

World Tourism Organization



# UNWTO

A photograph of a couple overlooking a scenic view. The woman is wearing a bright red blazer and blue trousers, and the man is wearing a white t-shirt and blue trousers. The man is seated in a black wheelchair. They are standing on a stone path with a metal railing. In the background, a large stone castle with a tower sits atop a rocky cliff, surrounded by lush green trees. The sky is clear and blue. A semi-transparent blue box is overlaid on the bottom left of the image, containing the conference title and dates.

**Highlights of the  
1st UNWTO  
Conference  
on Accessible  
Tourism in Europe**

San Marino, 19-20 November 2014

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[Highlights of the 1st UNWTO Conference on Accessible Tourism in Europe  
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# Foreword

The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that 15% of the global population – roughly one billion people – live with some form of disability. With populations ageing rapidly, the number of persons experiencing obstacles when travelling will only rise. Accessibility must be an intrinsic part of any responsible and sustainable tourism policy. Yet, facilitating travel for people with disabilities is not only a human rights imperative, it is also an exceptional business opportunity. Accessible tourism benefits us all by improving access conditions, enhancing economic prospects and creating jobs.

The 1st UNWTO Conference on Accessible Tourism in Europe, organized by UNWTO and the Government of the Republic of San Marino, was a unique opportunity to place this important issue at the heart of discussions on tourism development in the region. The Conference was also an occasion to experience first-hand how San Marino's authorities, civil society and private sector are working to make their country ever more accessible, while protecting its historic integrity.

This publication offers testimony of several successful accessible tourism projects in Europe. We trust these will provide tourism stakeholders with inspiration to continue working to make tourism a universal right to be enjoyed by all. To advance this fundamental agenda, we also invite tourism stakeholders to review and implement the 2013 UNWTO Recommendations on Accessible Tourism for All. Only together will we make 'Accessible Tourism for All' a reality.

**Taleb Rifai**  
**Secretary-General**  
**World Tourism Organization (UNWTO)**

# Foreword

The Republic of San Marino, in collaboration with UNWTO, organized the 1st UNWTO Conference on Accessible Tourism in Europe to promote the importance of universal accessibility in tourism. The Conference gave destinations in Europe the opportunity to present good practice examples and share strategies to improve the competitiveness of services within the industry.

The development of tourism, in particular accessible tourism, must be a priority for all countries. The tourism industry is a strategic asset for social and economic policies to trigger growth and development. Accessible tourism plays its part as an ethical responsibility, but it is also a very interesting market which can advance competitiveness within the tourism sector.

San Marino views accessible tourism as an asset. In 2010, having taken up the challenge of improving accessibility, we adopted the project “San Marino for All”. This was a virtuous example of collaboration which had particular significance for our country, as it showed the scale of our welcoming hospitality. As a result, San Marino was awarded an honourable mention as a top-quality destination in 2013 within the European Destinations of Excellence (EDEN) project for accessible tourism.

Accessibility is an important challenge for all countries. Having hosted the 1st Conference on Accessible Tourism in Europe, I believe we have made a good start. I hope the selection of good practices featured in this Report can prove that significant progress has been made in making European destinations more accessible for all.

**Teodoro Lonfernini**  
**Minister of Tourism**  
**San Marino**

# Introduction

Universal accessibility is both a human rights imperative and a remarkable economic opportunity. It stands to foster a thriving tourism sector which benefits us all – destinations, tourists, tourism businesses and communities alike. This is precisely why Accessible Tourism for All is essential. That is, ensuring that persons with disabilities have access, on an equal basis with others, to the physical environment, transportation, information, communications and public facilities.

UNWTO's commitment to accessible tourism is guided by the Global Code of Ethics for Tourism, a fundamental frame of reference for responsible and sustainable tourism development. Article 7 of the Code recognizes that “direct and personal access to the discovery and enjoyment of the planet's resources constitutes a right equally open to all the world's inhabitants”. As such, UNWTO collaborates with Disabled People's Organizations to mainstream accessibility throughout the tourism sector. In 2013, the UNWTO General Assembly adopted *Recommendations on Accessible Tourism for All* to guide stakeholders in implementing universal accessibility in practice.

In recognition of accessibility's importance, UNWTO and the Government of the Republic of San Marino jointly organized the 1st UNWTO Conference on Accessible Tourism in Europe (19 - 20 November 2014). Drawing together policy makers, practitioners and key-players, the event addressed how to advance quality, sustainability

and competitiveness in accessible tourism. Like an increasing number of destinations, San Marino is dedicated to advancing accessibility. This Conference showcased the Republic's extensive knowledge on accessible tourism, alongside a host of European organizations which have excelled in this field.

The 14 good practices presented at the Conference testify to the great strides made towards advancing universal accessibility in Europe, focusing on three key areas:

1. The accessibility of cultural heritage sites;
2. Policy frameworks and strategic actions to make accessible tourism a reality; and
3. Smart technologies to advance the accessibility of tourism infrastructure, facilities and services.

These cases exemplify how challenges can be overcome, whether in the form of architectural barriers, a dearth of knowledge, or societal attitudes. They highlight the need to consider persons with disabilities in all their diversity and to respond to the multiplicity of access needs in innovative ways. While much more remains to be done, it is hoped that these good practices will inspire public institutions, private enterprises and civil society organizations in advancing the cause of accessible tourism for all.

# San Marino for All: Developing Hospitality without Barriers



“Accessibility is not just about people in wheelchairs. It is about all types of disabilities. We must think about each tourist as an individual and welcome everyone in appropriate conditions.”

**Mahena Abbati, Director, Consorzio San Marino 2000**

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Since 2010, the Hospitality without Barriers project has made accessible tourism a reality in San Marino. Physical infrastructure is ever more accessible, reliable accessible information is widely available and attitudinal barriers are being overcome. Thus, in 2013 the Republic was recognized as a European Destination of Excellence (EDEN) for accessible tourism.

The project spans three phases: identification, information and implementation. First, a detailed assessment identified the state of accessibility in San Marino. A mapping exercise of local tourism itineraries led to the creation of the guide book “San Marino for All”, informing visitors about accessibility in the Republic before their arrival. This allows travellers to decide what services, facilities and infrastructure meet their access needs. While the guide can be used by anyone, it was developed for visitors with reduced mobility: persons with disabilities, the elderly, pregnant women, persons with luggage, or families with young children. A website with photos and measurements of routes and attractions helps tourists choose itineraries accessible for them.

Ramps are now replacing stairs across the city. The removal of architectural barriers owes much to synergies between Consorzio San Marino 2000, local entrepreneurs and institutions, who appreciate the business opportunities of making tourism accessible. The approach also tackles cultural and attitudinal barriers to accessibility. Training tourism operators prepares them to engage with tourists with disabilities. Marketing campaigns and advocacy with the public and private sectors further strengthen awareness.

Photo Credit: *View of San Marino*, San Marino Tourism Board



# Sozopol Foundation:

## Overcoming Physical Barriers and Preserving Historical Authenticity



“At the heart of our programme is the aim to overcome physical barriers and, at the same time, to preserve historical authenticity.”

**Lyubomir Durankev, National and International Projects Expert, Sozopol Foundation, Bulgaria**  
[office@sozopol-foundation.com](mailto:office@sozopol-foundation.com)

The Sozopol Foundation champions the equal right of persons with disabilities to travel and tourism. Its foremost projects provide infrastructure and services enabling tourists with disabilities or reduced mobility to access the city of Sozopol on Bulgaria's Black Sea coast.

The Foundation's initiatives are valuable examples of how cultural heritage sites can be made accessible without damaging their integrity. Notable projects span the construction of accessible infrastructure for the Sozopol's architectural and historic complex, including its

fortress walls and tower. Accessible facilities introduced include ramps, elevators, accessible toilets and tactile paving for the blind. Other strategic sites which have been made accessible are an urban park, the central beach, a “south panoramic alley” leading to the pier, the Saints Cyril and Methodius church, the Municipal Ethnographic Museum, the Archaeological Museum and streets in the old town.

In 2013, Sozopol joined the League of Historical and Accessible Cities (LHAC). This network has found inventive ways of reconciling cultural heritage protection and accessibility, making routes of over 1km long accessible in six historic towns. The Foundation is working on a Smart Tourist Routes for Inclusive Groups (STRING) project with its LHAC partners to create accessible virtual tourism itineraries. While its past efforts concentrate on access for tourists with reduced mobility, its future plans include information tools using Braille for the blind.

Photo Credit: *Fortress Walls of Sozopol*, Sozopol Foundation





# Accessible Syracuse and Noto: Making Tourism Accessible for the Deaf

“Accessible culture is a commitment to a society which is better for all, rather than a society of marginalization and solitude. Accessible tourism is an ethical must and a business opportunity. Not only people with disabilities benefit from it, we all do.”

**Bernadette Lo Bianco, President, Sicilia Turismo per Tutti**  
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The pilot project Syracuse and Noto: Also in Sign Language has created accessible tourism routes for deaf visitors in Sicily's historic centres of Syracuse and Noto. Its success demonstrates how accessibility can make destinations attractive to new target groups, improve their public image and promote social inclusion. Rising visitor numbers, greater competitiveness and a longer tourist season are just some of the benefits prompted by accessibility.

To improve accessibility for the deaf, the project first considered their specific needs. A promotional brochure was designed based on an examination of their motivations and consumer behaviour. International Sign Language interpreters now accompany guides on innovative routes for deaf travellers. A monthly mass for the deaf at the Santuario della Madonna delle Lacrime, as well as training for tourism operators, are also planned. Synergy with local bodies like the Deaf Persons' Association has been vital for developing itineraries.



Accessibility has generated substantial returns. The flow of deaf people to Syracuse and Noto has risen from 300 in 2013 to 450 in 2014. As of 2014, the project began to create routes for visitors with reduced mobility. In June and July alone, the region received over 800 visitors with physical disabilities.

Although surmounting architectural barriers has been challenging, the project galvanized support by presenting donors with examples of successful initiatives that have reaped the social and economic benefits of making the built environment accessible. Visitors with disabilities are prolonging their stays and opting to travel during low seasons. Not only has this improved the competitiveness of both Syracuse and Noto, it has also benefitted neighbouring destinations, given tourists' excursions to nearby sites. Increased tourism flows are boosting the local economy and helping to counter the effects of the financial crisis.

# Accessible Salzburg:

## Championing a Multifaceted Approach to Accessibility

“Awareness projects are very important because most barriers are still in people’s heads. We need to inform about accessibility and architects have to be creative in their designs.”

**Sabine Neusüss, Accessibility Manager,  
Municipality of Salzburg, Austria**  
[sabine.neusuess@stadt-salzburg.at](mailto:sabine.neusuess@stadt-salzburg.at)

Salzburg’s experience offers a telling example of how to enhance accessibility while safeguarding cultural heritage. Its multifaceted approach has made four aspects of the city fully accessible: (1) the built environment and public spaces, (2) transportation and infrastructure, (3) information and communication channels and (4) public institutions and services.

Monuments, attractions and leisure facilities boast ramps and hearing equipment which are constantly adapted and improved. Acoustic signals at traffic lights and audio guides at key sites cater to the needs of visitors with disabilities. Free accessible public toilets are widely available, public playgrounds are fitted with barrier-free equipment and pavements have been lowered at secure crossing points. Tools like tactile paving and orientation systems for the blind have been introduced at crossroads, bus stops and in public buildings.

Collaboration between the municipality and the Office for the Protection of Monuments has been

indispensable for making the World-Heritage listed city centre accessible while protecting its historic integrity.

To make public transport more accessible, Salzburg is equipped with barrier-free buses. Technology which permits vehicles to lower towards the curb enables passengers with reduced mobility to board independently. Information and tactile waiting areas at trolley bus stops are available for blind travellers, while accessible parking areas abound across the city. Improved access is facilitated by reforms of the railway station, alongside training for airport staff on assisting persons with disabilities.

A digital and printable map, “Barrier-Free Life”, provides information on accessible tourism products and services in four languages. This interactive tool is available in an accessible format on the municipality’s website, offering tourists the chance to plan their stay in advance according to their personal needs. Interpreters and sign language translation services are also available free of charge at all civic events.

Salzburg has taken many notable steps to surmount attitudinal barriers to accessibility. Awareness-raising projects inform tourism service providers, businesses, administrative bodies, students, teachers and communities of the benefits of accessible tourism. An educational programme, “From a Different



## STADT : SALZBURG Magistrat Behindertenbeauftragte

Point of View”, offered by the city’s Disability Advisory Board helps participants experience first-hand some of the challenges which people with disabilities face in their everyday lives. For instance, how a 3 cm step becomes a major obstacle when it must be negotiated in a wheelchair.

A number of workshops for planners and architects outline accessible options for both new and old buildings. In addition, the Civic Accessibility Manager’s Office provides advice, awareness-raising and subsidies related to barrier-free construction.

Photo Credit: *Roller-skates and Wheelchair*, by Christian Treweller, Verein SIS



# ACS Foundation and AECID:

## Adapting Heritage Sites in Spain and Latin America

“Accessible heritage has been the engine that has changed the infrastructure, the services and the dynamics of the city of El Escorial.”

**Elena de Mier Torrecilla, Architect, ACS Foundation/Spanish Agency for International Development and Cooperation (AECID)**  
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Through productive partnerships, the ACS Foundation has advanced the accessibility of national heritage sites in Spain like the 16th century Monastery of San Lorenzo de El Escorial. Such experiences, alongside the Foundation’s extensive activities in Latin America, demonstrate how historical landmarks can be made accessible while maintaining their authenticity and boosting local economic growth.

The ACS Foundation, the Spanish National Heritage Agency, the Royal Board on Disability and other expert institutions devised an Accessibility Plan for the Monastery of El Escorial. Adaptations of the physical landscape, guided by the principles of Universal Design, have made 95% of the Monastery accessible. These alterations have been unobtrusive, reversible and subject to strict conservation criteria. Visitor information has been improved, in part through staff training on how to meet visitors’ access needs and use technical aids.

By 2011, visitor surveys revealed high-levels of satisfaction with the monastery’s accessibility. In 2013, over 6,500 persons with disabilities visited the Monastery. This precipitated changes in local infrastructure and services. Positive repercussions are felt throughout the town of El Escorial, where the influx of tourists with reduced mobility has prompted tourism businesses to improve access. The economic benefits of their actions have been considerable.

Similar trends were observed in the wake of projects to make other key Spanish sites accessible, including the Monastery of Las Huelgas in Burgos, the Monastery of Santa Clara in Tordesillas, the Monastery of Yuste in Caceres and the Royal Palace of Madrid.

The ACS Foundation’s work also spans notable projects in Latin America, in collaboration with the Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation (AECID) and Spain’s Royal Board on Disability. Training complements activities like the construction of ramps, accessible countertops, accessible toilets, tactile paving, the availability of information in Braille and sign language services.

The Foundation’s achievements include the 2011 Ibero-American Universal Accessibility Manifesto, the creation of the Ibero-American Universal Accessibility Network (Red AUN) and

the integration of Universal Design principles into AECID projects. The emergence of inclusive public policies on accessibility in 14 Latin American cities has been celebrated by the Queen Sofia Award (now the Queen Letizia Award). Accessibility has promoted the social inclusion of people with disabilities and

sustainable community development in Brazil, Colombia, El Salvador, Guatemala, Mexico, Peru and Uruguay. Furthermore, spaces for knowledge transfer between Spanish and Latin American experts have been created.

Photo Credit: *Meeting of the Red AUN Network*, ACS Foundation



# ISTO:

## Making Social Tourism Universally Accessible

“For people involved in social policies, accessible tourism is undoubtedly the priority. Our aim is to put men and women at the very centre of tourism in all their diversity, as workers, inhabitants of tourism destinations and tourists.”

**Jean-Marc Mignon, President, International Social Tourism Organization (ISTO) and Member of the World Committee on Tourism Ethics**

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The International Social Tourism Organization (ISTO) raises awareness among governments, international organizations, regional and local authorities of the importance of social tourism initiatives, including those which promote accessibility. It emphasizes the need to translate ethical principles on Tourism for All into action.

In ISTO's view, accessible tourism should be regarded both from an ethical and an economic perspective. Social tourism in general and accessible tourism in particular offer financial benefits and positively impact sustainable local and regional development. Those countries which have invested in such forms of tourism are among the world's leading destinations.

With respect to ethical imperatives, more must be done to ensure that all persons can exercise their right to tourism. According to Euro Stat, only half of the EU's population is able to do so. Social tourism policies overcome exclusion by creating infrastructure, instituting support



systems, investing in staff training and raising awareness. Small-scale local initiatives can often be as effective as large-scale projects. Collaboration between tourism professionals is indispensable for developing common tools and strategies to realize this vision.

For instance, the eCalypso project, funded by the European Commission, has created a website to stimulate and facilitate the development of social tourism in and between EU Member States. By matching supply with demand, the project makes it easier for people with disabilities to travel, and for tourism businesses to attract clients with disabilities, particularly during low seasons. This benefits travellers with disabilities as end users while allowing tourism service providers to reap the economic benefits of making their offers accessible.

# NECSTouR Accessibility Task Force: Gathering Knowledge and Advocating for Change

“Accessibility initiatives give us a new horizon, a new way of looking at tourism which is very different to the conception we had before. Barriers are not just architectural, they are often mental barriers among people who do not have disabilities.”

**Paolo Rosso, Veneto Regional Commissioner for Tourism**

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NECSTouR's Accessibility Task Force promotes an integrated approach to regional planning and policy implementation on accessible tourism. It gathers information on the state of accessibility in member regions, offers evidenced-based recommendations to enhance accessibility and advocates for EU-level policy change.

Photo Credit: *Accessible Ramps in Venice*, Regione Veneto



Network of European Regions for  
a Sustainable and Competitive Tourism

**NECSTouR**

The Task Force's 2013 peer review analysis drew out good practices, common trends, challenges and solutions. It highlighted the transversal need for accessibility, as accessible tourism bolsters sustainability, innovation and social responsibility while offering substantive economic benefits. It drew attention to the merits of infrastructural change, territorial cohesion, skills training and public-private collaboration.

Based on its analysis, NECSTouR developed an Accessibility Road Map with regional case studies and recommendations. This is a key reference point for regional policy implementation. A Work Plan is now being developed to identify policies needed to advance accessibility in the EU.

The Veneto region, one of the Task Force's coordinators, upholds accessibility as key to competitiveness. Among Italy's leading destinations, it receives 63 million tourists a year. To improve accessibility, it introduced a law on accessible tourism based on the UN Convention on the Right of People with Disabilities. In addition to making natural and cultural heritage accessible, it prioritizes training for tourism professionals and supports destinations in improving accessibility standards. The region is committed to collaborating with the EU on an Action Plan for accessible tourism destinations.

# European Commission:

## Understanding Trends in Accessible Tourism

“Ethics and economics are interlinked. Businesses invest in accessible facilities because ethics is good for business. The more you improve, the more you reap the benefits.”

**Antonella Correra, Policy Officer of Accessible Tourism, European Commission**  
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The European Commission considers information on accessibility an essential precursor to targeted tourism policies. Central to its approach is gathering knowledge on the demand and behavioural profile of travellers with “special access needs”. They are understood to encompass persons with disabilities, persons with temporary impairments, elderly travellers, families with young children and the carers and family members accompanying these persons. So too does the Commission focus on the economic impact of accessible tourism, as well as the current supply and performance of accessible tourism services.

The Commission’s 2014 survey, “Economic Impact and Travel Patterns of Accessible Tourism in Europe”, provides an overview of trends and statistics on accessibility. 783 million persons with “special access needs” travelled in 2012, a figure set to rise to 862 million by 2020.

Survey data reveals that significant demand comes from senior citizens, which will only grow

stronger as the EU’s population ages. Moreover, enterprises offering accessible services tend to be motivated by a business case approach and cite staff training as the most effective means of bolstering accessibility.

Accessible tourism’s direct economic impact was approximately EUR 352 billion in 2012, while its overall contribution, given indirect and sub-contracted amounts, is estimated at EUR 800 billion. This represents around 3% of the EU28’s GDP. The accessible tourism market directly provided 4 million jobs, with multiplier effects creating a total of 9 million jobs in the EU.

Despite this immense potential, tourists report restrictions ranging from physical barriers to an absence of accessible information. The latter is also an obstacle for tourism businesses, many of which attribute their lack of accessible services to a scarcity of guidelines.

Inaccessible infrastructure abounds across the EU. This entails a dearth of such basic facilities as accessible toilets, parking or elevators, while transportation constraints impede freedom of movement. The lack of simple “common sense” services, like the availability of menus for persons with dietary needs, drives away scores of potential customers. Costs associated with accessibility are perceived as another hurdle.



As less than 30% of the EU's tourism products offer accessible services, the region is losing out on vast benefits. It is expected that even minimal improvements would generate substantial

benefits, specifically a predicted annual increase of 142 billion EUR and 3.4 million more jobs within the EU.

Photo Credit: *Accessible Museum Tours*, European Commission



# Turismo de Portugal:

## Creating Policies for Accessible Beaches, Guidance and Training

“From the customer’s point of view, accessibility can distinguish us from others. From a strategic point of view, this adds value to the country’s positioning as a tourism destination.”

**Teresa Ferreira, Director, Development and Innovation Department, Turismo de Portugal**  
[teresa.ferreira@turismodeportugal.pt](mailto:teresa.ferreira@turismodeportugal.pt)

In recent years, Turismo de Portugal has excelled in creating accessible facilities and public spaces. It particularly stands out for its provision of technical guidance, training courses, awareness-raising initiatives for tourism businesses and its support for measures taken by other public institutions.

In partnership with the National Rehabilitation Institute and the Portuguese Environment

Agency, the “Beach for All” project provided public beaches with facilities which apply the principles of Universal Design. As a result, 194 of Portugal’s beaches are now accessible (35% of its classified bathing areas). Another exemplary undertaking is the “Best Practice Guide for Accessibility in the Hotel Sector”. Offering technical information and practical recommendations, the digital guide assists businesses in adapting their offers to meet the needs of visitors with disabilities.

Training courses on accessibility in tourism schools raise awareness and impart skills. The remarkable “Heritage, Accessibility and Inclusion” initiative trains the managers of cultural facilities on how to make these sites accessible. Special focus is placed on multi-sensory communication, accessible internet sites, audio





descriptions and Sign Language. Awareness-raising sessions with tourism stakeholders draw attention to the economic benefits of accessible tourism while encouraging networking and the sharing of good practices.

Underscoring Portugal's efforts to improve accessibility is its National Tourism Strategy's

Action Plan. Its guidelines are a useful starting point for destinations seeking to invest in accessibility. These recommend: integrated programmes to make facilities accessible, training and awareness-raising, accessible information on infrastructure and services and fostering conditions that equip service providers to receive tourists with disabilities.

Photo Credit: *Amphibian Chair* (left) and *Tactile Guided Tours for the Blind*, Turismo de Portugal



# ENAT:

## Training Tourism Professionals on Accessibility

“Investment costs are misunderstood and exaggerated while access is seen mainly as a ‘problem’ rather than a golden opportunity.”

**Annagrazia Laura, President, European Network for Accessible Tourism (ENAT)**

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The European Training Certificate - Access for All in the Tourism Sector (ETCAATS) provides a pan-European framework for staff training in accessible tourism. Developed by ENAT in 2012, the online training course helps tourism service providers make their offers attractive and suitable for over 134 million Europeans looking for accessible services and facilities.

The course sets right a host of prevalent misunderstandings surrounding accessible tourism. As costs are misinterpreted and exaggerated, access is often framed as a “problem” rather than as an opportunity. The accessible tourism market is not well known, making it difficult for destinations to attract tourists with disabilities.

While training on accessibility is sorely needed, it is almost entirely absent from mainstream education. Vocational courses are sporadically offered and skills are not readily transferable between country contexts. To counter such trends, ETCAATS focuses on how to improve

access for visitors with disabilities and how to interact with them throughout the tourism supply and service chain. It offers guidance on the principles of customer care towards all clients, including those with access needs. It encourages trainees to identify good practices that can be transposed to their own contexts.

Among ETCAATS’ objectives is the development of a Road Map for an EU certification system in accessible tourism vocational training, in line with the European Qualifications Framework.

By December 2013, ETCAATS had been successfully completed by 259 international participants, demonstrating the applicability of the course to different national contexts. In 2012, the course was adopted by the UNWTO-Themis Foundation in its training programme for destination managers in Lithuania.

Based on learning from the course, ENAT has highlighted recommendations to improve the future standard of accessible tourism, including:

- Mandatory training on accessibility in mainstream education and tourism schools;
- Shared responsibility for improving training between the education system and the private sector;

- A training qualification recognized across Europe and transferable between countries;
- The coordinated promotion of good practices in accessible tourism training; and
- The development of new approaches to training and learning, reflecting the real operating conditions of tourism businesses.

Photo Credit: *Accessible Boating Excursion*, Photoability.com



# ONCE Foundation:

## Employing Smart Technologies for Accessible Tourism

“Technology has so much potential to make tourism more accessible. End users must be consulted throughout the design process about what designs suit them.”

**Roberto Torena Cristobal, Manager of Accessible Technologies and Innovation Business Unit ILUNION Consulting, ONCE Foundation, Spain**  
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The ONCE Foundation has developed pioneering “smart” products and services to spur the creation of Smart Human Cities and Tourism Destinations, whose built environment, ICT equipment and services are accessible for all. Its approach addresses the diversity of personal profiles, disabilities, technologies and locations. This hinges on consultations with end-users throughout the design process to ensure that their real needs are met. The Foundation’s achievements highlight technology’s immense potential to make tourism universally accessible.

In collaboration with ILUNION, the ONCE Foundation’s business group, the Spanish train manufacturer, TALGO, has created smart technologies to facilitate accessible travel. A new mobile application offers direct, personalized information for all users. This complements the information provided through loud speakers or electronic screens at train stations which is not accessible for deaf or blind travellers, or those

who do not speak the local language. Messages are also automatically sent to users’ mobile phones in the format determined by each user to meet their specific needs.

The smart traffic light system, PassBlue™, was spearheaded by the ONCE Foundation’s business group to assist blind people in crossing roads and navigating cities safely. The system has evolved to enable the sound activation of traffic lights via a remote control or Bluetooth-enabled device. The fact that travellers are able to activate the system using their mobile phones means it can be used across different cities.

Technology for the Personalization of Public Digital Terminals, such as ticket vending machines, tourism information kiosks and ATM machines, further caters to a range of users. A straightforward online wizard, which the ONCE Foundation’s business group helped to develop, allows users to personalize the way they employ such facilities. For example, they can select a larger font in which to view information, a high-contrast screen, sensory functions, or even make use of an animated digital avatar which converts spoken words into Sign Language. As each person’s preferences are stored on a “smart card”, akin to a credit card, accessible digital terminals automatically read this information and provide a personalized interface which meets their needs.

To date, these technologies have been deployed in several cities in Spain, which boast scores of accessible traffic lights and ATM machines. For instance, all CaixaBank ATMs, totalling over 7,000 machines, allow for personalized interaction.

Building on the success of these initiatives, the ONCE Foundation is planning to expand the personalization of digital terminals to a range of other devices. These technologies support the Foundation's tireless work to improve tourism accessibility over the past 20 years.

Photo Credit: *PassBlue™ Smart Traffic Light System*, ILUNION Consulting, ONCE Foundation



# Scandic Hotels:

## Employing Smart Technologies for Accessible Tourism

“Design for All is good for everyone. What we are doing is necessary for some guests but we are doing it for all our guests.”

**Magnus Berglund, Accessibility Director,  
Scandic Hotels, Sweden**  
[magnus.berglund@scandichotels.com](mailto:magnus.berglund@scandichotels.com)

Ensuring that visitors with disabilities and other access needs enjoy a barrier-free stay is the driving force behind Scandic Hotels' Accessibility Programme. Smart design solutions cater for the diverse needs of all visitors, from those with reduced mobility to the blind or deaf. In addition to making accommodation accessible, Scandic has made great progress in terms of the provision of information and training on accessibility.

Design for All is the hallmark of Scandic's buildings, fixtures, fittings and furniture, as well as information and facilities. Hearing loops, a special type of sound system for people with hearing aids, are available at reception desks, as are vibrating alarm clocks connected to fire alarms. For blind visitors, Braille hotel factsheets are provided and guide dogs are welcome.

Upon consultation with Disabled People's Organizations, guests and staff members, Scandic developed an Accessibility Standard

checklist, encompassing all the accessible products and services offered by their hotels. The majority of the checklist's 135 points are mandatory for all establishments, while all points must be applied for new buildings or renovations.

Scandic's approach emphasizes education and training, both for staff and the general public. It is the world's first hotel chain to offer an interactive e-learning course on accessibility, featuring advice, tests and instructional videos which demonstrate how to provide high-quality service for guests with disabilities. The initiative won first prize for Best Interactive Training at the 2014 Swedish Learning Awards.

To help staff to better understand guests with disabilities, training sessions ask them to spend two hours in a wheelchair. In this way, they can appreciate challenges from a new perspective, ranging from the ordeal of closing a toilet for persons with disabilities, to getting a cup of coffee from a machine whose countertop is too high.

Initially developed for employees, Scandic's e-learning course on accessibility is now available for the public at large to raise awareness of accessibility's importance.



The hotel chain's experience testifies to accessibility's merits as a business opportunity. Since it began improving access, Scandic has witnessed significant increases in guest numbers. Any investment made to enhance accessibility is paid back, often several fold, within a single year.

Scandic's experience also demonstrates how the prevalent perception of accessibility as a costly investment is inaccurate. Many accessible facilities are, in fact, extremely affordable.

For example, the provision of information via the hotel's website involves no extra costs. Providing guests with such accessible facilities as walking stick holders, which only cost a Euro each, is another example of affordable measures to enhance accessibility.



Photo Credit: *Magnus Berglund and Dixi the Guide Dog*, Scandic Hotels

# VisitEngland:

## Employing Smart Technologies for Accessible Tourism

“For businesses to engage in accessible tourism, there needs to be a compelling business case. We need to demonstrate to businesses and destinations that investing time and a little money in accessibility is an investment worth making.”

**Ross Calladine, Head of Business Support  
VisitEngland, United Kingdom**  
[ross.calladine@visitengland.org](mailto:ross.calladine@visitengland.org)

VisitEngland fosters accessible tourism by promoting the economic case for businesses to improve accessibility, providing tools and guidance to help them to do so and undertaking Access for All projects to develop accessible destinations.

Appreciating the need for a compelling business case for accessibility, VisitEngland carried out a seminal survey in 2013. This revealed that overnight stays in the accessible tourism market are worth GBP 3 billion. Day trips bring this figure up to an impressive GBP 12.4 billion. Between 2009 and 2013, the value of the domestic accessible tourism market increased by 33%. By contrast, over the same period, the growth of the tourism sector overall was limited. It is predicted that figures surrounding accessible tourism will steadily rise in tandem with Europe’s ageing population.

Recognizing the daunting challenge of making tourism accessible, VisitEngland offers easy to understand information for tourism businesses on how to improve accessibility, through its free tools and guidance booklets.

To provide reliable information for travellers with disabilities, VisitEngland has created “Access Statements”, now an industry standard for information on accessible English tourism sites and facilities. Produced in partnership with the UK’s largest charity for the deaf, Action on Hearing Loss, the booklet “Listen Up!” features practical information on deafness and clarifies terminology.

A National Accessible Scheme has been in place since 1993, detailing voluntary standards for accommodation facilities to make their offers more accessible. One of the categories of VisitEngland’s Awards for Excellence recognizes businesses which excel at access for all, providing a range of exemplary good practices.

Since 2012, the “Access for All” project has developed accessible tourism itineraries. Its pilot phase supported four destinations in creating the highest standard of access for visitors. The programme focuses on information, customer service and facilities.



VisitEngland

In the project development stage, audits of around eight tourism venues were conducted in each destination to formulate comprehensive improvement plans. Comprehensive staff training was followed by a “mystery shop” technique, in which persons with disabilities tested the facilities and suggested improvements.

Once VisitEngland was confident about the destinations’ level of accessibility, a nationwide marketing campaign was launched in 2014. This secured high visitor numbers while raising awareness of accessible tourism’s benefits.

Funding from the European Commission will finance a second “Access for All” project in the near future. This will support seven destinations and 56 businesses to develop and market innovative accessible tourism products.

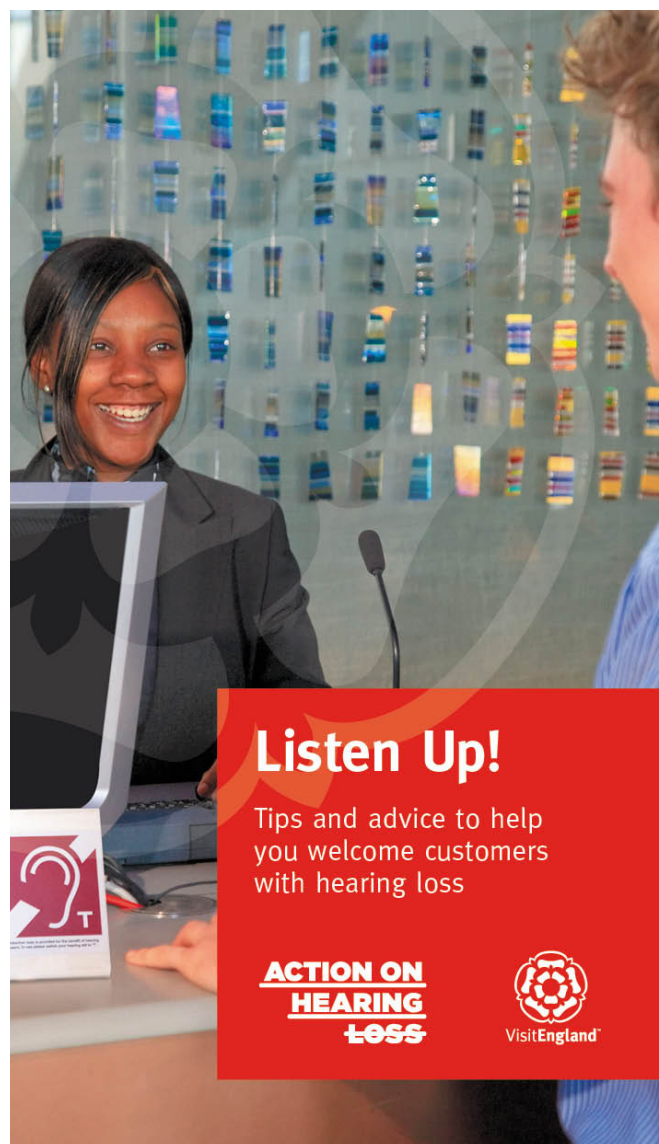


Photo Credit: *Listen Up! Brochure*, VisitEngland

# Village for All: Personalizing Information on Accessible Tourism



“Each person is an expert on their own needs. We need to provide objective, personal information, in order for tourists to choose what facility is accessible for them.”

**Roberto Vitali, President, Village for All, Italy**  
[direzione@V4A.it](mailto:direzione@V4A.it)

The App V4AInside facilitates the collection and processing of data on accessible tourism. By making accurate information available to users, travellers with disabilities can independently choose the destinations, services and facilities which suit their needs. As it affords tourism service providers information on how to implement accessibility, the application helps to improve the quality of destinations’ tourism offer, create commercial opportunities and generate employment for persons with disabilities.

As a first step, V4A® auditors visit tourism destinations, accommodation facilities and service providers to collect detailed, precise data and photographs concerning the physical characteristics of each site, such as slopes or obstacles.

This information is evaluated by qualified V4A® personnel using a special V4AInside algorithm, which analyzes data and suggests a list of improvements. For example, the elimination of architectural barriers or the implementation of communication systems for deaf and blind visitors. These suggestions help enterprises make their facilities and services accessible.

Over 60 entities are currently certified with the V4A® brand, from beaches, to accommodation facilities and transport companies. Some 1,500 tourism resources have been collected by V4AInside on various regional projects, such as Expofacile.it, Puglia For All and EasyVeneto.

The easy-to-use application can be accessed on a tablet or iPad in Italian, English and Portuguese. To provide truly comprehensive possible, its data is integrated with other data collection systems, such as quality certification, star ratings and environmental classification.

Photo Credit: *V4AInside receives the 2nd Runner-Up Award for Innovation at the 2014 UNWTO Ulysses Awards, Village For All*



# San Marino Declaration on Accessible Tourism

The Ministry of Tourism of the Republic of San Marino, the authorities of the member countries of the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), members of the World Committee on Tourism Ethics, representatives of the tourism sector, disabled people's organizations (DPOs) and the related civil society and private sector stakeholders, intergovernmental and international organizations, universities and experts met in San Marino on 19-20 November 2014 on the occasion of the 1st UNWTO Conference on Accessible Tourism in Europe.

**Considering** the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities of 2006 as the global action framework in the sphere of universal accessibility, whose Article 30 recognizes the legitimate right of access to sports, cultural, leisure and tourism activities by persons with disabilities;

**Whereas** the mandate of the UNWTO is “the promotion and development of tourism with a view to contributing to economic development, international understanding, peace, prosperity, and universal respect for, and observance of, human rights and fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language or religion”, as established by the Statutes of the Organization;

**Inspired by** the Global Code of Ethics for Tourism, adopted by the UNWTO General Assembly in 1999, and endorsed by the United Nations General Assembly in 2001, whose Article 7 underlines that “...a direct and personal access to the discovery and enjoyment of the planet's resources constitutes a right equally open to all the world's inhabitants” and explicitly recommends that “tourism for persons with disabilities should be encouraged and facilitated”;

**Referring to** the Recommendations on Accessible Tourism, adopted by the 20th UNWTO General Assembly in 2013, as a reference document for tourism stakeholders for making their infrastructures, products and services accessible to all people, as well as the related Manuals coproduced with civil society organizations – the ONCE Foundation, ENAT, and the ACS Foundation;

**Taking into account** the principles contained within the European Disability Strategy 2010-2020, a comprehensive framework committing the European Commission to the empowerment of people with disabilities;

**Recognizing** the wide scope of the multi-stakeholder recommendations emanating from the Declaration from the World Summit Destinations for All, held in Montreal, Canada, in October 2014;

**Commending** the efforts carried out by public authorities, private sector and the civil society stakeholders in making the heritage city of San Marino ever more accessible for all;

**THOSE PRESENT:**

1. **Convinced** that Tourism for All benefits not only people with disabilities and special needs, but all people, while entailing major economic opportunities for a myriad of sectors far beyond travel and tourism;
2. **Cognizant of** the gradual progress in the sphere of universal accessibility in Europe, but also of the pressing issues bestowed upon people with disabilities in developing countries and emerging economies;
3. **Aware of** the challenges and opportunities of making heritage cities accessible for all without jeopardizing their monumental integrity and their historical relevance;
4. **Mindful of** the importance of smart technologies and their future evolution in facilitating the access and enjoyment of tourism destinations by all;
5. **Committed to** constructive and more results-based partnerships between the policy makers, local authorities, the private sector and disabled people's organizations in making tourism and heritage infrastructure, products and services accessible for all;

**UNANIMOUSLY  
CALL UPON ALL  
STAKEHOLDERS:**

1. To **engage** in awareness-raising and training actions with the aim to **eliminate** attitudinal barriers amongst tourism and heritage professionals at all levels and to **persuade** the private sector of the competitive advantages of investing in Tourism for All;
2. To **ensure** that the right to experience tourism is not hampered by global economic uncertainties and that the spirit of solidarity and international cooperation for improving accessibility is sustained and further promoted;
3. To **observe** the principles of Universal Design when creating new tourism infrastructures, products and services and improving the existing ones, particularly in case of the cultural heritage of tourism interest;
4. To **facilitate** the development and application of smart technologies to provide objective information about all services (regardless of their degree of accessibility), so as to **enable** travellers to evaluate their own personal accessibility requirements, and, if necessary, with the involvement of civil society organizations to **propose** concrete solutions in order to enhance accessibility and the quality of hospitality;
5. To **mainstream** universal accessibility throughout all the components of the tourism value chain, including the physical environment, the transportation system, information and communications channels, and a complete range of public facilities and services;
6. To **promote** and **disseminate** good practices and case studies in the field of universal accessibility in travel and tourism; and
7. To **strengthen** cooperation with all relevant entities working in the field of universal accessibility at international and regional level, in particular the European Union, and to **engage** in public-private partnerships with the travel and tourism industry, non-governmental entities and disabled persons organizations for the development of new global policies in the field of universal accessibility.

**San Marino, 19 November 2014**

# Conference Programme:

1st UNWTO Conference on Accessible Tourism in Europe

San Marino, 19-20 November 2014

## Opening Ceremony

Pasquale Valentini, Minister of Foreign Affairs of San Marino  
Pascal Lamy, Chair of the World Committee on Tourism Ethics  
Francesca Barracciu, Undersecretary of State, Ministry of Culture and Tourism, Italy  
Teodoro Lonfernini, Minister of Tourism of San Marino  
Taleb Rifai, UNWTO Secretary-General

## Special Feature

Mirko Tomassoni, Former Capitano Reggente (Chief of State) of San Marino  
Mahena Abbati, Director, Consorzio San Marino 2000

## Setting the Scene

Simone Fanti, Italian journalist

## Session I: Heritage Cities and Universal Accessibility

*This session demonstrated how urban areas with significant heritage assets, which may pose challenges for travellers with disabilities, can adapt their infrastructures and access to monuments without jeopardizing authenticity or cultural value.*

Moderator: Valentina Rossi, Historian and Cultural Heritage Expert

Lyubomir Durankev, National and International Project Manager, Sozopol Foundation, Bulgaria

Bernadette Lo Bianco, President, Sicilia Turismo per Tutti and Project Manager of Accessible Syracuse and Noto, Italy

Sabine Neusüss, Accessibility Manager, Municipality of Salzburg, Austria

Elena de Mier Torrecilla, Coordinator, Cooperation Agreement between the ACS Foundation/Spanish Agency for International Development and Cooperation (AECID), Spain

## Session II: Accessible Tourism Policies and Strategies

*This session focused on partnerships between governments, the private sector and Disabled People's Organizations in devising common policy frameworks and concrete strategies for accessible tourism.*



Moderator: Alain Pellet, UNWTO Legal Advisor, Former Chairperson of the UN International Law Commission and President of the French Society for International Law

Jean-Marc Mignon, President, International Social Tourism Organization (ISTO)

Antonella Corraera, Policy Officer in charge of Accessible Tourism, DG Enterprise and Industry, European Commission

Paolo Rosso, Veneto Region Commissioner for Tourism, Italy and Representative of the NECSTouR Accessibility Task Force

Teresa Ferreira, Director, Development and Innovation Department, Turismo de Portuga

Annagrazia Laura, President, European Network for Accessible Tourism (ENAT)

**Session III: Smart Destinations: Accessible Infrastructures and Services**

*This session discussed innovative approaches to smart technologies which add value and enhance the competitiveness of Destinations for All on the global tourism market.*

Moderator: Pete Kercher, Ambassador of the EIDD Design for All in Europe

Roberto Torená Cristobal, Manager, Accessible Technologies and Innovation Business Unit, ILUNION Consulting, ONCE Foundation, Spain

Roberto Vitali, President, Village for All (V4A), Italy

Magnus Berglund, Accessibility Ambassador, Scandic Hotels, Sweden

Ross Calladine, Head of Business Support, VisitEngland, United Kingdom

**San Marino Declaration on Accessible Tourism**

Read by Marina Diotallevi, Programme Manager, Ethics and Social Responsibility, UNWTO

# Useful Links

## Featured Organizations (in alphabetical order)

- Accessible Salzburg: <http://www.stadt-salzburg.at>
- ACS Foundation: <http://www.fundacionacs.com>
- Consorzio San Marino 2000: <http://www.sanmarino2000.sm>
- European Commission: [http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/sectors/tourism/accessibility/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/sectors/tourism/accessibility/index_en.htm)
- European Network for Accessible Tourism (ENAT): <http://www.accessibletourism.org>
- NECSTouR: <http://www.necstour.eu>
- ONCE Foundation: <http://www.fundaciononce.es>
- San Marino for All: <http://www.visitsanmarino.com>
- Scandic Hotels: <http://www.scandichotels.com/Always-at-Scandic/Special-needs>
- Sozopol Foundation: <http://sozopol-foundation.com>
- Spanish Agency for International Development and Cooperation (AECID): <http://www.aecid.es>
- Turismo de Portugal: <http://www.turismodeportugal.pt>
- Village For All: <http://www.V4AInside.com>
- VisitEngland: <http://www.visitengland.com/accessforall>

## General Links

- Global Code of Ethics for Tourism: <http://ethics.unwto.org/content/global-code-ethics-tourism>
- UNWTO and Accessible Tourism: <http://ethics.unwto.org/en/content/accessible-tourism>
- San Marino Declaration on Accessible Tourism: <http://ethics.unwto.org/event/first-unwto-conference-accessible-tourism-europe>
- UNWTO Recommendations on Accessible Tourism for All: <http://ethics.unwto.org/en/content/accessible-tourism>
- World Committee on Tourism Ethics: <http://ethics.unwto.org/en/content/world-committee-tourism-ethics>

## Contact

- UNWTO Ethics and Social Responsibility Programme:  
Tel: +34 91 567 81 71/3; E-mail: [ethics@unwto.org](mailto:ethics@unwto.org)
- San Marino Tourism Board:  
Tel: +378 0549 885431; E-mail: [franca.rastelli@pa.sm](mailto:franca.rastelli@pa.sm)

# Glossary

## **Accessible Tourism for All**

A form of tourism that enables people with access requirements, including mobility, vision, hearing and cognitive dimensions of access, to function independently and with equity and dignity. It enables this through the delivery of universally designed tourism products, services and environments, all of which require a collaborative process among stakeholders.

## **Disability**

Disability results from the interaction between persons with impairments and the attitudinal and environmental barriers that hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others. Understanding disability as an interaction means that it is a social construct, not an attribute of a person.

## **Persons with disabilities**

Any person whose full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others in travel, accommodation and other tourism services is hindered by the barriers in the environment they are in, as well as by attitudinal barriers.

## **Tactile paving**

A system of textured ground surface indicators on footpaths, stairs and station platforms to assist individuals who are blind or visually impaired. These provide a distinctive surface pattern, detectable underfoot or with canes, which alert persons of their approach to streets and hazardous precipices.

## **Universal Design**

The design of products, environments, programmes and services to be usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialized design. It promotes a shift towards user-centred design by following a holistic approach and aiming to accommodate the needs of people with disabilities. It is a concept that extends beyond issues of the mere accessibility of buildings for people with disabilities and should become an integrated part of policies and planning in all aspects of society.

*Note: These are not official UNWTO definitions, but are drawn from the UNWTO Recommendations on Accessible Tourism, developed with the support of the ONCE Foundation and the European Network for Accessible Tourism (ENAT), and adopted by the UNWTO General Assembly in 2013.*



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