# Mapping of Skills and Training Needs to Improve Accessibility in Tourism Services in Europe

*Case Study 2. ETCAATS EU Training Project*

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

"Mapping skills and training needs to accessibility in tourism services"
(204/PP/ENT/PPA/12/6471)

<span style="color:green">**Case Study ETCAATS
European Training Certificate Accessible for
All in the Tourism Sector**</span>

# CONTENTS

## Executive Summary

This case study presents the 'Lifelong Learning' project, ETCAATS - European Training Certificate Accessible for All in the Tourism Sector, carried out from 2009 – 2011 by a consortium of eight partners from four EU Member States. It aimed to give professionals in the tourism sector a range of on-line training tools and a specific course in Accessible Tourism, enabling them to welcome and cater for guests with disabilities and others with particular access needs. The ETCAATS project was awarded a 75% funding grant from the Leonardo programme's 'Transfer of Innovation' action line to develop its activities.

Over the 2-year period, innovative training schemes and materials that had been developed by the project partners and others in previous Leonardo, National and Regional projects were collected and analysed by a transnational teams of experts. A modular system for Vocational and Educational Training (VET) was devised taking into account: 1). the access requirements of visitors with disabilities and those with other specific access needs, 2) knowledge, skills and competences needed by professionals in the tourism sector, 3). the current state of the art in hospitality and tourism service training, and 4). the European Qualification Framework.

The ETCAATS Consortium consisted of partners who were all experienced in accessibility and vocational training. They had expertise in delivering accessibility training programmes and courses in their own countries (Belgium, Greece, Ireland and Sweden) and combined their skills to collect, adapt, update and package innovative material to serve as courseware and digital resources. The partners established an on-line training platform, using the expertise of a web development company within the team. Furthermore, the project examined the subject of certification, in order to propose a certification programme for European, national, regional and local vocational training systems.

The project successfully achieved its outcomes, delivering a tested model of the ETCAATS introductory training course in accessible tourism at www.accestraining.eu. An online resource centre of training resources was also established and the project produced a "Roadmap" report describing possible scenarios for a transferable accessible tourism qualification for the VET sector in Europe.

The project has been moderately successful with a total of 259 registered trainees having taken the free training course in the period December 2011 – October 2013. The training course was used by UNWTO-THEMIS Foundation in its Destination Managers' Training Programme for Lithuania in 2012. The course has been well received by trainees, who come from a wide range of backgrounds. Most trainees take

the course on their own initiative as a means of learning more about an area of tourism with which they are not familiar.

The Certification Roadmap, which is also published and freely available online at the ETCAATS website, has not been implemented. Indeed this report describes *several scenarios* which may be suitable for EU-wide certification. There are advantages and disadvantages to each scenario and no single path has yet been elaborated more fully. Formal adoption of a chosen route to certification is therefore not in sight. ENAT, as a project partner, provides a forum for discussion of training issues and is considering making certification a priority target of its policies.
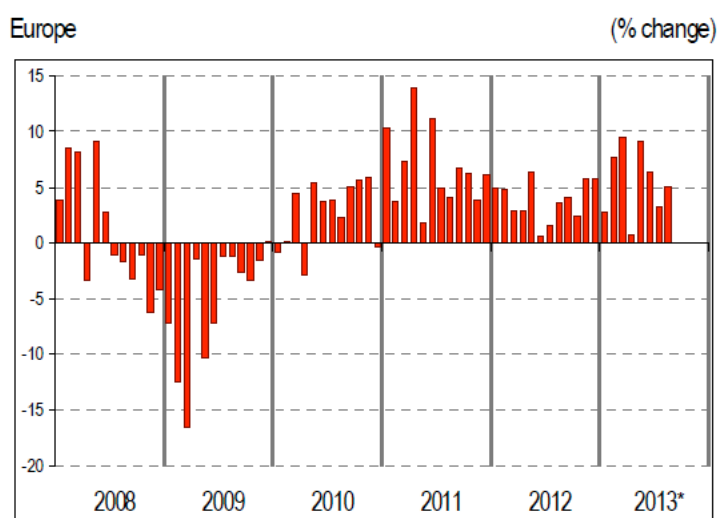
Since the end of the project implementation period, the ETCAATS e-learning platform has been jointly managed by the project partners, EWORX S.A. and ENAT. Additional training modules are to be added to the platform and new VET projects have the possibility to use the platform for delivery of their online training. A new course on accessible tourism training for tourist guides (T-Guide), co-funded under the Leonardo programme, will be implemented on www.accesstraining.eu in 2014-15.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

This case study presents the EU-funded Lifelong Learning project ETCAATS - European Training Certificate Accessible for All in the Tourism Sector, carried out from 2009 – 2011 by a consortium of eight partners from four EU Member States. It aimed to give professionals in the tourism sector (especially those in small and medium-sized enterprises – SMEs) a range of on-line training tools, enabling them to welcome and cater for guests with disabilities and others with particular access needs.

When the project was conceived in 2008-9, the global financial crisis was having a severe impact on tourist numbers in Europe. Overall, the number of international tourist arrivals fell every month from mid-2008 until early 2010, with European destinations and tourism operators experiencing a severe reduction in income. The consequences for SMEs were bleak and a period of contraction and business closures was just beginning in the tourism sector, most acutely felt in those countries with a high dependency on tourism. Looking back to that time, UNWTO figures give a stark picture of what was the worst period for European tourism outside wartime.

*Figure 1: International Tourist Arrivals, Europe. Monthly Evolution (UNWTO)*



In this period European tourism businesses already faced challenges of increasing global competition and demands for sustainable and higher quality products and services, with greater value for customers. SMEs, which make up over 90% of the EU tourism sector, were competing for fewer customers and there was an acute need to develop new products and find new markets.

One of the key areas where the tourism sector can improve its competitiveness and increase market share is in "accessible tourism", which caters especially for disabled persons, senior travellers and their families. EU studies have shown that the market size for accessible tourism in Europe is at least 127 million persons (OSSATE, 2006).

Yet the demand for venues, services and tourism experiences that are truly accessible for these visitors far outweighed the ability of the market to deliver (– and the same is still true today).

In addition to the economic incentive for tourism providers to make their tourism products and services accessible for all visitors, the EU has signed the 'UN Convention on the Rights of Disabled People', which came into force in 2008. This international agreement points to disabled peoples' right to equal access to tourism and leisure (art. 30). This signals the political imperative of enabling disabled citizens in the EU to participate fully in tourism.

Tourism training programmes can play a vital role in preparing managers and employees to deliver their services in appropriate ways, respecting not only the diversity of customers' access needs but also specific requirements related to disabilities or long-term health conditions.

Against this background, the ETCAATS project set out to deliver an online training course and a roadmap for a common European certification framework for staff training in accessible tourism services. The project team was awarded a 75% funding grant from the Leonardo programme's 'Transfer of Innovation' action line to develop its activities.

Over a 2-year period, innovative training schemes and materials that had been developed by the project partners and others in previous Leonardo, National and Regional projects were collected and analysed by a transnational teams of experts. A modular system for Vocational and Educational Training (VET) was devised taking into account:

1. The access requirements of visitors with disabilities and those with other specific access needs,
2. Knowledge, skills and competences needed by professionals in the tourism sector,
3. The current state of the art in hospitality and tourism service training, and
4. The European Qualification Framework.

At the end of 2011, pilot testing of the course took place with trainees from social partners and companies, including SMEs in each participating country.

The project successfully achieved its outcomes, delivering a tested model of the ETCAATS introductory training course in accessible tourism at www.accestraining.eu an online resource centre of training resources, and a report describing a 'roadmap' for a transferable accessible tourism qualification for the VET sector. Its remaining weaknesses, however, are the relatively low uptake of the course by training programmes and tourism sector bodies and the lack of progress towards an EU-wide

certification programme for accessible tourism training qualifications, within the VET system.

## 2. OVERVIEW AND BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The idea to develop the ETCAATS project came from a group of NGOs and SMEs that had worked in the disability-accessibility field for a number of years. Some had been partners in previous European projects and most of the partners had been co-founders, in 2008, of ENAT – the European Network for Accessible Tourism non-profit association. The partners shared the view that the great majority of European tourism businesses lacked awareness of the needs of disabled visitors, in particular, and that Vocational and Education Training could provide a channel through which to raise awareness, inform, and educate tourism and hospitality professionals about the advantages of addressing this market. The lack of awareness in business manifests itself in a distinct lack of facilities and services that support disabled and other tourists with access requirements when travelling.

While the ETCAATS partners, including ENAT, subscribe to a "mission" to promote accessible tourism in Europe, it was felt that the development of a structured training course with online resource materials and an appropriate certification system to back it up would create a concrete opportunity for tourism managers to use accessibility as a tool for reviving their businesses. Being able to welcome disabled tourists has been shown, amongst other things, to raise the quality of customer care, to extend the tourism season and increase visitor numbers for those destinations and businesses that invest in this area and train their managers and staff appropriately. (The ETCAATS training itself provides a great deal of evidence of this). This training could help owners and managers of SMEs guard against the worst effects of the economic downturn and contribute to the improvement of skills among staff. The project partners decided to establish a suitable digital platform for delivering accessible tourism training which could deliver courses and training resources into the future.

The partnership, therefore, had a specific aim to create a training initiative that could contribute to "awakening" small and medium-sized (SME) tourism enterprises to the potential of the accessible tourism market. A project was conceived around the themes of
The European Commission's *Lifelong Learning Programme – Leonardo da Vinci* provides up to 75% support funding for projects which address Vocational and Educational Training (VET) for professionals. Projects are awarded on the basis of an annual open, competitive Call for Proposals. The Calls procedure has taken place over many years and, as such, it has become quite elaborate, with very specific requirements for applicants regarding their eligibility to apply and the scope, objectives, modalities and implementation of projects.

Accordingly, the ETCAATS project structure and its activities were designed around the 'Leonardo' model for 'Transfer of Innovation' projects.

The project had two main aims:

1. To develop an on-line training course in accessible tourism from existing innovative content selected from previous Swedish work and supplemented with other international training materials; and
2. To develop a 'Road map' for an EU certification system for the area of accessible tourism vocational training, in line with the European Qualifications Framework.

These aims were pursued in parallel to enhance the validity and quality of both lines of activity. The on-line training course served as an example of the type of courseware which should be offered to tourism providers. Further modules created by ETCAATS and partner organisations could be offered later. The requirements of EU Certification of professional training in Accessible Tourism were defined and developed with ETCAATS partners and stakeholders, with the aim of defining a Europe-wide qualification.

**Approach**

The project investigated training requirements, compiled and developed e-learning content, and an on-line training programme. The common European certification framework was used as a reference for proposing a road map for certification of staff training in accessible tourism.

Following the 'Leonardo Transfer of Innovation' model, the ETCAATS partners adapted innovative pilot training schemes and materials developed by project partners themselves and by others in previous Leonardo, National and Regional projects. A modular system for training and certification was developed, taking into account:

1. The access needs of customers,
2. Knowledge, skills and competences needed by trainees,
3. The current state of the art in hospitality and tourism service training, and
4. The European Qualifications Framework.

The ETCAATS partners set themselves the task of engaging with tourism stakeholders to propose a feasible certification programme for European, national, regional and local vocational training systems.

Pilot testing of the e-learning course took place with trainees from social partners and companies, including at least 3 small and medium-sized tourism enterprises (SMEs) in each participating country at the end of the project period in late 2011. The training

course has since been maintained by two of the project partners and is still receiving registrations.

**Partners**

The ETCAATS Consortium consisted of partners who were all experienced in accessibility and vocational training. They had expertise in delivering accessibility training programmes and courses in their own countries (Belgium, Greece, Ireland and Sweden) and combined their skills to collect, adapt, update and package innovative material to serve as courseware. The partners established an on-line training platform, using the expertise of a web development company within the team. Furthermore, the partnership examined the subject of certification, in order to propose scenarios for the development of a certification programme for European, national, regional and local vocational training systems.

**Box 1: List of partners**

**Coordinator**

Vellinge Kommun, Sweden
http://www.vellinge.se

**Partners**

Access Sweden, Sweden
http://www.access-sweden.se

EWORX S.A., Greece
http://www.eworx.gr

Disability Now, Greece
http://www.disabled.gr

Toegankelijkheidsbureau, Belgium
http://toegankelijkheidsbureau.be

Association National pour le Logement des Personnes Handicapées, Belgium
http://www.anlh.be

Work Research Centre, Ireland
http://www.wrc-research.ie

**Non-funded Partner**

European Network for Accessible Tourism (ENAT) asbl.
http://www.accessibletourism.org

---

All the partners were members of ENAT and, apart from the coordinator, they had worked together on previous projects including the e-Content initiative, OSSATE: One Stop Shop for Accessible Tourism in Europe (2005 – 2007).

The project coordinator, Vellinge Kommun, a municipality at the southern tip of Sweden is a founder member of the NGO 'Access Sweden' and was also known at the time of the project for its reputation as the Swedish municipality with the highest proportion of entrepreneurs per head of the population. The municipality places sustainability and accessibility high on its agenda and businesses in the area include some of the most innovative and well regarded examples in these fields.

### 3. CONTENT, TRAINING MATERIAL AND AVAILABILITY

In accordance with purpose of the Leonardo Da Vinci programme's "Transfer of Innovation" theme, this project sought to re-use, adapt and develop existing contact from other sources to create course material which would be delivered in new ways and to a wider target audience than had been the possible in previous projects and 'best practices'. The content that was adapted and developed for ETCAATS accessibility training originated from several earlier training projects from Sweden, as well as the EU.FOR.ME project and ongoing training given by project partners ANLH and TGB in Belgium.

The selection of course content was also informed by the body of information that was collected and archived at the ETCAATS project Learning Resource Centre. This online collection is still available at: http://www.etcaats.eu/?i=etcaats.en.etcaatslibrary

This library of works which were especially collected for the ETCAATS project contains 48 annotated project reports, curriculum descriptions, training materials, certification documents, methodological and pedagogical studies, all related to the subject of accessible tourism and gathered from a wide range of sources in Europe and around the world.

#### Specific skills, competences and training outcomes
After making a thorough review of many curricula, training approaches and materials from previous EU 'Lifelong Learning' and other projects, the ETCAATS team drew its conclusions about what training should be delivered, who the training should be for and how the course should be delivered. It was also of crucial importance to decide at what level the course should be aimed.
The following table summarises the specific focus of the training modules, listing the main competences and skills that are targeted and the degree to which each subject is elaborated in the course.

*Figure 2: ETCAATS eLearning course: Areas and degrees of focus of training*

| High | | | | Low | Specific Focus of Training<br>- competences and skills |
|------|------|------|------|------|-----------------------------------------------|
| ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ | Develop disability awareness |
| | | | ■ | ■ | Understand functional diversity and causes of disability |
| | | ■ | ■ | ■ | Understand barriers to accessibility |
| | | | ■ | ■ | Understand basic principles in welcoming, serving and assisting guests with disabilities |
| | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ | Understand effective customer service |
| | | | | ■ | Know how to deal with service animals & assistive technology |
| | | | | ■ | Know about safety and evacuation procedures |
| | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ | Understand access in strategic business development |
| | | | ■ | ■ | Understand policies and legal requirements |
| | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ | Service Management |
| | | | ■ | ■ | Know basic principles for information provision and marketing to the accessible tourism market |
| | | ■ | ■ | ■ | Know where to find relevant information and resources |
| | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ | Understand case studies and 'best practices' |

The prime aim of the course was to use information, best practice examples of customer service and successful businesses to break down the barriers of fear, ignorance, uncertainty and possible embarrassment which were identified as some of the principle reasons why businesses show a marked tendency to skirt around the market of accessible tourism.

This approach purposely seeks to inform hospitality professionals about disabled customer requirements in a non-threatening way and to introduce good practices in

customer care – practices which in fact are effective for all customers, regardless of ability.

 Greatest emphasis was placed on gaining an awareness of what disabled people want, the barriers they face, how they travel, and how they overcome functional problems thanks to technical aids but also human support.

The specific competences gained by trainees through taking the course are largely in the form of changed attitudes or acquired ways of thinking, acting (anticipating or reacting) in certain situations and with certain customers. By learning how common stereotypes and myths about disability are not only wrong but lead, often, to bad business practices or poor customer service, trainees are better able to recognise such problems and address the needs of their visitors or guests in a relaxed and welcoming manner.

To a large extent the course aimed to develop the "soft skills" associated with customer care, such as self-awareness, self-confidence, empathy, service-mindedness, effective communications (- active listening and giving the right measure of positive feedback), enhancing situational awareness and achieving a sense of control – also when there may be ambiguity.

The outcome of this awareness-raising should be a set of internalised beliefs, attitudes and values which help to prepare the trainee for meeting and coping successfully in situations where disabled or other customers with specific access requirements are present.

Added to this, basic factual information about the tools and measures to make tourism services and the built environment more accessible also gives the trainee a degree of knowledge in this area, without having to learn lengthy or detailed texts, which could easily detract from the teaching style and the main messages. Case study reports, best practices and other resources such as videos and management tools are presented as references *for optional use*, in addition to the basic course content.


## Target groups of the course

The main target was to raise awareness of managers of small tourism enterprises and their staff about the requirements of the diverse range of visitors - including people with disabilities. A major objective of the training on management issues was to lay out the arguments and present compelling evidence that the accessible tourism market can bring financial returns on investment for those who cater effectively for this clientele.


The ETCAATS training was designed as an Introductory Course with the "interested layperson" in mind. It was decided to be targeted towards those who have little or no professional experience in serving disabled customers (or others with specific access requirements), based on the observation that the vast majority of small businesses show little or no interest in serving this market.

Training content related to management issues was at an introductory level, to be interesting and useful to managers but also understandable to frontline staff, who would gain a greater sense of what an accessible tourism business seeks to achieve.

*Figure 3: ETCAATS eLearning course: Target Audiences and relevance*

| High | | | | Low | Target Audience |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ | Frontline staff in general |
| ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ | Managers / owners |
| | | ■ | ■ | ■ | Specific frontline (e.g. receptionists, waiters) |
| | | ■ | ■ | ■ | Other tourism related roles |
| | | | ■ | ■ | Higher education in tourism |
| | | | ■ | ■ | Vocational Training / Higher education in tourism trades |
| | | | ■ | ■ | Tourism Schools / Academies |
| | | | ■ | ■ | Designers, architects (students/professionals) |
| | | ■ | ■ | ■ | Teachers in the tourism and hospitality sector |
| | | ■ | ■ | ■ | Policy and decision-makers |

As noted above, the course content was intentionally 'generalist' rather than 'specialist', aiming to ease the trainee into the subject through entertaining and informative content rather than presenting large amounts of factual content or challenging problem-solving tests.

Emphasis was given to content that could help trainees understand the presented material quickly and easily and lead to the broader messages which underlie accessible tourism practices – particularly in terms of customer care and the business case.

The choice of examples and cases was made with managers/owners and personnel (trained or untrained) in mind, which gives the course a wide potential application area for the further training of people who are already in work and, to some extent those in educational settings. However, the level of the course is not aimed principally at students in higher education, except for the very basic entrance level.

## Course Introduction

The introductory text to the online course shown in Box 2 was published on the ETCAATS website in the form of a dynamic, illustrated "PREZI" presentation at: http://www.etcaats.eu/?i=etcaats.en.e-learning   (The PREZI text was also offered in accessible PDF format for users who might not be able to view the PREZI slides).

**Box 2. Introductory text to the online course**

1. This course aims to give managers and staff in small and medium sized tourist businesses a general introduction to customer care issues when welcoming and providing services for guests who have disabilities or particular access needs.

2. Whether you are running a tourism business or working as an employee, knowing how to care for your customers is essential when you want to offer good hospitality and give your guests a positive, memorable experience of their visit. When you have a better understanding of what your customers want and expect, then you can serve them better – it is really as simple as that!

3. By following this course you will have the opportunity to become familiar with different customers' needs and typical situations that they - and you - might face.

4. This will give you an understanding of how to organise and prepare your business for receiving guests with access needs and how to serve these customers in a professional, confident and friendly manner.

5. Description of the course
The course is made up of four obligatory modules. Additional modules covering "specialist" subjects will also be offered during the coming weeks.
All managers and staff should follow the first four modules in sequence.
The specialist modules are optional and may be taken by managers or staff who wish to have knowledge about the particular subjects offered.

6. Certification
As you follow each module, your progress will be recorded by the e-learning system.
On successful completion of Modules 1, 2, 3 and 4 you will be able to download and print your Basic Certificate in Accessible Tourism.
There is also a downloadable Certificate for each Specialist Module.

7. Description of course activities
The course is interactive in nature. You will have reading materials which provide background and essential information with links to original documents where they are available.
There are also videos for you to watch and reflect on.
You can read the materials and watch the videos as many times as you want. At the end of each module you will find a "Test" with a series of questions based on the

course information. You may take the test and see your score.

If you score below the "pass" mark (60%) you may study the course materials again and take the test once more.

Many of the course materials can be saved to your personal on-line folder or downloaded to your computer if wish to keep them for later reference or to use them at your workplace.

8. What will you learn?

After you have completed the Accessible Tourism Basic training course you will have:

- Increased knowledge of different disabilities and the particular needs of tourists who need good access

- Understanding of the market value of visitors with disabilities, seniors and others – and why it makes good sense to cater for them in your business

- Understanding of how to welcome, communicate and behave towards people with different access needs in an easy and relaxed way

 Knowledge about the legal frameworks and obligations on service providers regarding non-discrimination and equal treatment of persons with disabilities

- Knowledge about ways to make your premises and services accessible to more visitors

- Greater knowledge of where to find information and build up the resources you need for improving your customer care skills

- An increased ability to deliver a warm welcome to all customers."

**Training material**

The course content is made up of a variety of media that were collected and adapted from other courses, some of which were discontinued while others were originally offered in face-to-face training.

Original material was also developed from research reports that are held in the ETCAATS public online library/database. Permission was secured for using videos owned and published by other others, for example VisitEngland, OneNorthEast (the former regional tourist organisation in north east England), Leonard Cheshire organisation and others.

All training materials are in English – which is noted by the project team as a significant limitation when seeking to reach a target audience across the EU. However, give the available funding limitations of the Leonardo programme it was not possible to create alternative language versions of the content. The use of externally produced videos, many carried on YouTube, also required sub-titling and this was not possible within the ETCAATS budget. Some videos presented in the course do not have sub-titles. (Now YouTube has an integrated service for subtitling videos which is free of charge. YouTube also provides the possibility of generating transcripts of some spoken languages which also makes it possible to deliver the content in alternative text formats for deaf people, for example).

*Figure 4. Screenshot of Module 1 opening page: Introduction to Accessible Tourism*

The image from Course Module 1 Introduction to Accessible Tourism (above) shows the list of webpages and course content. Each Module is broken into thematic sub-modules and each sub-module contains a short activity such as reading, watching a video, downloading and reading a report or visiting a related website.

The purpose of this structure is to give the trainee a lively, interactive experience and to hold their attention with short 'learning bursts'. Each sub-module contains a tab "Key Messages" which are short explanations of the issues – giving the trainee a context and background to the information they have just read or watched. The course allows the trainee to follow his/her own path, taking the sub-modules in turn.

In the ETCAATS course great emphasis is placed on giving trainees a virtual but nevertheless 'first-hand' experience of what accessible tourism has done and can do for a business, either in economic terms or in relation to improving quality of service, customer care and improvements to the physical infrastructure and facilities. Videos show real business managers, disabled people and visitors speaking about their experiences, their motives and their ways of working with accessibility as a key factor for shaping their services and offers.

The pedagogical approach can be summed up as: teaching by example. Almost every them and sub-theme shows examples of good practice and "laying out the evidence" to inform, inspire and instruct trainees in the basic ideas and practices of accessible tourism.

On subjects such as improving physical accessibility, additional materials in the form of practical guidance documents are shown in the reference section. Every sub-theme has a reference, either to a downloadable document or video or further information on external websites. (The occurrence of possible broken links to off-site pages is checked automatically and remedies are found when this happens).

### Availability

The ETCAATS e-Learning Course has been offered online since December 2011 and is still open at www.accesstraining.eu.  The online training platform was created by project partner EWORX S.A. as part of the ETCAATS project. The website is compliant with WCAG Accessibility Guidelines, meaning that it can be used by people with disabilities. However, some of the video content is not accessible, as lacks sub-titling and alternative texts, as explained above.

The site attracts on average 10 new registrations per month and has reached 259 participants so far (by 30 October 2013).

The course delivery "model" is quite simple. It may be accessed by anyone who wishes but they must create a login, with their email address and a password. The course URL has been promoted by all the project partners (see Partners section, above) and at the ETCAATS website: (www.etcaats.eu) where the training library is also held. ENAT, as dissemination partner has distributed the link and information about the training course through: www.accessibletourism.org In 2012 ENAT set up a Facebook page for AccessTraining at: https://www.facebook.com/AccessTrainingeu but this has been very quiet with just 40 "likes" so far.

### UNWTO Themis Foundation Training Platform

In summer 2012 the UNWTO's THEMIS Foundation made an agreement with ENAT to collaborate in providing an accessible tourism training module for destination management trainees from Lithuania, as part of a wider training programme set up for the Lithuanian National Tourist Board by UNWTO. (Course reference: Tourism Destination: Policy and Management – Lithuania, http://www.unwto-themis.org/elearning/course/view.php?id=14 ).

The course took place in July and August as a face-to-face training course followed by an on-line course. ENAT staff acted as online tutors and the Lithuanian trainees registered with www.accesstraining.eu to take the ETCAATS course. As this was the first such collaboration with UNWTO, the ENAT staff offered their services free of charge during the two-week period the course lasted. A group of 20 Lithuanian tourism managers followed the course, and about half of them were active participants in the Online Forum - an asymmetrical discussion forum based on Questions and Answers with the course tutors. One example of the very positive responses from the course participants is shown in box 3.

**Box 3. Example of positive response, UNWTO Themis Foundation Training Platform**

Re: Understanding the benefits of an Accessible Destination
By Rinaldas Klinas - Sunday, 26 August 2012, 04:22 PM

*Thank You for the possibility to improve knowledge about Accessible Tourism. It will be very beneficial for me at my job.*
*First main barrier is understanding the needs of disabled people, so some educational programmes would be very beneficial for local providers and destination managers.*
*Financial contribution will be next important barrier – so the ability to receive grants from national and EU funds for the smaller or larger access improvements is essential. Preparation of accessibility consultants in high schools or Universities and their availability in destinations all around Lithuania will be other important step.*

**Target audience, communications and barriers**
Reaching the target audience took place through partners' networks and in particular the ENAT network and related social media channels (Facebook and Twitter). A course brochure was also produced and distributed electronically: ETCAATS Access Training Brochure:
http://www.etcaats.eu/resources/toolip/doc/2012/02/11/etcaats_brochure.pdf .

## 4. EVIDENCE OF IMPACT

Shortly after the launch of the online line training course an evaluation was made among the first trainees. The results indicated that the training course was positively received and was likely to be widely used both within and beyond respondent's organisations. The web-based survey consisted of a survey of all users of the e-learning package during the month of December 2011. In all, 29 people completed a questionnaire during the survey period. The range of professions included: an access auditor and trainer, 3 access consultants, hotel marketing manager, business owner, CEO, psychologist, senior standards officer, skills, welcome and accessibility manager, tourism operator, students, tour guides and others.

The main reasons why respondents used the e-learning package related to obtaining general information on accessible tourism and also in order to undertake e-learning for personal benefit. 70% of respondents cited these reasons. Almost 60% of respondents wished to find out more about good practice in the area while a further 32% were interested in case studies of good practice. 32% were interested in finding out more about the e-learning in the context of other people taking the course, while smaller numbers were interested in accessible tourism policies.

- 85% of respondents believed that they would be able to better market their business as a result of taking the ETCAATS course.

- Just over 80% of trainees agreed or strongly agreed with the statement '*we could better serve our customers*' as a result of taking the ETCAATS course and 86% agreed that they would *better understand our customer needs'*.
- 70% of respondents felt that staff would become more employable as a result of taking the course
- 80% agreed with the statement '*We would take steps to make our facilities more accessible'* as a result of taking the course.
- 75% 'would expect to generate extra business'.
- 85% saw no negative impacts of taking the course
- A majority of trainees agreed that 'more training would be needed, especially if they were to act formally in the area'.

In order for the potential impact of the course to be realised, the impact assessment concluded that 3 issues needed to be addressed:

1. The project partners need to be committed to delivering and supporting training

2. The issue of translating the course into other languages needs to be addressed

3. There is a need to package the ETCAATS training together with longer and more substantial courses in order to meet any needs for deeper training in the area of accessible tourism.

The impact of the project has been moderately successful with a total of 259 registered trainees having taken the free training course in the period December 2011 – October 2013. The 'top ten' countries of origin of trainees are Portugal, Italy, Greece, Sweden, Spain, Lithuania, Ukraine, India, United Kingdom and United States.

The training was used by UNWTO-THEMIS Foundation in its Destination Managers' Training Programme for Lithuania in 2012.

The course has been well received by trainees, who come from a wide range of backgrounds. Most trainees take the course on their own initiative as a means of learning more about an area of tourism with which they are not familiar. (ETCAATS does not gather detailed information about registered trainees but an online survey has given some feedback from trainees during the first months after opening).

From an analysis of website statistics it also seems clear that some trainees have spent considerable time downloading large numbers of documents and web pages, either to build up their own training course libraries or to work on projects and assignments, possibly in educational or training institutions. While this is an unintended result, ETCAATS online training, it seems, is fostering the wider use of the accessible tourism training materials than for training alone – which can be regarded as a good thing for the wider dissemination of knowledge about the business case and other aspects of accessible tourism.

The course has not succeeded in being formally adopted into VET programmes in any EU Member State.

One global tourism training institution, UNWTO's THEMIS Foundation in Andorra incorporated the ETCAATS training course into its training programme for Destination Managers in 2012.

**Box 4. Dissemination and delivery of www.accesstraining.eu**

The subject of Accessible Tourism was included in the UNWTO course in Lithuania on "***Tourism Destination: Policy and Management***" for Tourism Destination Managers during July and August 2012.

The face-to-face training course was supplemented with an eLearning training session for managers. The ETCAATS Introductory Course was the chosen e-Learning course. Two ENAT tutors participated in the online Forum after the course.

The UNWTO course was attended by 20 participants

The purpose of this course was to examine tourism policies, the creation of tourism development plans and the regulatory mechanisms and the application of these in a variety of locations throughout the World. It focused on issues raised by the need to ensure the triple bottom-line for sustainable development of tourism (viz. economic, social and environmental) including evaluation of the impacts and the ways in which these find expression in policy, development and planning decisions in various settings.

In doing this, the course also provided an understanding of the relationships and interactions between the public and private sectors in the development process and provided real solutions to the gaps and problems tourism officials may face.

Embedded throughout the course were the universally accepted international concepts of sustainable tourism, the principles of the Global Code of Ethics for Tourism and the UN Millennium Development Goals.
In terms of competences addressed, the objective of this capacity building activity was to provide participants with knowledge, skills, tools and a forum for discussion and reflection about tourism planning, development and management as well as the associated policy dimensions.

"The participants found the ETCAATS/ENAT access training course very useful, as it helped them to understand much better the needs of the accessible tourist, that there are more accessible tourists than we think there are and it has also helped them, in the forum we had in the course, to share some interesting initiatives and projects there are in Lithuania" (Sònia Figueras, UNWTO Course Leader).

It must be said that the Certification Roadmap, which is also published and freely available online at the ETCAATS website, has not been implemented. Indeed this report describes *several scenarios* which may be suitable for EU-wide certification. There are advantages and disadvantages to each scenario and no single path has yet been elaborated more fully. Formal adoption of a chosen route to certification is therefore not in sight. ENAT, as a project partner, provides a forum for discussion of training issues and is considering making certification a priority target of its policies.

After the end of the project implementation period the e-learning platform provided by ETCAATS is now jointly managed by the project partners, EWORX S.A. and ENAT. Additional training modules are to be added to the platform and new VET projects have the possibility to use the platform for delivery of their online training. A new course on tourism training for tourist guides (T-Guide), co-funded under the Leonardo programme, will be implemented on www.accesstraining.eu in 2014.

## 5. CONCLUSIONS

There are four types of certification whose final purposes are not the same and the concerned public arenas are different:

1. The certification of service
2. The certification of training centre, university,
3. The certification attesting that a building answers the standards of the design for all
4. The certification of the individual skills of the persons

Based on the experience of the ETCAATS project it is evident that the ETCAATS e-learning system should work towards providing a recognised diploma/certificate to the persons having followed a programme of training which corresponds to standards established by every country. This would include a number of minimum periods by subject with a certain number of periods of training courses. The course, at present provides only a basic introduction as continuing professional development for those who are in employment, being especially young people working in the tourist industry with diplomas from secondary education, graduates of further education or universities.

We can observe that employers in the tourism sector who are in search of a competent staff encounter difficulties in determining the real level of skill/competence of the persons who postulate they have such abilities. The ETCAATS certificate does not allow determining the level of skill (competence) and level of achievement of the professionals in tourism. In professional life it is necessary to identify levels of required

competences in certain skills, for Assistants, Technical staff, Managers (of projects and staff), Experts (with a high level of knowledge and able to transfer knowledge).

The problem concerning tourism for all and the welcome of the persons with disabilities is all the larger, as no training at EU level gives specialisation in tourism for all, although the specificity of this subject makes training and experience necessary to reach sufficient levels of skill. Thus, the development of a specific certification would be step towards ensuring that the current tourism offers finally a quality service equal to all the citizens.

By offering an online training, ETCAATS has succeeded in reaching individuals but has not engaged fully or systematically with the broad range of tourism stakeholders. To move forward towards the goals originally set by the ETCAATS partners, there must be a concerted effort by all stakeholders in accessible tourism – VET institutions, policy makers, business and NGOs - to initiate a programme of certification and skills development which will allow professionals to be qualified in the subject.

## 6. RECOMMENDATIONS

The experience of the ETCAATS project has shown that the ability to reach professionals across Europe has been relatively weak. This is not a result of poor course content or lack of interest. Rather it is due partly to reliance on the Internet as the main means of dissemination and a lack of structural links to VET networks among the project partners. In order to reach professionals more effectively it is necessary to build relations between course developers and training institutions. It also requires dedicated promotional actions, with the involvement and support of tourism and hotel chambers, regional and national tourist boards, to integrate ETCAATS training in 'mainstream' training programmes.

**E-Learning: Further development in tools and methods**
E-learning is not a panacea for delivering vocational and educational training but it has particular value for reaching individuals who may find it difficult to participate in other forms of training or workshops, seminars and events where training may be offered. As ETCAATS has shown, at an introductory level, it can also be a useful supplement to face-to-face training.

ETCAATS has demonstrated how existing multi-media content can re-used and applied to training in a structured manner which is attractive and easy to use. It provides shortcuts for trainers who are looking for readily available content which can be given to students or trainees as introductory material, stimulating their interest and pointing to further learning resources.

Future developments should look to improving the integration of user-generated content and social media in training to bring the visitor perspective even more to the fore. In the field of accessible tourism, achieving a very deep understanding of customers' needs and preferences is of the highest importance – perhaps more than in any other area of tourism.

### European Certification

To make sure that the certificate of ENAT is useful and used by the workers in the tourism industry, the ETCAATS partners have pointed out that it is necessary to raise the currently vague definitions of accessibility to a recognised level and make the subject 'operational'.

This would include:

1. Making steps towards gaining recognition by states, of the ETCAATS certificate in the same way as that of awards a diploma or at least specializations so that the workers who made this approach remove a profit from it at the level of their work (promotion, increase of the salary)

2. Make inroads into the current policies, with the need to have in all the tourist companies, assessment of workers' skills in tourism for all and address why there is no certificate as yet delivered by an approved body. (In France and other EU countries, for example, since the energy studies are compulsory during the sale or the rent of a building and since approved bodies must only deliver the energy certificates, all the professionals of this sector are recognized when they have acquired their certificate. If we arrived at this kind of requirement for accessible tourism, certifying bodies and certification would become indispensable).

3. Skill levels for the tourism business should be integrated in the collective agreements of the workers and so that it can be integrated into salaries scales.

It is recognised that without a real operational EU qualifications framework for accessible tourism, different models for certification may arise in different member states.

In conclusion, ETCAATS provides a training certificate to those who complete the course but the certificate is not recognised by any authorising body. In order to achieve certification as a professional in accessible tourism it would not be an obligation to follow ETCCATS training but a candidate for possible Eurocertification would have advantages from following the course. That is, a candidate who did not do the training course ETCAATS should, without any problem, be able to make a request for a Euro certificate concerning his level of preliminary study. So far this possibility does not exist in Europe.

## 7. ANNEX I

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

| Criteria | Justification | On track/off track |
|---|---|---|
| **Innovative** | Uses a lively online mixed-media approach to deliver an Introductory level "awareness-raising" course for the hard-to-reach target groups of SME owners and hospitality staff<br><br>The courseware consists of original content and re-packaged items (especially videos, with permission) which were developed for regional training programmes in the UK (- now closed). | 🟢 |
| **Relevant** | As well as an e-learning course, the project developed an online resource library to support learners and trainers and developed a roadmap for EU wide certification of accessible tourism training.<br><br>The eLearning platform is itself accessible for disabled users. | 🟢 |
| **Transferable** | ETCAATS course was used as a Module in UNWTO's Destination Management Training 20 Destination Managers from Lithuania were trained in accessible tourism using the ETCAATS online course. | 🟢 |
| **Efficiency & Effectiveness** | The project has delivered a basic training course and support materials online, giving trainees open, direct and free access to high quality accessible tourism information and instruction. | 🟢 |
| **Impact** | Over 250 trainees in Europe and worldwide have taken the free online training course.<br><br>UNWTO has adopted ETCAATS e-learning course in its destination managers' training programme.<br><br>The EU wide certification roadmap is not being discussed in VET frameworks and there is little sign of achieving a transferable EU qualification on accessible tourism. However some EU members have made advances in their national VET systems. | 🟠 |

| Sustainable | The ETCAATS training course continues to be offered free of charge by ENAT and EWORX S.A. Although maintenance costs are low, the future of the e-learning platform is only sustainable with sponsorship and new projects. One new project has been awarded by the EU DG EAC. | ● |