



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

## *Case Study 3. Perfil, Portugal*

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**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)

**Case Study  
Perfil – Psicologia e Trabalho, Inclusive Tourism Training**

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## Executive Summary

This case study focuses on the training package “Inclusive Tourism – hospitality skills to receive and entertain people with special needs” developed by Perfil – Psicologia e Trabalho, a private consultancy company, with the use of European Social Funding (ESF).

Perfil – Psicologia e Trabalho has been involved in the promotion of accessibility in the tourism industry through innovative projects and national policy plans. In particular, the company was involved in a national study on “inclusive tourism” which set out to identify the skills needs required by the Portuguese tourism sector to properly serve tourists with accessibility needs. The training package developed was based on the results and needs identified in the study.

The training is structured around an innovative concept of b-learning (blended-learning), which includes both face-to-face learning and self-learning modules. It contains 4 different modules : 1 general module and 3 specific modules targeted to different tourism sectors. Due to the flexibility of the training it is believed that it is a good tool to overcome some of the most pertinent problems in the industry, namely time barriers.

A recognition of the value of the course is its inclusion in the Portuguese national education framework catalogue as a continuing VET training. Perfil - Psicologia e Trabalho has targeted mainly active professionals with the training. However, it has also been included in training efforts for the unemployed. This is believed to equip potential future hospitality professionals with the necessary skill set to effectively host tourists with disabilities.

The main barriers encountered by Perfil – Psicologia e Trabalho are not unique to this case, but relate to the lack of awareness and unwillingness of businesses to participate in accessibility training. In this vein, to overcome these obstacles, the company is engaging with other important stakeholders to raise the general awareness of the industry. In addition, the lack of funding opportunities to engage in marketing activities and provide the training free of charge is also believed to hamper the impact and uptake of training efforts.

However, there are a few good examples of the potential impact the training could have if more professionals were reached. These include the establishment of accessible tourism services by former students as well as the increased awareness among some participating organisations.

The case study concludes with a table overview of the criteria and justification for best practices.

## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

This case study focuses on the Training Package “Inclusive Tourism – hospitality skills to receive and entertain people with special needs” developed by Perfil – Psicologia e Trabalho. This training course was designed exclusively for the Portuguese tourism sector in order to equip professionals with the necessary hospitality skills to successfully receive and cater to people with special needs.

Perfil – Psicologia e Trabalho is a Portuguese Training and Consultancy company established in 1986. The company has, in recent years, developed cutting edge projects relating to accessible tourism. In particular relevance to this case study, Perfil– Psicologia e Trabalho was involved in a Study on Inclusive Tourism for CECD Mira Sintra carried out in 2009, on which the training package is based.

Perfil – Psicologia e Trabalho together with other Portuguese experts, has been raising the awareness of relevant Portuguese authorities (namely Turismo de Portugal, IP, Instituto Nacional para a Reabilitação, IP and Instituto do Emprego e Formação Profissional, IP) on the need to invest in the development of accessible tourism in Portugal.

Perfil – Psicologia e Trabalho has been invited to present its work on several national and international seminars and conferences. Examples of this include Turismo de Portugal, IP seminars in Lisbon, Porto, Faro, Coimbra and Portalegre to promote accessibility as a quality reference for new Portuguese tourism offers, Instituto Superior de Ciências Educativas Tourism Conference; Instituto Politécnico de Leiria Internacional Conference for Inclusion - INCLUDiT). Perfil has also contributed to scientific articles in academic publications (e.g. Tourism, Training and Innovation: Studies and Experiences from Pedago Editions) on the needs of accessibility in the tourism sector. By sharing its best practices, Perfil – Psicologia e Trabalho gives its contribution to the improvement of the training models used in Europe to develop in the tourism professionals the skills that will enable them to deliver a high standard of service to clients with special requirements.

Below follows a description of the organisations instrumental in the creation of the training package resulting from the Inclusive Tourism study:

**CECD Mira Sintra** (Centro de Educação para o Cidadão Deficiente de Mira Sintra) is a Portuguese non-profit organization founded in 1976 to work for the people with

intellectual disabilities. It is one of the largest NGOs operating in Portugal, providing services to 1,400 people with disabilities and their families in the following areas:

- Education: integrated unit of early intervention for children, special education school, public support centre to the disabled children on the normal teaching schools;
- Employment and training: vocational training centre, centre of protected employment, public support centre to the disabled people when they need help to find a job;
- Social: occupational activities centre, family support unit/residential homes, home support service, centre for physical medicine and rehabilitation, tourism projects.

**Turismo de Portugal, IP** is the public authority responsible for the promotion, regulation and sustainability of tourism in Portugal. It is in charge of the qualification and development of tourism infrastructure, the development of human resources training, investors support and the coordination of internal and external promotion activities. In the recent revision of the Tourism National Strategic Plan – PENT 2013-2015 (approved by the Portuguese government in April 2013), Turismo de Portugal included the goal of making Portugal an accessible tourism destination for all and mentions the need to provide adequate training to tourism professionals.

**Instituto Nacional para a Reabilitação, IP** is the public authority in charge of the planning, implementation and coordination of national policies to promote the rights of people with disabilities. It is responsible for the Accessible Beaches project which identifies the beaches with the best accessibility conditions.

**Instituto do Emprego e Formação Profissional, IP** is the Portuguese public authority in charge of Employment and Vocational Training.

The subsequent section discusses the outcomes of the inclusive tourism study which prompted the development of the training course which is the focus of this study.

## **2.0 OVERVIEW AND BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

In 2009, Perfil – Psicologia e Trabalho conducted a Study on Inclusive Tourism for CECD Mira Sintra with the goal to better understand the dynamics of providing hospitality services to people with access requirements. This study was funded by the European Social Fund and was developed in close collaboration with Turismo de Portugal, IP and Instituto Nacional para a Reabilitação, IP.

The main objective of Inclusive Tourism Study was to contribute to a national policy of inclusion of persons with disabilities improving their access to tourism services by:

- Identifying the special needs that people with disabilities have when using tourism services (accommodation, restaurants and catering, sports, tour operators, tourist information services, transportation and other tourism services);
- Identifying the hospitality skills required for the tourism professionals to be able to satisfy those needs/requirements;
- Building a Training Package targeted at tourism professionals to develop the specific hospitality skills required to successfully satisfy people with special requirements.

The Inclusive Tourism Study was based on 120 face-to-face interviews, conducted by experts with significant experience on disabilities and the tourism sector, with:

- People with special needs with travelling experience (including people with physical, visual, hearing and intellectual disabilities and elderly citizens with limitations arising from the ageing process);
- Tourism professionals with experience of working with this target group.

The study resulted in the extensive identification and detailed characterization of the needs and requirements that people with access requirements have when using tourism services (transports, accommodation, meals, and other activities). Equipped with this knowledge, the experts were able to identify and define the specific hospitality skills that tourism professionals need to develop in order to deliver a high standard of services to these clients.

The findings of the 'Inclusive Tourism Study' were used to produce a Training Package aimed at developing the identified skills. The subsequent sections discuss further Perfil's training package and its impact on the Portuguese tourism industry.

**Figure 1: photo from a training session**





### **3.0 CONTENT, TRAINING MATERIAL AND AVAILABILITY**

The training package was funded with the help of European Social Fund resources and took around 6 months to develop. Below follows more information on the content and training material which is disseminated to the participants.

#### **Content**

The Training Package emerging from the Inclusive Tourism study is entitled “Inclusive Tourism – hospitality skills to receive and entertain people with special needs” and is organized in 4 modules:

- **A “Cross-sectoral” module** is directed to all tourism professionals and focuses on the specific skills necessary to support and give assistance to people with special requirements concerning general mobility, orientation and communication.
- **An “Accommodation” module** that covers the specific skills that professionals of the accommodation business need to develop to provide a better service to this target group. It includes skills in daily operations like reservation, arrivals, check-in, room adaptation, activities during stay, check-out.
- **A “Food & Beverage” module** focuses on the specific skills that food and beverage professionals should develop to deal with people with special requirements. This includes skills in day to day operations like welcoming the client, table service, bar service, buffet, coffee-break, room service.
- **An “Other Tourism Services” module** that covers the development of skills necessary for the professionals that works in other tourism services such as tour operators, travel agencies, transports, event organization, leisure activities.

Each one of the modules covers the 4 main areas of disability (physical, visual, hearing and intellectual) as well as how to cater to elderly tourists with limitations arising from the ageing process.

#### **Training material**

The training materials for each module include:

- A manual for the participant;
- A manual for the trainer;
- PowerPoint presentation;
- Detailed list of the special needs identified in the Inclusive Tourism Study; and

- Detailed list of hospitality skills identified in the Inclusive Tourism Study.

The duration of each module can be adapted to the training needs of different target groups. Perfil – Psicologia e Trabalho produced two different versions for each one of the 4 modules:

- A 25 hour version for operational level tourism professionals. This include frontline staff
- A 10 hour version for management level professionals.

It is suggested that each tourism professional participates in 2 modules, the Cross-sectoral module which is a foundational course for all tourism professionals and the module of their specific area. For instance, a receptionist should take the Cross-sectoral and Accommodation module while a bartender should take the Cross-sectoral and Food & Beverage module.

Perfil – Psicologia e Trabalho uses an innovative approach in the training sessions by inviting people with disabilities to participate and give their own testimonial of what main barriers they face whilst travelling. Tourism professionals often feel uncomfortable when dealing for the first time with a client with physical, visual, hearing impairments or learning difficulties and they often do not know how to act. It is important that they can overcome the awkwardness and treat the disabled client in the same way they treat other customers. Thus, this strategy proved successful as it enabled tourism professionals to quickly overcome the major hurdle of dealing with people with disabilities.

The main goal of the “Cross-sectoral” module is therefore to make tourism professionals drop all the stereotypes and prejudices they have about people with disabilities.

This goal is achieved in the face-to-face training sessions where the trainers enable physical interaction between participants and people with disabilities. In the training sessions, participants can also have direct contact with the main assistive technologies for each area of disability as Perfil – Psicologia e Trabalho invites companies that sell or rent this equipment (e.g. wheelchairs, braille keyboard, vibrating alarm clock) to assist in the training.

However, the Training Package was also developed to work both in face-to-face trainings and b-learning programs. B-learning programs are innovative learning modules that combine classroom-based training with e-learning sessions. The reason for implementing this type of training style is that it integrates both face-to-face learning that is considered imperative in order to properly understand and break down the interaction barriers. However, as time constraints is a key issue in the tourism sector, an online tool has also designed in order to allow the participants to work around their schedules and complete the modules during a time that is convenient for them.

## **Availability**

The Portuguese government uses ‘the Catálogo Nacional de Qualificações’ (the National Qualifications Framework) to manage the formal and vocational training for professional qualifications. It is a strategic tool to manage the national educational qualifications and make references to nationally recognised trainings. The inclusion of the training in this framework indicates the value of its content and it is approved as a complimentary short-term training unit for the qualification of tourism professionals that deal directly with clients.

The training package was developed by Perfil – Psicologia e Trabalho with the ambition of including it in the CNQ. Thus, all the technical requirements comply with the national standards.

As the training package was funded with European Funds, it is publicly available in Portuguese. It is currently being improved with some upgrades and the creation of a specific module for Tourism Offices, a specific module for Travel Agencies and a specific module for Active Tourism.

The Training Package implementation started in January 2013 in Escola de Hotelaria e Turismo do Porto, a school managed by Turismo de Portugal, IP, which is in charge of providing the educational and vocational training of tourism professionals (both students and active professionals).

During 2013, 6 courses were organized in collaboration with Turismo de Portugal, IP, reaching 108 participants. These training sessions were partly funded by the European Social Fund. It is expected that more sessions will be scheduled in 2014.

As a next step, Perfil – Psicologia e Trabalho is now working with Turismo de Portugal, IP, and Instituto do Emprego e Formação Profissional, IP, to develop training courses for trainers. The goal is to increase the number of certified trainers prepared to organize the Accessible Tourism Training Package, which can facilitate the uptake and disseminate the awareness further of the need to increase accessibility in the sector.

In 2013, Perfil – Psicologia e Trabalho and Turismo de Portugal, IP, organized the following training courses:

**Table 1: Training course organised in 2013**

<b>Month</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Number of participants</b>
January	Porto	19
April	Estoril	18
May	Coimbra	20
May	Coimbra	15

June	Porto	17
November	Estoril	19
		<b>Total: 108 Participants</b>

#### **4.0 TARGET AUDIENCE, COMMUNICATIONS AND BARRIERS**

The target of this Training Package is very broad, from tourism professionals that deal directly with clients (from management to operational levels) to tourism students and even the general public is invited to participate if interested. However, the primary target are active tourism professionals that need to complement their hospitality knowledge with the specific skills required to answer the special needs of clients with physical, visual, hearing or intellectual limitations.

The secondary target is tourism students that have already acquired the basic hospitality skills and need to acquire the complementary skills of dealing with clients with special needs.

It can also be used to provide all citizens with the basic knowledge to deal with people with disabilities as the content of the “Cross-sectoral” module covers basic citizenship skills; that is, knowing how to help people with special needs in what concerns general mobility, orientation and communication.

In addition, the course is currently being taught to unemployed persons between the ages of 20-63 years of age given by the “Centro de Emprego”. The course is given to this segment in order to keep and enhance unemployed people’s skills and to remain competitive in the labour market. In particular, this has been considered useful in order to educate people who might go into the tourism industry and will then be equipped with the knowledge of accessibility for all. The course is not mandatory, but is available as an option, however, one of the course trainers has indicated that there is an interest in this type of course from the students who are participating.

#### **Barriers and communication**

Perfil – Psicologia e Trabalho, Turismo de Portugal, IP and other partners are involved in the creation of a national program to raise awareness and provide training to public and private agents at both operational and management levels. They believe that once the goal of raising awareness for accessible tourism is largely achieved, tourism professionals will feel the need to improve their skills and the demand for training sessions will automatically increase. However, for this to happen there need to be more awareness of the benefits of accessible tourism for the businesses involved.

Reaching the target group is not easy as accessible tourism is still an area of low awareness among tourism professionals (both at operational and management levels).

The uptake and the interest from the tourism sector on this type of training is generally low. The biggest challenge is, therefore, to find funding opportunities to execute the training sessions as most of the tourism companies operating in Portugal do not allocate their own funds for this objective and national authorities have little resources to allocate to this area.

In addition, tourism businesses (according to the interviewees) find the training package too specific to tourism for the disabled people and they, in general, do not want disabled customers in their facilities. Often this is a matter of not wanting to “inconvenience” and embarrass other guest. To change the mentality of those working in the industry takes work and time. Therefore, Perfil – Psicologia e Trabalho is now collaborating with Turismo de Portugal, IP, to create a program aimed at raising awareness for Accessible Tourism using existing channels to reach the audience. To raise awareness levels within the industry Turismo de Portugal, IP has allocated a specific budget within the Tourism National Strategic Plan (PENT 2013-2015) which aims to make Portugal an accessible tourism destination for all.

In addition to raising awareness levels among businesses, the interviewees of the case, found that it is also imperative to raise the awareness levels and indicate the gap in skills to industry associations such as hotel, restaurant, travel agents etc. These associations would be able to channel the training needs to the most appropriate channels. In this vein, it is important to convince industry representatives equally of the potential opportunities of increasing hospitality skills.

In order to promote the training course, Perfil – Psicologia e Trabalho has been using online social media networks such as Facebook, LinkedIn, tourism online newsletter and mailing lists. They also met with tourism industry associations, the public sectors as well as private companies and presented the training course in seminars in order to incentivize the uptake of the training. These channels were used as there was no funding for marketing activities relating to the course. The interviewees believe that with greater funding opportunities the course could have promoted more actively.

## **5.0 EVIDENCE OF IMPACT**

All training sessions organized in 2013 by Perfil – Psicologia e Trabalho and Turismo de Portugal, IP, had an impact on participants that became significantly better prepared to receive and entertain people with special requirements.

Some success stories include accessible tourism project started up by participants. This includes accessible residential tourism in Cascais and an accessible guest house in Fátima. In addition, two receptionists that attended the course promoted the idea of increasing accessibility to their managers which resulted in meetings between Perfil

and the company. Although these examples may seem minor they indicate the importance of training, in general, to raise the awareness of accessibility for at least one person in an organisation who can then take incorporate the concept into the organisation.

All the stakeholders (participants, organizers, guests and trainers) have evaluated very positively the training sessions executed and concluded that it is a useful tool to improve the accessibility of tourism services in Portugal. However, for the training package to have a long-term effect on the Portuguese tourism industry it is considered vital that this is coupled with awareness raising and further funding opportunities.

## **6.0 CONCLUSIONS**

The two key factors for the success of this project were the innovative methodology used in the Inclusive Tourism Study and the construction of the Training Package as a ready-to-use tool for training the tourism professionals.

The innovative methodology used in the Inclusive Tourism Study allowed the accurate and detailed identification of the special requirements that people with disabilities have when using tourism services.

The training package is a powerful and flexible tool that can be used both in face-to-face trainings and b-learning programmes. It can be used both for the training of new professionals and for the on-going training of active professionals.






This project turns out to be an adequate, efficient and efficacious solution to contribute to the achievement of these 2 goals:

- On the demand side, to activate the right of people with physical, visual, hearing or intellectual limitations to participate in tourism activities as any other citizen. Also, to activate the right of elderly citizens to continue to participate in tourism activities even with the limitations arising from the ageing process;
- On the supply side, to create conditions for the tourism industry to capture this new market segment and enlarge the market to All.

## **7.0 RECOMMENDATIONS**

- It is vital that the European Commission continues to encourage and fund the creation and implementation of National Training Programs specifically aimed at the skills development of tourism professionals to make accessibility significant and differentiating competitive advantage for the tourism industry in Europe.
- It is important that training is promoted together with awareness raising. Promoting training alone will yield low results as awareness levels in the tourism industry is generally low. This will incentivize uptake of training.
- It is useful to create “ready-made” training packages that can be transferred to different subsectors of the tourism industry.
- B-learning is an effective way of balancing the importance of face-to-face training and efficiency of e-learning. This circumvents some of the barriers associated with training for the tourism industry.

**ANNEX I: CRITERIA AND JUSTIFICATION FOR BEST PRACTICES**

Criteria	Justification	On track/off track
<b>Innovative</b>	The training package is innovative in its teaching method by combining face-to-face learning with e-learning modules that can be carried out in the participants' own time and pace. This type of learning is well-suited to overcome the time barrier pertinent to the tourism industry.	
<b>Relevant</b>	The training package was developed following an extensive study which aimed at identifying which skills need was required to serve disabled tourists in the Portuguese tourism market. This has ensured that the training action is effectively addressing a clear gap in skills levels.	
<b>Transferable</b>	The training package can be adapted to different tourism occupations and currently there are ongoing works on expanding and upgrading some of the modules in the course curriculum.	
<b>Efficient &amp; Effectiveness</b>	The training due to its innovative learning methods is both efficient and effective.	
<b>Impact</b>	The impact of the initiative is uncertain. Mainly because the overall conditions for engaging in accessibility training are not favourable. There is a low response from the market and a lack of funding opportunities.	
<b>Sustainable</b>	The training package is publicly available as it was developed with European funding. However, Perfil charges businesses to partake in the trainings that are given and many businesses are reluctant to spend money on this. However, the course is made available free of charge to unemployed people through governmental funding. Thus, the sustainability of the initiative relates more to the lack of interest in the business sector and the lack of funding.	