

Summary and Final Conclusions by Pedro Ortún

Europe for All – a Stakeholder Conference on Accessible Tourism

Brussels, 18th – 19th January 2007

- **Accessibility is a rights issue** – a right of access to goods, facilities and services – and everybody should have the right to travel and to enjoy their leisure experiences
- Accessibility is often limited to a certain group of people but it should be seen in a more **holistic approach**
- **Design for All** – accessibility should be useable for as many people as possible – the needs of as many people as possible should be taken on board
- Keyword: **mainstreaming** - The need to mainstream disability and accessibility into all relevant policy areas. The Commission pays particular attention to disability aspects in its socio-economic policies, programmes and projects. The Unit for the Integration of People with Disabilities is responsible for mainstreaming disability matters within the Commission
- All key actors at international, EU, national and destination (reg., local) level should be involved – but also the **tourism industry!**
- Accessibility is an important **economic element** and can be a real “**business case**” – it is a matter of competition (ageing population – new target groups!)
- But: the timeframe to reach accessibility is very long – even with legislation, also because the industry has to adapt, which also means to invest

What does DG ENTR?

- References to **accessibility in the TSG report:**
 - Aim 2b: To provide a safe, satisfying and fulfilling experience for visitors, **available to all** without discrimination by gender, race, religion, disability or in other ways -> **Fair access to tourism for all**
 - Challenge 2: Addressing the impact of **tourism transport**:
“In addition, however, tourism planners and businesses should work together to promote a modal shift towards the use of more environmentally

friendly forms of transport for tourism (train, coach/bus, water, cycle, foot), both to and within the tourist destination, through (amongst others):

*- Careful location of new tourism development **with respect to accessibility.***” (Sustainable transport is also a key challenge of the SDS.)

○ **Challenge 7: Making holidays available to all**

“Social inclusion and equity are important principles of sustainable development. A specific aim (2b) is to ensure that tourism experiences are available to all without discrimination. This will also bring additional economic benefits (Aims 1a, 1b).”

Two principal challenges to address are:

- **Physical disability.** This includes the high proportion of European citizens affected by mobility or sensory impairment, either personally or indirectly through a member of their family or group. This may increase, owing to demographic changes.*
- **Economic disadvantage,** which exists in all countries but is especially prevalent in some of the newer EU member states and among immigrant populations.*

Relevant action includes:

- Encouraging policies and actions to support social tourism at all levels.*
- Raising enterprise awareness of the size of the market and the economic advantages as well as social benefits.*
- Ensuring universal adherence to workers’ leave entitlement, safeguarding this aspect of social security guaranteed by the European social model*
- Designing and adapting tourism facilities and sites to meet requirements for physical disability.*
- Improving information relevant to disabled people and under-privileged groups.*
- Encouraging a broad price range in tourism facilities and experiences*
- Pursuing specific schemes to facilitate and encourage holiday taking by people on low incomes, such as the holiday voucher systems run in some countries based on tax incentives and involving governments and operators.*

- Relating **competitiveness to sustainability**:
*“The key challenges of delivering quality jobs, minimising resource use, supporting communities, promoting sustainable transport and **improving accessibility** are all partly dependent on a response from business.”*
 - **Education and capacity building**:
*“Much can be achieved through delivery of targeted advice and training. This could include among others:
 - Providing specific courses for existing businesses and employees.
 Courses should be short, focused and **easily accessible**.”*
 - In the **Action Framework** accessibility is the major theme in point 7:
*“**Making holidays available to all**, eg. Local authorities are asked to provide good information on accessibility and tourism businesses are asked to improve accessibility to their facilities.”*
 - Also in the table of **indicators** accessibility is one of the indicators on destination level – eg. % tourism enterprises accessible by public transport or % tourism enterprises meeting specified criterias on accessibility
- Ask the audience to participate in the open web-based consultation and give their contributions in regard to accessibility
 - The Commission will then work on an Agenda 21 for sustainable tourism in Europe taking into account the outcome of the consultation
 - Future challenge: Now we talk about accessibility, we raise awareness, we provide people with information – the next step should be to **implement accessibility**.
 - Commission renews commitment to the subject of 'Accessible Tourism' and proposes to develop a solid body of on-line information on accessibility for the sector.