

WS5. "Accessible Tourism in Central and Eastern Europe"

"Creating accessible tourism possibilities in Hungary"

The DBO-office representing Central Denmark Region was established in January 1999 by Skagerrak Consulting Ltd. DBO-Office, Budapest are dealing with developing new business and collaboration opportunities for smaller companies, private organizations, institutions and schools, and local and regional authorities in the so-called New Europe. You can read more on our homepage www dbo hu or at the homepage of Central Denmark Region www rm dk.

Through the years we have had the pleasure to organize both study- and holiday tours, student, teacher, employee and manager exchange programs, and we also participated in numerous of international cooperation and development projects together with Danish/Scandinavian, Central and Eastern European partners.

In connection to a Danish-Hungarian development project about setting up handicap aid lending centrals in Hungary, were we asked to organize a study trip to Hungary for a larger group of youngsters from the Danish Folk High School Egmonthojskolen (a folk high school especially for youngsters with disabilities).

We then noticed a need for basic information concerning accessibility around Hungary – e.g. about accessible hotels, restaurants, sights, public transport systems etc. But we couldn't find any coordinated (and reliable) information anywhere. We therefore had to collect (and check) these information ourselves. We started visiting hotels, restaurants etc. around the country, checking and testing the parking space, handicap toilets, ramps, hoists etc. We used (and still use) Danish/European standards when assessing buildings and sights.

Parallel these activities – which we financed (and still are financing) ourselves – we decided to establish a travel agency (Skagerrak Tours) in order to present a professional tour organizer on the market - especially in promoting accessible tourism. But as it can be seen on our webpage (www skagerrak hu), we are not especially stressing that our tours should ONLY be for people with a handicap. It is very important for us to communicate that our tours are for everybody – not only - but ALSO for people with special needs. Therefore you will find only a single picture of a wheelchair in our brochure.

We also decided to set up our travel agency in a way so we - at the same time - can educate, train "on the job" and employ e.g. wheelchair users as guides, accessibility experts, web designers, sales assistants etc. We applied for and has been approved and accredited as a rehabilitation working place.

We established contact and corporation agreement with a tour operator in Denmark (HandiTours) and we are working with agents in Sweden, Norway and Austria. We are now looking forward to expand our network to tour operators, agents and other kind of partners in other countries as well.

The latest development for our company will be to offer tours abroad for Hungarian tourists with special needs. We have been testing the “domestic market” by organizing one-day trips around the country, all though we met several barriers – practical as of economical character. Our first international “tour test” for Hungarian tourists with a handicap will properly be offering a guided City Break weekend to Vienna.

Skagerrak Tours is a private company – and a small one. We are in a situation where we now need support and strategic partners for being able to continue developing the accessible tourism in Hungary.

We are now working on setting up a platform of Hungarian partners (the tourism board, representatives from the hotels, restaurants, Budapest Municipality + the organizations, relevant ministries and public authorities).

We are very interested in participating in international partnerships and development projects, where we can exchange our experiences for common benefit.

It has been very difficult for us, briefly to describe our work in creating accessible tourism possibilities in Hungary. As everybody knows is it a complex “project” – and we still have a very long road to go.

Max Madsen/Budapest - September 2009



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