

Těšín Silesia for all



Těšín Silesia for all was a small Czech-polish cross-border project focused on accessible tourism. It was co-financed under the Cross-border Cooperation Operational Programme between Czech Republic and Poland – Microprojects Fund of Euroregion Těšín Silesia - Cieszyn Silesia. The project was successfully completed a few days ago (in June 2015).

Těšín Silesia (or Cieszyn Silesia) is a historical region in Central Europe along the border of the Czech Republic and Poland. This territory originally belonged to the Great Moravian Empire. In 1920, after the dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian Empire it was divided between the newly created countries – Czechoslovakia (now the Czech Republic) and Poland. Common historical development and therefore similar traditions, character of the landscape, problems etc, it all offers great potential for the development of cross-border cooperation, including tourism.

As a tourist destination Těšín Silesia provides excellent conditions for diverse holiday activities all year long – walking, hiking, cycling, skiing, paragliding, horseback riding, fishing, golf, swimming or just relaxing in spa or exploring the region. The main attraction of this region is the Těšín Beskydy mountain range as well as the unique architecture (picturesque wooden buildings), preserved local customs, traditional folklore and handicrafts.

Regarding accessible tourism there is a big difference between the Czech and Polish part of Cieszyn Silesia. While on the Czech side there were already implemented several projects (leded mainly by Kazuist, Ltd.), on the Polish side it was yet unknown topic (pilot project).

Therefore, the aim of the project Těšín Silesia for all was to raise awareness among tourism stakeholders of the importance and benefits of accessible tourism and to provide persons with access needs information about accessibility of tourist attractions in this area.

The main output of the project is 20 tourist attractions mapped in terms of their accessibility for people with reduced mobility and orientation. There were inspected mainly museums and churches, but also a lookout tower, theme parks, chair lift, a sport complex, ski jump site, design centre, centre of culture and art etc. Generally is the accessibility of tourist attractions low. Detailed results are published on www.jedemetaky.cz (so far only in czech and polish).

Inspection of the venues as well as other project activities (introductory workshops and study tours for stakeholders from the private and public sector) show that accessibility is still not perceived as a challenge and a business opportunity. It is very difficult to arouse their interest in this topic and convince them to cooperation through the whole chain and making tourist offer accessible for all (improve services, create accessible packages, provide accessibility information, train the staff).

Lead partner/coordinator: Regional Council for Development and Cooperation based in Třinec - non-profit association of municipalities, businesses entities and non-profit organization supporting the overall development of the region and providing tourism destination management for Těšín Silesia tourist area (<http://en.tesinskeslezsko.cz/>).

Polish partner: Powiat Cieszyński (Cieszyn District) - a unit of territorial administration and local government based in Cieszyn (<http://www.powiat.cieszyn.pl>).

Project contact person: Jana Szczuková, szczukova@kazuist.cz