

President's Message, December 2022



A light of hope

Dear Friends,

I am very happy, as usual, to be with you at the end of 2022 and to share with you some thoughts and the satisfaction for a year that has finally brought a breath of relief for everyone and for the economic recovery of our countries.

With travel restrictions completely lifted, with freedom of movement guaranteed to all and, in particular, to those travelling for tourism, we can hope that the darkest period of the pandemic is now behind us.

During the year, for the first time since 2019, we have been able to meet personally in Bruxelles for our Annual General Assembly, to attend events and to resume meetings with the partners of the EU financed projects we are part of.

The positive outcome of this situation is that we will all be able to maintain the extension we were forced to ask in the development of the project to the minimum agreed with the European Commission and to finalize the products which were the objectives of those proposals in time to make them contribute effectively to the recovery of the tourism sector.

We are contributing to three main areas which are essential to improve the performances and results of the tourism sector in Accessible Tourism.

Training

Our current projects will provide training opportunities for individuals, SMEs and specific vocational roles (managers and front-line staff in the hospitality sector) enabling them to cater for customers with disabilities and others with specific access requirements in a proper and dignified way.

New curricula will be developed and tested in some European universities with the ultimate goal to make training on accessible tourism a regular part of the education offer of universities ([IN TOUR](#)).

Guidance documents and training materials on accessibility for business development have been co-created with stakeholders for owners and managers of small tourism businesses in rural and natural areas ([ACCESS IT](#)).

Using edutainment criteria, we have developed Apps for self-learning on how to welcome tourists with disabilities in the Accommodation, restaurants and MICE sectors ([Games Without Barriers](#)).

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Another App will be developed to contribute to the training on Accessible Tourism of students of initial and continuing tourism VET in a pleasant and engaging way ([DIVETOUR](#)) .

Identification of Guidelines

Two very interesting projects will build on the use of data and scientific processing, to identify appropriate data sets and deliver new data-driven management tools to enhance the capacity of cultural tourism managers to develop their sites and destinations in a sustainable way, working towards the UN Sustainable Development Goals, avoiding negative social and environmental impacts ([IMPACTOUR](#) and [CulTourData](#)).

The participation of many important Cultural sites all over Europe, will add to the importance and quality of the application of these guidelines.

ISO Standards

The accessibility of cultural heritage buildings and monuments is being studied by ENAT experts in an international working group on “Accessibility of Immovable heritage” under ISO – the International Standards Organization. This work aims to provide a methodology for the consideration of heritage values and accessibility requirements when designing and implementing adaptations to existing structures and sites.

The availability of all the above resources will enable SMEs, public bodies, NTOs and destinations to improve their services, giving their human resources the chance to gain additional skills to face the emerging demands of their clientele and making use of new tools such as Augmented and Virtual Reality to shape an integrated offer.

Improving skills, open the training on accessible tourism to university students, enabling destinations and public bodies to turn towards more sustainable and accessible ways of “organising and selling” their touristic products will be keys to a quantitatively and qualitatively significant recovery of tourism and accessible tourism.

I am confident that 2023 could be the year when we will achieve the full recovery from the damages which the Covid pandemic caused for the tourism sector. This will mean, of course, that we have learnt from our previous behaviours and we will look at tourism as an economically important resource, while changing our perspective to ensure that the great diversity of destinations shall receive visitors to enjoy sustainable and accessible tourism, while the phenomenon of overtourism will be rolled back by the greater responsibility and care shown towards communities and our precious heritage.

However, in spite of positive signs, the unstable political situation is still present, with the Ukrainian war unceasing.

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I just bought a vintage Russian glass decoration for the Christmas tree from a Ukrainian seller online. A photo of the bauble is the one opening my message. It is a way to wish to all of you and, especially to our Ukrainian and Russian members, a peaceful Christmas and a new year hopefully bringing a new light of hope for both countries.

Happy New Year to all our members!

Anna Grazia Laura, Rome.