

Accessible Tourism has been developed in line with a number of legislative acts at different levels of governance and in different policy strands.

From the point of view of the policies, we can consider all acts and laws regarding disability and accessibility in all aspects of life of citizens, and acts and laws regarding the tourism sector. More broadly health policies, social welfare and inclusion, education, industry and market related policies have affected and shaped accessible tourism.

Laws have been developed locally, regionally, nationally, supra-nationally as the case of European Union, and in line with worldwide Resolutions and Conventions adopted by the United Nations. This module presents the worldwide and European main acts and policies.

Shaping the history of the last 15 years, it is essential to name the 2006 “United Nations’ Convention on the Rights of People with disabilities” (UNCRPD) which aims to **“promote, protect and ensure the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by all persons with disabilities, and to promote respect for their inherent dignity”**.

Article 30 requires: “Equal access to participation in cultural life, including leisure, tourism and sport”

The Convention has been ratified by 181 States parties (April 2020) and its optional protocol by 96 States parties and regional integration organisations, including the European Union.

<https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities.html>

The implementation of the Convention in the States has been independently evaluated at times, and in 2020 there have been a number of criticalities that still need to be solved or improved, like:

- Creating a solid legal basis for the organisation in charge of monitoring
- Insufficient funding and staff
- Lack of independence
- Fully involving people with disabilities and giving them a voice.

On Tourism legislation, a number of important steps the European institutions took, need to be highlighted:

- In 2009, the Lisbon treaty, which reformulated the past treaties of the European Union, with article 195 gave the EU the power of coordinating actions and information provision in support of tourism activities, which previously was within the competence of the member states.
- In 2010 and 2011, the European Commission Communication: **Europe, the world's No 1 tourist destination** and the European Parliament report 'Europe, the world's No 1 tourist destination – a new political framework for tourism in Europe' put great importance on developing accessibility throughout the tourism chain.

- In 2012, a **Preparatory Action** on ‘Tourism and Accessibility for All’ was developed, foreseeing a number of studies and projects to be financed.
- In 2014/15, with funding from the EU Preparatory Action, the European Commission initiated 3 **Mapping Studies** of
 - Training/Skills and Requirements of workers in the Supply Chain of Accessible Tourism Services;
 - The Economic Impact and Travel Patterns of Accessible Tourism, and The Supply of Accessible Tourism Services in Europe.

These studies are still the most up to date and comprehensive studies available in Europe.

- In 2013/2015 a number of **Open Calls** were launched by DG GROW for projects fostering accessible itineraries, entrepreneurship, management and skills. 19 projects were funded.

Since 2010 a number of other initiatives have been carried which helped to raise awareness of the importance of accessibility in tourism, like the Access City Awards (DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion), the European Capital of Smart Tourism Awards (DG GROW) and the EU Disability Card pilot application in some countries.

In the last years, it is worth mentioning other European initiatives:

- In 2018 the European Parliament published the outcomes of a funded research on “**Transport and tourism for persons with disabilities and persons with reduced mobility**” which highlighted the challenges in making cross-border, regional and local mobility more accessible for tourists and citizens.
- In 2019 the EU Commission’s proposal for a **European Accessibility Act** was finally adopted by the Council and the European Parliament. The Act provides for the accessibility of websites, ticketing, interactive self-services and terminals, but it does not prescribe or regulate access standards for tourist services or the built environment at EU level. Representatives of people with disabilities claim that the Act is therefore a step backwards from the implementation of the UNCRPD.

At world level, the UN World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) adopted officially in 2013 the “**Recommendations on Accessible Tourism**” developed with the support of ONCE Foundation and the European Network for Accessible Tourism (ENAT), who were then charged in 2016, to design a series of “**Manuals on Accessible Tourism for All: Principles, Tools and Good Practices**”. The UNWTO’s World Tourism Day, 2016, was dedicated to Accessible Tourism.

It is also important to mention the publication of UN in 2015 of the 17 **Sustainable Development Goals**, which will help the world transition to a more sustainable, responsible, green, equitable, prosperous and resilient world. Both Tourism and Disability are factors of dedicated analysis, and new initiatives and platforms are being created to report achievements and to raise awareness.

The process for standardisation of norms about accessibility conditions of the built environment, of the transport, mobility and tourism sector is very long and full of pitfalls, as many national and corporate interests are at stake, but 2 important initiatives can be mentioned here:

- The ongoing process for the **standard ISO DIS 21902** “Tourism and related services – Accessible tourism for all - Requirements and recommendations”.
- The European Standard on Accessibility of the Built Environment **CEN-CENELEC JTC 11 Mandate M/420 prEN_17210**.

It is also important to mention initiatives related to the rights of people with disability to work, and specially in the tourism sector.

At EU level, in 2017 the Council of Europe published the “**European Pillar of Social Rights**” which, at point 17, stated “People with disabilities have the right to income support that ensures living in dignity, services that enable them to participate in the labour market and in society, and a work environment adapted to their needs”.

At world level, the International Labour Organisation (**ILO**), with its Global Business and Disability Network is launching in 2020 a new initiative on “**Decent Work for persons with disabilities in the tourism sector**”.

When writing this handout (April 2020), it is difficult to foresee how the European institutions will tackle the challenges of accessible tourism, as the climatic emergency and the COVID-19 pandemic are re-writing the economic, social and health agenda. What can be said is that the policy programme **EU Green Deal**, in its last version of January 2020 only showed the intention to invest in sustainable transport, without mentioning the words “accessibility” and “disability” throughout the entire document.

Lobbying to shape the new European framework programme for 2021 – 2027 is crucial. In this matter, the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) is working for the inclusion of more funds and the inclusion of disability challenges in the new “**Disability Strategy 2021-2030**” when the Commission has not started yet to review the old strategy 2010-2020.

On the Tourism side, the **Tourism Manifesto** (the biggest European lobby on tourism, comprising more than 50 international organizations of stakeholders) has recently succeeded in including a budget line on “sustainable tourism” on the new draft of the framework programme, and in January 2020 has written to the new President of the European Commission Ursula von Der Leyen, to give the place Tourism deserves, as one of the pillars of the European economy.