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# TRAINERS' LEARNING KIT ON ACCESSIBLE TOURISM Handouts of Learning Modules/Units

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**Games Without Barriers**

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Games Without Barriers  
Game-based learning in initial VET for Accessible Tourism

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<b>Author(s)</b>	Emiliano Deferrari, Ivor Ambrose, Annagrazia Laura, Katerina Papamichail, Maria Stella Minuti, Stefania Berardi, Oderisi Nello Fiorucci
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<b>Recipients List</b>		
<b>Name</b>	<b>Partner number</b>	<b>Organisation</b>
Maria Stella Minuti	1	Incipit (coordinator) - Italy
Ivor Ambrose	2	ENAT - Belgium
Matteo Ragnacci	3	Consorzio ITACA - Italy
Bianca Maria Tagliaferri	4	IPSSEOASC Assisi
Jose Ignacio Gorostiaga Canals	5	Escola Superior d'Hostaleria de Barcelona
Bogdana Vasile	6	Colegiul Economic "Gheorghe Dragos"
Monica Grazia Boni	7	Wattajob - Italy
-	-	[ERASMUS+ National Agency]

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## Introduction

The present document is part of the “Trainers’ Learning Kit on Accessible Tourism” and contains the handouts delivered, as learning supporting material, during the face-to-face sessions of the Blended Learning activity (Opening joint staff training event) addressed to teachers of the tourism VET schools partner in the project.

The 16 handouts refer to the 16 Learning Units contained in the four Learning Modules in which the training path is articulated. They will help teachers to go deeply into details of the main topics of accessible tourism and to acquire all the necessary skills to design Training Modules on Accessible Tourism targeted to their students (IO2) and test them during the short-term exchanges of groups of pupils.

The Handouts are also available for consultation and download in the “Training” section of the project website:

<https://www.gameswithoutbarriers.eu/training/>



## **LEARNING MODULE N° 1 - "Accessible Tourism/Tourism for All, its history and the business case"**

### **Learning Unit N°1 – "Tourism Trends and Megatrends"**

Tourism is one of the largest and fastest growing economic sectors in the world. According to the World Tourism Organization, 1.46 billion people travelled to a foreign country in 2019 and their number is expected to reach 1.8 billion in 2030. Tourism accounts for 10% of the world GDP and generates one job out of 10: it is, therefore, a key driver of socio-economic development, creating wellbeing for communities.

From the point of view of those who practice it, tourism offers unique opportunities to escape from everyday life, socialize and discover new worlds and new cultures. Tourism is by now considered a primary need, but not all people can enjoy it in the same way and some are excluded. Among those whose demand for tourism is still largely unsatisfied there are people with specific access requirements who represent a very wide category: it includes people with disabilities – having physical, sensory or mental impairments -, older people, people with temporary impairments, families with babies, people with allergies or special dietary needs, and so on.

Tourism destinations, products and services still present many barriers that prevent their enjoyment by people with specific access requirements: not only physical and communication barriers, but also cultural barriers and barriers represented by the lack of detailed and reliable information about the accessibility conditions of the tourism premises.

**Accessible tourism for all** refers to policies and practices that aim to remove these barriers, guaranteeing people with specific access requirements the possibility to enjoy their holidays and their leisure time without obstacles and difficulties. It's about enhancing tourism products, services and environments in such a way that they can all be equally and easily used to grant people with specific access requirements and their families a higher degree of autonomy in enjoying their tourism experience.

Those destinations that create environments, products and services suitable for people with specific access requirements will experience positive effects in terms of increase in tourism flows, higher economic returns and enhanced competitiveness.

People with specific access requirements represent, in fact, a big and growing potential market that, if appropriate and comfortable conditions to travel are provided, can generate increase in the tourism demand of tourism destinations and in their market share.

According to the World Health Organization, there are approximately 1 billion persons with disabilities in the world. This equates to approximately 15% of the world population having a physical, sensory or mental disability.

Moreover, since older people very often have similar difficulties in carrying out daily activities, they are usually included among those who express specific access requirements, thus greatly increasing the overall number of persons who can benefit from accessible tourism services.

Older people represent a significant potential source of tourism business, if we consider that a rapid ageing of the population is under way. In 2019, there were 703 million people aged 65 or over in the world, comprising 9% of the global population. Their number is projected to increase more than 127 percent in 30 years: by 2050, there will be 1.6 billion people aged 65 or over worldwide, representing 16.7 percent of the total world population.

Due to the ageing population, the number of people with specific access needs with the capacity to travel is increasing, boosting the demand for an accessible environment, transport and services and, potentially, bringing benefits to the tourism sector. Much of the senior population, in fact, has significant disposable income and the desire to travel and their expenditure tends to be higher than that of tourists in general. Because older people are no longer active in the workforce, they have the possibility of travelling throughout the year, which helps to reduce the seasonality of demand experienced by many destinations.

Besides the **demographic changes**, there are other megatrends, which influence tourism dynamics and have an impact on tourism in general and on accessible tourism for all in particular. These megatrends capture the most significant and globally relevant long-term changes in the social, economic, political, environmental and technological fields. These are slow changes, which have a profound and lasting influence on human activities, processes and perceptions.

Among megatrends considered most significant for tourism, the OECD (OECD, *Tourism Trends and Policies*, 2018) has focused attention on the following key categories, which could have a significant influence also on accessible tourism for all: development of **new emerging markets**, **sustainable tourism growth**, **travel mobility** and **technological innovation**.

The development of **new emerging markets**, such as China and India, will lead to an increase in global tourism demand and will require "new" products, able to take into account the specific preferences, tastes and requirements of these markets, by breaking down the cultural barriers that may exist towards customers with different uses and habits.

The development of **sustainable tourism** is another megatrend that increasingly characterizes the sector on a global level. The growing awareness of the positive and negative impacts of tourism on the environment implies that destinations need to adopt sustainable management models based on the three characteristic pillars of *environmental*, *economic* and *socio-cultural* sustainability.

Accessible Tourism contributes to environmental sustainability through the application of Universal Design principles, which minimises the need for subsequent adaptations and re-design, thus contributing to economic sustainability.

Accessible Tourism contributes especially to the social dimension of sustainable development, as it aims at creating an environment where all people feel welcome and included, whether they are visitors or local citizens. It leads people working in the tourism industry to have a greater sensitivity toward the quality of the tourism experience and lays the groundwork for the creation of more liveable and welcoming destinations.

In addition, new forms of sustainable tourism, such as *slow tourism and experiential tourism*, are becoming more and more widespread and are well aligned with the practice of accessible tourism for all.

*Slow tourism*, that is slow way of travelling and discovering the territory, searching for authenticity and relationships with local communities, fits well with accessible tourism, which requires, in general, a slower and gentler pace for the enjoyment of the territory.

The development of *experiential tourism* in recent years is a particularly interesting aspect also with a view to promoting accessible tourism, in the sense that experiences can be adapted to suit the requirements of certain groups of tourists, for example, tactile experiences and sensory pathways, etc. for those with vision impairments.

The multiple motivations underlying experiential tourism lead to the need to consider the market not as undifferentiated, but divided into "niches" of demand characterized by specific motivations, interests and needs, which require tailor-made tourism products for customers. Following this logic, product development can go so far as to configure a "one to one" type of relationship with the tourist, where the product can take into account the specific and personalized needs of the customer, including those related to accessibility.

**Travel mobility** is becoming more and more an element of quality and sustainability of the tourism experience with the consequent request for:

- efficient, articulated and smart inter-modality systems;
- environmentally sustainable forms of mobility with the emergence of electric transport and sharing systems for individual means of transport;
- development of digital platforms and systems providing information including those about accessibility, making it easier and simpler for travellers with specific access requirements to plan their trip.

**Technological innovation** is reshaping the way people work, communicate, choose and buy travel in the tourism sector, increasing the capacity of the offer systems and sales channels to customize products and purchasing processes and to make quality control systems more effective.

Main drivers of change which also have an impact on accessible tourism are:

- *new digital business models for enterprises and destinations* with the development of specialized peer to peer platforms for new marketplaces highly defined in the characteristics of customer profile;
- *automation of company and intercompany production processes*. The process of digital transformation of online sales opens up new opportunities for SMEs to easily reach target markets and interact directly with customers, customizing their offer to their specific



requirements. The trend is towards greater integration, in the product design and sale phase, between accommodation services and on-site producers of experiences;

- *big data and open data to elevate business intelligence capability.* Possibility for destinations and tourism companies to effectively profile the desired demand targets by understanding their needs, desires and purchasing processes;
- *artificial intelligence.* Improvement of customer care by automating operations previously performed manually: e.g. robots and chatbots based on language recognition technology that can improve communication with guests and provide continuous, personalized assistance;
- *social media, review, web reputation as communication tools between tourists, destinations and businesses.* Tourists become testimonials who share their own judgements on tourism attractions and services determining the web reputation of destinations and companies and providing in-depth analysis/information useful for those who have specific needs;
- *virtual and augmented reality.* The new frontiers in the construction of contents for communication and the development of attraction factors ensured by the application of these technologies appear to be infinite. VR and AR offer the potential to create substitute experiences that may be particularly beneficial for people with access needs.

## **Learning Unit N°2 - "Accessible Tourism History and Business Case"**

In recent decades, the tendency to consider the problems of people with disabilities from a rights-based perspective has matured and has become widely established at international level.

Attention to disability issues in public policy-making began to grow significantly in the 1980s.

In 1981 "The International Year of Disabled People" was proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly aimed at increasing awareness of the needs, abilities and aspirations of disabled people and their participation, equality and integration.

In 1983 the UN decided to proclaim worldwide the "Decade of the Disabled" (1983-1992).

Initiatives at international level have been followed by initiatives at EU level the most important of which were:

In 1994, a White Paper entitled 'Action for the future' addressed social integration and independence of disabled people, and the 'European guide of good practice: towards equal opportunities for disabled people' was released in December 1996.

In 1996, the European Commission published a communication entitled 'Equality of Opportunity for People with Disabilities - A New Community Disability Strategy 1996'. It is based, above all, on the UN's 'Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities of 1993', which emphasise the removal of environmental barriers over individuals' functional limitations, with a view to equal participation of disabled people in society.

In November 2000, the European Council adopted a directive, which created a general framework to promote equal treatment of persons with disabilities in employment and work. It recognised that the failure to provide 'reasonable accommodation' in the workplace could constitute discrimination.

An EU action programme to combat discrimination against persons with disabilities (2001-2006) was adopted to stimulate the introduction of specific measures to tackle discrimination and was designed to complement the work of the EU and its Member States, particularly their legislative work.

The year 2003 was named 'European Year of People with Disabilities' to highlight and raise public awareness of the situation faced by disabled people. To this end, the EU launched an action plan entitled Equal opportunities for people with disabilities: a European Action Plan (2004-2010). It sought to ensure that disability issues were incorporated into all EU policies that may affect the lives of people with disabilities.

Along with the attention to the rights of people with disabilities, attention has developed over the years with regard to the usability of tourism services by people with disabilities or more generally by people with specific access requirements.

In 1989 a group of British experts, including the English Tourist Board and Holiday Care Service (Europe's first national information and advice service for tourism for people with disabilities), published a report entitled "Tourism For All" at the end of a Congress organised in the UK. This Report contained

63 recommendations for the tourism industry, which urged operators to take into account the needs of all visitors, and in particular disadvantaged groups of people, when drawing up their programmes, so that they could be integrated into tourism policies.

Subsequently, the approach taken by the United Kingdom was followed by various European and American organisations working in the same field. In this way the term "Tourism for All" soon took on an international declination: "Tourisme pour Tous", "Tourismus für Alle", "Turismo per Tutti" and "Turismo para Todos" and identified, in each country, all the organisations and bodies involved in promoting the development of accessible tourism, as autonomously as possible, also to people with disabilities.

The two conferences organised in London on this subject in 1989 and 1993 were considered to be the most influential initiatives of the time. The second conference, "Tourism 2000" in October 1993, was the occasion to present the first European study "Profiting from opportunities" carried out by Touche Ross on the potential economic impact of people with disabilities on the tourism market. Its results showed that there were 30 million disabled people interested in travelling but for various reasons they were still excluded from the official tourism circuits.

These historical data have been confirmed by more recent studies, both at European and international level, despite the objective difficulty of evaluating the market on the basis of statistical data, due to the lack of a standardised system of classifications used to define people expressing specific needs. Among these, the study "Economic Impact and travel patterns of accessible tourism in Europe" commissioned in 2014 by the European Commission provides a coherent picture of the current and future potential demand of accessible tourism in Europe and estimates its economic impact.

According to this study, in 2011 there were 138.6 million people with access needs in the EU, of which 35.9% were people with disabilities aged 15-64, and 64.1% were the older population aged 65 or above. In 2012, people with access needs in the EU took approximately 783 million trips, thus generating a total gross value added contribution of about €356 billion and a total employment of about 8.7 million persons.

Driven by the ageing population, which in Europe is much higher than elsewhere, the demand is anticipated to grow by 10% to about 862 million trips per year by 2020, equivalent to an average growth rate of 1.2% annually. However, the overall potential is far greater: if it would be possible to increase the accessibility of tourism-related facilities significantly, then up to 1.231 million trips per year could be realized, equivalent to a growth of 43.6%. If accessibility is significantly improved, the total economic contribution generated by the EU tourists with specific access needs is expected to increase against the current contribution by roughly 36%. Moreover, like most of the people, persons with disabilities or long-term health conditions rarely travel alone; on the contrary, they usually prefer or need to travel with relatives or friends. According to the previous EU study, on average, these visitors travel with about 1.9 companions, on average. Therefore the economic contribution of Accessible Tourism will be multiplied by a similar factor if the travel companion effect is taken into account.

From the above it is evident that making tourism services accessible can have an important, positive impact on the tourism sector.

But what is the situation of the supply of accessible tourism services? According to another study commissioned by the European Commission in 2015 – “Mapping and Performance Check of the Supply of Accessible Tourism Services” - it is estimated that only 9.2% of the existing supply of tourism facilities and services have at least some level of provision for travellers with disabilities or other specific access requirements. This means that over 3 million tourism businesses are not prepared to adequately cater to the accessibility market, with an estimated gap of 27.8% between the current offer and the demand for accessible tourist services.

Three key barriers prevent businesses from becoming increasingly accessible: infrastructure and physical barriers, financial barriers including the lack of a strong business case and knowledge and information barriers. Many public and private enterprises don't know the needs of customers with specific access requirements or often misinterpret them. They also underestimate the value of investments in breaking down architectural barriers and often exaggerate such costs. Accessibility is very often seen as a "problem" related to compliance with legal requirements rather than a "business opportunity".

Instead, accessible tourism represents a great opportunity. If supply meets the demand of tourists with specific access requirements, the tourism industry benefits from many advantages: increase in tourist flows and expenditure, reduction of seasonality, average longer stays, competitive advantage, better overall image and quality of its services since accessible services are better services for all customers.

But it is important to remember that in order for these benefits to fully achieve their potential, attention to accessibility issues should cover the whole chain of tourism services, that comprises all the services a tourist uses before, during and after his/her trip, from the planning stage up until the return back home.

This means involving a large number of actors in the tourism industry: not only the accommodation facilities, but also restaurants, transport, museums, monuments, sport facilities, events, information and welcoming services, guide and accompanying services and so on.

It's necessary to understand that each element of the tourism chain influences and depends on the others: if one of the elements is weak, in terms of quality and visitor satisfaction, the holiday can be strongly compromised as a whole.

A hotel without access barriers, but located in a site where the recreational and cultural facilities are not accessible to people with specific access requirements, would be less attractive to these visitors. The same would apply to an accessible museum or monument that can't be reached by suitable means of transport or hasn't adequate hospitality facilities nearby to accommodate customers with specific access requirements.

Destinations should therefore create a comprehensive supply of Tourism for All products and services in which all the elements of the supply chain (reservation systems, accommodation, transport, etc.) are easily accessed.

## Learning Unit N°3 - “Design for All, Universal Design”

Design for All and Universal design aim to remove barriers and ensure access for all through the design of the built environment, products and services.

**Design for All** means designing, developing and marketing **mainstream products, services, systems and environments** to be accessible and usable by as broad a range of users as possible.

**Universal design (UD)** is the design of products and environments to be usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialized design. The intent of the universal design concept is to simplify life for everyone. The universal design concept targets all people of all ages, sizes and abilities.

The 7 Principles of Universal Design:

- Equitable Use
- Flexibility in Use
- Simple and intuitive use
- Perceptible Information
- Tolerance for Error
- Low Physical Effort
- Size and Space for Approach and Use

The Goals of Universal Design

- Body fit
- Comfort
- Awareness
- Understanding
- Wellness
- Social integration
- Personalisation
- Cultural Appropriateness

Universal Design in Tourism for the whole supply chain supports Sustainability, Quality, Comfort, Safety, Inclusion, Equality, Independence and Growth.

The consequences of **not** following UD principles include Lower quality, Exclusion, Reduced return on investment, not sustainable environments and services, hindered growth.

Customer Engagement is a key in Tourism Services. Two important references are:

- The Universal Design for Customer Engagement Toolkit, by the Centre of Excellence in UD-Ireland, provides comprehensive best practice guidance on achieving better customer communication.
- Irish Standard (I.S.) 373:2013 'Universal Design for customer engagement in tourism services' which was published by NSAI, the National standards Authority of Ireland.

Education and training are the most important tools to achieve the goal of Universally designed products, services and environments.

- There is a big gap in design education. Architects, planners and designers of products and services are not taught about Universal Design and the importance of accessibility, therefore there is no common understanding of human needs - "functional requirements"
- Legislation and standards are not enough and cannot be well understood or applied without the adequate educational background.

## Learning Unit N°4 - “Accessible Tourism in the Legislative and Policy Framework”

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.

## LEARNING MODULE N° 2 - “The Access Requirements of Tourists and Customer Care”

### Learning Unit N°5 - “International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health”

This Learning Unit presents the principles under which the entire conception of disability and accessibility has changed in the last twenty years, thanks to an important publication of the UN World Health organization in 2001, the “International Classification of Functioning and Disability (ICF).

The ICF model provides an international, standardized and unified language to talk about disability and it has become a reference model for the description of health, disability and environmental factors.

ICF changes the paradigm of disability, which is from 2001 on the result of a correlation between persons' health, their characteristics and the environment.

ICF provides tools to « action » for policy makers in different fields (social policies, transport, and also tourism).

The main concept can be summarized quoting directly the document when it says « Disability is characterized as the outcome or result of a complex relationship between an individual's health condition and personal factors, and of the external factors that represent the circumstances in which the individual lives ».

The ICF is the result of a long revision process on a previous document, the ICIDH (International Classification of Impairments, Disabilities and Handicaps, 1980) of which it represents an evolution and complement.

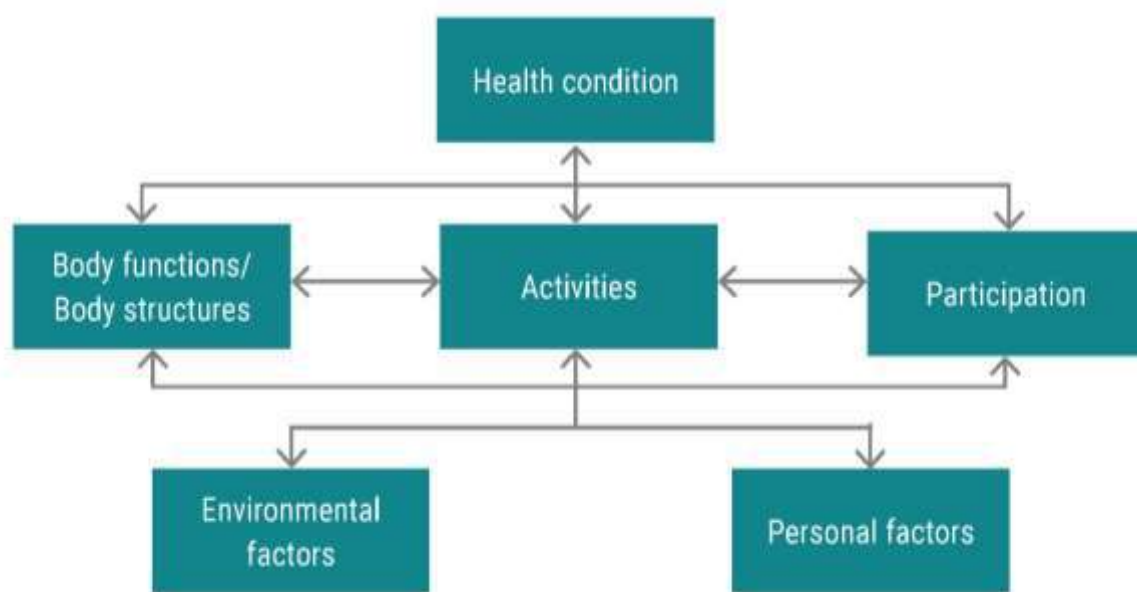
For ICIDH, **impairments** were considered as a loss or abnormality of a psychological, anatomical, physiological structure or function. **Disability** was any limitation or loss (resulting from impairment) of the ability to perform an activity in the manner or extent considered normal for a human being. The term **Handicap** was used and it meant the condition of disadvantage resulting from an impairment or a disability which in a certain subject limits or prevents the fulfilment of the normal role for that subject in relation to age, gender and socio-cultural factors.

This model was called the “**medical model of disability**” as it viewed disability as a feature of the person, directly caused by disease, trauma, or other health condition which required medical care provided in the form of individual treatment by professionals.

This way impairments were seen as the cause of Disabilities which then produced Handicaps.

The medical model was opposed by the “**social model of disabilities**” which sees disability as totally a socially created problem and not at all an attribute of the individual. On the social model, disability demands a political response: « Society disables impairments ».

The **biopsychological model** developed with ICF provides a coherent view of the different perspectives of health: biological, individual and social. It moves the concept of disability away from solely being a consequence of diseases to a recognition of the interaction of health and functioning and environmental and personal factors.



For the ICF model, which is shown schematically above, a health condition is an umbrella term for disease, disorder, injury or trauma. Health conditions are coded using a standard called ICD-10, developed in parallel with ICF.

**Impairments** are problems in body functions or structure as significant deviation or loss.

**Activity limitations** are difficulties an individual may have in executing activities.

**Participation restrictions** are problems an individual may experience in involvement in life situations.

**Environmental factors** make up the physical, social and attitudinal environment in which people live and conduct their life. Environments may facilitate functioning or be a barrier to functioning.

**Personal factors** are the particular background of a particular life and living and comprise features of the individual that are not part of a health condition or health state.

The biopsychosocial model of ICF is different from previous models as it focuses on human functioning and not merely disability. It is a universal model and not a minoritarian one. It is an integrated model and not only medical or social. It is an interactive model, and not progressive or linear.

In fact, there is an equality of factors causing a disability and not an etiological causality. ICF model includes the context in which the persons live, it is not centred on the persons impairments. It is applicable in different cultures, as it is not tied to western concepts. The method is operational and

not guided by theory alone. Finally, it covers the entire life of people, and not only adulthood.

The new model and terminology set by the ICF is therefore a Copernican turn, as its focus can be summarized as follows:

- What is important is “Human functioning” (not only disability)
- The focus is on body functions instead of impairments
- The model is centred on bodily activities instead of limitation of activities
- The model focuses on the participation of people in society rather than on his/her handicaps which prevent participation.

The environmental context has a fundamental role in facilitating or, vice versa, hindering participation in the social, economic and working life of each individual.

Accessibility to places, spaces and equipment therefore represents the means by which to allow and guarantee everyone participation in life activities in an active and autonomous way.

## **Learning Unit N°6 – “The main access requirements of people with different types of disabilities and other groups of tourists”**

Abilities of people change from childhood to old age and can vary considerably whatever their age. People can experience restrictions to their activities because of a mix of possible impairments, health conditions and personal and environmental factors. Combination of impairments can impose significant limitations, as is often the case in ageing. Children can also have specific access requirements or impairments. Accessibility to places, spaces and equipment therefore represents the means by which to allow and guarantee everyone participation in life activities in an active and autonomous way. People with disabilities may have one or more of the impairments that follow in the next paragraphs.

### **Motor impairments**

Motor impairment is the partial or total loss of physical abilities including balance, walking, holding and manipulating objects, pushing, pulling, lifting and reaching. Many activities involve more than one of these abilities.

Access needs of visitors with motor impairments are related mostly to the **built environment** which should be designed free of barriers and according to Universal Design principles in order to enable all users to move in safety and comfort, to use the facilities and participate in activities.

**People with difficulties/limitations in walking, balance and limited strength.** This group is quite differentiated by the type of their impairment. For some people, walking on the level or up or down gradients/stairs is difficult. Some people may have a limited range of motion, other may not be able to move on foot independently. People with poor balance, with reduced stamina and/or coordination are typically older people but also children may be in the same condition. People with walking difficulties may not be able to walk a long way or even stand up for long time, becoming tired quickly, moving slowly etc. They may be more likely to slip or fall down. They may need handrails on both sides of a ramp or staircase for support. They may have difficulties in walking on uneven or loose surfaces. They may need non-slip floor surfaces. They may need to rent or borrow walking aids, wheelchairs or scooters available in specific venues. They may need another person to support them to walk.

**People with difficulties in handling objects.** Motor difficulties/impairments are not only related to legs but also to arms, hands and fingers movements. These impairments can prevent people from manipulating or grasping objects and from doing combined movements or turn the wrist, lift objects etc. These people may also have difficulty in holding objects, carrying bags and other items or turning handles to open doors, using taps etc.

**People with a limited reach range.** The reach range depends on the height of the person, their ability to use their arms and balance, their strength and/or mobility of their upper body while seated. It is particularly important to have things within easy reach for those with more severe mobility limitations.

For people using a wheelchair, the reach range is limited depending on the seated position.

## **Sensory impairments**

This refers to impairments in one or more senses – vision, hearing, touch, taste and smell. They reduce a person's ability to perceive, understand and act in various situations. People who lose one of the senses later in life may find their activities severely restricted, whilst those who have been blind or deaf since birth may have learned skills that help them to communicate, orientate themselves and carry out their daily activities in an independent manner and find their way.

People with sensory impairments often cannot travel independently and many have another person - a companion, helper or assistant to help them, especially when travelling and when coming to unfamiliar surroundings for the first time.

People with sensory impairments may use specialised assistive technologies to help them communicate with other people, read or interpret visual or auditory messages, orientate themselves and move around.

**Vision impairments.** People with vision impairments may be blind or partially sighted. They can be **exposed to dangers**, including injuring themselves by walking off paths, tripping on steps, bumping into unmarked objects or hurting themselves on hot surfaces or sharp objects and edges. If the problem of vision is combined with balance problems the individual is exposed to higher risks, including colliding with objects, slipping and falling. Visitors with vision impairment (not only blind persons) may use a cane to detect obstacles on a route. Some may use a guide dog (service animal) to assist them in way-finding, negotiating road crossings and warning them of dangers. Their access needs will vary according to the person's level of sight and will be related mainly to the access to information, safety of movement and orientation in an unknown environment.

**Hearing impairments.** They are invisible at a first glance. They include partial hearing loss or complete deafness. The strength, pitch and intensity of sound that can be perceived vary from person to person. Access needs of people with hearing impairments are related particularly to the communication and access to information. People who are born with a hearing impairment or deafness communicate mostly using sign language. Sign languages vary from country to country, so this is important to know for interpretation purposes. People born with a hearing impairment may have difficulty in writing and speaking because of the difficulty they have experienced in acquiring language.

**Speech impairments.** Those impairments are related to the lack of ability to speak or dysarthria. This may imply difficulties when holding a conversation with others. People may be misunderstood, and this may lead to the danger of not being able to alert service personnel or another individual when needing help or when there is a danger. Some people use sign language to speak or assistive devices to enhance or supplement their speech, either with a keyboard or another communication device. Pictograms may also serve as a medium of communication for those who lack speech. Having paper and

pencil handy can help to overcome communication problems, in many situations.

**Reduced sense of touch.** Those people may have nerve damage, paralysis or missing limbs. They have problems in sensing any kind of objects that they have to interact with. Some may not be able to feel anything with the **lower part of their body and legs**, others may also have a loss of feeling in the **hands and arms** and upper body. Lack of feeling can affect the ability to use a touch screen or other devices that need to be perceived partly by touch. Guests who lack the sense of touch or feeling may be at **risk of injury** from objects that are very sharp, very hot or very cold, as they do not react to them on contact.

**Reduced smell and taste.** Those people experience similar problems linked to their lack of sensory perception. The main dangers they can face are in failing to react to toxic chemicals, other dangerous airborne pollutants or smoke from a fire.

### **Cognitive impairments, learning difficulties and Mental ill-health conditions**

Under this very wide category we have people with problems in understanding, processing or using information, people on the autism spectrum, people with Asperger Syndrome, people with dementia, people with short-term memory loss, people with dyslexia, people who are first time users of a very complex, busy environment. Generally speaking, people with these impairments have difficulty to learn and understand as most people do, to access information at the same speed or in the same way as others, difficulty to follow instructions, to understand where someone is, to identify people or to behave in an appropriate manner in a given setting. They face dangers of disorientation, of getting lost, and they may feel isolated. Memory loss is a form of cognitive impairment. It can cause problems of acting inappropriately in a given situation. People with cognitive problems may need assistance and simplified, well-structured information to enable them to be safe and to enjoy a visit. It is better to use signs, symbols and pictograms than rely on printed word. 'Easy-to-Read' is a form of writing that has been developed to inform people with learning difficulties in a simpler way. People who do not understand the local language may benefit from the above.

### **Other people with specific access requirements**

It is also important to pay attention to other groups of people who may have specific access requirements but are not included entirely under the above categories.

- Older people
- Small children
- People of very large or small stature
- People who don't understand the local language

People with long term health conditions: (epilepsy, cardio-vascular conditions, allergies and hypersensitivities, food intolerance and special diets, asthma , etc.)

## **Learning Unit N°7 – “The design of an accessible built environment for all users”**

Accessibility in the built environment is an essential and fundamental right for all members of society. Providing accessible places and spaces empowers people to enjoy the everyday activities and opportunities taking and enables them to participate safely, independently, conveniently, with confidence and with dignity.

The benefits of an accessible built environment are:

- Consideration of the diverse capabilities of human beings
- Safety and convenience for everyone
- Improvement of the quality of life
- Supports the independence of users

The accessible built environment includes:

- Private and and public buildings
- Movement to /inside/from - including emergency access and evacuation
- Public spaces and routes
- Parking
- Transport terminals - stations, ports, airports, etc.
- Buildings and environments for recreation and leisure; cultural, educational and sports facilities
- Building products and services (covered by the EU Construction Products Directive)
- Any technology products and services used in buildings, e.g. lifts, escalators, moving walkways

**New design projects**, buildings and environments can be accessible for all users, from the beginning by following building regulations and standards/guidelines for accessibility

**Existing buildings and environments** often require adaptations to make them accessible because they were designed at a time when access for all was not considered as a priority

By applying a Universal Design approach the design of the built environment will be accessible and suitable for the widest range of users, including people of different stature, people with temporary impairments or injuries, people with disabilities, people with long term illnesses, people with allergies, families with small children, old people and others.

### **Do we have an accessible built environment? What is the problem?**

Although there are many rules, regulations and standards on accessibility in EU states, the actual accessibility of buildings and the built environment is not yet satisfactory.

There are many examples in the current built environment where completed buildings or spaces do not offer an appropriate level of accessibility, even in newly built facilities.





## Main Existing standards and Guidelines

- National Standards and Guidelines
- ISO 21542 Building construction- Accessibility and usability of the built environment (under revision)
- ISO TC/228 Tourism and related services (under development)
- EU M420/CEN-EN 17210-Accessibility and Usability of the built environment- Functional requirements (under development)

Just following legislation and standards is not always enough because they may consider only minimum requirements and most professionals do not have specific knowledge and training to understand and apply standards appropriately in their designs.

Lack of accessibility is expensive to fix, wasteful of public funding and – fundamentally – it denies many EU citizens their rights to free movement and access to buildings and services.

The module presents some of the common access barriers faced by users, followed by examples of good practice in newly built and adaptations of existing environments and buildings.



## **Learning Unit N°8 – “Communication with people with disabilities and other access requirements; accessible tourism etiquette”**

Many people employed in the front line services of their company are often worried about the possibility to interact with customers with disabilities or specific access requirements.

They feel they may make mistakes, be misunderstood, seem unpolite and rude, in a word be inadequate for a quality communication with their customers.

Training is essential to enable them to deal with the problem: if they have been properly trained on the potential requirements of their disabled guests and know how to handle any request, the contact will be smooth and appreciated and they will be confident to communicate.

It is also very important to know how the tourist service components are linked together in the so-called “chain of tourist services” which highlights the complementary relationships that exist between them. In order to attract tourists is necessary to provide a range of products, distinctly receptive (catering and accommodation) entertainment, recreation, sports, culture, transport and able to satisfy the different demands of the customers.

It's necessary to understand that each element of the chain influences and depends on the others: if one of the elements is weak, from the quality and the fruition point of view, the holiday can be strongly compromised as a whole.

Who are the Customers?

Tourists with specific access needs and older people do not form a homogeneous group. They may have different requirements and needs, in strict relation with the kind of holiday they are planning. Above all, they are and want to be considered as TOURISTS, who are selecting the destination of their vacations as anybody else. They do not represent a closed cluster, their travel motivations and buying habits do not significantly differ from other travellers. However, some special requirements have to be taken into account in order to guarantee the possibility to fully enjoy their vacation and leisure time.

The specific requirements of each individual have to be perfectly clear in order to offer a quality service.

It is necessary to relate and communicate with the guests with an open mind, free from the myths and prejudices about people with disabilities which very frequently create behaviour barriers.

Consider three major statements on **Disability**:

1. Is not a disease
2. Does not mean not being autonomous
3. Does not make people different inside.

and then follow the main principles of a good welcoming:

1. Respect the dignity of the person always
2. Consider the person and not the disability
3. Speak directly to the customer and NOT to any assistant or accompanying person
4. Do not assume you know how to behave: ask the customer and follow his/her instructions
5. Do not help at any cost: ask first and wait until your offer is accepted.

A minimum of flexibility accompanied by clarity and courtesy should be the key to the good management of many complex situations that can occur with a person with specific needs:

- a) Some customers may need extra time to do or say some things. If you can't understand what has been said ask again.
- b) Written information might be provided in different formats, (electronic text, large print, braille or audio).
- c) Verbal description of the layout of an area including any obstacles like stairs or furniture, if the customer has a visual impairment
- d) Consider Assistance animals as a essential support to any customer accompanied by them. They are allowed in all public spaces and on public transport and this right is protected by law. Do not disturb them as they are well trained and working animals
- e) Try and make sure wheelchair users and people of short stature can reach counters. If that's not possible, find a sitting area to talk to the customer so to keep eye contact.
- f) Choose the right position to talk to a customer with a hearing impairment, without shouting or exaggerate gestures. Critical situations are often connected to a poorly flexible attitude, to the absence of aids and facilitators (acoustical and luminous signals, simple and evident graphic signage)
- g) Do not consider Sign Language as usable in any situation as it is a national language; for an efficient communication both the customer and the service provider have to know and use the SAME one.

### Disability etiquette

When addressing a customer with disabilities, it is necessary to use an appropriate language and terminology, avoiding expressions and words that could be particularly irritating, if not offensive.

For example, terms like "handicapped" or "invalid", "crippled", "bound to" should be avoided. Use instead terms like "person with disability" or with "specific needs" or with "particular requirements", or "person with reduced mobility".

During the conversation you shouldn't feel uncomfortable to use expressions like "see you later", if the guest is blind, it is most likely that he/she uses the same expression. In conversation it is necessary to focus the attention **on the person and not on his aspect**. The use of simple language is always desirable, for example avoiding acronyms, abbreviations, codes, expressions in dialect.

### In general

- Availability and politeness are always appreciated;



- Have a natural attitude, if you feel embarrassed remember that it is normal there is no reason to worry about this. In relations with disabled customers there are no special requirements: just professionalism and quality in response to the various needs;
- When you talk avoid the use of codes at least in direct contact: for example in the case of airline staff do not speak about chair type WCHC (Wheel Chair Cabin) but about a Passenger in a type C wheelchair;
- When it is not possible to satisfy the demands of the customer with specific access requirements explain the reasons without any embarrassment;
- Don't treat adults as children;

Make it possible for persons with visual impairments to explore the environment and objects by touch.



## Learning Unit N°9 - “Customer Care”

Defining Customer Care concept is not simple: it entails a lot of different strategies and actions which lead to a general principle: **the relationship between a business and its users for the satisfaction of the latter.**

From Customer Care it is necessary to approach also the concept of CRM Customer Relationship Management: it describes a business strategy which, based on a customer-oriented business philosophy and company culture, aims at a style of customer relations management that would lead to competitive advantage and an increase in profitability for the enterprise.

Thus Customer Satisfaction becomes the primary objective of each service providing company, putting the Customer at the center of any strategic choices and decisions. Technically speaking CRM is the collection of every touchpoint with each customer – phone calls, emails, orders, that opens every time there is the need to communicate with that customer. You can see prior responses from your team, issues and what they have done. CRM is not only important to store customer information but also to improve customer service as a whole.

High-quality customer service creates loyal customers, even if today customers are less inclined to be faithful to any particular company. The reason lies in the fact that the possibility of choice for the consumer has increased exponentially.

Demographic and economic shifts coupled with advances in digital technologies are changing customer behaviour faster than many large companies can respond. These changes create significant opportunities for the most agile and forward-looking businesses.

To remain at the forefront, leading companies are transforming their businesses into customer-centric, digitally enabled and connected enterprises capable of responding to customer needs

Digital advance and rising customer expectations are creating rapidly changing markets where loyalty is hard won and easily lost. If customers don't find what they want they will go to someone who satisfies them.

The situation is somehow different in the case of businesses and structures which offer tourism services for customers with specific access requirements: in fact, this type of tourist may show a higher level of fidelity, connected more to the effective correspondence of the offer to his/her own needs than to a generalized freedom of choice.

Even if, thanks to Internet, but also to other more modern information sources, such as the exchange of peer-to-peer information on social networks, very important for this type of market, customers with disabilities have access to many more information than in the past and feel stronger and their choices are better focused on what their wishes are.

Effective Customer care should be following those rules that are considered “golden” in order to achieve the planned results, no matter how difficult it could be:

1. Customer Service is everyone's job: every contact with the customer is important. Customers do not make any difference between various people operating in a company. They do not care about roles. Anyone is representing the company and is judged by his behaviour.
2. Ask question and listen to the answers: if you know your customer and his requirements better you may avoid misunderstandings, mistakes and improve the relationship
3. Promise only what you can deliver: there is nothing worse than creating expectations that are not met by the service provided. On the contrary providing an excellent service can gain more customers and maintain them
4. The magic power of apologies: if something goes wrong it is important to make the customer understand that the Company really cares and intends to find appropriate solutions
5. Consider the company humans resources: they have to be familiar with the product/service they are offering to customers. There is nothing more annoying than to find someone unsecure of what he/she is talking about. Here is where training is playing a decisive part in building the Company image of good quality and reliability. The Company must give them the most effective training and proper motivation.



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Nowadays the customer voice has an increasing number of outlets across social media channels and on different types of websites. Places such as

<sup>1</sup> Source: <https://commons.wikimedia.org>

Twitter, Facebook, blog site comment sections, and customer service scoring sites can potentially be the entry point into a virtuous circle while a bad experience, described using the same media, may create a very negative circle and consequently critical results for the enterprise

In order to avoid that a bad experience, complaints and disaffection of Customer will damage the company image and business it is necessary to put into practice techniques which will help the Company to understand the reason of complaints and critical situations, solve them and thus improve the overall quality of the service.

*Problem Solving* can be defined as the art of solving problems, through the use of tactics and techniques to obtain the maximum effectiveness and efficiency and thus resolve the problem.

Faced with a problem we have to solve, continuing to use the same thought framework that generated the problem is obviously unproductive. We must identify something that we have not yet considered, open our minds to possibilities that we have not yet explored, evolving our thinking from a level in which we were not able to solve the problem to a higher level in which we are able to understand the situation.

The best tools to do this are **questions**.

However, these must be **productive questions** because they must help solving the problem. A good question to ask oneself is always:

**“how can I solve this situation?”**

All questions beginning with **“HOW CAN I...?”** go in the right direction.

It is important to take into consideration specific phases :

- a) Problem FINDING : Realize that an uncomfortable situation has been created
- b) Problem SETTING : Define the problem – ask questions WHY?
- c) Problem ANALYSIS : Divide the main problem into secondary problems
- d) Problem SOLVING: Eliminate the causes and answer to questions

At this point two other essential phases in the Problem Solving should be developed: the task of the Problem Solving is to transform a well defined problem into a project to be managed. If the problem setting individualizes what to do, the problem solving individualizes how to do it.

- e) Decision MAKING: Decide to act according to the answers obtained
- f) Decision TAKING: Get to action

Applying the results to the company's rules and procedures is then a winning strategy.

## **Learning Unit N°10 - “Handling unforeseen situations”**

Even a very carefully planned trip may encounter problems which could not be foreseen at the moment of booking, travelling or stay at the final destination of a tourist with specific access needs.

When travelling with a disability a tourist has to be well prepared to face any sort of accidents to his equipment or realities which prove to be far from what had been promised by the travel agents and or the trip organisers.

There might be exceptional events, both of private nature (being injured during the trip and needing medical care) or of more general nature such as dramatic natural events or situations of social unrest, which might need to secure the safety of the customer and prevention of personal damages.

Even if planned with the utmost care and detail, information gathered before leaving are many times not precise enough if not absolutely wrong, habits and/or legislation in the destination do not grant the same equality experiences people get at home, service providers staff is not trained enough to be able to put things right.

The major burden to avoid or solve uncomfortable situations lies on staff: they have to know what to do in any critical situation, how the service they are offering is linked or depends on other elements of the Tourism Service Chain, how to interact with public or private bodies who may grant a solution, but most of all be fully aware of the needs of their potential customers.

Cooperation with the customer in identifying a solution which may be accepted is essential.

Staff resources, from the Management to the provision of any specific task have to know how the customer's trip has been organised, who has been/ is responsible for the correct delivery of his part of competence and know how to contact bodies external to the Tourism sector such as hospitals, insurance companies, police departments and Tourism public organisations which are institutionally deputed to intervene if specific situations or criticalities will occur.

Unforeseen situations may be divided into various main groups:

1. Events affecting the customer independence such as loss or damage of technical aids, no replacements or spare parts available, no renting opportunities, refusal to accept service animals inside the tourist facilities. Cancellation or delaying of services which might endanger the smooth prosecution of the whole journey.  
In such cases it is important to search for alternatives and be prepared to cover possible additional costs.  
As far as service animals are concerned, any service provider had to refer to the local authority capable of having the law respected.
2. Logistic situations which prevent the customer to use in complete comfort( accessibility, usability) the booked facilities such as accommodation structures whose arrangements are totally or partially not respondent to the specific access needs of the customer. It is important to consider that all the facilities of a hotel (bedroom,



restaurant, lift, bathroom, spas, swimming pool, conference room etc) have to be usable without creating problems of access or embarrassing situations.

If, for any reason, what has been booked and paid for will prove not adequate, the facility management has to find a suitable alternative, offer it to the customer and wait for his/her approval. Possible additional costs have to be covered, either from the facility itself or the Travel agent/ online booking service through which the service has been organised

3. Medical and health problems. Each tourist is normally travelling with a stock of medicines/drugs they might need during the whole journey. They may also have a medical insurance which covers major medical needs when travelling, including the possibility to go back home in an emergency.

Some unforeseen situations may however occur during the travel:

- a) Getting ill
- b) Being injured when using public transport, or in the room itself, or during sightseeing
- c) Emergency evacuations for fire or gas leaks, earthquakes, floods etc.
- d) Having an allergic reaction to food, in case of severe intolerance

In all these cases it is important to call immediately a doctor, an ambulance if the situation is very serious and organise the transfer to the nearest hospital.

Consequently all reference numbers and contact persons to whom intervention has to be requested, must be at the immediate disposal of the service provider's staff.

Even if trained in the basics of first.aid it is better to wait for the doctors and medical assistants.

When an evacuation is required, do not move the customer yourself and this might be against some national laws.

It will be also important to check the conditions of any Health Insurance, its coverage and rules applicability in the country.

In general some golden rules will be:

- Be aware of all the details of the customer journey and have the contacts of all relevant agents providing each component of the travel
- Keep calm, analyse the situation, listen to the customer and reassure him that you are there to solve the problem. Remember that a solution has to be identified
- Be prepared to start the emergency procedures as soon as possible and connect with the right people and organisation which will help you to find a solution

Facing unforeseen situations and handling them so that the customer will not suffer any discomfort is part of the level of quality in the service that each tourism operator, either public or private, is aiming at.

Human resources are an essential component of the quality offer and their commitment has to be valued as an important asset for the benefit of their business.

## LEARNING MODULE N° 3 - “The Accessibility Assessments”

### Learning Unit N°11 - “Accessibility Information Schemes”

#### What is an Accessibility Information Scheme?

- an information communication source that aims to assure the quality of tangible assets provided at tourist destinations.
- may be managed by public or private enterprises or NGOs
- intended to fulfil the need for accessibility information by tourists with disabilities or persons with other access requirements.

An Accessibility Information Scheme (AIS) should answer the question of each potential visitor “Is it accessible FOR ME?”

Gathering and presenting accessibility information/data requires detailed work and, in large facilities it can be a complex task. Therefore, it requires a structured approach.

There are many different Accessibility Information Schemes using different data collection tools and ways of presenting the data.

#### Some key questions to consider:

- Whose access requirements are covered?
- Is the accessibility information for only one type of user or many?
- How can we trust the information?
- Who collects the information and how did they do it?
- Is the information reliable: up-to-date, accurate, relevant?
- Who checks the information?

Some examples of AIS and their features are examined, including “mainstream” booking sites and specialised accessible tourism information providers: Hotels.com, Booking.com, TripAdvisor.com, Ewan’s Guide, Accessaloo, Eating Out-Venue Guide, Pantou - The Accessible Tourism Directory.

**Pantou** is the Accessible Tourism Directory developed by ENAT and EWORX as part of a European study.

- Originally funded by European Commission
- Supports tourism SMEs that have accessible services
- Includes over 70 types of services, e.g. Cultural heritage sites, accommodation, equipment hire, tourist guides, transfers ...
- Covers ALL customer types and access requirements
- Over 900 accessible suppliers already registered



- Free of charge for businesses, public sector and visitors

Pantou works with over 30 Accessibility Information Schemes (AIS), enabling their members to register, free of charge in the Pantou Directory.

**Tourism Service Providers** who are certified or labelled by an access scheme may indicate the name of the scheme they belong to during the Pantou registration process. This allows potential visitors to check that the accessibility of the venue or service is suitable for them.

Service providers who do not have an AIS in their city, region or country, should **write and upload a Pantou Access Statement** using the "self-assessment" questionnaire and WORD template.



## Learning Unit N°12 - “Access statements and collection tools”

An Access Statement is a document written by a service provider (or an appointed agent) describing the accessibility characteristics of a tourism service and/or facility, as objectively and factually as possible.

In some countries or regions the term "Access Guide" or "Accessibility Guide" is used. It means the same thing.

The Access Statement is used to inform potential customers or visitors about the accessibility of venue and/or service and it is particularly useful as a planning tool for visitors who have specific access requirements.

An access statement is based on a checklist which is used to describe or measure the accessibility of a venue, property or service for the visitors.

The accessibility requirements are related to all users with various disabilities and/or other access requirements, such as persons with mobility limitations and impairments, persons with hearing, visual or cognitive impairments, older people, families with young children and more.

The accessibility information provided in Access Statements is very important for users with specific access requirements. It enables them, their family and friends to make informed decisions about their visits in view of their requirements, ensuring a safer and a better quality visit and experience.

An Access Statement can be of two kinds:

1. Carried out by accessibility experts individually or through an Accessibility Information Scheme. The information provided through such Access Statements is accurate and reliable.
2. Self-assessed. Self-assessed Access Statements are provided by the tourism operators/owners of businesses who do not have specific knowledge on accessibility, but they can be very useful and accurate as much as possible, depending on the awareness and possible brief training of the owner or the personnel in charge.

Having an access statement provides a marketing opportunity for a business to reach a wider market and it gives a business competitive advantages, allowing visitors to make informed decisions, knowing whether a venue and its facilities are suitable for them.

Photos may be used in access statements as an additional way to inform people with access requirements. These should be taken to show specific features which are of key interest to the visitor.

Links to videos showcasing the business's accessibility, hosted on YouTube and Vimeo are also very useful as sources of information for all potential visitors and especially those with specific access requirements.

In order to fill in an access statement the following collection tools are needed:

- Access statement template with questions/checklist which have to be answered.
- Help text (if any) how to answer questions in the check list.
- Measurement and photo guide



- Tape measure
- Camera
- Notepad or tablet

Some examples of Access Statements are presented to illustrate the principles described above.

The “Pantou Access Statement” template is explained, section-by-section, indicating the different types of data and information to be collected and inserted in the form. This template will be used by trainees in a practical group exercise, when an accessibility audit will be carried out in a tourist facility (Learning Unit 13).



## **Learning Unit N°13 - “Developing an Access Audit, auditing techniques”**

This exercise will be carried out using the “Pantou” collection tool and its accessibility checklist. IN An interview with the building/facility manager or owner and the person responsible for accessibility, (if any) it is important to identify:

- Management policy on accessibility
- Areas to be audited
- Customer services offered

The students should have studied the Photo and Measurement Guide beforehand and should be also equipped with the appropriate measuring tools e.g. tape measure, camera, etc.

### **Key areas to be used as examples in the practical exercise**

1. Common features of buildings and facilities, e.g. entrance, reception, public-use toilets, elements of horizontal and vertical circulation (such as corridors, lifts, stairs, ...)
2. Specific functional areas according to intended use of the building or facility, e.g. classrooms in an educational building, guestrooms in a hotel, dining area in a restaurant)

On the site:

- The group is divided in smaller teams to measure, describe and record the data for different areas of the building/facility, using the checklist
- The trainer supervises and guides teams when conducting measurements

Every building/venue is a different case and some features or access problems may not be fully captured by the checklist. For this reason, any specific issues or unforeseen situations/obstacles that may be found during the audit will be explained by the trainer and further guidance will be given.

Photos are used to illustrate accessibility features and obstacles, if any, in order to enhance the information for users of the guide.

Accessibility problems that may have been identified should be briefly described and highlighted as comments, to ensure objective and reliable information that is helpful to the visitor

## **LEARNING MODULE N° 4 - “Information and communication”**

### **Learning Unit N°14 – “Providing information to customers with access requirements”**

This learning unit focuses on how tourism providers can provide accessibility information to customers with access requirements.

Tourists with access requirements need very specific, factual information about the accessibility conditions that they will encounter at the venue.

Therefore, it is important to ensure that the appropriate accessibility information is available and that it is delivered in a simple and clear way. It should also be verified by a specialist in accessibility and up-to-date. It is essential to pay attention to the format of the information to ensure that the information itself is accessible to people with different communication requirements.

Considering why people buy travel products and services, there may be many reasons but, in particular, customers with access requirements are motivated to find products and services that offer them adequate accessibility, in a safe and inclusive manner.

When setting out to inform the customer about accessibility, the tourism provider must “put oneself in their shoes”. That means, consider firstly what the customers already knows about their own access requirements. The better you understand your customers’ needs the better you will be able to inform them about the accessibility issues that concern them.

Users’ abilities and impairments set certain requirements for how information is delivered to them and which information they need. Tourism providers need to consider the different limitations and requirements that relate to the various disabilities, impairments or health and other conditions presented by visitors.

In information channels such as websites there are five critical factors to think about; information should be 1) easy to find 2) it should be accessible, 3) it should be reliable, 4) accurate and 5) up-to-date.

Remembering the Visitor Journey (described in previous modules), providers should consider the importance of accessibility of information at all the stages of that journey: searching, planning and booking, accessing information on the move during travel, when staying at the destination and enjoying the experiences, and then having the opportunity to share information about the experiences with others after coming home again.

The Learning Unit goes on to consider an analysis of user data by Google which refers to their “Five stages of travel”, corresponding closely to the Visitor Journey.

There are four important steps or general principles in designing the form of information and the content. Step A. Perception, Step B. Discoverability, Step C. Understanding and Step D. Use of information. Information providers must develop content which corresponds to users’ perceptual abilities and allows



them to discover the information and understand it correctly. They should choose the layout, style and content of the information allowing customers to decide how to use and act on the content that is presented.

The learning unit presents, as an example, the accessibility information provided by Barcelona Turisme showing their specialist website for Accessible Tourism.

The website gives a comprehensive overview of the city's provisions in relation to What to visit, Transport, Where to sleep and Other services. The website uses pictograms signifying information for users with visual, hearing, motor or cognitive impairments. A sub-section site contains a Visitor Attraction Search facility which allows users to select specific kinds of attractions and view a list of accessibility features for each one. The information presented goes into a lot of detail for the different user groups concerned. One example of an accessible venue is an open-air theatre. For each visitor attraction the Barcelona Turisme web page provides a Visitor Feedback form that can be used to send comments to the website, allowing users to provide information, for example on any accessibility issues or problems they encounter.

Further information on how to provide information to customers with access requirements is shown in two key resources: 1) The UNWTO recommendations on accessible information in tourism; and 2). the Irish National Disability Authority Toolkit on Customer Engagement in Tourism.





## **Learning Unit N°15 - “Best techniques for different media”**

This learning unit focuses on 1) How to make information accessible, understandable and usable by as many visitors as possible; and 2) How to design accessible information in different formats and deliver it through different information channels.

The main reference for this Learning Unit is the “Toolkit on Universal Design for Customer Engagement in Tourism Services”, developed by the Irish National Disability Authority and Centre of Excellence in Universal Design in Dublin.

The universal design toolkit is based on an Irish standard for guidance on the use of universal design to improve engagement between tourism service providers and their customers. It refers to: Electronic-based communications, Written communications, Telephone communications and Face-to-face communications - presenting advice and guidance on how to make the communication process easier and more effective for both the tourism provider and the customer.

In this Learning Unit two short videos are presented explaining how Irish businesses have benefited from using the toolkit on universal design for customer engagement in tourism services. From studies carried out by the centre of excellence in universal design it is shown that:

52% of customers purchase more from the business as a result of a good customer experience

58% of customers are more likely to tell others about their customer service experiences today than they were five years ago and

24% of customers will continue to use service providers for two or more years after a good experiences.

Creating a good experience for the customer is a key part of delivering Accessible Tourism, and in this process the way communications are designed is extremely important.

Starting with electronic communications, the Learning Unit describes “10 essential tips for web content”. Several of these features are explained with examples from the toolkit.

Considering writing for the web a number of guidelines are presented which help to present information in a clear consistent and concise way.

For face-to-face telephone and video communication it is very important to use plain language to think about what you're saying speak clearly speak slowly and keep messages simple. In a conversation, tourism staff should listen and respond to the customer and don't finish the customers sentences! Other tips are also described.

Written information plays a key role in any tourism business. Document design is described with examples related to images, font size, colour contrast and layout.



The Learning Unit concludes with the key advice that was given in the previous Learning Unit (14) concerning the design of communications:

Step A. Perceive – can the user perceive the information; which formats, style?

Step B. Discover – can the user discover the information they are looking for?

Step C. Understand – is the information in a form the user can understand?

Step D. Use – is the user able to act, based on the information given?



## Learning Unit N°16 - “Marketing accessibility”

This learning unit focuses on how to market the accessibility of tourism venues, products and services to tourists with disabilities and/or persons with specific access requirements. It explains how guests search for accessibility, the different available communication channels, and what prompts tourists to book. The unit includes examples of good communication strategies and practices by tourism destinations and businesses around Europe.

The Learning Unit does not examine the size or value of the Accessible Tourism market, as this has been dealt with earlier. Here, the focus is on how to present information about the offer and engage with customers effectively by using the most appropriate channels.

It is noted, as in the previous LU, that it is particularly important for people with access requirements that the information is easy to find, accessible, reliable, accurate and up-to-date.

Six key marketing tools are listed as follows A. your access statement or accessibility guide, B. an accessible website, C. social media, D. Apps, E. Bloggers and travel review channels, and F specialised listings agencies and operators.

(A) and (B) The Accessibility Guide on the website of Eden Project, a tourist attraction in the south-west of England is presented as an example of good practice. This attraction has won an award from VisitEngland as one of the best accessible venues in England. It has an accessible website that is designed to be usable by persons with disabilities, complying with the WCAG guidelines, and it has a wide range of services and accessible environment and fit pictures for people with disabilities, families and older visitors. The Accessibility Guide provides a lot of detail about how to reach the destination, the accessible parking and drop-off points, the visitor centre, accessible toilets and a number of tips to help visitors have a comfortable and enjoyable visit.

(C) Social media channels. Tourism Enterprises use social media channels first of all to spread the word about the company, secondly to attract new customers and thirdly to increase customer satisfaction, using social media platforms as a communication tool to engage with customers to provide support and to answer service enquiries. Some of the most popular social media channels are presented: Instagram Twitter Facebook, Pinterest and Facebook.

(D) Apps are increasingly being used to present accessibility information to tourists. There is a wide variety of apps in the marketplace serving a variety of purposes. Apps are used for navigation and information support for people on the move including those with visual or hearing impairment. There are many apps connected to accessibility information schemes as mentioned in earlier learning units. The Tur4All app developed by PREDIF in Spain, is shown as an example of one such accessibility app.

(E) Working with travel bloggers and especially persons with a disability themselves has proved to be a very effective way of reaching out to customers with access requirements. Bloggers and Vloggers (video bloggers)

are able to give a first-hand opinion about what they've experienced and bring the destination alive in ways which many travel guides and websites cannot do. Just a few websites of well-known travel bloggers are shown as examples. This is an area where destinations can gain credibility and reputation by the word-of-mouth marketing that comes from these blog sites.

(F) Finally, there are many specialised listings agencies and operators which also provide suitable marketing channels for accessible offers. Two examples are shown: the website of "Tui" the tourism operator and Pantou.org which will be familiar to trainees on this course. Whichever marketing channel is used, the key principles remain the same when designing the content for marketing to potential visitors. Providers should ask themselves

- Who is this for?
- What do they want?
- What do I want?

When the tourism provider knows these things, then they can market their product to fit that specific person.