies to take care of this issue of “accessible tourism”?
... and then perhaps as an afterthought, some might ask: – What is accessible tourism anyway? Accessibility - isn’t that just something for disabled people?

Well, already at that point in this fictional conversation, we might take a mental step backwards and consider just how far we have come in Europe but also how far we still have to go before “accessible tourism” can become the norm in Europe.

Although the calendar today says “2006”, the idea that all people, of all ages and abilities, can be tourists and enjoy visiting other regions and countries is still a surprise or even a provocation to many people. Unfortunately, some of the people who do not recognise this desire are in the business of providing transport or running hotels, or a managing a 1000 other kinds of attractions that tourists typically enjoy. Barriers that prevent physical access or access to information and experiences still exist; and discriminatory rules against disabled people as well as price surcharges can still be found in certain places and sectors of the industry.

Well, just a minute:

What about that idea that all people, of all ages and abilities, can be tourists and enjoy visiting other regions and countries? Let us add that this should be on equal terms and without discrimination.

In this room today I am pleased to note that we have representatives of many tourism providers and others who have recognised the concept of accessible tourism for all in Europe, and who are putting this idea into practice in their daily work.

So, why not share and learn from each other, and make the idea of accessible tourism a reality everywhere in Europe?

We believe and hope that –ENAT - the European Network for Accessible Tourism can do just that.

I would like to give you an overview of ENAT: the what, where, how and why... and who the network is intended for. Let me then take the key points from the ENAT proposal, which we wrote to the European Commission:

ENAT was conceived as a project, led by EWORX S. A., an Internet services company based in Athens, Greece, that is a strong proponent of accessibility.

The project proposal was selected by EU experts in open competition with other project proposals. The funding line for financing this action is: “Pilot projects for mainstreaming disability policies”. This means, simply, bringing the access needs and requirements of disabled people into all policy areas of society, and in this case, those areas which especially relate to travel and tourism. At EWORX we decided to propose “ENAT” because we believe tourism must be made more accessible for everyone, and we felt that we could make a contribution to this effort with our expertise in new technologies, accessibility and information management.

These are ENAT sponsoring partners:

ENAT Sponsor and Coordinator	Country
EWORX S.A.	Greece
ENAT Sponsoring Partners	
Fundación ONCE	Spain
Toegankelijkheidsbureau vzw.	Belgium
VisitBritain	UK
Turism för Alla i Sverige	Sweden
Work Research Centre	Ireland
Hellenic Ministry of Tourism	Greece
Assoc. Nat. pour le Logement des Personnes Handicapées	Belgium
Disability Now	Greece

This core group of partners has two years to set up ENAT as a pan-European network, made up of businesses and organisations that support the goal of making tourism accessible for all citizens, especially those people who, today, are excluded or less well catered for in the marketplace. That is: people with disabilities, older tourists and those who may have particular demands when travelling, due to their health condition or other reasons. All the partners are together contributing 20% of the costs of setting up the project.

Aims

These are ENAT's main aims:

- ENAT will be open to all actors and stakeholders in the EU-25 tourism and disability sectors.
- ENAT will act as the focal point for promoting accessible tourism in Europe.
- ENAT will compile and distribute information, and will support dialogue about disability and accessibility issues in tourism.
- ENAT will contribute to awareness-raising, and promote mainstreaming through targeted policy recommendations and actions that can improve tourism products and services for disabled tourists. The network will also seek to improve the employment rate and conditions of disabled workers in the EU tourism sector.
- ENAT will work to foster a spirit of common purpose and will encourage partnerships for policy development and practical problem-solving, involving the tourism industry, public authorities, social partners and NGOs".

Approach

ENAT will be developed by sector actors, for sector actors. During the project period (December 2005 – November 2007), a "core group" of 9 partners from 6 countries (the proposers) will develop the structure and modus operandi ENAT, following an agreed Workplan, and ensuring a dynamic start to the organisation.

The partners are key players and specialists in the fields of disability, accessibility, labour relations and tourism. Leveraging on their respective positions in the sector, the partners will recruit an inclusive, multi-stakeholder membership to the Network.

The partners and network members will implement The 1st ENAT Work Programme, 2006 – 2007, with 2 Annual General Meetings, 3 studies, 8 newsletters, the ENAT Website, one International Workshop. A European Conference on Accessible Tourism will be held in October 2007.

(We wrote in the proposal): "This proposal summary text is not the right place to present a complete "mission statement" for ENAT. This should be left up to the newly-formed membership to decide at some future point. But we may highlight some key aspects of our intended approach, as follows:

- ENAT shall be directed and driven by the interests of its members, functioning as a democratic, inclusive European organisation
- ENAT shall have an open membership policy, bringing together and enabling collaboration between users, providers, regulators and policy-makers
- ENAT shall gather and disseminate knowledge, it shall foster debate and serve as a platform where issues can be openly and fairly examined

- ENAT shall seek consensus through dialogue, within the membership and in its dealings with other bodies and authorities, so as to propose and promote workable solutions to the problems of the sector
- ENAT shall develop and maintain a rolling Work Programme which will provide focus for its activities and enable its progress to be measured systematically across a range of initiatives and indicators
- Following its initial 2-year 'start-up' period, with its activities being 80% funded by the European Commission, ENAT shall be self-supporting through membership fees, grants and sponsorship arrangements".

Activities

The project will follow a set of 5 Actions and sub-activities, listed as follows:

Action 1. Project Management

Action 2. Stakeholder Management

- Develop and implement the membership strategy ; Recruitment drive; Member activities and services; 'Special Interest Groups'; On-line consultations and discussions

Activity 3. Publicity and Outreach

- Website, News, events, articles, an e-Newsletter; Publicity materials;

- International Meetings and workshop, ENAT Conference, and 2nd Annual General Meeting, Spain, October 2007.

Activity 4. 1st ENAT Work Programme (2006 – 2007)

Policy Actions

Building strategic alliances and partnerships

2nd ENAT Work Programme 2008 – 2009

Studies and Reports

Study: "Addressing the Rights of Disabled Tourists in Europe"

Study: "Services and Facilities for Accessible Tourism in Europe"

Study: "Towards 2010: Disability Policy Challenges and Actions for the European Tourism Sector".

Final Conference Report

Accessible Tourism Resource Centre (On-line)

Best Practices - themes and criteria (- "White papers")

Best Practices Database

Key Documents (legislation, reports) and links.

Activity 5. Monitoring and Evaluation

ENAT's actions to promote accessible tourism in Europe will be assessed through an external impact evaluation.

Expected Results

The ENAT Web-site will provide a members' platform and pan-European portal with a Resource Centre for Accessible Tourism, Special Interest Group areas, "White Papers" (- one for each SIG which is established), consultation and discussion forums, and links to member sites.

The Website will be developed according to usability and accessibility guidelines, being Level AA compliant with the WAI guidelines.

Recruitment to ENAT should aim to bring at least 500 members (organisations and individuals) to the Network by the end of 2007.

The ENAT website should aim to reach over 20,000 unique visitors by the end of 2007.

At least 5 ENAT Special Interest Groups should be active by the end of the project.

The three ENAT studies will be published and disseminated widely in 6 languages.

At this minute, ENAT is a network with 9 sponsors but no official Members, no written Charter or Statutes, and a simple Workplan.

Today the work begins – and I have the firm conviction that this can happen - with the active participation of all of you, and colleagues outside this room across Europe.

We hope that the tourist industry will be interested to know more about how they can make their facilities and tourist offers more accessible to people with disabilities. They will be able to use the network to find advice and to get direct contacts with user organisations and professionals, who can help them. Then, by advertising the accessibility of their facilities, they should be in a position to receive more customers and get higher revenues. Of course, we do not expect miracles, but we really want ENAT to reach out to the "mainstream" and get all the parts of the travel and tourist industry to focus much more on what they are doing for people with disabilities, older people and families – who can benefit most from 'accessible tourism'.

We will use our resources and our contacts to try to bring together all the organisations in Europe that support accessible tourism. Since we are offering "added value", a network and publicity to all those who become members, we think that this is a good incentive for everyone to get involved. As the membership builds up, we will need national or regional coordinators to help manage the activities and to communicate in even more languages. We are relying mainly on our core partners to set up the network in the period while the membership is free (during 2006 and 2007), and then we must have sponsorship and a system of membership fees to allow ENAT to continue and grow beyond that. It is a big challenge but we are confident that it will work.

ENAT is just at the beginning. We need and welcome constructive suggestions and contributions for its future development from all those who may be interested. We want to cover all EU countries and languages, and every type of tourist and travel offer and destination.

ENAT is for all of us. And ENAT is what we want it to be.

Thankyou.

3.4 Ioanna Tselika, Hellenic Ministry of Tourism



Title: “The European Network for Accessible Tourism”

I am very pleased to be present at this Inaugural General Meeting of ENAT, which is an exciting development for the tourism sector in Europe.

I wish to pass on the wishes of our Minister of Tourism for the success of the Network. Access to tourism for people with disabilities and others who need accessible environment and services is a priority for our Minister.

Since 1987 the Hellenic Ministry of Tourism has implemented the framework and the regulations concerning the accessibility measures to be followed by tourism enterprises according to the urban-planning regulations.

In Greece we have had the experience of planning and implementing the Olympics and Paralympics in 2004, which focused people's awareness on the importance of accessibility, and made it necessary to improve the infrastructure of the cities and venues. We have made great improvements, for example, making it possible for wheelchair users and people with walking difficulties to have access to the Acropolis - a World Heritage Site - which now is accessible to people with disabilities and to older people with the use of an elevator which brings people up to visit the site.

At the Ministry of Tourism, we look forward to using ENAT as a network for sharing information about accessible tourism at national and European levels and also as a promotion of the information about the accessible accommodation and accessible places to visit in Greece. We think, through ENAT, we are helped to be effective facing the growing demands from travellers who want better access in hotels and tourist attractions.

Using the EU “Community Support Framework” we have established certain priorities which target the upgrading of accommodations and the enhancement of the SME tourist enterprises, and the Ministry is standing behind the financial support for hotels/ enterprises which improve the accessibility of their facilities.

One of our Projects is the “Action 2.2.2” which is designed in order to support accommodations financially. The main aim of the action is to modernize and upgrade the quality of the services offered by the small and medium-sized tourist enterprises. In particular, works-projects aiming at

making tourist lodgings and accommodations accessible to people with disabilities, giving the opportunity to grant an extra contribution by this Action. Specifically if they invest the 20% of their budget to works for accessibility, the total amount of the public fund may reach 50.000 Euros instead of other categories of works which the public fund, which reach the amount of 35.000 Euros.

Indicatively, the following expenditures are regarded as eligible and are being financed by the measure:

- Construction of ramps rising from the street level, and Reception Desks following - the appropriate requirements and specifications for people with disabilities
- Telephone booths accessible to people with special needs
- Toilets - W.C. accessible to people with special needs
- Elevators accessible to people with special needs
- Reception room, bars, restaurants with accessibility facilities
- Special labelling in order to facilitate disabled people's movement
- Swimming pools, accessible for disabled people
- Configuration/formation of exterior and internal spaces, and
- Special studies referring to the accessibility issue

In the terms of another Project, the "Action 5.3.1.1" about the "Greek Cuisine", the entrepreneur-owners of restaurants willing to be financed by the Funds, can include in their proposals works/projects which refer to the subject of accessibility of people with disabilities.

The basic aim of those both Projects is to eliminate accessibility problems which people with disabilities face when they are on holiday.

In the framework of future tourist development, the accessible tourism issue constitutes a matter of major importance, being a top priority of people designing and implementing tourist policy in Greece.

We will be watching the development of ENAT with great interest and we look forward to being part of this movement to make European tourism accessible for all.

I wish a great success to the aim of ENAT and I also wish a "Europe for All"!

Thank you for your attention.

3.5 Andrew Daines, Visit Britain



Title: “Welcoming ALL Tourists to Europe”

Slide Presentation

http://www.accessibletourism.org/pdfs/ENAT_IGM_2Daines.pdf

Goeie morge en welkom iedereen.

Bonjour et bienvenue, mesdames et messieurs.

Good morning and welcome, ladies and gentlemen. Unfortunately, this is the end of the trilingual part of my presentation.

On behalf of my colleagues from VisitBritain, I'd like to say how pleased we are to be here today to support the launch of ENAT - the European Network for Accessible Tourism – and to have this opportunity to share knowledge, experience, ideas and opinions to improve the welcome to ALL visitors to Britain, and throughout Europe.

VisitBritain is the national tourist office funded by the UK government to grow the value of tourism in Britain – a role similar to that of the other 33 national tourist offices across Europe, such as Tourism Flanders, or the Greek National Tourist Office, part of the Hellenic Ministry of Tourism – whom we've just heard from and who are also founding members of ENAT.

In reality, VisitBritain is a marketing organisation, spending over 80% of our budget marketing Britain's leisure and business events offer to over 30 overseas markets, and encouraging UK residents and our near European neighbours to enjoy England. We also work collaboratively with

the other 33 European National Tourist Offices within the European Travel Commission, in order to market Europe as a tourist destination in long haul destinations.

[My Slide slide shows VisitBritain's two brand presences – VisitBritain – leading the world to Britain, and Enjoy England, together with the new brand for marketing Europe – a never ending journey – launched recently by the European Travel Commission]

Like the other European National Tourist Offices – and it is pleasing to see a number of NTOs represented here today – what VisitBritain is really about is getting more people to come to Britain (or to stay in Britain), spend more money in more parts of Britain, and to do this throughout the year. We have targets set from the UK Government with regard to the tourism revenue that is generated from the grant funding we receive. So it is important that we know our markets well, and communicate with them effectively.

The global ageing population

[My next slide shows two couples who are perhaps in retirement, enjoying some fantastic British food and drink outside a café in Southwark, London]

VisitBritain has done a great deal of work over the past few years in order to get to know our customers a lot better. One of the most striking facts is that tourists, be they domestic or from overseas, are getting older. They're also likely to be homeowners and well travelled. Maybe in the past they travelled for business, and as they get older they want to continue to travel and to enjoy life...but they might require a little more help at each stage of their journey to ensure this is the case. Many are active grandparents who are looking for places to stay and places to visit that can meet their needs – and the needs of their grandchildren. The shift towards an aging population is well documented; indeed it is estimated that the number of people over 60 years of age will increase by roughly 2 million in the UK by the end of the decade. This obviously has huge implications for operators in the travel and hospitality industry who should be considering now what requirements these customers will have.

This situation is mirrored in all our key overseas markets:

For example, today, a quarter of our visitors from the United States are over 55, one third in terms of visitors from Canada, whilst from New Zealand, 36% of visitors can be classed as 'seniors'.

Reliable info online – strength of the NTOs

[This slide shows the landing page of our award-winning visitbritain.com website]

VisitBritain believes that the provision of timely and effective information about quality assured, easily bookable products and experiences is the key to our future successes as a leading destination. Throughout 2006, 19 million people will use one of the internationally tailored visitbritain.com and enjoyengland.com websites. This philosophy is shared by other European National Tourist Offices, and through the European Travel Commission, we have just launched visiteurope.com to the United States, to Canada in French and English, Latin America in Spanish, and specifically to Brazil in Portuguese.

Reliable information - importance of the OSSATE project.

[This slide shows the OSSATE logo with the OSSATE swift]

Providing good quality, reliable information is also key to the OSSATE project – that's One-Stop-Stop for Accessible Tourism in Europe. This two year project, part of the European Commission's

e-Content programme will be launched to consumers via the website www.europeforall.com. This website, and the OSSATE project behind it, is endeavouring to empower anyone with access needs, for example older travellers, families with young children, as well as those with temporary or permanent disabilities to find reliable information, tailored to their own needs, and in a consistent form throughout Europe. As a lot of you will be aware, many of the organisations who are working together to launch ENAT have been working on OSSATE since January 2005, so please do speak to us about this, or look at the website www.ossate.org.

National Accessible Schemes

[This slide shows VisitBritain signage for our National Quality Assurance Scheme and three of our National Accessible Scheme signs]

One of the key principles of OSSATE is that we have sought to build on and complement what is already there and working well – for example the two established accessibility schemes operating in Belgium by ANLH and TGB, and VisitBritain’s National Accessible Scheme (NAS) in the UK. The NAS has been developed and refined over a number of years in collaboration with industry, consumers and disability organisations; it is highly regarded by all. The NAS, in line with similar schemes that exist throughout Europe, is designed to enable consumers make an informed choice, and to help tourism businesses understand the benefits of making changes to the way they work. It also assists businesses comply with the Disability Discrimination Act legislation in the UK, which became fully enforceable in October 2004.

VisitBritain’s National Accessible Scheme has always been positioned as one of our ‘quality standards’, and last year Quality was centrally placed within our marketing division, as we feel the tourism industry’s future lies in the strength of its quality offering.

Partnership working – Tourism For Alls

[This slide shows VisitBritain’s logo alongside TFA UK’s logo, and Tourism Flanders logo alongside that of TGB]

There are approximately 2 million individual tourism businesses and organisations across Europe; our industry is famously fragmented, and in order to present a coherent offer to visitors, and to operate effectively, it is vital to develop effective working partnerships. I’ve already spoken about how the 34 European National Tourist Offices collaborate on the long haul marketing of Europe within the European Travel Commission. At VisitBritain we work with the other tourist boards within the UK, with the UK Foreign & Commonwealth Office, with hotel companies and inbound tour operators – all to derive maximum benefit and to add value to the tourism offer. An important partnership is with Tourism For All UK, an established charity that works with other organisations, such as operators who specialise in providing tourism and travel services for disabled visitors to and within the UK. Tourism For All UK support and help to deliver the UK’s National Accessible Scheme I referred to earlier, and have provided invaluable support to ENAT in its early stages. I am very pleased that Jenny Stephenson, Tourism For All’s chief executive is present at today’s meeting. Of course this partnership isn’t unique to the UK; here in Belgium, there is a similar partnership between Tourism Flanders and TGB.

Where we see ENAT adding value – more tourists to and within Europe

[This slide shows the ENAT logo]

I’ve talked briefly about a number of different topics over the last few minutes:

- the role of the National Tourist Offices from across Europe separately or collaboratively promoting tourism to and within Europe
- the growing ageing population, and how there will be greater numbers of tourists and potential tourists with access needs in the future; Victoria from the University of Surrey will talk about this in more detail later
- the importance of reliable, quality information in order that tourists, irrespective of their access needs can make an informed choice and experience the freedom to travel
- the established Accessible Schemes currently in operation and how they can provide the reassurance to enable tourism for all
- and finally the partnership working, not least that between NTOs and Tourism For All organisations across Europe.

The European Network for Accessible Tourism being launched today embraces all these points and more. VisitBritain and other National Tourism Offices across Europe can offer mainstream routes for the industry and consumers alike. By working together with the range of partners and organisations involved in ENAT, by sharing knowledge and expertise, we can and will add value to tourism for all in Europe.

Final slide

[Final slide shows an athlete crossing the winning line in the wheelchair race at the 2004 London Marathon]

We can all reach the winning line!

3.6 Victoria Eichhorn, University of Surrey



Title: “Accessibility: an Important Economic Opportunity for the European Tourism Sector”

Slide presentation

http://www.accessibletourism.org/pdfs/ENAT_IGM_3Eichhorn.pdf

Victoria Eichhorn presented the results of a study conducted in the framework of the OSSATE project [www.ossate.org] on the economic opportunities of accessibility for the European Tourism sector. This study calculated the general demand of accessibility and the tourism market potential in Europe. The University of Surrey made a comprehensive review of published literature, reports, statistics and websites.

General demand for accessibility in Europe

The target markets include (1) people with impairments (Europe – more than 46 million), (2) the aging population (EU more than 75 million), and (3) able-bodied citizens (almost everyone).

People with impairments:

- Total number of the population with Long-Standing Health Problems (LSHP) more than 46 million
- One in six persons (15,7%)

The elderly population:

- There is a strong and positive correlation between ageing and LSHPD
- Elderly population in Europe and worldwide is continuously ageing

Able-bodied population:

- Ability exists on a continuum of high, mid-range and low ability
- Often people have temporary limitations during the normal course of their life

- The 'average' person often has 'non-average' needs or limitations.

The University of Surrey "OSSATE study estimated the general demand for accessibility in 25 European countries at over 127 million.

Tourism market potential in Europe

Based on the figures above the potential travel market was calculated. About 70% of the population in demand for accessibility has physical and financial means to travel. These people seldom travel alone: they travel with family and friends. Therefore a multiplier effect was taken into account. The total potential travel market in Europe is estimated to be over 133 million. This gives potential tourism revenues greater than 80 billion Euros.

Other case studies

Case studies in the US, Canada, Australia and New Zealand confirm the huge potential market for accessible tourism.

3.7 Maria Nyman, European Disability Forum



Title: “Policy Challenges for Accessible Tourism in Europe”

Slide presentation

http://www.accessibletourism.org/pdfs/ENAT_IGM_4Nyman.pdf

The European Disability Forum is the representative organisation of disabled people in the European Union. It was set up in 1997 in order to be a strong, independent body, speaking with one voice, the voice of – not the voice for - disabled people. This means that all members of the elected bodies of EDF are disabled or family members of disabled people unable to represent themselves. We cover the diversity of the disability movement, as disability covers not only people with physical impairments but also people with sensory impairments, people with intellectual disabilities, mental health problems or chronic illnesses. Our full members are the national councils of disabled people in all the Member States of the European Union and also the disability specific European NGOs (European Blind Union, European Union of the Deaf, Autism Europe, etc.).

The aim of EDF is to promote the rights of disabled people in all EU policy areas, by mainstreaming disability. Tourism is not an exception in this respect. I have been asked to make a presentation about the point of view of EDF on policy challenges for accessible tourism in Europe and I thank you for this.

There are some challenges for accessible tourism in Europe that are difficult to overcome, we have to admit that. This is because the competence of the European Union in the area of tourism is limited. The EC Treaty states that the activities of the EU shall include measures in the sphere of tourism (Article 3 EC). However, the treaty gives no particular guidance for a community tourism policy. Any act by the Council of Ministers in the field of tourism needs unanimity among all the Member States. To obtain unanimity is of course not an easy thing now that there are 25 Member States of the Union. The new Constitution for Europe would have increased the competences of the EU in the area of tourism. Decisions concerning tourism should have been taken by qualified

majority and the Parliament should have been co-legislators. This Constitution, as we all know, is not adopted, so we still have to struggle with the unanimity requirement. However, if there would be political commitment and will, there would be a great potential to improve the situation for disabled tourists. So far, there is no legislation on accessible tourism at EU level, only some recommendations or guidelines.

Being able to travel and to access tourist activities is necessary in order to achieve social inclusion of disabled people. To be denied this right goes against the principles of equal opportunities and non-discrimination. It represents a barrier to the freedom of movement, which is one of the fundamental principles of the European Union. Therefore, from the point of view of the disabled potential tourists, there is a need for urgent action in the field of accessible tourism policies.

Some people worry that accessibility is costly, but actually, as we have also understood from the previous presentations, accessible tourism makes good business sense. Disabled people make up approximately 50 million citizens in the European Union, and these people are all potential consumers and tourists, provided that the tourist sites are accessible.

Also a lot of older people share the same barriers as disabled people and would also benefit from accessible tourism. Just as anyone of us would actually do. Because accessibility and design for all means comfortable, high quality tourism, which all people would benefit from. In addition, constructing an accessible built environment and accessible modes of transport does not represent a higher cost in itself. What IS costly is to adapt a building or a vehicle to become accessible once it is already constructed. Therefore, accessibility must be considered from the very beginning of each project linked to tourism. Currently, the two key barriers faced by disabled people concerning tourism within the EU are:

- lack of physical accessibility and
- lack of reliable information on accessibility.

The first one is obvious: lack of appropriate infrastructure of the tourist sites themselves is only one part of this. Tourism has to be seen from a holistic perspective. This means that you will not be able to even reach that tourist site – accessible or not – if the whole travel chain is not accessible. This implies that internet booking sites should be accessible. Otherwise, disabled people will have more difficulties than other people to arrange their holiday. It also implies that the transport should be accessible. And so on.

Here there are not only policy challenges, but also opportunities – particularly in the transport sector where the EU has come out with a lot of proposals that will facilitate travelling for disabled people. In the area of built environment, there are less opportunities, because the EU has less competences in that area than in the area of transport, but the revised proposed regulations on the Structural Funds are going in the right direction in this respect. For the moment, the Council and the Parliament agree that no inaccessible infrastructure should be funded with EU money. The regional development fund, for example, might have an impact on the tourism sector in this sense. As there are few “pure EU competences” relating to tourism, we have to use the tools we can to facilitate conditions for disabled tourists. Transport and built environment are of course invaluable in this respect and this is the reason that I mention them. But ICT, for instance, can also be a tool, even though the European Commission is reluctant to propose mandatory requirements in that area.

EDF would of course welcome EU proposals for an increased coordination of tourism policies across the Member States. At present, one of the barriers to travelling for disabled people is the diverse and often confusing set of policies and standards existing across the EU Member States regarding access for disabled people. EDF would wish to see these policies and standards made more transparent and favour closer convergence in this field. As it is now, each Member State defines its own way of implementing the concept of “tourism for all”, as well as policy initiatives associated with it. This is certainly *not* satisfactory.

So I mentioned that there are two main barriers. The first one relates to accessibility. The second one relates to lack of reliable information on accessibility. Too often, tourism service providers use the accessibility labels inappropriately as marketing tools. The other day I tried to book a hotel room here in Brussels for one of the members of EDF who is an electric wheelchair user. On the

websites of some of the hotels I found the wheelchair symbol and I called one of these hotels. They did confirm to me that the rooms were adapted for wheelchair users. I booked the room but was later told by one of my colleagues that the elevator of that hotel was not spacious enough for electric wheelchairs. I had to cancel the reservation and booked a room at another hotel, with spacious lifts and adapted rooms. Fortunately, I asked if there were any steps anywhere. "Only two or three in the entrance" I was told. I had of course to cancel that reservation as well. Finally I found a hotel that was reasonably accessible. The only unfortunate thing was that there was not a shower, but a bath, in the bathroom of the accessible rooms. All three hotels used the wheelchair symbol. What I wish to say with this is that as long as there is not such a thing as a European accessibility label, disabled people are unable to trust the existing symbols and can therefore not travel with confidence. The symbols lose their value and sometimes they can mean almost anything as it is today.

However, these standards will only have any real value if there are clear rules on how and when to use the accessibility symbols and that the use of the standards are correctly implemented. This means that there must be an independent expert evaluator that states whether a certain tourist site has the permission to use those symbols or not in their advertising. With reliable information as regards the accessibility of a particular tourist site, more disabled people would feel confident to travel and to enjoy tourism. During the development of such a label, there must be a cooperation between organisations of disabled people, and the International or European Standardisation Organisations technical committees that would draft the standards.

During the Ministerial Conference in Bruges in 2001, it was actually proposed that a European label of accessibility should be developed.

After this, the European Commission carried out a study on how to improve information of the accessibility of tourism facilities for disabled people. It was acknowledged that appropriate information is indeed a necessary prerequisite for the possibility of planning a holiday. However, EDF was quite disappointed with the recommendations to the tourism industry that came out as a result of this study, because it is suggested that the tourism providers (hotel personnel, travel personnel etc) *themselves* should make an evaluation of the accessibility level at their particular site. This is of course not an objective way of investigating the level of accessibility of a place and in addition, the personnel does not have the required expertise on accessibility to judge this in a satisfactory way. EDF can therefore not see how a self-assessment approach would open up tourism to a bigger potential clientele or how it would improve the quality of tourism by meeting the expectations of disabled people. The result of misleading or incorrect information can literally mean the end of the holiday for a disabled person.

One challenge that we have in front of us, is therefore the campaign to obtain independent assessment of the accessibility of tourist sites before these respective sites make any statements whatsoever about their level of accessibility. If we obtain this, we have come a long way forward.

3.8 Henryk Handszuh, UN World Tourism Organisation



Title: “Universal Accessibility in Tourism Policies: an Approach from the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO)”

Slide presentation

http://www.accessibletourism.org/pdfs/ENAT_IGM_5Hanszuh.pdf

Henryk Handszuh presented the approach of the UNWTO towards accessible tourism and the UNWTO instrument ‘Accessible tourism for all’.

The UNWTO is a specialized agency of the United Nations that contributes to sustainable development through tourism and gives assistance to developing countries. It includes 150 member states and 7 territories.

What does the UNWTO means by tourism and tourism policies?

UNWT sees tourism as a travel experience: activities outside the usual place of residence, supply of products and services to visitors, and satisfaction of their demand.

Tourism is a cross-cutting activity in society, it is both result and vehicle of virtuous globalisation. Tourism’s major challenge is sustainability.

Tourism needs and seeks world standards in search of sustainability

UNWTO distinguishes three dimensions:

- Technical specifications
- Ethical dimension
- Quality result

UNWTO instrument ‘Accessible tourism for all’

It's important how to define disability. UNWTO defines 'handicapped people' as:

'All persons who, owing to the environment being encountered, suffer a limitation in their rational ability and have special needs during travel, in accommodation, and other tourism services, particularly individuals with physical, sensory and intellectual disabilities or other medical conditions requiring special care, such as elderly persons and others in need of temporary assistance.'

A wide spectrum is taken into account: unperceived, hidden, explicit, temporary and permanent disabilities, ...

Creating and demanding enabling environments for all implicates several steps that should be taken (awareness → assumption → solidarity → integration → awareness of common interest).

Compliance with the UNWTO recommendations 'Accessible tourism for all' is achieved through:

- (1) Promotion of accessibility standards expressed by specific technical specifications (e.g. national standards), international guidance and international support.
- (2) The ethical dimension
- (3) The quality dimension: accessibility is an underlying factor in the fundamental definition of quality in tourism.

3.9 Kathleen Van Brempt, Flemish Minister of Mobility, Social Economy and Equal Opportunities



Title: 'Address'

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my honour to welcome you all here in Brussels for the launch of the European Network for Accessible Tourism. I hope you have the opportunity to do some sightseeing during your stay in our capital. As I hope you will experience, Brussels is well worth the visit.

However, I'm rather sure not everyone will be able to enjoy a visit of Brussels on an equal footing. And I'm afraid the same goes for many other cities in Flanders and in the rest of Europe. Those among us with limited mobility will no doubt encounter many obstacles that make life, and indeed travel, a daily adventure.

Let me be very clear on this point: inaccessibility creates inequality. In my view, promoting accessibility is simply a matter of promoting equal opportunities.

An accessible environment is a key element to make integration and participation in society attainable for everyone. However, our current environment is far from accessible. We have little, or no figures on accessibility, but intuitively we know accessibility is a problem. We may not have figures, but there are none the less strong clues that accessibility will only become more important in the future.

Although everyone benefits from an accessible environment, the group of people for whom accessibility is a necessity, is growing.

It is not easy to estimate the correct number of people with disabilities in Flanders. There is as yet no database in which all people with disabilities are registered. Our estimates are based on surveys in which people are asked about their health condition.

From these surveys we estimate that about 17% of all Flemish citizens between the ages of 18 and 85 encounter limitations in daily life because of a disability or a lasting illness they are living with.

The second group of people for whom accessibility is a necessity, are our senior citizens. Our population grows older: in 2005 more than one million Flemish citizen were 65 years old or older. Almost half a million people were 75 years or older. Moreover, the group of senior citizens is growing in Flanders. Research shows that 37% of those over 65 year is affected by one or more lasting illnesses or disabilities and almost four out of ten of those over 75 encounter limitations in daily life on a regular or permanent basis.

The limited numbers we have on accessibility, show a not so nice picture about the accessibility of our environment. Most buildings that are screened on their accessibility turn out to be not accessible. In Antwerp, my home province, fifty-five schools were screened: none of them is accessible without aid. Even with aid, 78% of these fifty-five schools remain not accessible.

I'm not the only one to think that accessibility is a problem for people with disabilities. Seventy-six percent of all Europeans think that people with a visual disability encounter difficulties with regard to accessibility of education, labour, tourism, cultural and sports events and of all kind of services. This percentage is seventy-three with regard to people with a mental disability, seventy-one for people with a physical disability and fifty-four for people with a hearing disability. These are just general assumptions of the public at large. If we combine this with the knowledge that accessibility is easily overrated, in the sense that a building or an environment is considered to be accessible while it is not, or not for all people, it is again safe to assume that our built surroundings are most likely not very accessible.

It is obvious that an inaccessible environment limits the possibilities for people with a disability to participate in social life. A very recent publication on the 'inclusion' of people with disabilities shows that people with disabilities participate less in our labour market. Not only are they more likely to be unemployed, fifty percent of all persons with disabilities between the ages of fifteen and sixty-five are 'inactive'. People with disabilities have, in general, a more precarious economic status than people without disabilities. Averagely, they earn less and they are less likely to own their own house than people without disabilities.

Survey results in Flanders also show rather low participation rates in leisure activities. The number of people with a disability that don't participate in cultural activities is significantly higher than those without disabilities. Seventy-one percent of people with a disability never go to a classical concert or a rock concert, while only fifty-six percent of people without disabilities never do that. Forty-eight percent of people with a disability never visit a museum or an exhibition, while only thirty-eight percent of people without disabilities never do that.

And more specifically with regard to tourism, one third of all people with a disability in Flanders did not make a day journey or a longer trip in the year before they participated in the survey. Only nineteen percent of people with disabilities were in the same position.

Although I am convinced – and I assume your presence here attests of the same conviction – that accessibility is a right for everyone, the indications mentioned above show that in practice we are far from a world accessible to everyone. Or to put it more bluntly: a lot of work still needs to be done.

It is clear that governments have an important role to play in this matter. As Flemish minister of Equal Opportunities I am taking several initiatives to promote a more accessible Flanders.

The first responsibility of any government is to provide a good and effective regulation with regard to accessibility. The regulation that is currently applicable in Flanders dates back from 1975. It will come as no surprise to you that this legislation is outdated. I therefore consider it obvious that I, in cooperation with the Flemish minister on Urban Planning, update these norms. The aim is to ensure that only when a design meets these new norms on accessibility, a building permit is granted.

Accessibility is not only a general policy concept, realising it in practice requires technical expertise both on a policy level as in the field. With the aim to stimulate that expertise, I am financing the creation of a Flemish expert centre on accessibility. One of the important objectives of this expert centre will be to centralise the existing and new expertise on accessibility in Flanders and to provide technical expertise to policy makers in Flanders.

The potential richness of 'universal design' – this is, as you probably all know, designing with the largest possible group of potential users in mind – will never fully be captured in objective and quantifiable norms. A further responsibility of the government is therefore the promotion of the concept of universal design.

It is clear that this concept needs to be introduced in the training programs of architects, engineers, designers and other professionals who create our built environment. To stimulate this, one of our academic experts on accessibility has developed a 'universal design toolkit'. This toolkit sums up and illustrates the different aspects of universal design.

To further promote universal design I will publish a code of best practices illustrating this concept when the new legislation on accessibility is introduced.

As said before, accessibility is a necessity for some users. Because accessibility is not yet the rule, people with a disability need correct and detailed information which enables them to decide whether or not to visit a certain building or place. In this regard I have decided to further develop the project 'Toegankelijk Vlaanderen', or in English 'Accessible Flanders'.

The key element of it is a database on accessibility. The database provides detailed information on the accessibility of hotels, museums, sport facilities, public buildings, et cetera. The information can be consulted via the internet and is based on screenings by trained people, using checklists with very specific criteria. The result is a detailed description of the degree of accessibility with a description of the measurements of key areas. Users can personalise the information they are looking for by type of disability.

It is my intention to stimulate the further development of this project as an important policy instrument.

Every year I want to focus on accessibility in a certain policy field. In that way the efforts are bundled and, hopefully, reinforce each other. In 2006 the focus will be on the broad domain of leisure activities. There will be attention for the sports sector and the cultural sector, but also for the tourist sector. I have asked the expert centre I mentioned before to develop an action plan on accessibility in this field and I will finance projects on accessibility with regard to leisure activities. One example of such a project is that of the organisation Intro which aims to make some cities at the Flemish seaside accessible for all people.

The Flemish seaside is a popular destination for day trips or a holiday in Flanders. However, for most persons with a disability a holiday at the seaside is simply not an option. To make it possible, it is not enough to have one accessible hotel at the seaside. People with a disability need to be able to travel to the seaside, stay in an accessible hotel, go for a drink in an accessible café, go to the beach, and maybe even take a dip in the water. This project aims to make all this possible.

All of the above mentioned initiatives are elements of my policy on accessibility as the Flemish Minister on Equal Opportunities. But it is clear accessibility should be integrated in all policy fields: education, employment, culture, mobility, et cetera. In other words: other policy makers also have responsibilities with regard to accessibility.

In order to stimulate my colleagues in the Flemish government to take measures with regard to accessibility, I introduced a method that I came to be familiar with while I was – in a not so distant past – a member of the European Parliament. It is called the ‘open coordination method’ and it is basically a method that stimulates different policy makers to commit themselves to common strategic objectives. All Flemish Ministers have committed themselves in one way or another to stimulate accessibility in their policy field.

Of course, some Ministers have committed themselves to more than others. In some policy fields there is more experience with or attention for accessibility than in others. And in this regard, it must be said that Tourism Flanders, the Flemish government agency that promotes tourism in Flanders, is a front runner. This agency developed an inclusive approach to travelling with a disability and incorporated accessibility in its services to the tourist sector.

In 2001 the agency developed an action plan with three priorities. Firstly, they provided financial support to the tourist sector to make the infrastructure accessible. Secondly, they promoted accessibility in the tourist sector by convincing owners of the importance of it. They not only covered the accessibility of the buildings, but also the accessibility of information, communication and services. They organised both ‘design for all’, ‘disability awareness’ and ‘client-friendliness’ courses. The third and last priority of the action plan is providing reliable information about accessibility to tourists with a disability. In this regard Tourism Flanders took several initiatives: the development of a label that is linked to very clear and specific accessibility criteria, the support of the database Toegankelijk Vlaanderen and the creation of an information point on accessible travel.

It is clear that governments and policy makers have an important role to play with regard to creating a more accessible world. However, others have a role to play as well. Specifically with regard to accessible tourism, travel agencies and tourism businesses, researchers, consumer organisations and NGO’s can all contribute to the creation of more accessible destinations and offers for tourists.

It is therefore my pleasure to congratulate you all with the launch of the European Network for Accessible Tourism. I sincerely hope that this network will become an important forum in the field of accessible tourism. A forum where policy makers, travel agencies and tourism businesses, researchers, consumer organisations and NGO’s can meet each other and exchange information and best practices, where bridges can be built between all involved in the tourist sector and where real progress with regard to accessible tourism becomes a reality for all.

4 Workshop Reports

4.1 Workshop 1: Learning from 'Best Practices' in Accessible Tourism



Moderator and Rapporteur: Toegankelijkheidsbureau / Steven Vos (left) & Visit Britain / Chris Veitch (right)

4.1.1 Introduction

The aim of the workshop was to consider 'best practices' in accessible tourism and attempt to understand what can be learned from them. In order to get some answers to this question, it was felt essential that a common starting point was needed to understand the topic under discussion. The reason for this being that 'Best Practice' can have a very personal meaning for people and can be subjective. Some key points were therefore identified for consideration and to form the thread for discussions, so that some agreement and conclusions could be reached.

These key points were:

- What is meant by 'accessible tourism'?
- Who is the target audience?
- What are the barriers to accessible tourism?
- An inclusive approach –v- non-inclusive?
- What can be learnt from other sectors?
- Define what is meant by good Practice
- What ENAT should do with Best Practice

4.1.2 Discussion

There were no formal presentations from delegates during the workshop. There was however a discussion based around the framework of the key points outlined above.

The discussion opened with an attempt to understand what is meant by the term 'accessible tourism'. One definition offered was that it means full accessibility in any place for either visitors or those who live there, so that disabled people are able to enjoy a positive experience and quality of life equal to that of non-disabled people.

This discussion raised the question of a problem with the word 'tourism', and that there could be an assumption that any changes or improvements in design, information and services at a destination are meant only for the potential visitor and ignore any benefits which are likely to be gained by the local community. Taking into account the impact and the benefits that tourism can bring to local communities is of course a pre-requisite in responsible and sustainable tourism development. This is a crucial point as it highlights how many more people are likely to benefit from initiatives that seek to make a destination more inclusive and the local community should not therefore be ignored.



Anja Gritter, Delegate from the Hotel de Palatijn, The Netherlands, speaking in Workshop 1

The discussions highlighted how tourism is like no other industry or sector in that it is not homogenous and is totally fragmented. It is therefore as strong as its weakest link and highly interdependent on various stages of processes. Consideration needs therefore to be given to making accessible all of these processes, from looking for information and booking a holiday, to travelling to and moving around a destination. Whilst at the destination there is a need to ensure that all of those elements which make up the tourism experience, for visitors, attractions, accommodation hospitality, retail and the return journey home are accessible. Within this fragmented process there are tangibles to consider, that this the built environment and transport etc and the non-tangible parts, that is the quality of service. Bringing all of these factors together is a challenge for all tourism providers who are seeking to deliver a quality experience for visitors, to ensure that all of the elements described above are made accessible and inclusive for the greatest number to enjoy adds another dimension to this already difficult process.

An example was given of how vital it is that everything works together. A hotel in Finland, whilst being fully accessible, does not have an accessible bus service to take guests to the beach and therefore they are forced to arrange for a special taxi. Another issue is that the town has not adapted itself to cater for disabled people who are using the hotel. By way of contrast, an example was given of a hotel in Rheinsberg, in the Brandenburg region of Germany, that is fully adapted for use by disabled people. By working with shopkeepers, restaurant and bar owners etc., the hotel has helped make the town much more accessible and therefore more inclusive by giving access to disabled people to the range of facilities offered to the local community and non-disabled people.

Whilst this is a good example of the influence and change that can be brought about, the point was made that this is possible to achieve in a small town where there is a large specialist hotel that brings in many visitors who have specific needs. To achieve this change there has been extensive disability training to ensure that staff of the hotel and the facilities in the town can help meet the needs of all their customers. However this type of change is not so easy in larger towns or cities where there is a diverse number of visitors and service providers do not recognise or feel the need to adapt their premises and service in any way. It is this environment where some of the biggest challenges lay to making changes to create a more universal and accessible environment with appropriate service.

Another key point that was made, is the fact that non-disabled guest can be made to feel uncomfortable by hotels and rooms that may have a very 'medical feel' to them with equipment and aids being in bedrooms which are needed by some disabled people. However, to counter this, some hotels that are fully accessible do not compromise their quality and appearance with a design that looks and feels universal, that is it is able to be used by a wide range of people and any aids that are needed by guest are only placed in room if they are specifically needed.

When thinking of the target group, for whom the development of accessible tourism can bring advantages the consensus was that everyone stands to benefit in some way. Accessibility is seen as being a quality issue and something of concern for all those who seek quality and comfort. Again the point was reinforced here that it is not only visitors that benefit from improved accessibility but also the local community.

Agreement was also expressed that the majority of disabled people want to travel with family and friends and enjoy a 'mainstream experience', and that they will be looking to go somewhere that suits everybody in their group.

Another perspective of this 'mixing together', was offered with the example of a holiday centre that was shared by disabled people and those convalescing from an illness or operation and how well this worked in bringing people together.

The role that marketing plays in acceptance of disabled people and inclusiveness was also raised. The point was made that Cities or destinations define themselves through their marketing and the use of words and images, to target the type of people that they want to visit. This profiling or segmentation can sometimes be seen to conflict or overlap, or even perhaps be seen to be exclusive. People want to see in marketing images and messages, as well as information, indications that they are welcome at a destination.

Information was seen as being a very important area because of the need for disabled people to have accurate, reliable and up to date information. The example of Flanders Tourism was given, where disabled people can get information not only about the local area but also access related information for those wishing to travel abroad. The point made was that Flanders is actively supporting disabled people in this way and through subsidies that it offers tourism providers to improve access to their premises, where grants of 30% are offered to cover works to adapt buildings.

The issue of fear when a disabled or elderly person is travelling alone was also expressed. Again information was seen to play a role here with people needing to be able to find readily available useful information to help them whilst on holiday. The view was expressed that some would be prepared to pay for such a service. A dedicated 24 hour support telephone line for use by disabled travellers during the Salt Lake Paralympic games was cited as a good example of the value of such a facility.

The role that new technology can play in this demand for information was highlighted by the EU funded project 'ASK-IT' which aims to demonstrate how an accessibility information system can be

offered to everyone via new technologies such as mobile phones. This service is currently being piloted in a number of cities across Europe.

Highlighting the fragmented nature of tourism, the need for transport to be accessible was seen as essential in order for disabled people and others to reach any destination. The Netherlands was given as an example of a destination looking to be fully accessible by 2010.

While addressing the diversity of tourism, a number of other areas were highlighted. Amongst these, events were mentioned, as was the fact that tourism and access should be seen as being more than just an issue for cities. There is a need for easy access to the countryside and walking routes, as well as giving access to historic monuments, with sensitive adaptations which do not compromise the atmosphere of the place. There are many innovative examples of how this can be achieved, one such example is the use of new technology to give people 'virtual tours' which everyone can enjoy.

The need to look at the whole tourism system was stressed throughout and shops were identified as playing a role in the tourism experience. An example was given of how in the lead up to the Olympic Games in Athens in 2004, the Olympic Committee targeted shops and gave advice to make them more accessible and a list published on line.

Good Practice or Best Practice?

The feeling was that it is better to have many different Good Practices and promote these, rather than to have one best practice. Good practice might be seen as having one or two rooms in a hotel that are accessible, whilst best practice is all of the rooms being accessible. This led on to a discussion about the need to both involve and to listen to disabled people in accessible tourism development and for this to be shared with attractions and hotels etc. The employment of disabled people in tourism can of course be particularly helpful in this respect of understanding and make changes or adapting tourism products and services. Whilst there was general agreement about the need to consult with disabled people it was stressed that when making adaptations or changes it was essential to consult with a large range of people otherwise the needs of key groups such as visually or hearing impaired and others may be ignored.

4.1.3 Conclusions and Recommendations for ENAT

Conclusions from the discussion, which ENAT should have regard to, when thinking of best practices and what can be learned from there are:

- Promote the concept of Universal design and service;
- The benefits from a universal approach to tourism development are to be enjoyed by all visitors;
- Recognise the fragmented nature of tourism, e.g. the different parts that make up the whole visitor experience, from looking [marketing and information] to booking through to travelling and staying at a destination etc.;
- When addressing the issue, it is both the tangibles [the physical infrastructure] and the non-tangibles [the service provided] which need to be considered;
- That access is part of a quality issue for tourism;
- Approach the issue of access in a sustainable way, remember the local community and the benefits increased or improved access can have for them at a destination;
- That disabled people want to travel with family and friends and therefore enjoy the same experience;
- The need to consult with a wide range of people to ensure all needs are taken into account;
- That good practice is perhaps preferable to best practice.

4.2 Workshop 2: Special Needs – Customer Service



Moderator and Rapporteur: Fundación ONCE / Maria José Sánchez (centre)

4.2.1 Introduction

This workshop addressed the general issues concerning customer services, with particular attention to the way services are offered for travellers and tourists with disabilities or “special needs”.

4.2.2 Discussion

It was agreed that a high quality service should always be directed to the satisfaction of the customer, understanding that the clients are different, depending on their age, their interests, levels of demands, disabilities, etc. Therefore, to ensure that people who work in the tourist sector can give an adequate response to the subjective needs of the widest possible range of clients, they have to receive appropriate training that takes into account this heterogeneity of profiles.

For this reason, the workshop regarded it as fundamental to consider the person in his/her entirety, not only to attend to the characteristic of the disability. It is conventional to approach the attention to the client in a normalized way, with some habitual assumptions about their situation and their problems. Instead, a service provider should be open to the possibility that the client will actually tell what he/she needs and what can or cannot be done him/her.

Respect for the person is fundamental, and that is why you have to ask the person with a disability if he or she needs assistance. It is essential to take into account that the needs of a person are not necessarily equal to those of another person, simply due to the circumstance of them having the same disability, and therefore needs should not be generalized and we must not imagine that the required assistance will always be the same.

This respect to the person, with or without a disability, can seem obvious but it is appropriate to recall it, since the overprotective attitudes are more present than they have to be and it causes situations in which the person with disability is ignored, often due to the erroneous understanding that communication should be established with the companion.

Throughout our life we can, by accident or another circumstance, suffer a disability. This awareness should help us to feel closer to the concept, and to understand, that *it is not by having disability that we change or we are different*, on the contrary, we continue to aspire to the enjoyment of goods and services and we demand a normal and respectful deal.

4.2.3 *Conclusions and Recommendations*

We conclude by offering some general guidelines to service providers for improving the satisfaction of clients with special needs, with the aim of eliminating prejudices and false beliefs. Our overriding concern is to take into account the concrete perspective of each disability, without losing sight of the common requirements:

Naturalness: Avoiding prejudices, because the person with disability will know to orient to the person who attends him/her, for the best way to satisfy his/her concrete needs.

Flexibility: Recognizing the diversity of the people that despite having common characteristics, they can have, according to their level of autonomy or by other personal circumstances, different subjective needs.

Respect to the person: The person with a disability is the main actor in the relation of attention that belongs to him/her, like any other person without a disability, for which the communication with him/her should begin directly and personally, respecting his/her capacity to decide for himself/herself.

4.3 Workshop 3: Addressing Policy Challenges in the Tourism Sector



Moderator and Rapporteur: Tourism for all in Sweden / Lilian Müller (centre)

4.3.1 Introduction

Tourism in Europe is an industry with a great potential for economic growth and providing new jobs. Facing the quite dramatic demographic changes of all European countries, it's obvious that accessibility will become a very important criterion in the development of sustainable tourism.

Many facts speak in favour of a positive development of tourism: it's a rapidly growing sector of great importance for economic growth, structural change and employment. It will remain labour-intensive, decentralized (important for local and regional development) and European tourism will remain in Europe!

The growing number of elderly people, the 55+ generation is a generation with strong influence on tourism the coming 20 years. They are many, they have money, they have time, they want to travel frequently and off-season - and they will ask for accessible tourist products and destinations!

Accessibility is also one crucial point to obtain sustainable development in tourism, like environmentally-friendly products, flexible solutions, reliable information, high quality in welcoming, *et cetera*.

To reach the goal - tourism accessible for all - we need to identify the strengths and weaknesses, possibilities and threats. We need to gather and exchange tools, knowledge, best practices and so on, in order to attain the necessary changes and to meet the challenges.

4.3.2 Process and Discussion

The workshop had 24 participants. First of all a round-table presentation of all participants was made.

Lilian Müller, as moderator, made a short introduction of the subject.

Thereafter followed a short presentation by Mr Rüdiger Leidner, EU Commission, DG Enterprise/Tourism Unit:

First of all he made the statement that a common European tourism policy doesn't exist – competence in tourism matters is located at the national level. He spoke about the different initiatives that have been taken by the Tourism Unit such as the checklist for hotel owners to evaluate their own establishment; and some studies. He also expressed the opinion that there is a lack of knowledge, both concerning the economical potential and the needs of the disabled. He recommends, that disability organisations must raise awareness. And that better coordination is a way forward since there has to be better coordination between the European Commission's DG's – representing the different policy areas.

After the presentation by Mr. Leidner, a discussion followed with a number of contributions.

Later, the representative from UNWTO, Mr. Handszuh, joined the group and made a short presentation:

"It's important to define what we mean by tourism – it's much more than going on holiday. It's also important how to define disability – now we define it in a broad manner. Solidarity, inclusion, common interest – all these create a demand for enabling environments for all. This should define the right way".

Questions and Comments:

Q: What can ENAT do to change things? Can we make a difference?

Tourism Flanders: "To integrate accessibility in tourism you have to start with facts and figures. In Flanders we have done different studies on accessibility (of hotels) and the size of the market. The Tourism Minister is very interested in the issue. Politically there was an action plan made in 2001 and since then we have been developing this work."

One of the experiences are the difficulties found within the industry – lack of knowledge, money, eagerness and willingness.

Tourism Flanders has a budget line to give grants to improve accessibility linked to rebuilding/renovation.

They have developed a technical model to raise knowledge and support in the area, and have an information point and website - www.toegankelijkreizen.be

They also give courses on consumer-relations when dealing with disabled customers.

Q: Have you evaluated the effect of the grants? (to Tourism Flanders)

Flanders: The authorities can give grants and make projects. So everything has to be accessible. They have had grants before as well. But after 1999 they only give money if the new project or modernisation is made accessible. In this way the project manager will be interested in accessibility. Hotels can only get money for accessibility adaptations – and it is widely used and more accessibility is the result.

TFAS: This is an important example for us all. In Sweden the parliament made a decision to set the target "accessible Sweden by 2010" but there is no money foreseen for this and changes come very slowly.

Discussion:

Maria (private entrepreneur): The private sector has a problem because they are accused of making money from the disabled customers. It is a problem for us, as a small private enterprise that we must finance things that should be a public affair (e.g. accessible external areas around the hotel).

EDF: What can we do to influence the European Commission? To show the gap and the needs! We can also influence through other channels. E.g. bus and train – we need to show, that there is a need for accessible journeys. Right now industry is saying that nothing is needed.

WRC Ireland: As the European Commission have limited competence to act in this field we'd better look to other levels. ENAT can support lobbying towards national and regional authorities.

F.A. Norway:

Its clear to everybody that disability is a cross-sector discipline. This is very clear in tourism – when you split this up in different sectors it loses its impact.

The way you look at the problem it is important – we should **not** “sectorize” – but to make use of different viewpoints.

VisitBritain:

Some organisations are beginning to consider not only accessible destinations but the **accessible route, as a whole**. This approach reveals the different access problems and how they relate to each other .

Sipuó:

Two proposals: In Italy we have many projects. The important thing for ENAT is to collect as much good practice as possible. The biggest problem is that all projects in this field stand alone and things are not discussed / used on a wider basis. Therefore it would be a good idea to collect and disseminate this knowledge.

A standard is also a good idea – there are so many disabilities and special needs that need to have a common language – in Europe. So that everybody speaks the same language.

TFA-S:

Agree on the need to collect good practice – methods used, ideas exchanged, problems faced.

F.A; Norway:

What can be done? People don't see the benefits, but they think they see the costs. Everybody thinks that the costs are very much higher than they are in reality.

We must increase awareness of the fact that better accessibility is of benefit to everybody.

EDF:

Speak about “design for all” rather than accessibility – the goal must be that everything is designed for all. Here standards are important.

NeumannConsult:

Pointed out that there are may be not enough people living in a place (e.g. Balearic Islands) to make it worth investing in accessibility – you have to talk about all the people living in European countries – being potential tourists.

4.3.3 Conclusions and Recommendations for ENAT

Conclusions from the discussion:

- make the needs for accessible tourism visible!
- raise awareness of the economic importance
- give support to lobbying, also at national/regional level
- professional support in accessible tourism
- conferences between industry and disability associations
- close contact to EU institutions and tourism industry
- collect and disseminate good practices and knowledge
- Identify studies/good practices
- initiate a "common language" (definition of accessibility, disability *et cetera.*)
- make interactions to the tourism policy of the country to include accessibility as priority
- activities linked to accessibility in transport, museums and environment.

Suggested Special Interest Groups:

- Accessibility of hotels
- Disability awareness training of employees/trainees in the hospitality sector

5 Concluding Remarks

Ivor Ambrose, ENAT Coordinator

As Coordinator of ENAT, I would like to express my sincere thanks to the Government of Flanders, the European Commission and all the organisers, speakers and delegates who travelled to Brussels for this event and made the day a great success.

After this stimulating Inaugural General Meeting, with many important contributions, I would like to offer these conclusions:

It makes sense for the European travel and tourism industries to focus on accessible tourism. There is a growing demand from disabled and older people and their families to travel and enjoy tourism offers. Demographic ageing of the population in western economies will lead to increasing numbers of tourists who require better accessibility and services. A large proportion of older and disabled people have money to travel but the means of transport and the destination often lack just a few simple facilities and measures that could make their holiday possible. The tourism market needs to be truly opened up “for all”.

It makes sense to start ENAT now because there is already an increasing body of experience in this area. And now it needs to be shared. A small but growing number of businesses, regions and cities of Europe are showing how to cater for tourists who need accessible travel, facilities, services and information. This valuable knowledge should not remain isolated in small geographical pockets but should be accessible to travel companies, destination owners, policy-makers and information centres across Europe.

It makes sense to have a European network that can identify and promote good policies for accessible tourism. Where these policies are being implemented in EU regions and countries they should be highlighted and spread more widely. Many have said at this meeting, ‘there is no point in re-inventing the wheel’ - and there are many good reasons to learn from each other.

It makes sense for ENAT to look at quality standards for accessible tourism, so that tourists can be sure that, wherever they go in Europe, they can expect certain minimum requirements will be fulfilled. The whole travel chain from door-to-door and the tourism experience at the venue needs to be assessed, so that the industry can provide a genuinely 21st century level of service, where all customers are treated with equal care and respect.

So, it also makes sense for tourism destinations and service providers to use ENAT and, through this network, to start making an accessibility audit of their facilities and services. They need to make a few simple checks, which can show them if *all customers* are able to come in and enjoy the venue: the guest rooms, the bar, the pool, the garden, the leisure park, the archaeological site - or whatever is available for the tourist. Staff training in awareness of disabilities and how to provide for all customers is also a key element, where ENAT members will also be able to advise and assist.

In the accessibility field we say: *‘Good design enables, bad design disables’*. When a building and its facilities are designed to meet the needs of disabled people - who may use a wheelchair, be hard of hearing or have a guide dog with them, the place is actually more “user-friendly” for everybody. I think this basic message must be passed on and explained to everyone who works in the tourism industry. Because our goal must surely be, to open up tourism to everyone, regardless of their abilities or disabilities.

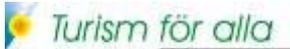
6 List of Delegates

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