

ELEVATOR



## Accessible Tourism Guide

### Part 2 – Tourism Industry

Be a level above rather than just a step ahead

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**ACCESSIBLE TOURISM GUIDE | TOURISM INDUSTRY**

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## INTRODUCTION

**A**ccessibility is an important topic, in tourism yet often overlooked. It seems that the main reason for that is lack of knowledge and cooperation between key stakeholders.

This document is therefore created as a brief guideline introducing this topic and giving answers to 3 main questions:

- What is accessible tourism?
- How can accessibility in tourism be improved?
- What are the benefits of accessible tourism?

It has 3 parts where each part is dedicated to one VIP group, that play important role in development of accessible tourism: **Visitors, Tourism Industry, and Policy Makers.**

The first part “Be Actors more than Recipients” is dedicated to **Visitors**, i.e. all users of tourism infrastructures and services including residents, who could have more courage and be more pro-active in demanding accessible environments, products and services.

This second part “Be a level above rather than just a step ahead“, focuses on **Businesses in Tourism Industry**, i.e. tourism service providers, who should meet the accessible market demand and make their business more competitive and sustainable.

The last part “Lift upward not just push ahead“ is aimed at **Policy Makers**, i.e. politicians, public authorities, tourism boards and other decision makers in tourism and access policies on national, regional or local level, who are expected to take into account citizens’ needs and create a suitable environment for cooperation and motivation of all stakeholders in order to lift up tourism offer and environment for living.

Every group has its own particular role in the creation of accessible tourism products and destinations. The most important role, however, is to harmonize individual efforts in common strategy and communication. Success can be guaranteed only if these three main stakeholders work together as one.

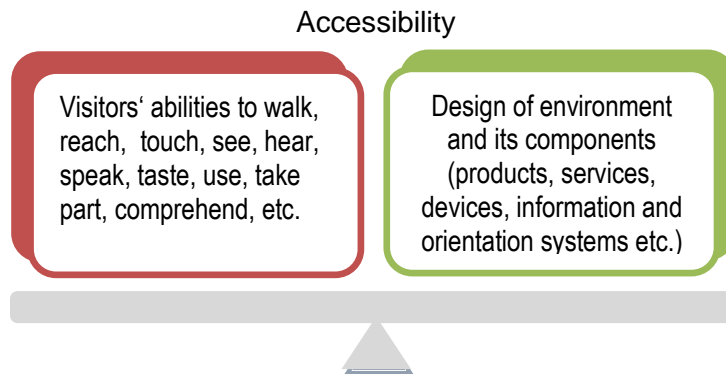
**So, why wouldn't you be the part of such a team?**

*„The source of our success is the cooperation of all stakeholders.“*

*(Józef Solecki, Manager of the Integration of People with Disabilities Section in Poznań City Hall; Access City Award 2014 – Third prize)*

## WHAT IS ACCESSIBLE TOURISM

**A**ccessible Tourism (also called Tourism for All or Inclusive Tourism) is complex of products, processes and services that are designed, promoted, distributed and provided to meet specific access needs and requirements of visitors regardless of their age or abilities.



There are a lot of myths connected with accessible tourism or accessibility in general. The most common are:



**”Accessible tourism is only for people with disabilities ...**

**Not at all!** Although persons with disabilities have the greatest need of accessibility, accessible tourism covers the needs of a **variety of customers** with different access needs (not always visible) which can be caused by impairment, illness, injury, age, stature, foreign language proficiency or culture. **Any person**, who faces some difficulties in accessing, using or enjoying tourism services and facilities fully, comfortably, safely and independently, will prioritise accessible places.<sup>1</sup>

### Main Beneficiaries of Accessible Tourism



<sup>1</sup> Source: World Tourism Organization (2016), Manual on Accessible Tourism for All: Principles, Tools and Best Practices – Module I: Accessible Tourism – Definition and Context, UNWTO, Madrid, <https://www.e-unwto.org/doi/pdf/10.18111/9789284418077>

In fact, accessible tourism can benefit everyone and all of us at least once in our lives will have a need for accessible environments, products and services.

... and it is a niche market.”



**On the contrary!** Taking into account who is behind the term “person with access needs“, we cannot talk about a small market segment. Moreover, it is a loyal, growing market which brings competitive advantage and new opportunities to businesses<sup>2</sup>. Accessible services have the potential to attract more potential customers, increase service quality and strengthen the image.

Basic facts about the accessible tourism market in EU



Source: European Commission (2014), Economic Impact and Travel Patterns of Accessible Travel in Europe – Final Report, <http://ec.europa.eu/DocsRoom/documents/5566/attachments/1/translations/en/renditions/native>



”Accessibility means absence of architectural barriers.”

**Well, not only.** Accessibility is often narrowed down to the construction or adaptation of facilities but types of barriers and difficulties involved in tourism have a much wider scope and are present in all tourism and travel-related services.

Accessible destinations have to ensure the accessibility of the **complete value chain** including hotels, transport, attractions, free-time facilities, tourism information offices, information and booking systems, marketing and an inclusive attitude among all relevant actors. Accessibility measures in tourism have to be accompanied by adequate **accessibility of public spaces** and involvement of public bodies. Only coordinated efforts combining each phase of the visitor’s experience may lead to visitor satisfaction.

<sup>2</sup> Source: British Tourist Authority (VisitEngland), At your service, [https://www.visitbritain.org/sites/default/files/vb-corporate/at\\_your\\_service\\_17.12.10.pdf](https://www.visitbritain.org/sites/default/files/vb-corporate/at_your_service_17.12.10.pdf)



## ”Accessibility is expensive.”

**Not always!** Accessibility is not connected only with big financial investments. Even small adjustments and smart solutions can positively affect visitor’s decision and experience.

Examples of low-cost actions with positive impact on tourists with access needs:

- inclusive marketing
- accessible websites and information in alternative formats (raised text, audio/video format, plain language easy to understand, good contrast between the colour of text and background, appropriate font type easy to read, etc.)
- reliable information about accessibility of facilities and services
- trained staff
- technical aids and equipment to rent or loan (wheelchairs, bath chairs, toilet raisers etc.)
- free entry with guide dogs
- resting places where visitors can sit
- good lighting
- universally designed tourism products and activities

Efficiency of investment in accessibility is often measured as costs in relation to the number of visitors with disabilities. In fact, accessible measures improve safety and comfort and ensure that environment, products and services can be enjoyed by any person. That is why investment in accessibility should be perceived as an investment in dignity and quality for all.

*“ Accessibility is a central element of any responsible and sustainable tourism policy. It is both a human rights imperative and an exceptional business opportunity. Above all we must come to appreciate that Accessible Tourism does not only benefit persons with disabilities or special needs; it benefits us all.”*

*Taleb Rifai, UNWTO Secretary-General*

## HOW CAN YOU MAKE TOURISM MORE ACCESSIBLE



### Inform visitors about accessibility

**Check accessibility** of your offer. You can use a variety of schemes that are available on the internet.

**Provide detailed information** on accessibility of your facility and of your offer. For many people information on accessibility is most important when deciding whether and where to go. Accurate information enables them to assess if their individual access requirements can be met. Provide objective information about your services, regardless of the degree of their accessibility. Publish an accessibility statement on your web page. Make it easy to find. Detailed, accurate and objective information about accessibility of your facility that can be read online provides potential customers with useful advice and the same time can serve as a reference for the staff when answering customers' queries.

**Promote accessibility.** Although accessibility issues are important for many people, they are hardly used in marketing. Integrate information on accessibility of your offer in your promotional materials. Use various formats of information (written, audio, video, easy to understand) according to the audience (its needs) and the place of your promotion.



### Tools for assessment and provision of detailed information about accessibility, examples of promotion of accessible facilities and services

#### **Pantou Access Statement, <https://pantou.org/access-statement>**

This Statement is used to inform potential customers or visitors about the service and it is particularly useful as a planning tool for visitors who have specific access requirements.

You can also find its online version on <http://www.apptouryou.eu/index.php/your-facilities/add-a-new-facility>. You will need to register for free and then you will be guided throughout the filling of the questionnaire.

#### **Pantou – The Accessible Tourism Directory, <https://pantou.org/>**

Pantou (Greek word for Everywhere) is the website developed by ENAT and partners for European Commission. It promotes accessible tourism suppliers, showing places to go and things to do – in safety and with convenience and comfort. Registration with Pantou is free of charge.

#### **Access Guides (PDF downloads), as examples of how to promote accessibility of a facility**

- Algarve Senior Living

[https://pantou.org/sites/default/files/access\\_statements/Pantou\\_Access\\_Statement\\_2014\\_Algarve\\_Senior\\_Living.pdf](https://pantou.org/sites/default/files/access_statements/Pantou_Access_Statement_2014_Algarve_Senior_Living.pdf)

- Royal Botanic Gardens, Edinburgh

<http://www.rbge.org.uk/assets/files/Gardens/accessibility/Access%20Statement%20Ed%20July.pdf>



## Provide attentive and customized care to all visitors

Catering for visitors with access requirements means being hospitable to your customers and providing quality services. It's not a matter of measure and features, but first of all a **state of mind**.

To be prepared to respond to the needs of tourists you need to know their requirements. Ask your guests about their needs in respect of accessibility. You should not understand accessibility as a service but rather as a condition that enables them to enjoy their visit and the provided services. When you cater for persons with specific needs you are in fact catering for everyone.

Equally important as the right attitude is appropriate communication. Communication barriers can affect quality and satisfaction of customers just as much as architectural barriers. Make sure that all your staff members are informed about different accessibility issues in your facility and that they are able to give information to customers and respond to their needs. Choose the quality training course that best suits your needs.



### Expert opinions on accessible tourism

#### **Mind the accessibility Gap (Short version) (ENAT)**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uNgEQvPj1N8&t=0s&index=77&list=PLC648CE68AB90757>

A video on the benefits and business case for Accessible Tourism produced by ENAT for the European Commission. Features leading actors and experts in the field, recorded at the European Commission Conference "Mind the Accessibility Gap", 6th June 2014, Brussels. (4 Minutes).

#### **Attraction Case Study: Roman Baths, (UK)**

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qh\\_8ZVbVmyY&t=0s&index=40&list=PLC648CE68AB900757](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qh_8ZVbVmyY&t=0s&index=40&list=PLC648CE68AB900757)

An award-winning tourist attraction shows how the visitor experience has been enhanced for everyone by introducing a number of simple access improvements and services.

#### **Accessible Tourism – Why we do it (UK)**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hrg6bOJuGfI&index=161&t=0s&list=PLC648CE68AB900757>

Video with business owners telling how they have invested small sums of money in accessibility of facilities and services, bringing more customers and more income.

#### **Profiting through accessible tourism (VisitEngland, UK)**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GtutzNnl0Q&index=171&t=0s&list=PLC648CE68AB900757>



Business owners explaining how they incorporate inclusion and access to make their offers more suitable for everyone, opening up a loyal market and giving clear business benefits.

### What we have learned (Accessible conference/concert/theatre venue, (UK)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SZCtS1V2wow&index=199&t=0s&list=PLC648CE68AB900757>



### Make your facility easy to reach and enjoyable

An accessible environment without barriers is an important part of accessible tourism. It includes: accessible parking, accessible routes, accessible toilets, accessible transport infrastructure, accessible entrances, even and non-slip surfaces, wide passageways and aisles, handrails, places to sit and rest, dropped kerbs, sensory elements (tactile, visual and audio elements), access ramps, low counters, hearing loops etc. It includes also equipment, which visitors often have to take with them.

Access barriers can be removed by architectural adjustments or by suitable measures, equipment or easy to understand instructions. When these things are considered at the time of construction they do not increase costs of the investment significantly. Moreover, there are many cheap solutions which can greatly improve accessibility. When access is done properly, it becomes “invisible” and can be used by anybody.



### Examples of smart and easy solutions of accessibility

#### Scandic hotels, Nordic countries, Poland and Germany

Features and solutions at Scandic hotels for guests with special needs

<https://www.scandichotels.com/always-at-scandic/special-needs>

[https://www.scandichotels.com/contentassets/2ce6650a89b24e6e8e54e6ec8c14da49/accessibility-at-scandic\\_eng.pdf](https://www.scandichotels.com/contentassets/2ce6650a89b24e6e8e54e6ec8c14da49/accessibility-at-scandic_eng.pdf)

#### Visit England, British Tourist Authority - „Easy does it“

Guide that suggests simple and low cost improvement that businesses can make to improve their accessibility.

[https://www.visitbritain.org/sites/default/files/vb-corporate/Images/Business-Advice-Hub/easy\\_does\\_it.pdf](https://www.visitbritain.org/sites/default/files/vb-corporate/Images/Business-Advice-Hub/easy_does_it.pdf)

## WHAT CAN ACCESSIBILITY BRING YOU

**A**ccessible tourism is a matter of equal rights to tourism services and a central element of any responsible and sustainable development policy.

For you, Businesses in the Tourism Industry, it is first of all a **business opportunity**. It is important to understand that accessible tourism aims at travellers with access needs, but benefits all travellers. Taking steps toward better accessibility will have a positive impact on the quality of your offer and thus on your competitiveness.

Businesses that are accessible will attract more guests, because they cater for a wider range of guests. These persons rarely travel alone, they are accompanied by a family member and/or a companion to give support. If they are satisfied with the offer they receive, they will most probably give good a review of the facilities to their friends and there is a great chance they will return to the location.

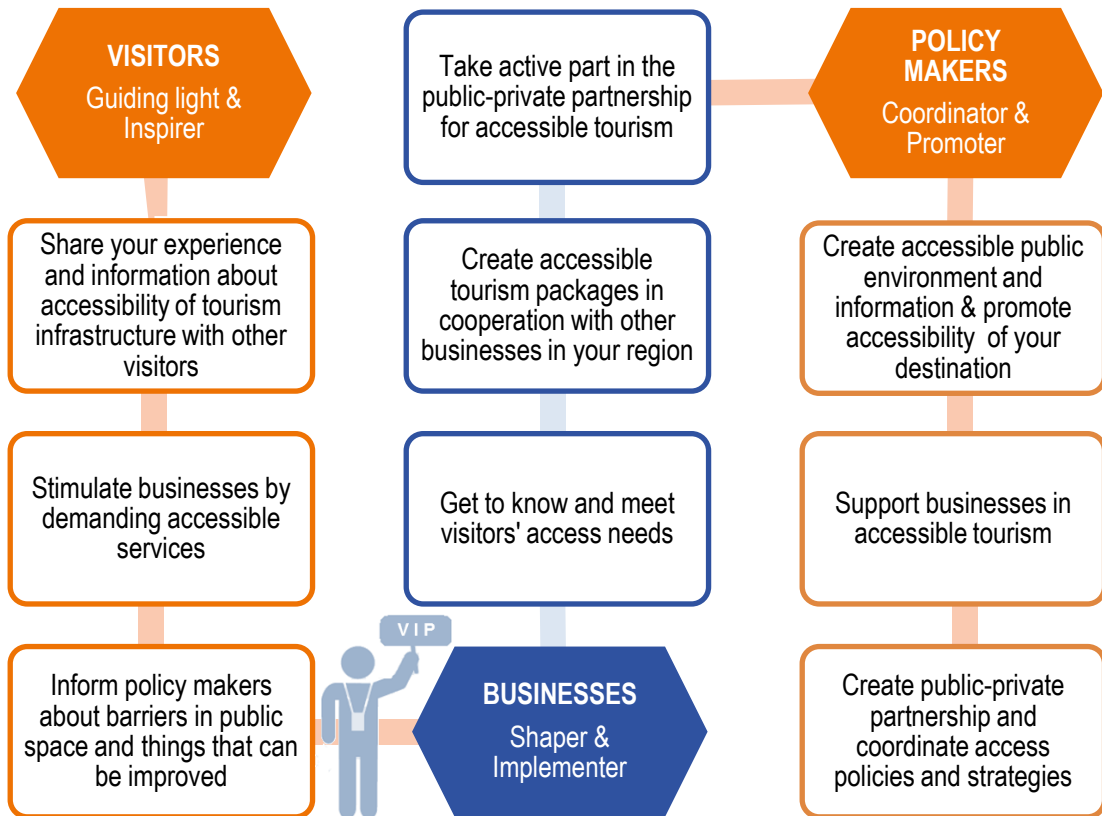
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### Benefits for Businesses

- More visitors, loyal (returning) visitors
  - New incomes
  - Competitive advantage
  - Support of off-season business
  - Sustainability of the business
- 

Development of accessible tourism is not only up to individual owners of tourist facilities and service providers. Individual and isolated solutions cannot bring all these benefits. It is a collective task, where everyone (every VIP group) has its role, which is equally important. The closer the cooperation between the partners is the better results are achieved. **Where there's a will there's a way.**

Role of VIP groups in development of accessible tourism





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