

Mapping skills and training needs to improve accessibility in tourism services

Objectives

As part of the European Parliament’s “Preparatory Action on Tourism Accessibility for All”, the European Commission (Directorate General Enterprise and Industry, Unit E2 - Tourism and Cultural Instruments) has awarded a study to VVA, the European Network for Accessible Tourism and 3S Research Laboratory to:

1. **Map the need for staff skills to improve accessibility across the tourism sector;** and
2. **Analyse the availability of appropriate training,** both in EU Member States and in a selection of other regions of the world.

The findings will be used to develop a proposal for an EU-wide transferable model curriculum to integrate accessibility-related content in vocational and educational training in tourism. The model curriculum will indicate the accessibility training needs of different occupational groups, responding to the requirements of visitors with disabilities, older people and others who need good access.

Rationale

Appropriate and effective training for tourism for managers and staff is a vital component in the successful delivery of accessible tourism for all. In addition, training provision needs to be fully integrated with market demand and with the supply of accessible services.

A general level of “disability awareness” is necessary for all employees who are in contact with visitors, allowing them to communicate more easily and to give appropriate assistance if and when needed. This study will

1. investigate the key areas where training can add value,
2. identify gaps in the provision of quality training and
3. explore the extent to which accessibility-related materials can be included as part of “mainstream” training e.g. in tourism marketing, quality, health and safety, and other areas.

At the same time, specific skills and strategic training differ between professions. The study will indicate the essential and desirable skills required for three target groups:

1. **Managers;**
2. **Frontline staff;** and
3. **Other professionals** such as planners, architects, web designers, marketing and information specialists among others.

The research will present a collection of best practices of 'training for accessibility' in the different tourism services. A series of case studies will identify not only what skills are required but what works, i.e. by evaluating the effectiveness of current training methods and curricula, through concrete surveys and impact studies.

In addition to mapping skills needs, the study also investigates barriers to training. In particular, we will analyse why some businesses are not considering or using available access training and why training enterprises and schools do not integrate accessibility into their curricula. Given that SMEs represent over 90% of tourism enterprises in Europe, particular attention will be given to how these businesses can be better engaged in Access Training.

Related to this, we will determine which channels of communication and training methods can be used to reach different sector actors and stakeholders. This part of the research can help foster the development of targeted policies and actions to overcome practical impediments. It is likely that these actions will include a diverse range of actors offering current training such as VET centres, private training businesses, tertiary-level education centres, online businesses, professional bodies, local, regional and national Chambers of Hotels among others.

Study recommendations will show how accessibility training can or should be delivered, taking into account the practical barriers including cost, time and local availability. This may include a mix of options for businesses in order to provide them with greater choice for training through, for example workshops, online training and webinars.

Methodology

The research will offer essential insights into the current state of accessible tourism in Europe. The project will run for 12 months collecting data through interviews with key stakeholders, surveys, desk reviews, workshops and user forums. The results of the study will be presented at a European workshop and online in 2014.

The figure below summarises the key project activities:

Figure 1 - Overview of key project activities

